



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
Governor

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### **Western Governors to Pursue Common Presidential Primary date**

SANTA FE- New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson today voted with four other western governors to unanimously pass a resolution calling for the creation of a unified western states primary in 2008. Governor Richardson, Chairman of the Western Governors' Association, said he will push for a regional primary or caucus to be held early in the primary season - in January or February 2008.

"I think the idea for a Western primary or caucus is ripe, because our common western issues - forest health, water scarcity, environmental concerns and energy -- need to be at the forefront of our presidential elections," Governor Bill Richardson told his colleagues before today's vote at the Western Governors' Association Conference being held in Santa Fe.

Governor Richardson pitched the idea of a Western Primary earlier this year following the successful Feb. 3 presidential caucus in New Mexico and primary election in neighboring Arizona.

Joining Governor Richardson to pass the bipartisan resolution were: Utah Governor Olene Walker, who introduced the resolution, Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, Colorado Governor Bill Owens and South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds.

### **Western Governors' Association Resolution**

**A. Background**

1. Along with the Federal Election Commission, the major political parties play a large part in establishing the rules for the nominating process for the nation's Presidency. The parties establish the rules state primaries and party caucuses must follow and the date window within which primaries and caucuses must be held.
2. The rules of both of the major parties give preferential treatment to Iowa and New Hampshire allowing them to hold the first Presidential primary and caucus elections every four years. Other state primaries and party caucuses follow.
3. In the last four election cycles, more and more states have moved their primary or caucus dates earlier in an attempt to have an impact on the candidates that are selected as the parties' nominees. As a result, the parties' nominees are selected early in the date window allowed by parties. States that hold their caucus or primary later in the date window have no influence on who the parties' nominee will be.
4. One of the results of voters feeling like they have no influence in helping select the parties' nominees is low voter turnout. Just 17.7 percent of eligible voters turned out during the primary season in 2000. This was an improvement over the 16.9 percent who participated in 1996, but still the second lowest percentage since 1960.
5. At a Western Governors meeting in February 2004, the Governors agreed to explore creating a common date for caucuses and primaries for the Presidential candidate nomination process in 2008. The Governors felt that more states banding together in 2008 could help draw attention to western issues including public lands, energy, water, and tribal issues.

**B. Governors' Policy Statement**

1. Voters in Western states should have an equal say in who the party nominees are for President.
2. Western Governors urge the major political parties to examine reforms to the nominating process rules that will encourage voter participation and encourage a discussion among the candidates for the parties' nomination of issues unique to each region of the country.
3. Western Governors support states and state political parties in the region examining the idea of a common date for interested states and parties to hold their primaries and caucuses in order to draw attention to western issues.

C. **Governors' Management Directive**

1. WGA is directed to provide staff support to any group of interested western states that choose to work together to select a common caucus/primary date for the 2008 Presidential nominating process.
2. This resolution shall be sent to the national chairmen of major political parties, the chairmen of the western state political parties and the western secretaries of state.

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