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FAST FACTS:

✓ **An estimated 35,000 people** will participate in the 2004 Democratic National Convention, June 26-29, at the Boston Fleet Center. In order to transform the 9,600-seat sports arena to a convention hall, the Democratic National Convention Committee required the following supplies:

- 4,000 miles of cable
- 60 tons of steel
- 25,000 square feet of office space
- 120 temporary doors
- 360 ft. of scaffolding inside
- 50 tons of cooling equipment
- 2,000 chairs
- 3,000 linear feet of drywall
- 538 data lines
- 177 cable hookups
- 267 computers
- 793 telephone lines

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National Party Conventions Nominating a U.S. President and Vice-President

By Darlisa Crawford
Washington File Staff Writer



Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush and his wife Laura are engulfed in balloons at the close of the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia Thursday, Aug. 3, 2000. (AP Photo/Ed Reinke)

In late July the Democratic Party will gather in Boston to officially nominate Massachusetts Senator John Kerry as its presidential candidate and North Carolina Senator John Edwards as its vice-presidential nominee. In late August Republicans will hold a similar event in New York City to officially confirm incumbent George W. Bush as their candidate for president and Vice President Dick Cheney as the vice-presidential candidate. In addition to nominating presidential and vice-presidential candidates, the conventions will establish party positions in the platform. A political convention formally launches a presidential campaign and functions as a quadrennial party meeting. Traditionally, conventions served as a mechanism for

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Memorable Moments in Political Convention History: The Evolution of National Party Conventions

Since their beginnings in the early nineteenth century, election-year conventions have been the occasion for political parties to nominate their presidential and vice-presidential candidates, formulate their positions on the issues into a “platform,” and elect national committees to run the parties. In earlier times, when last-minute compromises were made

in “smoke-filled rooms,” real surprises could emerge from conventions. Today, according to Nelson Polsby, a distinguished political scientist at the University of California at Berkeley, “National party conventions...ratify what’s already been done in the process well before the convention. The role of the convention now is entirely advertising for the nominee

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building consensus among party factions and convention delegates determined who would become nominated candidates. After the election reforms of the 1970s and 1980s, the nominating conventions no longer entailed party leaders deliberating over candidates but involved delegates confirming their support of a candidate. Today, party conventions attempt to provide a definition of what the party represents and how it will support the electorate's preferences.

The federal government grants \$14.9 million to each of the two major parties for convention expenses. Campaign Finance Institute data concluded that both parties would spend a total of \$220 million on their conventions this year.

Representing each of the 50 states and the territories (the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands and Democrats Abroad from 12 different countries), 4,353 delegates and 611 alternates will attend the 2004 Democratic National Convention, June 26–29, in Boston, Massachusetts. More than eighty percent of the delegates were chosen from results of the vote from the 2004 Democratic presidential primaries and caucuses. Delegates are pledged to candidates in proportion to their success in the state primary or caucus. As candidates dropped out of the race and endorsed Kerry, they freed their delegates to vote their consciences. Because of the unity of the

Democratic Party, Kerry's nomination at the convention is likely to be unanimous. The remaining, unpledged, ex-officio delegates are governors, Democratic Senators, congressmen, and officials of the Democratic National Committee. The twelfth amendment to the U.S. constitution specifies that the president and vice-president must run for their respective offices as a team. In the past vice-presidential candidates were not always selected before the convention nor identified until party leaders chose the nominees at the convention. Over the last forty years, the presidential nominee and vice-presidential nominee of a party are increasingly identified before the convention.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe said, "We're going to have training sessions every day, all day, which is something different than we've ever done before. Everybody's going to leave this convention with an assignment: They have to do something to help John Kerry become president."

The key speakers at the convention have already been announced. Former President Bill Clinton, former Vice President Gore and former President Carter will speak on the opening night. Teresa Heinz Kerry, the wife of presumed nominee John Kerry, Senator Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, Christie Vilsack of Iowa and Governor Janet Napolitano of Arizona will deliver speeches on

the second night. Ron Reagan, the younger son of the late President Ronald Reagan, will address the convention about the importance of stem cell research, prompted in part by his late father's battle with Alzheimer's disease. The convention's last night traditionally features the presidential and vice-presidential acceptance speeches.

Representing 50 states and the territories (the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam and the Virgin Islands), 2,509 delegates and 2,344 alternate delegates will attend the 2004 Republican National Convention, August 30–September 2, at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Arizona Senator John McCain and New York's former mayor, Rudolph Giuliani will address the convention the first evening. First Lady Laura Bush, Secretary of Education Rob Paige, and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger deliver speeches on the second night. Mrs. Lynne Cheney, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Senator Zell Miller will speak on Wednesday evening. New York Governor George Pataki and President Bush will address the delegates on the final night of the convention.

Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie said, "I know that there's not much suspense at conventions anymore, but any time an individual becomes the nominee for president of the United States of one



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The U.S. Department of State is pleased to present its election coverage newsletter, **Election Focus 2004**. The newsletter will provide non-partisan coverage of the U.S. election process, featuring articles, interviews, public opinion polls, and other information on the presidential primaries, debates, conventions and campaign activities of the major presidential candidates.

