

5-MINUTE GUIDE TO

THE PR

AFTER MONTHS OF speculation about the 2016 presidential election, voting to pick the final Democratic and Republican candidates begins next month in a series of state primaries and caucuses. The primary season, which kicks off with the Iowa

caucuses on February 1 and the New Hampshire primary on February 9, runs through June 14 (see map).

In these contests, voters aren't electing actual candidates. Instead, they'll be electing delegates—people who've pledged to support

a particular candidate at a national **convention** this summer.

Don't know a caucus from a primary, or what happens at a national convention? Read our guide for a crash course on how the major parties choose their candidates.



HOW A PRIMARY WORKS

Voters go to a polling place to cast secret ballots. Some states have open primaries: Voters may choose a candidate from any party. Others have closed primaries: Only voters who have registered with a particular party may vote for that party's candidates.



HOW A CAUCUS WORKS

People gather in schools, churches, and even private homes across their state to discuss their party's candidates, then make their choices. Some caucuses have secret ballots, and some don't.

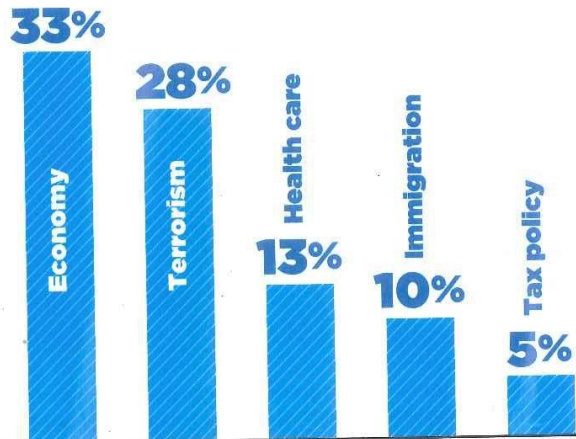
\$30,000,000

Estimated campaign funds that will be spent by 2016 presidential candidates for the Iowa caucuses alone. Iowa is the first state where voters get to choose.

SOURCE: IowaCaucuses.info

What Voters Care About

Registered voters nationwide were asked to choose the issue most important in deciding their 2016 vote for president. The top results:



SOURCE: ABC News/Washington Post poll

SWING STATE

A state that doesn't typically vote Democratic or Republican—it can "swing" to either party. Elections are often won or lost in swing states, which is why candidates campaign so hard in them (and why they're also known as battleground states).

MEET THE TOP CANDIDATES

DEMOCRATIC PARTY



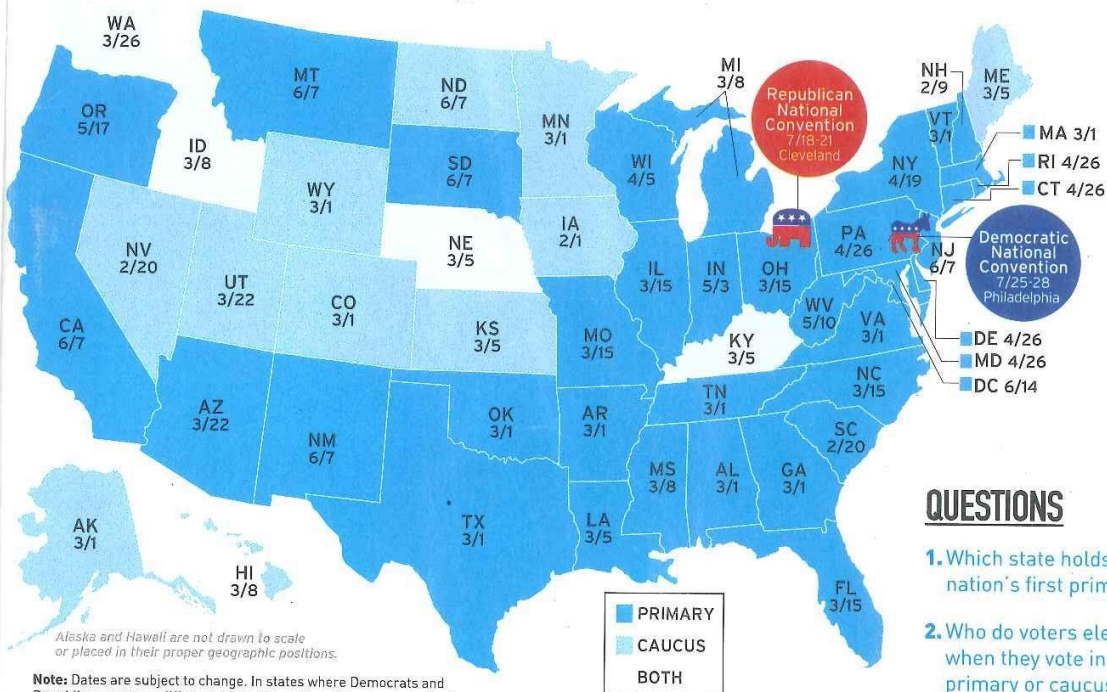
REPUBLICAN PARTY



SOURCE: Quinnipiac University National poll

IMMARRIES

ONLINE
 Play the
 Mapman™ Game at
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QUESTIONS

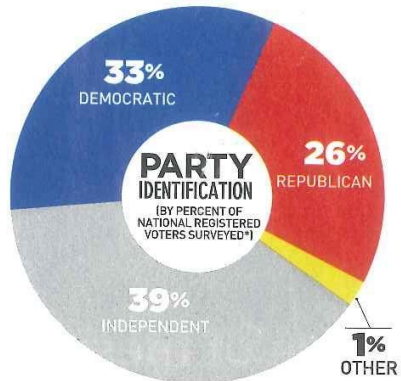
- Which state holds the nation's first primary?
- Who do voters elect when they vote in a primary or caucus?
- Which party will be first to formally choose its candidate? In which city will that take place?
- What is the last date on which state primaries and caucuses will be held? How many states will vote that day?
- About twice as many states as the answer to question 4 will vote on which date? Why is this day so important?

SUPER TUESDAY On March 1, 13 states will vote—the most on any single day. Big wins can give a candidate a huge advantage.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A NATIONAL CONVENTION?

The two major parties each hold a convention. There, delegates chosen in the state-by-state contests gather to nominate one candidate for president and one for vice president.

Often, it's already clear before the conventions which candidates have enough delegates to win the nomination. In that case, the conventions—which air on prime-time TV—become an opportunity for each party to get free publicity for its candidates and party **platform**.



*Figures don't add up to 100 percent because of rounding. SOURCE: McClatchy-Marist poll

BONUS: Iowa's voting-age (18 and older) population is 2.4 million. About how much will be spent per potential voter for Iowa's caucuses?