

CHAPTER 4

MICHIGAN

In 1996, Michigan was one of four states in the Midwest that had their timing all wrong. Michigan joined with three other important Midwestern states, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin, in scheduling presidential primaries on the same Tuesday. The problem was the four states picked a date that was too late in the presidential primary calendar.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. This new presidential primary was to be called Midwest Tuesday. Three of the states, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio, were among the ten most populous states in the United States. Furthermore, all four states were evenly divided between the Democratic and Republican parties and represented an accurate cross-section of the American electorate. Since the Midwest was one of the most important and clearly-identifiable sections of the country, its voters deserved a big say in the presidential nominating process.

The date selected for the 1996 Midwest Tuesday was the third Tuesday in March. Two weeks earlier, on the first Tuesday in March, Kansas Senator Bob Dole won a string of primaries in New England, the South, and the Rocky Mountain West. Dole thereby sewed up the 1996 Republican nomination for president. Midwest Tuesday became one of those ho-hum elections where the voters tramped to the polls and dutifully cast their ballots, but the voting results had no effect whatsoever on who was nominated.

For 2000, Michigan Governor John Engler successfully supported separating the date of the Republican primary from the Democratic and moving the Republican vote into the middle of February. That way, Michigan Republicans would be voting prior to the first Tuesday in March, when California and New York and fourteen other states would be voting on the same day. Michigan Democrats were left with caucuses scheduled for mid-March, long after California and New York would have voted and the presidential nominating races probably would have been decided.

Governor Engler, a Republican, did not just press to change the date of the 2000 Michigan Republican presidential primary. He also supported changing the state's voter registration laws so that independent voters and Democrats could vote in the Republican primary. Engler argued that

giving Democrats the opportunity to vote in a Republican presidential primary would weaken the psychological ties of those Democrats to the Democratic Party. Engler also believed that having Democrats voting for Republican presidential candidates in a primary would help win Democratic crossover votes for the Republican candidate in the general election in November.

So Michigan's Republican primary in 2000 was a much bigger deal than in 1996, or was it? The problem was *compression*. The Michigan Republican primary in 2000 was scheduled for February 22nd, just three days after the South Carolina primary on February 19th. Early on in 2000, Michigan Republicans did not see a great deal of either George W. Bush or John McCain campaigning in their state because both candidates considered South Carolina the more important fight.

This reveals the extent to which presidential primaries are based more on symbolism than reality. Up to that point in the 2000 nominating process, Michigan was the most populous state to hold a Republican primary. In fact, the Michigan Republican primary had more convention delegates at stake than New Hampshire and South Carolina combined. The primary calendar, however, is more important than the size of a state's population. Because South Carolina was voting first (by three days), and South Carolina had a reputation for holding a key Republican primary, South Carolina took precedence over Michigan in the minds of the candidates and the news media.

The *New York Times* labeled the 2000 Michigan primary "second-hand." The *Detroit News* grumbled sarcastically to its readers: "Don't expect to shake the hand of a candidate any time soon." Most Michiganders were not upset, though. Bill Ballenger, editor of *Inside Michigan Politics*, pointed out that, previously, the Michigan primary had been a "non-entity." He added: "The candidates were never here very much before this year, compared to how often they've been here this time, which still isn't very much."

It was true that the three-day gap between the South Carolina and Michigan primaries was reducing the time the candidates could spend in Michigan, but another factor was at work as well. New Hampshire is a small state in terms of population, so presidential campaigning there can be intensely personal. There is a great deal of what is called "retail"

politics, where presidential candidates sometimes go from door-to-door meeting people. The candidates stand around shaking hands in shopping centers, and they do small and intimate town hall meetings.

The rules change when dealing with a state as populous (more than 10 million inhabitants) and geographically big as Michigan. In terms of land area, Michigan is one of the largest states east of the Mississippi River. To drive to one part of the state, the remote Upper Peninsula, a ferry boat must be taken across one of the Great Lakes. In such an environment, candidates turn to what is known as “wholesale” politics. The emphasis shifts from person-to-person campaigning to big buys of radio and television advertising. Folksy town hall meetings are replaced by “big city” media events where candidates address thousands of cheering supporters packed into a convention hall or sports palace.

In the more populous states such as Michigan, candidates have to reach out to hundreds of thousands and sometimes even millions of voters. A kitchen-table conversation with only one homemaker will not work in the Michigan environment the way it does in New Hampshire.