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of the two major parties in this country, it's significant. And it should be treated as such."

The creation and adoption of the party platform occurs prior to the formal nominations of the presidential and vice-presidential candidate. Convention resolutions became known as a "platform" in 1852 when Democratic National Convention delegates approved a "platform of resolutions." The first Republican platform in 1856 called for the prohibition of the extension of slavery into the territories. Platform writing used to be the exclusive domain of party leaders at the national convention. Today, however, the platform writing process entails a Platform Committee and Policy Council that gathers data on a variety of topics from private organizations, Congress, universities, government and private citizens. According to the New York Times, "party platforms carry no authority beyond providing a kind of snapshot of the leadership's thinking and a distillation of its assessment of the public's mood." Academic studies have shown, however, that much of the party platform is enacted in the public policy of the party that wins the presidency.

Convention organizers will urge cable channels, newspapers, radio and the Internet to broadcast the conventions and bring their message to potential voters. The Democrats will feature a "talk show row," an area designated for radio interviews and the first convention "blog," an interactive online journal. In addition, Internet writers, known as bloggers, will join journalists and broadcasters in the designated press section for the first time. The Internet has become a new media source for campaign news and con-

vention coverage. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press surmised, "The Internet, a relatively minor source for campaign news in 2000, is now on par with such traditional outlets as public-television broadcasts, Sunday-morning news programs, and the weekly news magazines."

Although the media still play an important role in modern national conventions, broadcast networks have decreased campaign coverage from 100 prime-time hours in 1976 to 23 hours in 2000 due to the early selection of presidential nominees, eliminating much of the suspense of earlier conventions. Nielsen Media Research data reported that CNN secured approximately 1.5 million viewers each evening of the 2000 conventions live coverage while ABC attracted an estimated 5.7 million nightly.

Convention organizers are reaching out to younger audiences and potential voters this year. The Republican Party and the Democratic Party are sponsoring an essay competition with MTV for contestants 18 to 24 years old. The contest will feature two winners, one speaker at each convention. ■

The official Web site for the Republican Party's convention is www.gopconvention.com

The official Web site for the Democratic Party's convention is www.dems2004.org

"I know that there's not much suspense at conventions anymore, but any time an individual becomes the nominee for president of the United States of one of the two major parties in this country, it's significant. And it should be treated as such."

— Republican National Committee
Chairman Ed Gillespie

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Memorable Moments in Political Convention History: The Evolution of National Party Conventions

and the party.” Broad media coverage, though somewhat reduced in recent years, provides an ideal vehicle for each party to present its candidates and platform to the nation, and both parties will use the opportunity to energize their voters in the run-up to Election Day in November.

Political party conventions are a rich part of American political culture. Here are some interesting facts about their history.

The First National Party Convention

The Anti-Masonic Party held the first national party convention in 1831 in Baltimore, Maryland. It nominated William Wirt as its presidential candidate and Amos Ellmaker as its vice-presidential candidate. The other parties soon emulated the Anti-Masons in using conventions to nominate their presidential candidates. The Democratic Party, known as Republican Delegates from Several States, held its first convention in Baltimore in 1832 and re-nominated President Andrew Jackson. All the states, except Missouri, sent delegates to the convention for the purpose of choosing a vice-presidential candidate. The re-nomination of Jackson was taken for granted. The National Republicans also held their convention in Baltimore in 1832 and they nominated Henry Clay.

Television Campaigns and Conventions

Televised debates among the major candidates running for the presidency of the United States have been a key factor influencing public opinion in presidential races for decades. The airtime for the conventions and the debates is provided free of charge by the television networks as a public service. The first political convention to be televised was the Republican National Convention in June 1940 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when Wendell L. Willkie was nominated for president. The telecast was made by station W2XBS of the National Broadcasting Company, located in New York City. The first color telecast was the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida in August 1968; both NBC and the Columbia Broadcasting System broadcast the proceedings. The first televised campaign spots in a presidential campaign were aired in 1952. In a series of commercials, Dwight Eisenhower, the Republican candidate for president, answered questions from average citizens. These spots were titled "Eisenhower Answers America" and featured dramatic footage of "the Man from Abilene" interacting with voters. (Eisenhower was from Abilene, Kansas.)

Chicago, 1968

Probably the most disruptive national convention was the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, Illinois. The event was a public relations disaster for the Democratic Party, which was shaken by a series of shattering events that year. The bitter anti-Vietnam protests, the withdrawal of President Lyndon Johnson from the 1968 presidential race, the assassinations of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. in April, and of Senator Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.) in June on the night of his California primary victory

formed the backdrop to the Chicago convention. Outside the hall, thousands of anti-war protestors clashed with police. Inside, tempers exploded over issues as diverse as the selection of Vice President Hubert Humphrey as presidential nominee (he had not entered a single presidential primary), and the vocal demands of supporters of Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.), the anti-Vietnam war candidate. The McCarthyites' loud complaints generated sympathy among several delegations. Ironically, the anti-Vietnam War protest movement was partially responsible for the rapid increase in the percentage of first-time participants at national conventions. In 1972, for example, 83 percent of the Democratic delegates and 76 percent of the Republican delegates were attending their first convention that year.

