Role of Conventions

The first methods to choosing presidential candidates was the congressional caucus.

**Convention Arrangements**

The poltical parties created the convention system. Both parties make their own arrangements in which they decide on the date and location. Traditionally the party out of power has the convention first.

**Apportionment of Delegates**

The “call” is issued which names specific times and location and number of delegates each state receives. States now receive bonus delegates which greatly inflates the number each state gets.

**Selection of Delegates**

States have different state laws and rules for picking delegates. Democrats also include 750 superdelegates who are made up of elective offices. Republicans allow states to determine laws and procedures while the Democrats have national laws.

Presidential Primaries

The presidential primary does one of two things. Either it chooses some of the State’s delegates for the national convention or it expresses a preference for the party’s nominee.

**History of the Presidential Primary**

While initially most states started out with a caucus, most states now have a primary.

**Primaries Today**

New Hampshire has the first of the primaries. In fact its State law that ensures this by setting the date as the Tuesday of the week before the date on which any other State schedules its contest. Money and name recognition are extremely important factors in winning the primaries, so states that early primaries have extra significance. Candidates without name recognition or the money to fund a long campaign hope to establish both through early wins thus keeping the ball rolling such as, Bill Clinton. Many States have now changed their date to improve its importance.

**Proportional Representation**

To create a fairer, but more complicated structure primaries have begun to remove themselves from the winner-take-all contests. These are contests where the delegates earn all of the delegates at the primary. The Democrats now use proportional representation. The winners of at least 15% of the votes receive that many delegates from the State. Some states have a preference primary where the delegates aren’t chosen just the percentages are established.

**Evaluation of the Primary**

The primary, for the party out of power, provides the party the strongest candidate. The primaries are a tough competition and in order to win, the candidate must be strong. The party in power does not usually have such competition. Either the president is seeking reelection or he throws his substantial weight behind his favorite.

**Reform Proposals**

There are great demands on the candidates including: time, effort, money, scheduling, fatigue, and ability to stay relevant in the peoples’ minds. One solution would be to have one national presidential primary. Another similar solution would create regional primaries that would occur every 2-3 weeks across the country.

The Caucus-Convention Process

States that do not hold primaries conduct causcuses or conventions. Delegates are chosen at local levels. The Iowa caucuses are the most popular and important because they occur so early in the process.

The National Convention

Finally, the parties hold national conventions. These are awesome parties that would rival those of Triwizard Tournament or Kate and William’s wedding. The convention nominates the presidential and vice presidential candidates, bring factions together and adopt the party platform. The platform are the principles and goals for the party. This is similar to when the Order of the Phoenix met and had to decide their plan for eliminating He who must not be named (spoiler alert) once and for all.

**The First Two Days**

The most action is writing the party platform, while the most important event is the keynote address. One of the party’s respected speakers riles the crowd up and predicts their victory in the fall. This can only be compared to a speech that Victor Krum would give to his fellow Quidditch mates during the World Cup.

What are possible problems with the reforms? Problem for each reform

Draw out an illustration of how the presidential nominee is chosen.

What are the pros/cons of the caucus system and primary?

What is an open and closed primary? Which is better? Why?

Why not just let everybody campaign and vote once in the fall?