Sunday, February 13, 2000, was a big day on network television in the Republican presidential primary battle raging at that time. On “Meet The Press” on NBC, George W. Bush charged that Democrats were mobilizing to support John McCain in states such as Michigan, where the Republican primary was open to all registered voters, including Democrats. “The only thing I’m concerned about,” Bush said, “is that Democrats flock into the Republican primary to decide who the Republican nominee is, and then head back for the Democrats in the general election.”

Bush in essence was charging that Democrats were going to vote for John McCain in the Michigan Republican primary because they considered McCain the easier of the two candidates to beat in the general election in November. Some Bush supporters even argued that supporters of Democratic presidential hopeful Al Gore were urging Democrats in Michigan to vote for McCain, just to make things as difficult as possible for George W. Bush, the most likely Republican nominee.

Meanwhile, on “Face The Nation” on CBS, John McCain was re-

sponding directly to George W. Bush. "I'm very proud that Libertarians or vegetarians or anybody would consider supporting me," McCain fumed into the television cameras. "I have a vision of reform for America that I think is taking hold all over the country."

The McCain camp appeared to realize that it had a ready source of votes in Michigan Democrats. Registered Democrats in Michigan received a mailing from McCain urging them to "make your voice heard by voting for the one candidate committed to reform." The mailing went on to note that Michigan Democrats would not lose the right to vote in Michigan's Democratic caucuses by voting for McCain in the Republican primary. "Even if you vote Tuesday," the mailing read, "you can still participate in future Democratic Party political activity." The McCain forces also acknowledged sending prerecorded telephone calls for McCain to Democratic and Republican voters alike.

Should Democrats and independents be allowed to vote in Republican presidential primaries? That question quickly came to the fore in the Bush-McCain struggle in Michigan in 2000. The Bush campaign argued that Republicans in Michigan were voting solidly for Bush and that McCain was mainly receiving support from independents and Democrats. The Bush forces were implying that John McCain might even win the 2000 Republican nomination despite the fact that George W. Bush was the choice of the vast majority of "party line" Republicans.

There is no concise answer to the question of whether Democrats and independent voters should or should not vote in Republican primaries, or vice versa. That decision is left to each state to decide when it passes election laws establishing a presidential primary. One thing was quickly becoming clear in Michigan in 2000, however. Republican Governor John Engler made a big mistake, at least from the point of view of the Bush campaign, when he opened the Michigan Republican presidential primary to Democratic and independent voter participation.

As soon as the 2000 South Carolina Republican primary was over and George W. Bush's victory had been flashed across the nation by the news media, both Bush and John McCain headed for Michigan. The effects of compression were obvious. Each candidate began a three-day

marathon to win as many Michigan votes as possible. A state that had been neglected by both campaigns for weeks and weeks suddenly became the center of all campaign activity.

An argument began to rage among political sophisticates about how the compression between South Carolina's and Michigan's voting dates would affect the impact of Bush's big victory in South Carolina on Michigan. The traditional wisdom was that Bush's win in South Carolina would easily enable him to triumph in Michigan. After all, the biggest effect on the next presidential primary is supposed to be the results of the previous presidential primary.

An opposing viewpoint held that three days was not enough time for the effect of Bush's South Carolina win to soak in on the average Michigan voter. Part of the lift that comes from winning an early presidential primary is the sustained favorable comment coming from the news media. Getting your photograph on the cover of *Time*, though, is a lengthy process, usually longer than three days. The same is true of having all the newspaper columnists speculating that the most recent primary winner will surely take the party nomination for president. Compression, in effect, reduces the impact of a previous primary victory because there is insufficient time for the news media to "exaggerate" the results on behalf of the primary winner.

Nevertheless, the two candidates responded to the South Carolina results as if they were important. George W. Bush campaigned in Michigan in 2000 with the attitude of a man who had the nomination cinched. He reduced his attacks on John McCain and returned to focusing his attacks on President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. Speaking at a rally in Southfield, Michigan, Bush shouted to the crowd: "Listen to me now. There are 260 days *more* (pause) to no *more* (pause) Clinton-Gore!"

When the subject of John McCain did come up, the Bush camp tended to discuss McCain's fraternizing with Democrats so McCain could win the Michigan primary. George W. Bush described one of McCain's supporters in Michigan as "the most liberal of liberal Democrats." Speaking in support of Bush on "Face The Nation" on CBS, Michigan Governor John Engler griped: "McCain has absolutely courted

some of the worst people. They're our sworn foes. He has tried to bring some of them in to influence the result."

