

DELEGATE STRENGTH - AN OVERVIEW

BY CNN POLLING DIRECTOR KEATING HOLLAND

It's easy to tell when presidential candidates have won a majority of the delegates up for grabs, but a lot harder to calculate when they have reached an earlier and more important milestone -- the moment when the delegate math has made their ultimate victory inevitable. That's what CNN's "delegate strength" score is designed to do.

The delegate strength score is a way to quantify historical observations of how the primaries have progressed each election year in the modern primary era (starting in 1972). When the score is low, a candidate's ultimate nomination is far from inevitable, regardless of how big a lead he or she has. When the score reaches 100 (or higher), it means that every candidate who has reached the level of support in past races has been considered the inevitable nominee at that point.

That's not a prediction of what will ultimately occur next year -- if 2012 is a unique election for any reason, those historical trends may not apply to the coming primary season. But in past years the delegate strength calculation has been a good guide to identify the moment when nearly all political observers -- including most supporters of the losing candidates -- have agreed that the fight for the nomination is effectively over.

The 2008 contests are good illustrations of the way the delegate strength score has worked in past years:

- * On Super Tuesday, John McCain won the lion's share of the delegates, but only about half the total number of GOP delegates had been chosen. McCain's delegate strength score stood at 72 -- short of 100, which historically indicates inevitability, but getting there. Mike Huckabee stayed in the race hoping for lightning to strike, but it didn't. When McCain won all three primaries on February 12, his delegate strength soared to 121, and virtually everyone agreed that he would be the eventual nominee.

- * The Democratic race was a different story. Barack Obama did not win a majority of the Democratic delegates until June 3, but virtually all political observers agree that he effectively clinched the nomination on (or before) May 6, when Indiana and North Carolina held their primaries. Through the middle of February, Hillary Clinton had more delegates than Barack Obama -- but since so many delegates remained unchosen, her delegate strength score was only at 7. By the end of February, Obama had about 100 more delegates than Clinton, but his delegate strength score was only 15 -- a far cry from inevitability.

By the end of April, Obama's lead over Clinton had grown to about 160 delegates, which doesn't sound like a huge margin but his delegate strength score was up to 54. Why? The number of delegates yet to be chosen was dropping rapidly, making it harder for Clinton to make up lost ground. (At that point, Clinton needed to win about 60% of the remaining delegates.) Clinton had pinned her hopes on a big win in Indiana and a narrow victory in North Carolina. But Obama won North Carolina handily and nearly upset Clinton in Indiana. For most political observers, that was the sign that Obama would be the inevitable nominee. His delegate strength score and climbed to 98 immediately after Indiana and North Carolina, and it went up to 103 a few days later after endorsements from "superdelegates."

There are two basic components to calculating the delegate strength score -- how close the frontrunner is to winning a majority of the delegates, and the gap between the frontrunner's delegates and his or her closest rival. That gap is measured in terms of how many "outstanding delegates" remain. Finally, a factor is applied that essentially creates a range of scores from zero to 100, which makes the score a little easier to comprehend. For the math junkies, the calculation is:

$$\text{Delegate Strength} = (((C1-C2)/O) * (C1/L) * 333)$$

where...

C1 = Number of delegates the leading candidate has won

C2 = Number of delegates the candidate with the second-highest number of delegates has won

O = Number of delegates that have not been chosen

L = Number of delegates needed to win the nomination

What historical trends is the delegate strength score based on? The following tables will provide a guide to political junkies the data they need to double-check this calculation for themselves.

1972 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,507 delegates

The first primaries of the modern electoral era produced a lot of confusion in the early going, with four different candidates winning the first seven events. But eventually, a frontrunner (Muskie) was bounced out of competition, a major player (Wallace) was sidelined by an assassination attempt, and the Democrats' choice came down to a winner-take-all contest in California between George McGovern and Hubert Humphrey. In the spring. McGovern was not seen as the inevitable nominee despite key victories in states like Wisconsin, Massachusetts and Oregon, but when he won the Golden State, it was pretty much game over. The GOP had no contested primaries in 1972.

	MOST RECENT EVENTS	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Jan. 25	IA: Muskie 36%, McGovern 23%	Muskie: 18 McGovern: 10 2,970 REMAINING Uncomm: 18	MUSKIE: 0.01
Mar. 16	NH: Muskie 46%, McGovern 37% FL Wallace 42%, Humphrey 19%	Wallace: 75 Muskie: 23.5 McGovern: 14.5 2,852 REMAINING Others: 20 Uncomm. 31	WALLACE: 0.3
Mar. 28	IL: Muskie 63%, McCarthy 36%	Muskie: 97.5 Wallace 77 McGovern 39.5 2,658 REMAINING Others 21 Uncomm 123	MUSKIE: 0.2
April 6	WI: McGovern 30%, Wallace 22%	Muskie: 97.5 McGovern 92.5 Wallace 77 2,559 REMAINING Others 34 Uncomm 156	MUSKIE: 0.4
April 26	MA: McGovern 53%, Muskie 21% PA: Humphrey 35%, Wallace 21%	McGovern 232.5 Muskie 134.5 Humphrey 77 2,235 REMAINING Wallace 77 Other 14 Uncomm 156	MCGOVERN: 2.2
May 8	IN: Humphrey 47%, Wallace 41% OH: Humphrey 41%, McGovern 40% TN: Wallace 68%, Humphrey 16% NC: Wallace 50%, Sanford 37%	McGovern 312.5 Humphrey 223 Wallace 206 1,898 REMAINING Others: 186.5 Uncomm 190	MCGOVERN: 3.3
May 25	MD: Wallace 39%, Humphrey 27% MI: Wallace 51%, McGovern 27% OR: McGovern 50%, Wallace 20% RI: McGovern 41%, Wallace 15%	McGovern 505.3 Humphrey 294.3 Wallace 323 1,306 REMAINING Others 272 Uncomm 314.5	MCGOVERN: 18.0
June 8	CA: McGovern 44%, Humphrey 39% NM McGovern 33%, Wallace 29%	McGovern 930.3 Wallace 333 Humphrey 318.9 714 REMAINING Others 272.6 Uncomm 447.2	MCGOVERN: 175.9