Women and Minorities

Victoria Claflin Woodhull was the first woman presidential candidate. The National Radical Reformers, a group that seceded from the National Woman Suffrage Association, nominated her at a convention held in May 1872 at Apollo Hall, New York City. Ten years later, at the Republican National Convention in Cincinnati, Sara Andrews Spencer made a speech against the disfranchisement of women. She was the first woman to address a national political convention. Charlotte A. Bass was the first and only African American woman nominated to be vice-president. She was nominated by the Progressive Party at its convention in the International Amphitheatre in Chicago in 1952. New York Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman to run for the presidency at the 1972 Democratic nominating convention in Miami,

Florida. She assembled 151 delegate votes on the first ballot. Later, in 1988 and 1992 Dr. Leonora B. Fulani was the first woman and first African American to appear on the presidential ballot in all 50 states as a National Alliance Party candidate. She qualified for two million dollars in Federal matching funds. The first and only female vice-presidential candidate from a major political party was Geraldine Ferraro, who was chosen by Democratic presidential nominee Walter Mondale at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco in 1984.

Frederick Douglass was the first African American at a national convention (National Loyalists' Loyal Union Convention, Philadelphia, September 1866) nominated as a vice-presidential candidate. Douglass was also the first African American to be nominated for

president when he received one vote at the 1888 Republican National Convention. The first national political convention to propose African Americans for the offices of president and vice-president was at the Democratic convention in Chicago, 1968. The Reverend Channing Emery Phillips of Washington, D.C. received 67.5 of the 2,622 votes cast for the presidential nomination.

Same City Conventions

The first time that the major parties held their nominating conventions in the same city occurred in 1832 when the Democrats and the National Republicans (soon to be Whigs) held their conventions in Baltimore. Baltimore was also the location in 1844 for the Whigs (later the Republicans) and the Democrats. Since 1948, both parties have had their

conventions in the same city only three times: Philadelphia (1948), Chicago (1952), and Miami Beach (1972). Since then, the practice has been that each party chooses a different city. For the 2004 elections, the Democrats will hold their convention in July in Boston, one month before the Republicans meet in New York City. However, the most popular convention city is Chicago, which has hosted twenty-five national conventions (1860-1868, 1880-1896, 1904-1920, 1932, 1940-1944, 1952-1960, 1968, and 1996). ■

Campaign★Highlight

The Evolution of Political Conventions: An Interview with Nelson W. Polsby

In a recent interview, Nelson W. Polsby, Heller Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley spoke with Washington File staff writer Darlisa Crawford about how political conventions have evolved over the course of U.S. history and the role they play in the 2004 election. Polsby is a distinguished political scientist and the author or co-author of 14 books on American politics.

Q: What was the role of political conventions in the past and how has it changed? What is the relevance of political conventions today?

Polsby: It's changed a lot. National party conventions used to pick the nominee and now at most, they ratify what's already been done in the

process well before the convention. So the role of the convention now is entirely advertising for the nominee and for the party. It's an advertising medium. It is not a real decision making organization anymore.

Q: Have the mechanics of conventions—how candidates are selected and how platforms are presented—changed?

Polsby: Not much. No. The mechanics are roughly the same, but the significance is completely different now.

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Government.

Q: How has television changed political conventions over the years?

Polsby: The real coverage of television started in 1952. It's changed enormously, of course, because there used to be something to cover and there isn't anymore. So, the television networks are cutting way back on what they show, simply because they realize that there is no significance to what is going on except as advertising.

Q: World Wide Web coverage of conventions started in 2000. Will cyber-coverage have any impact on the political conventions in 2004?

Polsby: I assume not. No. I don't see how they could have an impact on the conventions. It is simply a different set of channels through which advertising can proceed. In that sense, it is very important. I think the Internet and that kind of stuff is more and more

important in mobilizing voters and raising money. So, the Internet is very important, but it won't have any impact on the convention. However, the convention may have some impact on it.

Q: According to Campaign Finance Institute analysis, private donations rose 208 percent in 2000 and are projected to rise another 297 percent in 2004. Can you please comment on the role of private donations in relation to political conventions?

Polsby: They don't have much to do with political conventions. They do have a lot to do with making it possible to spread the message around the respective candidates. The population of the country grows. Expenses go up all the time. Of course, you have to spend more money to stand still. Political money is being mobilized

somewhat more efficiently today than it was true a few years ago. Mainly, I think because of the Internet.

Q: What do you think political conventions will look like in the future?

Polsby: They have been on a declining curve for some time. I think that they will probably gently decline even more. They are just advertising. That is all they are. Of course, they might be interesting, if and only if, intra-party squabbling breaks out and some faction within a political party attempts to embarrass the nominee. That's interesting and reportable news and people will be on top of that, but other than that, I don't think the future holds much for national party conventions, unless they change the rules of nomination, which I think is unlikely in the near term. ■