The response of the McCain campaign to George W. Bush's victory in South Carolina was to launch an all-out attack on Bush and his purported credentials as "A Reformer With Results." John McCain had to win Michigan if he was going to reignite the enthusiasm for his candidacy generated by his big win in New Hampshire in 2000. At that time, New Hampshire was his only win so far. Political reporters began to question how much longer McCain could be introduced at political rallies as "the winner of the New Hampshire primary" and nothing else.

Going for Bush's political jugular vein appeared to be the best way for McCain to revive his flagging candidacy. "If he's a reformer, I'm an astronaut," McCain said as his bus rolled from one political rally to another in Michigan. Pretending to speak to George W. Bush directly, McCain added with derision: "We're not letting you get away with that, pal. You're not a reformer. Anybody who believes you're a reformer believes in the tooth fairy."

More than 1 million Michiganders turned out to vote in that state's 2000 Republican primary. That was twice as many voters as had appeared at the polls in any previous primary or caucuses in Michigan. Governor Engler's efforts to involve as many Michigan voters as possible in the Republican primary paid off handsomely.

The problem for Engler was that Democrats and independents flooded to the polling places along with all the loyal Republicans. The result was that Arizona Senator John McCain swamped Texas Governor George W. Bush in Michigan. McCain won by almost a 100,000 vote margin, scoring 51 percent of the vote to Bush's 43 percent.

Exit polls revealed what had become a very familiar voting pattern in the 2000 fight for the Republican nomination for president. McCain received 45 percent of his votes from independents while Bush took only 23 percent of his votes from that group. McCain also got more of his vote from Democrats, by 29 percent to 5 percent. Among Michigan Republicans, however, George W. Bush was the runaway winner. A whopping 72 percent of Bush's votes were cast by Republicans. McCain only

polled 27 percent of his votes from the Republican Party faithful.

When the 2000 Michigan results became known, Bush continued to push the idea that he was the first choice of loyal Republicans and McCain was a party interloper supported only by independents and Democrats. “Republicans overwhelmingly supported my candidacy,” Bush said. “It seems I’m getting stronger and stronger with Republicans as the primaries go on.”

For John McCain, Michigan was a must-win state, and he won it handily. McCain’s big victory among Wolverine voters dismissed once and for all the charge that McCain was a one-time winner in New Hampshire and nothing more. McCain sought to turn his support from independents and Democrats into a campaign asset, arguing that he was the candidate who could attract outsiders to the Republican Party and fashion a winning national majority in the general election in November.

“The great thing about this victory,” McCain said, “was we have proved that we can reassemble a coalition that reaches out across party lines, preserving our core with conservative Republican principles yet attracting to our banner people who are independents, people who are Democrats, Libertarians, vegetarians.” That quip about attracting the vegetarians along with the Libertarians was becoming a permanent part of John McCain’s standard campaign speech.

The Michigan results in 2000 illustrated how the political composition of a state can influence the outcome of partisan presidential primaries. Republican voters supported George W. Bush in Michigan just as strongly as Republican voters supported Bush in South Carolina, but Michigan had a great deal more independent and Democratic voters than South Carolina. It was those waves of independents and Democrats, not present in such great numbers in South Carolina, that enabled McCain to beat Bush in Michigan.

McCain’s triumph in Michigan, coupled with the high level of compression between the South Carolina and Michigan primaries in 2000, created great problems for the news media. With only a three-day gap between Bush’s big win in South Carolina and McCain’s overwhelming victory in Michigan, political editors and commentators did

not quite know what to say. A big part of the problem was that many a serious journalist wrote a big story on South Carolina, arguing that Bush was now certain to win the Republican nomination, only to have the story being read as television and newspapers boomed the big news about McCain's victory in Michigan.

A *Washington Post* media commentator summarized the problem this way: "The media's current infatuation with Big Picture stories, written in the narrative voice and awash in predictions, encourages journalists and opinion writers to simplify complex and fast-moving events, or to draw broad conclusions from scattered, conflicting or otherwise confusing facts."

Thus the media had to replace the story of Bush's big comeback in South Carolina with a new story about McCain's great resurgence in Michigan. Suddenly, the 2000 Republican nomination for president was up for grabs again, with Bush and McCain apparently running even. Alas for John McCain, in the next round of Republican primaries, George W. Bush won Virginia, Washington state, and North Dakota, and thereby ended John McCain's presidential hopes in 2000 once and for all.