1976 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,503 delegates

Despite his astounding early-season victories in both Iowa and New Hampshire and some big-state wins in Florida and Illinois, Jimmy Carter was considered vulnerable for most of the primary season. Even after he had won 11 primaries and lost only one, two Democrats -- California Governor Jerry Brown and Idaho Senator Frank Church -- mounted late-season challenges against him (the last time anyone has tried that strategy), and Arizona Congressman Morris Udall continued to hang in there despite a series of close losses. It wasn't until late May, when the stock of outstanding delegates had dwindled away, that the party began to treat Carter as the inevitable nominee.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 26	IA: Carter 28%, Bayh 13% NH Carter 28%, Udall 23%	Carter 17 Wallace 9 Udall 4 Others 7 Uncomm 5 2,963 REMAINING	CARTER: 0.01
March 4	MA: Jackson 22%, Udall 18% VT: Carter 42%, Shriver 28%	Carter 36 Jackson 34 Wallace 32 Udall 22 Others 21 Uncomm 5 2,855 REMAINING	CARTER: 0.01
March 11	FL: Carter 35%, Wallace 31%	Carter 70 Wallace 58 Jackson 56 Udall 24 Others 20 Uncomm 21 2,756 REMAINING	CARTER: 0.1
March 25	IL: Carter 48%, Wallace 28% NC Carter 54%, Wallace 35%	Carter 167 Wallace 86 Jackson 55 Udall 23 Others 109 Uncomm 50 2,515 REMAINING	CARTER: 1.2
April 26	WI: Carter 37%, Udall 36% NY: Jackson 38%, Udall 26% PA: Carter 37%, Jackson 25%	Carter 268 Jackson 183 Udall 150 Wallace 105 Others 109 Uncomm 179 2,011 REMAINING	CARTER: 2.5
May 13	GA: Carter 83% IN: Carter 68%, Wallace 15%	Carter 594 Jackson 204 Udall 202.5 Wallace 143 Others 195 Uncomm 329.5 1,337 REMAINING	CARTER: 38.4
May 23	MD: Brown 48%, Carter 37% MI: Carter 43.4%, Udall 43.1%	Carter 741 Udall 292.5 Jackson 246 Wallace 145 Others 200 Uncomm 363.5 1,017 REMAINING	CARTER: 72.4

May 27	AR: Carter 63% ID: Church 79% KY: Carter 59%, Wallace 17% NV: Brown 53%, Carter 23% OR: Church 34%, Carter 27% TN: Carter 78%	Carter 880 Udall 295.5 Jackson 248 Wallace 163 Other 186.5 Uncomm 398.5 833.5 REMAINING	CARTER:136.8
June 3	MT: Church 59%, Carter 25% RI: Carter 30%, Church 27% SD: Carter 41%, Udall 33%	Carter 905 Udall 307.5 Jackson 249 Wallace 169 Others 278 Uncomm 392.5 704 REMAINING	CARTER:170.2
June 10	CA: Brown 59%, Carter 20% NJ: Carter 58%, Church 14% OH: Carter 52%, Udall 21%	Carter 1,179 Udall 329.5 Jackson 234 Others 438.5 Uncomm 689 135 REMAINING	CARTER: 1,644

1976 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,130 delegates

The primaries of the 1970s and 1980s were significantly more "back-loaded" than in recent years, making it difficult for candidates to get enough traction to mathematically eliminate their opponents, regardless of other circumstances. Case in point: the 1976 GOP contest between Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan -- the first two-candidate race of the modern era. Despite a string of six consecutive (and surprising) victories for Ford early on, there were far too many unallocated delegates to write off Reagan's chances. And when Reagan responded with several victories of his own, starting in North Carolina, he could not knock Ford out of the race despite taking a brief lead in delegates in May. The final primary showdowns in June -- in which Ford matched a Reagan victory in California with strong showings in Ohio and New Jersey, finally gave the party a presumptive nominee. Although the Reagan forces scrapped for every delegate in the post-primary season, Ford dealt from a position of strength due to his delegate lead and his strong finish in the final primaries. True, the 1976 GOP conclave was the last convention (to date) where floor votes mattered, but all political observers agree that Ford had essentially locked up the nomination well before the convention was gavelled to order, reducing the Reagan camp's options to a series of Hail-Mary passes (such as his pre-emptive naming of a running mate, Pennsylvania Senator Richard Schweiker).

