



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **California Heartland Calls for Systemic Presidential Primary Reform**

PETALUMA, CA - In back-to-back votes this week, Democratic Party central committees in California's agricultural heartland endorsed a reform plan to improve the way voters elect their national leader. At its meeting on Wednesday, September 7th, the Fresno County Democratic Central Committee (FCDCC) endorsed the American Plan, a presidential primary calendar that favors no state or region. On Thursday, the following night, the Madera County Democratic Central Committee (MCDCC) also adopted the American Plan. These two Central Valley counties join the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, which approved the American Plan by acclamation on August 16th.

"When MCDCC members unanimously approved the resolution during our September meeting, I saw it as the committee's highly-focused commitment to help take our country back," said Susan Smith-Rowe, MCDCC chair and local Democracy for America organizer.

"This plan maximizes the involvement of every state and forces candidates to run campaigns responsive to America's great diversity of ideas" said Barbary Pyle, FCDCC chair.

The American Plan is designed to cure the disease of "front-loading." Over the past two decades, more and more states have scheduled their primaries earlier and earlier in attempts to capture more political power. This has resulted in shorter, less-competitive nomination races that are more driven by money than by message. In 2004, only 20% of convention delegates had been chosen when Howard Dean suspended his campaign. "That means 80% of Democrats were disenfranchised," said Ginger Julian, member of the Madera County DCC and California Democratic Party Delegate. "Is that democracy?"

For an in-depth explanation of the American Plan, please visit  
[http://pweb.jps.net/~gangale/opsa//ps/Primary\\_2003\\_frm.htm](http://pweb.jps.net/~gangale/opsa//ps/Primary_2003_frm.htm).

Also known by the scholarly name "Graduated Random Presidential Primary System," the American Plan was authored by Thomas Gangale of the policy think tank OPS-Alaska based in Petaluma, California. The Plan has received the support of Rep. Lynn Woosley (D-Petaluma), the Center for Voting and Democracy ([www.fairvote.org](http://www.fairvote.org)), the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley, the California Young Democrats, the California 6th Assembly District Democratic Committee, the Young Democrats of America, as well as several progressive blogs. Several members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) have shown interest in the plan, and the plan is being studied by Common Cause. Additionally, the American Plan is the subject of a chapter in the 10th edition of the popular political science textbook, "Points of

View: Readings in American Government and Politics," edited by Robert E. DiClerico and Allan S. Hammock.

Gangale said, "According to H. L. Mencken, 'For every complex problem, there is a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong.' Now, there are some simple, neat, and wrong solutions out there, but the American Plan is not one of them. It is not simple, and because of that, I cannot fully explain it to you in a few minutes. But if I had an hour, you would understand that the American Plan is not wrong, and I like to think that you would say it's pretty neat, because it's based on a mathematical formula." To date, no organization has voted down the American Plan, and in most cases it has been adopted by acclamation.

Among primary alternatives, the Rotating Regional Primary Plan has received the most attention. However, according to Gangale, "It has all the drawbacks of a single-day national primary and none of the advantages. Far from eliminating front-loading, it institutionalizes it, merely rotating it from region to region. No candidate could afford to lose that first primary, so that's where all of the campaign spending would go. Whoever won the first regional primary of the season would be the presumptive presidential nominee, and everyone else might just as well stay home and not vote. We've had enough of that. The American Plan structures the primary schedule as a gradually accelerating process that keeps the campaign competitive longer, and gives the American people more time to make an informed decision regarding whom their next leader will be."

Although the Rotating Regional Primary Plan was endorsed by the NASS in 1999, the idea dates back to the early 1970s, when Bob Packwood (R-OR) introduced a bill for a similar plan in the US Senate. "It was designed about the same time as the Space Shuttle," noted Gangale, who is both an aerospace engineer and a political scientist.

The Democratic National Committee's Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling is due to recommend reforms to Chairman Howard Dean the end of this year. "Dr. Dean has stated that only 'minor surgery' is required to the 2008 presidential primary schedule," said Dr. Marilyn Dudley-Flores, CEO and Chief Research Scientist at OPS-Alaska. "He's a great general practitioner of politics, but this case calls for specialists. Relieving a few symptoms will only allow the body politic to deteriorate further. Only a systemic cure can stop the cancer of front-loading."

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Thomas Gangale is an aerospace engineer and a former Air Force officer. He is currently the executive director at OPS-Alaska, a think tank based in Petaluma, California, and an international relations scholar at San Francisco State University. He is the author of the American Plan to reform the presidential nomination process.

Dr. Marilyn Dudley-Flores is a social scientist and founder of OPS-Alaska. She teaches at Sonoma State University and writes with Thomas Gangale and other scholars affiliated with the OPS-Alaska collaborative.