* * *

In 2004, Michigan played no role whatsoever in the Republican and Democratic presidential nominating struggles. For the Republicans, incumbent Republican George W. Bush did not have significant opposition within his own party and was nominated almost by acclamation. With the Democrats, U.S. Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts captured both the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary. The Democratic race was essentially over at that point. Kerry's only significant challenger, former-Vermont Governor Howard Dean, bypassed Michigan to make a "last stand" against Kerry in Wisconsin. When Kerry defeated Dean in Wisconsin, the 2004 Democratic race was completely over.

* * *

In 2008, Michigan was the state that worked the hardest at messing up the Democratic Party's plan for there being four caucuses and primaries, and *only* four caucuses and primaries, prior to the Super Duper Tuesday voting on February 5, 2008.

Michigan Democrats took exception to the idea that Wolverine voters should be excluded from the all-important early schedule of presidential caucuses and primaries. Particularly outspoken was U.S. Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, who long had criticized the exaggerating effect of Iowa and New Hampshire being permanently enshrined at the front of the primaries and caucuses calendar. Senator Levin argued for a Michigan presidential primary scheduled on Tuesday, January 8, 2008, a full six days prior to the January 14, 2008, date assigned to Iowa for its “First In The Nation” presidential caucuses.

Democratic leaders in Michigan, however, finally settled on Tuesday, January 15, 2008, for the date of their presidential primary. That was *one day* after January 14, 2008, the date the Democratic National Committee (DNC) selected for the Iowa caucuses. It was six days prior to January 22, 2008, the date the DNC assigned to New Hampshire for its “First Primary.”

Not for a minute were Iowa and New Hampshire politicians going to let newcomer Michigan horn in on their sacred “We always vote first!” tradition. Iowa rescheduled its caucuses for Thursday, January 3, 2008, and New Hampshire selected Tuesday, January 8, 2008, for its primary. Because Iowa and New Hampshire were responding to an unauthorized action by Michigan (according to Democratic Party rules), national Democratic Party leaders did not penalize Iowa for moving the date of its caucuses or New Hampshire for moving the date of its primary.

Such was not the case with Michigan. As it had threatened to do, the Rules Committee of the Democratic National Committee stripped Michigan of all its delegates to the Democratic National Convention, to be held in August of 2008 in Denver, Colorado. Michigan Democrats had been aware of this penalty when they moved the state’s presidential primary date forward. They were convinced, however, that once the Democratic nominee for 2008 had been determined, the nominee would insist that Michigan’s convention delegates be restored. Michigan, after all, would most likely be a crucial state that the Democrats would have to carry to win the 2008 presidential election. It would not be wise to antagonize Michigan voters by not seating the Michigan delegates to the Democratic

National Convention.

The Republican Party had a similar rule, but it was not quite so harsh. As punishment for setting its presidential primary prior to February 5, 2008, the Republican Party took away *one-half* of Michigan's delegates to the Republican National Convention, set to take place in early September of 2008 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Also important was that the national Democratic Party, to further punish Michigan for audaciously scheduling an early primary, asked the Democratic candidates for president to remove their names from the Michigan presidential primary ballot. Two of the major candidates, Barack Obama and John Edwards, did so. That left only Hillary Clinton and a minor candidate on the ballot in Michigan.

Clearly Hillary Clinton was going to win Michigan, but she would not win any delegates by doing so. The news media promptly lost all interest in the 2008 Michigan Democratic presidential primary. The Michigan state legislature next attempted to pass a law requiring that the names of all the Democratic candidates be put on the primary ballot, which could have tempted Obama and Edwards to campaign there. Alas, Michigan Democrats could not muster enough votes in the state legislature to pass the law. There was a good chance that either Barack Obama or John Edwards, or both, had pressured Michigan legislators to not force their names onto the ballot because they calculated that they would suffer the bad publicity of losing the Michigan primary to Hillary Clinton.

There were no such ballot complications for the Republicans, however. Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani, and the minor Republican candidates all put their names on the Michigan ballot. All but Giuliani campaigned to win the state. Michigan ended up having a lively presidential primary in 2008, as Michigan Democrats had hoped, but the primary turned out to be for the Republican candidates only.