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 26	IA: Ford 45%, Reagan 43% N.H. Ford 49%, Reagan 48%	Ford 17 Reagan 4 2,198 REMAINING Uncomm 39	FORD: 0.03
March 4	MA: Ford 61%, Reagan 34% VT: Ford 84%	Ford 53 Reagan 18 2,149 REMAINING Uncomm 38	FORD: 0.3
March 11	FL: Ford 53%, Reagan 47%	Ford 96 Reagan 41 2,083 REMAINING Uncomm 38	FORD: 0.8
March 25	IL: Ford 59%, Reagan 40% NC: Reagan 52%, Ford 46%	Ford 206 Reagan 81 1,919 REMAINING Uncomm 52	FORD: 4.0
April 26	WI: Ford 55%, Reagan 44%	Ford 290 Reagan 135 1,641 REMAINING Uncomm 192	FORD: 8.1
May 13	GA: Reagan 68%, Ford 32% IN: Reagan 51%, Ford 49% NE: Reagan 55%, Ford 45% WV: Ford 57%, Reagan 43%	Reagan 417 Ford 323 1,137 REMAINING Uncomm 381	REAGAN: 7.9
May 23	MD: Ford 58%, Reagan 42% MI: Ford 65%, Reagan 34%	Ford 561 Reagan 540 877 REMAINING Uncomm 280	FORD: 4.0
May 27	AR: Reagan 63%, Ford 35% ID: Reagan 74%, Ford 23% KY: Ford 51%, Reagan 47% NV: Reagan 66%, Ford 29% OR: Ford 50%, Reagan 46% TN: Ford 50%, Reagan 49%	Ford 777 Reagan 644 696 REMAINING Uncomm 141	FORD: 43.8
June 3	MT: Reagan 63%, Ford 35% RI: Ford 65%, Reagan 31% SD: Reagan 51%, Ford 44%	Ford 799 Reagan 653 654 REMAINING Uncomm 152	FORD: 52.6
June 10	CA: Reagan 66%, Ford 35% OH: Ford 55%, Reagan 45%	Ford 965 Reagan 862 282 REMAINING Uncomm 149	FORD: 104.0

1980 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,657 delegates

Another two-candidate race, another contentious convention -- but this one did not go down to the wire. By early May, the delegate count just didn't add up in Ted Kennedy's favor. March and April saw Carter and Kennedy trade victories, but a string of Carter victories in early May convinced all but the Kennedy faithful that the incumbent would again be the Democratic nominee. The math backed that conclusion: Carter's three-state sweep on May 7 left Kennedy the impossible task of capturing more than three-quarters of the remaining delegates. Much like the Reagan forces in 1976, Kennedy's campaign was left with little except procedural challenges to pin their hopes on when the convention rolled around.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
March 8	IA: Carter 59%, Kennedy 31% NH: Carter 47%, Kennedy 37% MA: Kennedy 65%, Carter 29% VT: Carter 73%, Kennedy 26%	Kennedy 113 Carter 89 3,110 REMAINING	KENNEDY: 0.1
March 12	AL: Carter 82%, Kennedy 13% FL: Carter 61%, Kennedy 23% GA: Carter 88%	Carter 283 Kennedy 145 Uncomm 1 2,883 REMAINING	CARTER: 2.7
March 19	IL: Carter 65%, Kennedy 30%	Carter 478.3 Kennedy 182.1 Uncomm 2.6 2,649 REMAINING	CARTER: 10.8
March 28	CT: Kennedy 47%, Carter 42% NY: Kennedy 59%, Carter 41%	Carter 746 Kennedy 385 Uncomm 29.6 2,151 REMAINING	CARTER: 25.2
April 2	KS: Carter 57%, Kennedy 32% WI: Carter 56%, Kennedy 30%	Carter 852 Kennedy 427 Uncomm 29.6 2,003 REMAINING	CARTER: 36.4
April 22	PA: Kennedy 46%, Carter 45%	Carter 947.3 Kennedy 475.1 Uncomm 29.6 1,860 REMAINING	CARTER: 48.4
May 5	TX: Carter 56%, Kennedy 23%	Carter 1,147 Kennedy 657 Uncomm 29.6 1,478 REMAINING	CARTER: 76.5
May 7	IN: Carter 68%, Kennedy 32% NC: Carter 70%, Kennedy 18% TN: Carter 75%, Kennedy 18%	Carter 1,306 Kennedy 721 Uncomm 29.6 1,255 REMAINING	CARTER: 122.4
May 14	MD: Carter 48%, Kennedy 38% NE: Carter 47%, Kennedy 38%	Carter: 1,365 Kennedy 770 Uncomm 29.6 1,147 REMAINING	CARTER: 142.3
May 21	OR: Carter 57%, Kennedy 31%	Carter: 1,391 Kennedy 782 Uncomm 56.2 1,083 REMAINING	CARTER: 157.3
June 3	AR: Carter 60%, Kennedy 18% ID: Carter 62%, Kennedy 22% KY: Carter 67%, Kennedy 23% NV: Carter 38%, Kennedy 29%	Carter: 1,583.6 Kennedy 844.8 Uncomm: 83.6 800 REMAINING	CARTER: 294.1
June 5	CA: Kennedy 45%, Carter 38% MT: Carter 52%, Kennedy 37% NJ: Kennedy 56%, Carter 38% NM: Kennedy 46%, Carter 42% OH: Carter 51%, Kennedy 44% RI: Kennedy 68%, Carter 26% SD: Kennedy 49%, Carter 45% WV: Carter 62%, Kennedy 38%	Carter 1,948.6 Kennedy 1,221.8 Uncomm 94.6 47 REMAINING	CARTER: 6,059

