



## Why Delaware needs to Change Primaries to April

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.

**Expanding voter registration and participation has been a principal goal of the League since its founding. The LWV of Delaware bases its action on the LWVUS position.**

**The LWV of Delaware supports this bill:** House Bill 41 will move Delaware's state primary elections to coincide with its presidential primary elections beginning in 2020. Currently, Delaware holds its presidential primaries for both major parties on the fourth Tuesday in April. The state primaries currently are held the second Tuesday after the first Monday in September for statewide and local political offices.

### **Would changing the date of our primaries achieve the goal of increasing voter turnout?**

- Holding both primaries on the same date can focus attention and improve the dismal turnout that characterize most state primary elections.
- During the recent discussion concerning changing New York's primary dates, many new sources (New York Times, Huffington Post, and NBC News) cited having one primary date would increase voter turnout by reducing voter confusion. No new sources provided any statistical evidence of this.

### **Are there other reasons we should change the date of our primary elections?**

- This will help eliminate confusion many voters have about why there are two primaries.
- An April primary will provide a longer period of time for voters to inform themselves about the candidates' positions on important issues.
- By law, the Department of Elections must send out the ballots to military/overseas individuals 45 days prior to the November general election. By the time primary results are certified following our September primary, the department is under considerable pressure to send the General Election ballots out in that 45-day window. Moving the September primary to April will alleviate the serious time crunch that the Department faces each year.

### **Do other states have such late primaries?**

- *\*Two other states (Rhode Island and New Hampshire) hold primaries the same date as Delaware. Note that New York did hold its primary on the same date, but recently changed to April. No other state holds a primary later than Delaware.*

### **Do other states hold multiple primaries?**

- *\* 31% of the states hold Presidential primaries earlier than their state primaries. Note that most of these states have their Presidential primaries on March 1, or earlier.*

- *\* 44% of the state's hold Presidential primaries on the same day as state primaries. The remaining states hold caucuses to select Presidential delegates.*
- *\*Neighboring states have Presidential and state primaries on the same day. Pennsylvania and Maryland hold their primaries in late April, and New Jersey holds their primary in early June.*

**How will changing the primary affect our budget?**

- Eliminating one primary election cycle will save the State of Delaware over one million dollars in Presidential years.

We urge the Committee to release the bill and seek its enactment.

\*Data from the National Conference of State Legislators(NCSL)