* * *

The major beneficiary of early scheduling of the Michigan presidential primary in 2008 was Mitt Romney. He finished second to Mike Huckabee in the Iowa caucuses and second to John McCain in the New

Hampshire primary. Romney desperately needed a win, particularly in view of the fact that his original campaign plan, which the press knew about, had been to win Iowa and New Hampshire and gain the momentum to go on winning from there. Political analysts began speculating that Romney's campaign to become president of the United States would end abruptly if he did not win in Michigan.

Michigan was a good state to be a "must-win" for Mitt Romney . Although he spent his adult life in Massachusetts, Romney was born and grew up in Michigan. He graduated from high school in the state, and his parents were buried there.

Better yet, the name Romney was one of the best-known names in Republican politics in Michigan. Mitt Romney's father, George Romney, had been a well-known executive in the automobile industry in Michigan. As president of American Motors, the elder Romney promoted and popularized, in an age of gas-guzzling giant automobiles, a fuel-efficient small car named the Rambler. George Romney then ran for and won three terms as governor of Michigan, a post in which he was very popular and greatly admired.

An interesting event occurred at the end of George Romney's political career. In 1968, the senior Romney ran for the Republican nomination for president against former-Vice President Richard Nixon of California. It was at the time of the Vietnam War, and during the campaign Romney said he was opposed to the United States fighting in Vietnam. When news reporters pointed out to George Romney that he previously had supported the war, Romney replied that he had been "brainwashed" into supporting the Vietnam War. He implied the U.S. Government gave him false information to try to get him to support the war.

George Romney's "brainwashing" comment did not play well in the news media or with Republican voters. It was not believable that such a successful businessman could be "brainwashed" on an issue as important as the Vietnam War. The elder Romney's campaign for president was soon over. It had been sunk by a single word, "brainwashed," said in a routine news interview.

The son, Mitt Romney delighted his Michigan audiences in 2008

with stories about growing up in the state. He stumped with his wife, Ann, and eldest son, Tagg. “This is personal for me,” Romney said, emphasizing his old ties to a state he had left more than 40 years earlier. “I won’t need a GPS to find Michigan when I become president,” he said.

Romney had more than reminiscences of his childhood for Michigan voters, however. Following his twin losses in Iowa and New Hampshire, Mitt Romney moved away from his efforts to portray himself as a social conservative who could appeal to evangelical Christians. He began to campaign vigorously on the twin issues of restoring the national economy in the United States and reviving the economically-depressed state of Michigan.

The land of the Wolverines was a good place for Mitt Romney to make such a shift in emphasis. Michigan is the home of the United States auto industry, and by 2008 an estimated 300,000 jobs had been lost in the state to foreign manufacturers of automobiles, such as Toyota and Honda. The unemployment rate in Michigan in November of 2007 was 7.4 percent, the highest figure of any state. Michigan ranked second in the United States in home mortgage delinquencies and third in the number of foreclosed houses.

Mitt Romney seemed to find his footing in Michigan as he dropped issues of importance to evangelical Christians and concentrated on rescuing the Michigan economy. He spoke of a coming day when “most of the cars on the road are American-made, as they ought to be.” His promise to rescue the national and Michigan economies sounded plausible because it was coming from a business person who had made a fortune of more than \$200 million. He repeatedly promised to help the thousands of Michigan workers who were unemployed because of downsizing and outsourcing.

Romney was helped by one of his opponents for the Republican nomination. U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona commented that most of the lost jobs in Michigan “will never come back.” Romney jumped on that statement by McCain and offered a more positive alternative. He said he would use his business acumen to go to Washington and get the U.S. auto industry on the road to recovery. “Don’t listen to anyone who says

those jobs are not coming back,” Romney told an unemployed mother of two sons in Marshall, Michigan. “I’m not willing to accept that.”

Romney blamed Washington, D.C., lawmakers for passing laws that excessively regulated the automobile industry with low gas-mileage restrictions and air pollution requirements. He described these laws as an “anvil” around the neck of a drowning industry. Romney pledged, when president, to bring together the auto companies, the auto-workers unions, and Congress to “rebuild America’s automotive leadership.” He proposed to increase U.S. Government research in automotive technology by five times, to \$20 billion.

Mitt Romney was able to combine his plans to save the auto companies in Michigan with traditional Republican distrust of government. “Most of the burdens on the auto industry are imposed by government,” Romney said, and he pledged to go to Washington and relieve the auto industry of that over regulation.

