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NH Primary Experts Available To Discuss Fallout Of Expected DNC Rule Change Aug. 19

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Two New Hampshire presidential primary experts are available to discuss the fallout of an expected rule change by the Democratic National Committee that would place the Nevada caucus ahead of the New Hampshire primary. The DNC votes Saturday, Aug. 19, 2006.

Mark Wrighton is an associate professor of political science at the University of New Hampshire. **Wrighton can be reached at (603) 862-2792 (office), 603-674-6642 (home) and Mark.Wrighton@unh.edu.**

According to Wrighton:

"Traditionally, the process of selecting a presidential nominee has served as a forum for the parties to hash out the great issues of the day and to give voice to a wide range of opinions on many different topics. In the process of nominating Harry S. Truman for a full term in 1948, the Democratic Party had a grand debate of the merits of desegregating American society. In 1968, the Democratic Party had a raucous discussion in Chicago of the merits of American military action in Southeast Asia."

"Yet, in 2004, the severely frontloaded process squelched a discussion among Democrats on a wide range of topics, and the party pushed aside a potentially effective message (John Edwards' 'Two Americas' theme on economic disparities in the United States) in order to emphasize an issue on which, Americans chose -- at the time -- to support the party's opponent."

"The biggest impact of the DNC's action this week to place a contest between Iowa and New Hampshire and to allow a contest a week after the New Hampshire primary will be to further frontload the process of selecting a presidential nominee. Doing so will further reduce serious intra-party discussion on the issues as well as the effective number of choices for president. Further, by taking this step, the DNC -- and the RNC, should it follow suit, as it might very well -- will hasten the nomination process down the road toward its logical endgame: a media contest played out between political heavyweights -- each of whom will have raised the exorbitant amounts of money needed just to buy into the process -- in a single, nationwide primary contest in which partisans have little, if any, real opportunity to debate the great issues of the day."

"It is difficult to imagine that the electorate would receive great value from such a plutocratic process, and many may become further disenchanted with the political process and choose not to participate -- as either candidates or as voters."

Andrew Smith, director of the Survey Center at the University of New Hampshire and associate research professor of political science. **Smith can be reached at 603-862-2226 (office), 603-868-3309 (home) and or andrew.smith@unh.edu.**

According to Smith:

The repercussions of the rule change for New Hampshire remain to be seen. Key factors are a possible move by the New Hampshire secretary of state to bump the New Hampshire primary ahead of Nevada, a boycott of the Nevada effort in New Hampshire, and whether the press pays attention to the Nevada caucus. There will be no advantage for the New Hampshire primary unless different candidates win in Iowa and Nevada, and New Hampshire is seen as a show-down state.

"Big winner with the rule change is the DNC leadership, as it gives them more control of the selection process. Big losers, outside of New Hampshire, are general American voters because New Hampshire's vetting of candidates will be reduced."