1980 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 996 delegates

As in previous primary seasons, the frontrunner in the 1980 Republican contests built up a nice cushion of delegates over his challenger by April, but it was not until May that the math made his victory inevitable. In April, Ronald Reagan had more than four times as many delegates as George H. Bush and seemed all but assured of the nomination. But Bush refused to throw in the towel because Reagan at that point still needed roughly half of the remaining delegates to win the nomination, and had not cracked the 50% mark in a competitive primary in more than a month. After three convincing victories on May 8, however, there was no question in anyone's mind who the GOP nominee would be.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 27	IA: Bush 32%, Reagan 30% NH: Reagan 50%, Bush 23%	Reagan 21 Bush 20 Others 9 1,935 REMAINING Uncomm 5	REAGAN: 0.0
March 8	MA: Bush 31%, Reagan 30% VT: Reagan 30%, Anderson 29%	Reagan 62 Bush 36 Others 23 1,862 REMAINING Uncomm 7	REAGAN: 0.3
March 12	SC: Reagan 55%, Connally 30% AL: Reagan 70%, Bush 26% FL: Reagan 56%, Bush 30% GA: Reagan 73%, Bush 13%	Reagan 167 Bush 45 Others 23 1,748 REMAINING Uncomm 7	REAGAN: 3.9
March 19	IL: Reagan 48%, Anderson 37%	Reagan 206 Bush 47 Others 43 1,660 REMAINING Uncomm 34	REAGAN: 6.6
March 28	CT: Bush 39%, Reagan 34%	Reagan 295 Bush 68 Others 49 1,508 REMAINING Uncomm 70	REAGAN: 14.9
April 2	KS: Reagan 63%, Anderson 18% WI: Reagan 40%, Bush 30%	Reagan 343 Bush 72 Others 60 1,445 REMAINING Uncomm 70	REAGAN: 21.5
April 22	PA: Bush 51%, Reagan 43%	Reagan 411 Bush 96 Others 57 1,344 REMAINING Uncomm 82	REAGAN: 32.2
May 6	TX: Reagan 51%, Bush 47%	Reagan 636 Bush 138 Others 57 1,077 REMAINING Uncomm 82	REAGAN: 98.4
May 8	IN: Reagan 74%, Bush 16% NC: Reagan 67%, Bush 22% TN: Reagan 74%, Bush 18%	Reagan 744 Bush 170 Others 57 937 REMAINING Uncomm 82	REAGAN: 152.5
May 14	MD: Reagan 48%, Bush 41% NE: Reagan 76%, Bush 15%	Reagan 821 Bush 186 Others 57 844 REMAINING Uncomm 82	REAGAN: 206.7
May 21	MI: Bush 58%, Reagan 32% OR: Reagan 54%, Bush 35%	Reagan 888 Bush 256 Others 56 678 REMAINING	REAGAN: 277.0
June 3	ID: Reagan 83% KY: Reagan 82% NV: Reagan 83%	Reagan 1,068 Bush 199 Others 23 554 REMAINING	REAGAN: 560.7

1984 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,962 delegates

Walter Mondale stumbled early and often in 1984 but Gary Hart could never land a knock-out punch. Late-season victories by Jesse Jackson helped keep Hart's delegate totals low, and by mid-May the Colorado Senator needed to win 130% of the remaining delegates (an impossibility, of course) in order to get the nomination. Mondale, meanwhile, kept steadily adding to his delegate score and by May most observers bowed to the inevitability of the math and -- unlike March or April -- began to treat Mondale as the presumptive nominee.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 28	IA: Mondale 45%, Hart 15%	Mondale 18 Hart 7 Jackson 7 3,809 REMAINING Others 35 Uncomm 47	MONDALE: 0.01
March 11	NH: Hart 37%, Mondale 28% VT: Hart 70%, Mondale 20%	Hart 211 Mondale 126 Jackson 10 3,492 REMAINING Others 17 Uncomm 67	HART: 0.5
March 15	AL: Mondale 35%, Glenn 21% FL: Hart 39%, Mondale 33% GA: Mondale 31%, Hart 27% MA: Hart 39%, Mondale 26% RI: Hart 45%, Mondale 35%	Mondale 312 Hart 207 Jackson 37 3,214 REMAINING Others 51 Uncomm 102	MONDALE: 1.7
March 22	IL: Mondale 40%, Hart 35%	Mondale 640 Hart 358 Jackson 72 2,547 REMAINING Others 35 Uncomm 271	MONDALE: 12.0
April 7	NY: Mondale 45%, Hart 27% WI: Hart 44%, Mondale 41%	Mondale 900 Hart 520 Jackson 147 1,966 REMAINING Others 35 Uncomm 355	MONDALE: 29.5
April 12	PA: Mondale 45%, Hart 33%	Mondale 1,047 Hart 571 Jackson 152 1,764 REMAINING Others 58 Uncomm 331	MONDALE: 48.0
May 15	DC Jackson 67%, Mondale 26% TN: Mondale 41%, Hart 29% LA: Jackson 43%, Hart 25% IN Hart 42%, Mondale 41% MD: Mondale 43%, Jackson 26% NC Mondale 36%, Hart 30% OH: Hart 42%, Mondale 40%	Mondale 1,532 Hart 886 Jackson 305 812 REMAINING Others 58 Uncomm 330	MONDALE: 206.9
May 17	ID: Hart 58%, Mondale 30% NE: Hart 58%, Mondale 27% OR: Hart 59%, Mondale 28%	Mondale 1,564 Hart 941 Jackson 291 715 REMAINING Others 58 Uncomm 354	MONDALE: 231.4
June 7	CA: Hart 39%, Mondale 35% NJ: Mondale 45%, Hart 30% NM: Hart 51%, Mondale 39% SD: Hart 51%, Mondale 39% WV: Mondale 54%, Hart 37%	Mondale 1,969 Hart 1,212 Jackson 367 98 REMAINING Others 58 Uncomm 219	MONDALE: 2,582