Romney claimed his efforts to save the Michigan economy would help unemployed workers throughout the United States. Campaigning in a General Motors plant that had just laid off hundreds of workers, Romney said: “In some respects, Michigan is like the canary in the mine shaft: What Michigan is experiencing, the whole nation will experience unless we fix what’s happening in Michigan and learn lessons here we can apply across the nation.”

There was one little problem for Mitt Romney in Michigan, however. Independents and Democrats were allowed to ask for a Republican ballot and then vote in the Republican presidential primary if they wanted. It was independent voters who had strongly supported John McCain in New Hampshire and put him over the top in that crucial primary, both in 2000 and 2008. In addition, in Michigan, Democrats could join independents in voting in the Republican race. This was believed likely to happen because, in the Democratic primary in 2008, all the major candidates but Hillary Clinton had removed their names from the ballot. Democrats, with little incentive to vote in their own primary, could cross over to the Republican primary and vote for McCain along with the independents.

This was precisely what happened in 2000, when John McCain rode a wave of independent and Democratic votes to a dramatic victory over George W. Bush in the Michigan Republican presidential primary. In 2008, John McCain set out, as he had in New Hampshire, to resurrect his 2000 script and make it work again in Michigan. He campaigned hard in the state, and he quickly corrected his earlier mistake when he said Michigan's auto industry jobs "will never come back." McCain started to take a more positive and upbeat attitude, as Romney was doing, toward saving auto workers' jobs.

John McCain's problem in Michigan was *compression* in the Republican presidential primary calendar. Four days after Michigan, South Carolina Republicans were going to hold their primary. Polls showed McCain having a better chance of winning South Carolina rather than Michigan. McCain was forced to split his campaign time between the two states. Mitt Romney, on the other hand, had more or less abandoned South Carolina and was spending almost all of his time wooing voters in Michigan. Romney pulled his television advertisements in South Carolina and concentrated his money as well as his time in Michigan.

The other Republican campaigning in Michigan was former-Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. He spent much of his time and effort in central Michigan, far away from Detroit, where there is a concentration of evangelical Christians. Similar to John McCain, however, Huckabee was more interested in campaigning in South Carolina, where there are many more evangelical Christians than in Michigan.

* * *

On election day, there were early hints from the news media that Mitt Romney was likely to score a big victory in Michigan. Although Michiganders were still voting in the primary, the network evening news programs revealed that, according to exit polls, large numbers of independents and Democrats had not asked to vote in the Republican primary. That was bad news for John McCain, who needed those independent and Democratic voters to counterbalance Mitt Romney's strong support among Michigan Republicans.

When the election returns were in, it was clear the exit polls had been

right. Romney defeated McCain handily with Huckabee in third place. Mitt Romney needed a big victory in Michigan, and he got it. His shift from right-wing social conservatism to an emphasis on economic revival appeared to have worked perfectly. Romney told his election-night celebration: “Tonight is a victory of optimism over Washington-style pessimism.”

Mitt Romney’s triumph in Michigan confounded political analysts. There had been three major Republican caucuses/primaries, and there were three big winners, each one still with a solid chance of winning the nomination. Mike Huckabee had triumphed in the Iowa caucuses, John McCain had won in New Hampshire, and then Mitt Romney was the victor in Michigan. The race for the Republican nomination for president was going to go on for awhile.

The haphazard schedule of caucuses and primaries played a major role in who won those early caucuses and primaries in the Republican Party in 2008. Mike Huckabee won Iowa because of his good fortune that there were large numbers of evangelical Christians in the first state to vote. John McCain was lucky that independents could choose to vote in the Republican primary in New Hampshire, the second state to vote, as it was independents who gave McCain his victory there. Mitt Romney hit the jackpot in Michigan because it was his native state and voted third. A different schedule of early voting states might have produced a different list of early winners.

The news media had trumpeted the idea that Mitt Romney would have to win Michigan or drop out of the race. Ironically, when Romney did win and win big in Michigan, the press paid scant attention. The news reporters and commentators talked more about it becoming a tight three-way race than about Romney’s triumph.

A newspaper editorial cartoonist summed it up perfectly. The cartoon showed the front pages of four different newspapers. The first three newspapers had big bold headlines reading such things as “Romney Must Win Michigan,” “It’s Do Or Die for Romney In Michigan,” and “For Romney, Win Michigan Or Say Goodby.” The fourth newspaper had a big bold headline saying “Sale At Sears.” Down at the bottom of the front

page, in small type, was the line: “Oh. By the Way. Romney Won Michigan.”