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**\*\*\* For Immediate Release \*\*\***

## **Early Voting Periods Could Change Primary Campaign Schedule in 2008**

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PORTLAND, OR (November 3, 2006) – The length of a state’s voting period may shift its placement in the 2008 presidential primary calendar, reshaping the dynamics of national campaigns.

Over the last decade, the number of states that allow votes to be cast before Election Day without an excuse has increased rapidly. In addition to the 29 states requiring no excuse to vote absentee by mail, 16 states allow voters to cast an “absentee” ballot in-person with no excuse, and 15 states have “early voting” systems that essentially amount to the same thing.

Early voting changes the voting period – the length of time between the vote opening date and the vote closing date – taking it from a single day to several weeks or even months. And this has significant effects for campaign strategies. In 2008, the variability in states’ voting periods could create big waves for national campaigns aimed at a variety of voting markets, each with a different voting period in which to make vote choices.

### **Current Voting Periods**

This year, many voters are using convenience voting systems to cast their ballots days, weeks, or even months before the 7th of November. The map featured below shows the timeline of voting periods in the US for 2006. Beginning sometime between 50 and 22 days (four to seven weeks) before Election Day, voters in mainly Midwestern states and California began to cast ballots in-person.

In the third week before Election Day, voters in some Southern and other Western states began their trips to the polls. In the last two weeks, voters in Louisiana, Georgia, and (this week) Oklahoma have begun voting.

November 7th is the national Election Day, but many Americans have already voted. As Election Day as a single Tuesday of shared civic experience becomes anachronistic in the U.S., candidates and initiative campaigns are drastically adjusting their mobilization strategies, funding efforts, and advertisement blitzes.

### **Campaigning for Early Votes**

Instead of the traditional gradual build-up with a peak right before Election Day, candidates in states with early voting systems and high rates of absentee and mail-in ballots must now recalibrate, planning to hit their peaks sooner and maintain a high energy for longer. Similarly, the effect of releasing scurrilous information about an opponent is less certain when many constituents may already have voted.

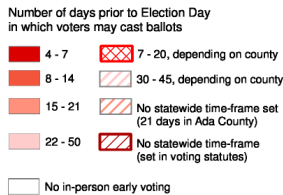
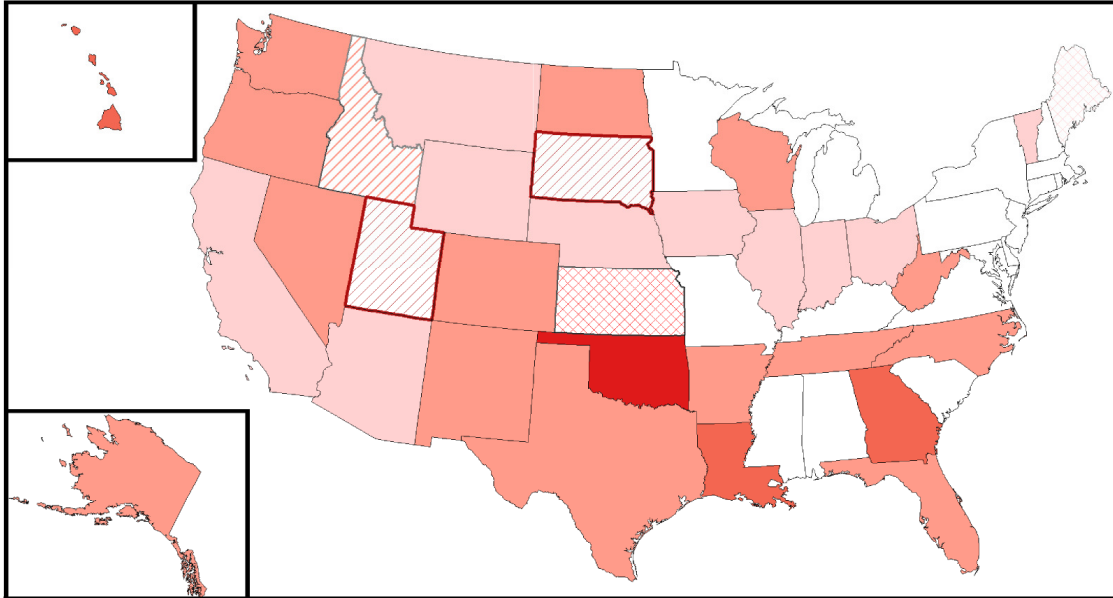
On the other hand, in a race where mobilizing the base is a key strategy for both parties, early voting may alleviate the conflict between appealing to the base voters and appealing to the undecided center. If parties can encourage their loyal supporters to cast their ballots early, last-minute efforts can target those still in the middle without worrying about alienating strong partisans.

### **California Moves Up**

Early voting's effect on campaigns may become an even more salient factor in the 2008 general election, particularly when it comes to primaries. For example, in California, where voters can also have "permanent absentee voter" status, early voting begins 29 days before Election Day. Even though California's presidential primary occurs in the beginning of March, its month-long voting period pushes it to the front of the line, just after the famous New Hampshire primary at the end of February.

# THE EARLY VOTING INFORMATION CENTER at Reed College

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## Early Voting Start Dates for the 2006 General Election by State

Early Voting Information Center at Reed College  
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Source: ESRI Data & Maps CD  
 Created in ArcGIS 9 using ArcMap

For more information, please see the Early Voting Information Center's website: <http://www.earlyvoting.net>, or contact us at [earlyvoting@reed.edu](mailto:earlyvoting@reed.edu).

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