1988 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 2,082 delegates

This was the first year that a real "Super Tuesday" was held (although the term had been used in previous years), but the result was a muddle rather than the quick coronation of a Democratic nominee. Michael Dukakis' successful strategy was to outlast his opponents as the pool of remaining delegates dwindled. Throughout March, it looked like Al Gore or Jesse Jackson could overtake Dukakis' consistent (if sometimes tiny) delegate lead. But Jackson lost steam after the primaries moved away from states with large black populations, and a third-place finish in New York in late April buried Gore's chances. It took Dukakis a few more victories to convince skeptics that he really was the winner, but resounding victories in Pennsylvania and three states on May 5 put that skepticism to bed.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
March 3	IA: Gephardt 27%, Simon 24% NH: Dukakis 36%, Gephardt 20% SD: Gephardt 43%, Dukakis 31% VT: Dukakis 56%, Jackson 26%	Dukakis 63.5 Gephardt 47 3,713 REMAINING Simon 35.5 Jackson 27.6	DUKAKIS: 0.1
March 10	AL: Jackson 44%, Gore 37% AR: Gore 37%, Dukakis 19% FL: Dukakis 41%, Jackson 20% GA: Jackson 40%, Gore 33% KY: Gore 46%, Dukakis 19% LA: Jackson 36%, Gore 28% MA: Dukakis 59%, Jackson 19% MD: Dukakis 46%, Jackson 29% MO: Gephardt 58%, Jackson 21% MS: Jackson 45%, Gore 34% NC: Gore 35%, Jackson 33% OK: Gore 41%, Gephardt 21% RI: Dukakis 69%, Jackson 15% TN: Gore 72%, Jackson 21% TX: Dukakis 33%, Jackson 25% VA: Jackson 45%, Gore 22%	Dukakis 466 Jackson 389 2,513 REMAINING Gore 344 Gephardt 159	DUKAKIS:2.3
March 30	IL: Simon 42%, Jackson 32% CT: Dukakis 58%, Jackson 28%	Dukakis 607 Jackson 598 1,955 REMAINING Gore 369	DUKAKIS: 0.5
April 20	WI: Dukakis 48%, Jackson 28% NY: Dukakis 51%, Jackson 37%	Dukakis 900 Jackson 769 1,261 REMAINING Gore 419	DUKAKIS: 15.0
April 27	PA: Dukakis 67%, Jackson 27%	Dukakis 1,129 Jackson 780 1,059 REMAINING Gore 410	DUKAKIS: 59.5
May 5	DC: Jackson 80%, Dukakis 18% IN: Dukakis 70%, Jackson 23% OH: Dukakis 63%, Jackson 27%	Dukakis 1,320 Jackson 854 821 REMAINING Gore 408	DUKAKIS: 120.0
May 18	NE: Dukakis 63%, Jackson 26% WV: Dukakis 75%, Jackson 14% OR: Dukakis 57%, Jackson 38%	Dukakis 1,585 Jackson 924 590 REMAINING Gore 400	DUKAKIS: 284.2
June 8	ID: Dukakis 73%, Jackson 16% CA: Dukakis 61%, Jackson 35% MT: Dukakis 69%, Jackson 22% NJ: Dukakis 63%, Jackson 33% NM: Dukakis 61%, Jackson 28%	Dukakis 2,167 Jackson 1,054 37 REMAINING Gore 399	DUKAKIS: 10,424

1988 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,139 delegates

On the Republican side, Super Tuesday worked as planned, with George Bush the elder running the table on March 8 and piling up a more than four-to-one advantage over Bob Dole in the delegate count. For the GOP in 1988, the delegate math was not driven by the number of delegates remaining but instead the huge lead that Bush had piled up, allowing him to clinch the nomination earlier than any previous candidate in the modern primary era. Even after Super Tuesday, some observers were not convinced (Dole, for example, did not drop out until March 29), but a solid Bush win in Illinois left no doubt. After Dole withdrew, news organizations simply stopped counting delegates.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
March 3	IA: Dole 37%, Robertson 25% NH: Bush 38%, Dole 28% SD: Dole 55%, Robertson 20% VT: Bush 49%, Dole 39%	Bush 85 Dole 61 2,077 REMAINING Kemp 35 Robertson 8	BUSH: 0.3
March 10	SC: Bush 49%, Dole 21% AL: Bush 65%, Dole 16% AR: Bush 47%, Dole 26% FL: Bush 62%, Dole 21% GA: Bush 54%, Dole 24% KY: Bush 59%, Dole 23% LA: Bush 59%, Robertson 18% MA: Bush 59%, Dole 26% MD: Bush 53%, Dole 33% MO: Bush 42%, Dole 41% MS: Bush 66%, Dole 17% NC: Bush 45%, Dole 39% OK: Bush 37%, Dole 35% RI: Bush 65%, Dole 23% TN: Bush 60%, Dole 22% TX: Bush 64%, Robertson 15% VA: Bush 54%, Dole 26%	Bush 700 Dole 164 1,304 REMAINING Robertson 37	BUSH: 84.2
March 16	IL: Bush 55%, Dole 36%	Bush 769 Dole 177 1,222 REMAINING Robertson 37	BUSH: 109.0
March 30	CT: Bush 71%, Dole 20%	Bush 837 Dole 177 996 REMAINING Robertson 37	BUSH: 162.2

