



BIG MOMENTS IN NH PRIMARY VOTING



Some people date the start of the NH primary earlier than 1952 because the NH primary evolved over time. It took several steps before it became the primary we know today. Learn about some of the big moments that helped create the NH presidential primary.

MOMENT #1

1913

NH passes a law that says the state will hold presidential primary elections to select delegates to the national conventions for each party, where the presidential nominees are chosen.

In earlier elections, each party's leadership picked the delegates themselves. The change in the law was proposed by William Bullock of Richmond who thought the people should play a bigger part in choosing the nominees for president.

Other states—14 of them—had already adopted a presidential primary for the 1912 election, so NH wasn't the first. Nor did NH vote first in 1916, when it held its first presidential primary.

MOMENT #2

1920

NH is the first state to vote in the 1920 presidential election cycle.

NH's primary election was so early because the state was trying to save money by moving the presidential primary to the same day as Town Meeting, when each NH town traditionally holds a meeting to elect town officers, vote for proposed town laws, and pass a town budget.

NH would vote first in the presidential primary from this point on.

MOMENT #3

1949

NH's Secretary of State Richard Upton proposes a law that allows people to vote directly for presidential candidates.

They still voted for delegates to the national convention, but the delegates started pledging themselves to specific candidates. Voters could now mark their preference for the candidates themselves on the ballot.

The first presidential election under the new law is in 1952, which draws a lot of national attention. This election is considered the beginning of the NH presidential primary as we know it.

MOMENT #4

1980

Voters stop electing delegates to the national convention and start voting instead directly for the presidential candidate of their choice. That's the way we vote in the NH primary today.



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