



# Avoid caucus chaos

## Not a fan of Nevada's chaotic presidential

caucus? Join my club. But with so many choices this year, Nevada's third-in-the-nation, first-in-the-West contest means our collective votes could influence the rest of the country. Lucky for us caucus-haters, we don't have to attend the Feb. 22 caucus to have our voices heard.

Some people enjoy going to their neighborhood caucus, especially in a competitive year like this with lots of choices. They like the freewheeling caucus atmosphere, which allows people to "realign" if their candidate doesn't have enough support to be "viable." I've heard stories of well-organized caucuses where votes were calmly counted and people relished the debate. These are usually caucuses in smaller precincts held in facilities large enough to communicate easily, with well-trained volunteers who manage the process in a neutral, calm manner.

But I know far more people who had the same experience as me in the last

two contested caucuses, which were held in overcrowded rooms with no place to sit, not even for the elderly or disabled. Caucus leaders wore the T-shirt of their preferred candidate while they carelessly counted the sea of hands in the air on a freezing playground as "votes." There were no sound systems, no order and lots of angry people storming out saying they would never caucus again.

Whatever your experience, there is now another option.

Beginning this Saturday, you can early vote for four days, from Feb. 15-18, at various locations in the community. Learn more by checking out [bit.ly/37lvG9E](http://bit.ly/37lvG9E) for voting sites and days/hours they are operational in Washoe County. You will be asked to select a minimum of three candidates in order of your preference, and you may select up to five, to allow your early vote to be realigned if your preferred candidate does not have enough votes in your precinct—at least 15 percent—to be viable. Early votes will be counted

on caucus day in their home precincts, so your vote will be calculated then for viability purposes. And cross your fingers our vote-counting process is smoother than Iowa's.

Nevada has a closed primary/caucus system, so only members of a political party can select their candidates. If you're not already a Democrat, no problem. You can change your registration when you early vote or show up to caucus. You'll likely be cheered by the crowd for joining the team.

If you're a Republican and want to vote for a presidential candidate, you're out of luck. Last September, Nevada's Republican party changed its rules to avoid a 2020 caucus, saying they wanted to save resources since Trump would be the inevitable winner. Of course, this also effectively eliminated any competition, leaving the President free to continue to crow about his popularity, although he hardly needs an excuse to celebrate himself.

Instead, Nevada Republicans will hold a "preference poll" in Pahrump on caucus day, but only the party's executive committee of about 300 people can vote. And alternatives to Trump will only be considered if 20 executive committee members sign a nomination form, an unlikely prospect.

This decision also removes the opportunity to register new Republican voters at the caucus. The party already is substantially behind Democrats in statewide voter registration and is having a difficult time attracting younger members, women or people of color—but they seem oblivious to the impending crash in membership in the post-Trump era.

If you want to caucus for a Democrat, doors open at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 22, and the caucus starts at noon. Or skip the caucus and vote early; that's what I'm going to do. Who knows, if enough of us use the early vote option, maybe we can make the caucus irrelevant and have a presidential primary instead. □

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