1992 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 2,102 delegates

Bill Clinton made a slow, steady march to the nomination and his delegate strength numbers show it -- from 15.0 after Super Tuesday to 34.9 in mid March, 43.6 on April 1 and 89.6 a week later. Winning all the states outside of new England on Super Tuesday turned Clinton from the "Comeback Kid" into a legitimate frontrunner but it didn't clinch the nomination for him. He got closer after convincing wins in two big Midwestern states, Michigan and Illinois, and after a hiccup in Connecticut, inched even closer after convincing wins in New York and Wisconsin. Most observers climbed on the Clinton bandwagon at that point, but it took a big win in Pennsylvania to erase all doubt.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 25	IA: Harkin 77% NH: Tsongas 33%, Clinton 25%	Clinton 95 Harkin 68 3,761 REMAINING Tsongas 20	CLINTON: 0.3
March 4	SD: Kerrey 40%, Harkin 25% CO: Brown 29%, Clinton 27% GA: Clinton 57%, Tsongas 24% MD: Tsongas 41%, Clinton 34%	Clinton 198 Tsongas 110 3,560 REMAINING Harkin 79	CLINTON: 0.8
March 11	SC: Clinton 63%, Tsongas 18% FL: Clinton 51%, Tsongas 35% LA: Clinton 70%, Tsongas 11% MA: Tsongas 66%, Brown 15% MS: Clinton 73%, Brown 10% OK: Clinton 71%, Brown 17% RI: Tsongas 53%, Clinton 21% TN: Clinton 67%, Tsongas 19% TX: Clinton 66%, Tsongas 19%	Clinton 707 Tsongas 347 2,687 REMAINING Brown 81 Harkin 77	CLINTON: 15.0
March 18	IL: Clinton 52%, Tsongas 26% MI: Clinton 52%, Tsongas 26%	Clinton 944 Tsongas 432 2,197 REMAINING Brown 130	CLINTON: 34.9
April 1	CT: Brown 37%, Clinton 36%	Clinton 1,018 Tsongas 439 2,140 REMAINING Brown 159	CLINTON: 43.6
April 8	KS: Clinton 51%, Brown 13% MN: Clinton 31%, Brown 30% NY: Clinton 41%, Brown 26% WI: Clinton 37%, Brown 35%	Clinton 1,262 Tsongas 539 1,613 REMAINING Brown 266	CLINTON: 89.6
April 29	PA: Clinton 57%, Brown 26%	Clinton 1,499 Tsongas 535 1,228 REMAINING Brown 321	CLINTON: 186.6
May 6	DC: Clinton 74%, Brown 7% IN: Clinton 63%, Brown 22% NC: Clinton 64%, Brown 10%	Clinton 1,736 Tsongas 537 1,028 REMAINING Brown 343	CLINTON: 320.6
May 20	OR: Clinton 45%, Brown 31% WA: Clinton 42%, Brown 23%	Clinton 1,856 Tsongas 551 796 REMAINING Brown 394	CLINTON: 481.4
May 27	AR: Clinton 68%, Brown 11% ID: Clinton 49%, Brown 17% KY: Clinton 56%, Brown 8%	Clinton 2,042 Tsongas 550 615 REMAINING Brown 394	CLINTON: 784.5

1992 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,106 delegates

Despite making a big splash in New Hampshire, Pat Buchanan's candidacy never really took off. He didn't win a single primary and amassed fewer than 100 delegates. The elder George Bush got halfway to the nomination by running the table on Super Tuesday, but Buchanan had no intention of dropping out of the race (in fact, he never did). But two crushing blows in Illinois and Michigan made Bush's victory seem inevitable, and even hard-core Buchanan supporters admitted the jig was up by April.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 25	NH: Bush 53%, Buchanan 37%	Bush 14 Buchanan 9 2,187 REMAINING	BUSH: 0.01
March 4	CO: Bush 68%, Buchanan 30% GA: Bush 64%, Buchanan 36% MD: Bush 70%, Buchanan 30%	Bush 140 Buchanan 20 2,045 REMAINING	BUSH: 2.5
March 11	SC: Bush 67%, Buchanan 26% FL: Bush 68%, Buchanan 32% LA: Bush 62%, Buchanan 27% MA: Bush 66%, Buchanan 28% MS: Bush 72%, Buchanan 17% OK: Bush 70%, Buchanan 27% RI: Bush 63%, Buchanan 32% TN: Bush 73%, Buchanan 22% TX: Bush 70%, Buchanan 24%	Bush 560 Buchanan 46 1,598 REMAINING	BUSH: 54.3
March 18	IL: Bush 76%, Buchanan 23% MI: Bush 67%, Buchanan 25%	Bush 711 Buchanan 46 1,447 REMAINING	BUSH: 98.5
April 1	CT: Bush 67%, Buchanan 22%	Bush 762 Buchanan 46 1,396 REMAINING	BUSH: 117.8
April 18	KS: Bush 62%, Buchanan 15% MN: Bush 64%, Buchanan 24% WI: Bush 76%, Buchanan 16%	Bush 963 Buchanan 54 1,185 REMAINING	BUSH: 222.6
April 29	PA: Bush 77%, Buchanan 23%	Bush 1,092 Buchanan 56 1,059 REMAINING	BUSH: 321.9
May 6	DC: Bush 82%, Buchanan 19% IN: Bush 80%, Buchanan 20% NC: Bush 71%, Buchanan 20%	Bush 1,211 Buchanan 68 928 REMAINING	BUSH: 449.5
May 20	NE: Bush 81%, Buchanan 14% WV: Bush 81%, Buchanan 15% OR: Bush 67%, Buchanan 19% WA: Bush 67%, Buchanan 10%	Bush 1,350 Buchanan 74 783 REMAINING	BUSH: 663.0
May 27	AR: Bush 87%, Buchanan 13% ID: Bush 64%, Buchanan 13% KY: Bush 75%, Buchanan 26%	Bush 1,478 Buchanan 78 623 REMAINING	BUSH: 1000.9

