

Cache County GOP Special CMV Meeting • Nov. 21, 2013

This was a special meeting to discuss the *Count My Vote Initiative*, an effort to end Utah's neighbor caucus/ convention system. Under *CMV*, candidates would gather the signatures of 2% of their parties' registered voters in order to get their name on the ballot.

Members of the Cache Central Committee, along with state and county delegates and ex-officio delegates were invited to the meeting.

Action Taken

At the end of the meeting, the body overwhelmingly voted for the *Resolution in Support of the Utah Caucus and Convention System*. (The Resolution is attached.)

The voting was by a show of hands. Please note that some people held more than one office (ie., a state delegate and county delegate; or a central committee member and state delegate) and voted accordingly.

County Delegates (41 total): For ~ 40
Against ~ 1

State Delegates (21 total): For ~ 20
Against ~ 1

Cache Central Committee (38 total): For ~ 37
Against ~ 1

Total votes cast: 100
Total For: 97
Total Against: 3

Discussion and Presentations:

Clair Ellis, a member of the State Central Committee from Cache County; Danny Brownell, county party chair; and Jeff Peterson, Utah GOP Executive Director all presented information about CMV and the negative aspects of a Primary Election system. These points have been combined to be more cohesive.

DISADVANTAGES OF SIGNATURE GATHERING:

CMV creates a disadvantage for Republicans to get on the ballot. For a statewide race, Republican candidates would have to gather 11,000 signatures. Democrats would only have to gather 3,000. In Cache County, Republicans would need 680 signatures; Democrats 110; and unaffiliated 300.

Signature gathering is not a neighbor to neighbor activity. It's a merchant activity. You hire people to get signatures and you pay to be the signature. The Primary System promoted by CMV eliminates from candidacy those who don't have the money to gather signatures.

- The signatures for the candidates will be public record. (Unlike ballots, which are secret.)

- People don't actually have to be party members to register to run as a party candidate.

RURAL UTAH LOSES ITS VOICE

It is unlikely that in a state-wide race, candidates would come to Cache County to gather some of the 11,000 signatures when they could get that many along the Wasatch Front. The neighborhood caucus/convention system makes representatives accountable to Utah's smaller counties and gives them a say and a voice. Candidates must win delegate votes from Utah's rural areas in order to win. There was disagreement in the body at the meeting over how rare it would become for a elected state and federal office holders to visit Cache County. But many were afraid that Utah's most populous counties would rule the political process.

ELECTIONS : MORE COSTLY, MORE OUTSIDE \$

State Sen. Lyle Hillyard told the group he has been told by colleagues in other states that it will cost \$1 million to run for state senate if CMV passes. He said he has never spent more than \$4,000. He is very concerned the change will be dramatic.

He said that CMV has raised \$1 million, and he foresees that a lot of outside money will be coming into campaigns.

Jeff Peterson said he expects to see more special interest groups getting involved in Utah politics should CMV pass. He said a lot of extreme groups fund local county commissioners in other parts of the U.S.

- The advantage of the neighborhood caucus/convention system levels the playing field: You don't need a lot of money or name recognition to win election. (And it also keeps Utah politics more local – with more local influence.)

CANDIDATES DON'T REPRESENT THE MAJORITY

Under the CMV method/Primary system, the candidate who wins the primary ballot doesn't necessarily need to win a majority. It's just the highest vote-getter. Contrast that with the neighborhood caucus/convention system, where a candidate must reach a majority vote to win the party's nomination and avoid a primary. If the candidate does not reach a majority, the top *two* candidates then go on to a primary election. This method ensures that the party's candidate on the November ballot has the support of the majority of the party. The primary system has no way of eliminating candidates...there could be 10 candidates on the ballot and the highest vote-getter moves on to the General Election.

PRIMARIES & VOTER TURNOUT

Peterson said that the Primary system has not proven it can increase voter turnout. Utah ranks in the middle at 23 out of 50 for voter turnout percentages. Being a one-party dominated state has more to do with voter turnout than the caucus system.. When CMV supporters say, "increase voter turnout" they mean, " 'We want a stronger Democratic Party in Utah' and we (the Republican Party) are not going to support that," Peterson said.

- Participation in caucuses has increased every year since 2006

COUNT MY VOTE LESS

CMV takes away 50% of Utah's opportunity to vote. Currently there are 4 opportunities to vote: 1. Neighborhood Caucus. 2. State and County Convention 3. Primary (there often is one) 4. General Election. CMV would eliminate the caucus and also the convention.

Other Points regarding this issue:

- The CMV is appealing to unaffiliated voters. But it is no benefit to them. The Republican primary will still be closed, so the unaffiliated voters can't vote in it.
- Under the Neighborhood Caucus/Convention system, neighbors can meet and debate the issues and choose a representative. Candidates are vetted so we have the best people running for office. He noted that in the 2010 election, Sen. Bennett didn't work hard enough and was defeated. Sen. Hatch saw this mistake, and worked hard and won in 2012.
- CMV supporters keep saying the neighborhood caucus system produces extremist. But can you name 10 state or federal elected officials who are extremist? There may be one or two who some feel are extremist, but it is a very small amount.
- Under the CMV/Primary plan, the party has no control over its nominee for office. (Candidates don't even have to be a registered Republican.)
- The Primary would cost tax payers \$1 million every two years.

Jeff Peterson also gave details about changes this year to how the neighborhood caucuses will operate.

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A Resolution In Support of the Utah Caucus Convention System

WHEREAS, The Cache County Republican Party believes the caucus convention system should be protected against the Count My Vote (CMV) initiative which would implement a direct primary for all county and state elections; and, ...

WHEREAS, We support the local, civic involvement of the delegate system where every elected official must meet face to face with the individuals in our community; and,

WHEREAS, We believe the political voice of our rural county will be diminished by a direct primary where campaign advertising will be focused on urban areas of the state, and the incentive to visit small rural counties will be reduced; and,

WHEREAS, We seek to avoid the added influence of money and special interests that come with a direct primary system, where candidates require larger budgets to run mass-market campaigns against multiple opponents; and,

WHEREAS, We believe that our current system allows more opportunities than the Count My Vote initiative for our citizens to exercise their voice through neighborhood elections (Caucus meetings), county and state conventions, primary election and general election

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Cache County Republican Party Central Committee fully supports the efforts of those involved to maintain our current system of neighborhood elections (caucus meetings) and pledges the resources of our party to assist in protecting our caucus convention system against the Count My Vote initiative.