



Choices made

The candidates have moved on, and

Nevada Democrats can breathe a huge sigh of relief that our caucus did not repeat the Iowa disaster, and we are not the laughingstock of the nation. Sure, there were some glitches when iPads malfunctioned or the early votes didn't arrive at a precinct on time. And there were errors in how the early vote was accounted for in the realignment process in some precincts. Then there was that embarrassing moment on the national stage when the party's tone-deaf use of non-disclosure agreements to muzzle key volunteers was exposed, making us look a bit amateurish. It's one thing to have people sign a confidentiality pledge to keep voter information private or to ask volunteers to refer media inquiries to a party spokesperson, but it's quite another to forbid any encounter with the media. It's unenforceable anyway, so why do it?

But the caucus circus is over for another four years, and—with any

luck—Nevada won't have another one. Voters demonstrated their intense dislike for the caucus process as more than 75,000 people, well over half of Democrats who participated in the caucus, chose to cast an early vote instead of attending the traditional neighborhood caucus.

During early voting, the volunteers were friendly and patient. They took the process very seriously as they carefully (and sometimes painfully and slowly) asked the same questions twice in order to log in each early voter in the Google spreadsheet and check their party registration.

At my early vote location at the University of Nevada, Reno, people in line passed the time amiably, chatting about the pros and cons of candidates without rancor or pressure as the line inched forward. A volunteer repeatedly canvassed the line for those with a disability or anyone needing to register or change their party affiliation in order

to participate in the Democratic caucus. People were annoyed with the wait but talked each other out of leaving, noting the line would probably get even longer as early vote locations decreased throughout the week.

We didn't know it at the time, but our wait was on the low end. On the first morning of early voting at UNR, it took a little over an hour to cast a ballot. A friend of mine voted the evening of the last day at the headquarters of the Washoe County Democratic Party, and he stood outside in the cold for more than two hours. I saw reports on social media that night of people waiting up to four hours at a neighborhood library. I admire the tenacity and determination of Democrats to choose their champion to run against Trump, but it shouldn't ever take that long to vote.

Attendance at the actual caucus was greatly diminished by all those early voters willing to stand in line, enabling the process to run much more smoothly

this year, although caucus math was still challenging, especially in larger precincts. Volunteers appeared to take it in stride for the most part, and there were far fewer complaints than in 2008 or 2016.

Nevada enjoys the attention we get from being the third state to vote in the presidential contest, allowing us to showcase our diversity, our unions and our interest in a wide variety of issues from health care to the environment. But it's time to retire the caucus and move to a regular primary, run by government officials instead of depending upon party volunteers, no matter how nice and friendly they are.

If we're unwilling to move our existing June primary to earlier in the year, let's cowboy up and agree to pay for a special presidential primary with fewer voting locations but with plenty of early voting opportunities and the usual 12 hours on primary day. It would be worth every penny. □

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