1996 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 996 delegates

Bob Dole stumbled out of the gate, narrowly losing New Hampshire to Pat Buchanan and two other early contests to Steve Forbes, but Dole won in South Carolina on March 2 and went eight-for-eight on "Junior Tuesday" three days later. That was not enough to knock Buchanan or Forbes out of the race, and it only gave Dole about a third of the delegates needed for the nomination. All that changed the following week on Super Tuesday, when Dole won virtually all the delegates at stake and erased any doubt that he would be the eventual nominee.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 20	IA: Dole 26%, Buchanan 23%, NH: Buchanan 27%, Dole 26%	Buchanan 21 1,949 REMAINING Dole 8	BUCHANAN 0.02
March 7	DE: Forbes 33%, Dole 27% AZ: Forbes 33%, Dole 30% ND: Dole 42%, Forbes 20% SD: Dole 45%, Buchanan 29% SC: Dole 45%, Buchanan 29% CO: Dole 44%, Buchanan 22% CT: Dole 54%, Forbes 20% GA: Dole 41%, Buchanan 29% MA: Dole 48%, Buchanan 25% MD: Dole 53%, Buchanan 21% ME: Dole 46%, Buchanan 25% RI: Dole 64%, Alexander 19% VT: Dole 40%, Buchanan 17%	Dole 361 Forbes 67 Buchanan 45 1,498 REMAINING	DOLE 23.7
March 13	FL: Dole 57%, Forbes 20% LA: Dole 48%, Buchanan 33% MS: Dole 60%, Buchanan 26% OK: Dole, 59%, Buchanan 22% OR: Dole 51%, Buchanan 22% TN: Dole 51%, Buchanan 25% TX: Dole 56%, Buchanan 21%	Dole 710 Forbes 70 Buchanan 55 1,136 REMAINING	DOLE 133.7
March 20	IL: Dole 65%, Buchanan 23% MI: Dole, 51%, Buchanan 34% OH: Dole, 67%, Buchanan 22%	Dole 933 Buchanan 80 913 REMAINING	DOLE 291.7

2000 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 2,170 delegates

On the Democratic side, New Hampshire put a scare into Al Gore but he beat Bill Bradley by a whisker and never looked back. Bradley didn't win a single state on Super Tuesday, March 7, and dropped out two days later. In the GOP race, Super Tuesday was also the effective end of the primary season. George W. Bush did not dominate John McCain as effectively as Gore had dominated Bradley, but Bush's victories in big winner-take-all states like California made the Republican nomination seem a foregone conclusion. McCain bowed to the inevitable and dropped out of the race on March 9, leaving only Alan Keyes to carry on a quixotic fight against Bush.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 2	IA: Gore 63%, Bradley 35% NH: Gore 50%, Bradley 46%	Gore 42 Bradley 27 4,270 REMAINING	GORE: 0.02
March 9	CA: Gore 81%, Bradley 18% CT: Gore 55%, Bradley 42% GA: Gore 84%, Bradley 16% MA: Gore 59%, Bradley 37% MD: Gore 67%, Bradley 29% ME: Gore 54%, Bradley 41% MO: Gore 65%, Bradley 34% NY: Gore 66%, Bradley 34% OH: Gore 74%, Bradley 25% RI: Gore 57%, Bradley 41% VT: Gore 54%, Bradley 44%	Gore 1,593 Bradley: 435 2,311 REMAINING	GORE 123

2000 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,034 delegates

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Feb. 2	IA: Bush 41%, Forbes 31% NH: McCain 49%, Bush 30%	McCain 9 Bush 6 2,049 REMAINING Forbes 2	MCCAIN 0.01
Feb. 23	DE: Bush 51%, McCain 25% SC: Bush 53%, McCain 42% AZ: McCain 60%, Bush 36% MI: McCain 51%, Bush 43%	Bush 105 McCain 95 1,864 REMAINING	BUSH 0.2
March 9	CA: Bush 61%, McCain 35% CT: McCain 49%, Bush 46% GA: Bush 67%, McCain 28% MA: McCain 64%, Bush 32% MD: Bush 56%, McCain 36% ME: Bush 51%, McCain 44% MO: Bush 58%, McCain 35% NY: Bush 51%, McCain 43% OH: Bush 58%, McCain 37% RI: McCain 60%, Bush 37% VT: McCain 60%, Bush 35%	Bush 681 McCain* 225 1,157 REMAINING Keyes 1	BUSH 129

2004 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 2,162 delegates

Once again, Super Tuesday was the key to determining in the inevitable nominee. March 2 saw John Kerry eight of nine states and winning the lion's share of delegates at stake; only Howard Dean's home state of Vermont did not go for Kerry, and it mattered little because Dean had dropped out of the race in mid-February. John Edwards had stayed in, but Super Tuesday's results were enough for him to hang up his hat the following day, leaving only Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton to oppose Kerry.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Jan. 29	IA: Kerry 38%, Edwards 32% NH: Kerry 38%, Dean 26%	Dean 114 Kerry 96 Edwards 39 4,005 REMAINING	DEAN 0.07
Feb. 4	AZ: Kerry 43%, Clark 27% DE: Kerry 50%, Lieberman 11% MO: Kerry 51%, Edwards 25% OK: Clark 30%, Edwards 29% SC: Edwards 45%, Kerry 30%	Kerry 244 Dean 121 Edwards 102 3,744 REMAINING	KERRY 1.2
Feb. 18	TN: Kerry 41%, Edwards 27% VA: Kerry 52%, Edwards 27% WI: Kerry 40%, Edwards 34%	Kerry 608 Edwards 190 Dean 201 3,248 REMAINING	KEERRY 11.7
March 3	CA: Kerry 65%, Edwards 20% CT: Kerry 58%, Edwards 24% GA: Kerry 47%, Edwards 41% MD: Kerry 60%, Edwards 26% MA: Kerry 72%, Edwards 18% NY: Kerry 61%, Edwards 20% OH: Kerry 52%, Edwards 34% RI: Kerry 71%, Edwards 19% VT: Dean 53%, Kerry 32%	Kerry 1,362 Edwards* 454 Dean* 182 Others 42 2,225 REMAINING	KERRY 125
March 10	FL: Kerry 77%, Sharpton 3% LA: Kerry 70% MS: Kerry 78%, Sharpton 5% TX: Kerry 67%, Sharpton 4%	Kerry 1,937 Edwards* 540 Dean* 170 Others 48 1,570 REMAINING	KERRY 359

2008 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 2,025 delegates

This was a battle for the ages. Hillary Clinton went for a big win on Super Tuesday but despite piling up more big-state victories than Barack Obama, she did not have a huge lead in delegates as a result of proportional rules and Obama's advantage in a number of smaller states that were holding caucuses. Through the middle of February, Hillary Clinton had more delegates than Barack Obama -- but since so many delegates remained unchosen, her delegate strength score was only at 7. By the end of February, Obama had about 100 more delegates than Clinton, but his delegate strength score was only 15 -- a far cry from inevitability.

By the end of April, Obama's lead over Clinton had grown to about 160 delegates, but the number of delegates yet to be chosen was dropping rapidly, making it harder for Clinton to make up lost ground. (At that point, Clinton needed to win about 60% of the remaining delegates.) Clinton had pinned her hopes on a big win in Indiana and a narrow victory in North Carolina. But Obama won North Carolina handily and nearly upset Clinton in Indiana. For most political observers, that was the sign that Obama would be the inevitable nominee. His delegate strength score and climbed to 98 immediately after Indiana and North Carolina, and it went up to 103 a few days later after endorsements from "superdelegates."

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Jan. 14	IA: Obama 38%, Edwards 30% NH: Clinton 39%, Obama 37%	Clinton 181 Obama 94 Edwards 47 3,727 REMAINING	CLINTON 0.4
Jan. 24	MI: Clinton 55%, Unpledged 40% NV: Clinton 51%, Obama 45%	Clinton 218 Obama 127 Edwards 53 3,651 REMAINING	CLINTON 0.5
Feb. 6	AL: Obama 56%, Clinton 42% AZ: Clinton 50%, Obama 42% AR: Clinton 70%, Obama 26% CA: Clinton 52%, Obama 43% CT: Obama 51%, Clinton 47% DE: Obama 53%, Clinton 42% GA: Obama 66%, Clinton 31% IL: Obama 65%, Clinton 33% MA: Clinton 56%, Obama 41% MO: Obama 49%, Clinton 48% NJ: Clinton 54%, Obama 44% NM: Clinton 49%, Obama 48% NY: Clinton 57%, Obama 40% OK: Clinton 55%, Obama 32% TN: Clinton 54%, Obama 41% UT: Obama 57%, Clinton 39%	Clinton 1,033 Obama 937 2,054 REMAINING	CLINTON 7.2
Feb. 13	LA: Obama 57%, Clinton 36% DC: Obama 75%, Clinton 24% MD: Obama 61%, Clinton 36% VA: Obama 64%, Clinton 36%	Obama 1,253 Clinton 1,211 1,560 REMAINING	OBAMA 5.6
March 6	WI: Obama 58%, Clinton 41% OH: Clinton 54%, Obama 45% RI: Clinton 58%, Obama 40% TX: Clinton 51%, Obama 47% VT: Obama 59%, Clinton 39%	Obama 1,520 Clinton 1,424 947 REMAINING	OBAMA 24.6
April 28	PA: Clinton 55%, Obama 45%	Obama 1,725 Clinton 1,588 717 REMAINING	OBAMA 54.2
May 7	IN: Clinton 51%, Obama 49% NC: Obama 56%, Clinton 42%	Obama 1,845 Clinton 1,686 492 REMAINING	OBAMA 98.0
May 19	WV: Clinton 67%, Obama 26%	Obama 1,909 Clinton 1,718 414 REMAINING	OBAMA 144.7

2008 REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES

Needed to nominate: 1,191 delegates

On Super Tuesday, John McCain won a big majority of the delegates at stake, but that was not quite the knockout punch it had been in earlier years because only about half the total number of GOP delegates had been chosen. Mitt Romney chose to exit the race at that point, but and Mike Huckabee stayed in the race hoping for lightning to strike, but it didn't. When McCain won all three primaries on February 12, the math just wasn't there for Huckabee. McCain victories on March 4 finally convinced Huckabee to withdraw, but by then the party had already started to treat McCain as the inevitable nominee.

	MOST RECENT PRIMARIES	DELEGATE COUNT	DELEGATE STRENGTH
Jan. 24	IA: Huckabee 34%, Romney 25% NH: McCain 38%, Romney 32% MI: Romney 39%, McCain 30% NV: Romney 51%, Paul 14% SC: McCain 33%, Huckabee 30%	Romney 73 McCain 38 Huckabee 29 2,224 REMAINING	ROMNEY 0.2
Feb. 6	FL: McCain 36%, Romney 31% AL: Huckabee 41%, McCain 37% AZ: McCain 47%, Romney 35% AR: Huckabee 61%, McCain 20% CA: McCain 42%, Romney 35% CT: McCain 52%, Romney 33% DE: McCain 45%, Romney 33% GA: Huckabee 34%, McCain 32% IL: McCain 48%, Romney 29% MA: Romney 51%, McCain 41% MO: McCain 33%, Huckabee 32% NJ: McCain 55%, Romney 28% NY: McCain 52%, Romney 28% OK: McCain 37%, Huckabee 33% TN: Huckabee 35%, McCain 32% UT: Romney 90%	McCain 714 Romney 286 Huckabee 181 1,183 REMAINING	MCCAIN 72.3
Feb. 13	LA: Huckabee 43%, McCain 42% DC: McCain 68%, Huckabee 16% MD: McCain 55%, Huckabee 29% VA: McCain 50%, Huckabee 41%	McCain 827 Romney* 286 Huckabee 217 1,034 REMAINING	MCCAIN 121.1
March 6	OH: McCain 60%, Huckabee 31% RI: McCain 65%, Huckabee 22% TX: McCain 51%, Huckabee 38% VT: McCain 71%, Huckabee 14%	McCain 1,289 Huckabee 267 Romney* 255 548 REMAINING	MCCAIN 680.3