

FACT-CHECKING CARRIE GIDDINS & THE NEW YORK TIMES

The following editorial by former Iowa Democratic Party Communications Director Carrie Giddins appeared in the New York Times today with numerous falsehoods and distortions. Ms. Giddins was not involved in any discussions between the Florida Democratic Party and the DNC and has no firsthand knowledge of this situation, which emerged more than a year ago.

“Rules Count”

By CARRIE GIDDINS, New York Times

IN life, in love and in politics, when you break the rules there are inevitable and often deserved consequences.

Last year, the Democratic National Committee tried to work with the Florida Democratic Party after the Florida Legislature selected a date for the state’s primary that conflicted with the committee’s nominating calendar.

Those efforts were met with silence and stonewalling from Florida’s party leaders despite the penalties. The same thing essentially happened in Michigan.

Now the Michigan Democratic Party is trying to convince the committee that they should have the opportunity to recast their primary votes, while Florida has thrown its hands in the air and is blaming the committee for the self-inflicted situation it finds itself in — having no convention delegates. Well, all I have to say is, grow up.

Instead of working out a solution, the two state parties spent their time attacking the four states with the earliest primaries and caucuses — Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina — which had gotten together last fall to protect their early status. Those four states wrote a pledge in which candidates agreed not to campaign in states that violated the Democratic National Committee’s calendar rules. The candidates signed that pledge understanding the important role the four early states play in shaping the presidential race, by testing the candidates in a one-on-one setting, winnowing the field and acting as a sounding board for ideas not ready for a national audience.

Party leaders in Florida and Michigan knew exactly what was going to happen when they decided not to follow the calendar rules. They have no cause to be angry at the early states that protected their status with the pledge.

But even more disappointing than Michigan and Florida’s disregard for the calendar was the vitriol directed at the early states by those who never liked the calendar in the first place. In late September, the Florida Senate Democratic leader, Steve Geller, called Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina “terrorist rogue states” for writing the early-state pledge.

The Democratic National Committee gave Florida and Michigan Democrats every opportunity to work with the agreed-upon calendar, but they chose to not play by the rules. Florida and Michigan each had the ability to submit a compliant plan, but they chose not to. The committee even offered Florida Democrats \$900,000 to help run an alternative primary on an acceptable date; again they chose not to.

“Florida Democrats absolutely must vote on Jan. 29,” Karen Thurman, chairwoman of the Florida Democratic Party said in a press release last September. “We make this election matter. Not the D.N.C., not the delegates, not the candidates, but Florida Democrats like you and me voting together. We make it count.”

Comment [M1]: This is completely false. Even before the GOP Legislature and Governor moved the primary up, the FDP enlisted experts on alternative processes and conducted extensive research. We proposed a vote-by-mail primary to be held after Feb. 5. Tina Flournoy and other DNC RBC members tried to help us find funding, but unfortunately, we could not find anyone interested in paying for a later primary

Comment [M2]: This situation was by no means self-inflicted. Republicans control the Florida House 77-43, the Senate 26-14, and the Governor’s office. There was (and remains) no way for the FDP to change the law. We also proposed an alternative plan – the only one that was possible – but it did not receive the support of the candidates, the DNC or the voters of Florida.

Comment [M3]: Ironically, three of those four states ALSO violated DNC calendar rules, though they always seem to leave that out. Additionally, Florida had been penalized with a 100% delegate reduction already, so the “Pledge” simply added insult to injury.

Comment [M4]: This is only partially true. The Rules call for a 50% delegate reduction – not a 100% reduction and a four-state ban on campaigning.

Comment [M5]: Again, this is not true. We had no choice but to accept the January 29 primary.

Comment [M6]: We had a compliant plan, but while millions of dollars in political money poured into these early states, not one of them offered to help pay for an alternative primary. Primaries are not free. (see attachments below)

Comment [M7]: This is false. The DNC offered \$866,000 to pay for a 150-site caucus for 150,000 people. At this time, the DNC had \$4 million in the bank and \$2 million in debt. The offer was not realistic. (see attachments below) In Iowa, a much smaller state without Voting Rights Act requirements, there were almost 2,000 caucus sites and more than 200,000 showed up. In a normal Florida election, there are 7000 polling precincts. On Jan. 29th, 1.75 million people voted, despite having no delegates and the early states’ campaign ban.

Comment [M8]: After months and months of trying to find an alternative that would work, Democrats had to settle on the state-run, taxpayer-funded Jan. 29th primary. This was the only way to guarantee an organized election in which everyone, including military service members overseas, elderly, disabled, shift workers, etc. could participate. It would have been un-Democratic for the FDP to support any other option at the time.

Holding an early primary in Michigan would “give five million Michigan citizens a chance to cast their votes,” said Jennifer Granholm, the state’s Democratic governor. “A primary held in late February, after the nominations have been decided by earlier contests, would be an exercise in futility.”

Of course, the lesson for Florida and Michigan, at least this year, is that every state matters and continues to matter as we move into April. Florida and Michigan must face the consequences of their decisions.

That said, because millions of people from Florida and Michigan should not be punished for the short-sighted acts of their state’s Democratic Party leaders, the states’ delegates should be welcome at the national convention in Denver. But the delegates “won” in those noncompliant elections in January should be split 50-50 between the two remaining candidates.

There is no such thing as a do-over. Do-overs are what you get when the end results don’t matter. Do-overs are what children do on a playground. Adults accept their mistakes, learn from them and move on.

Comment [M9]: Millions of people were punished most of all because of the Four State Pledge, which was nowhere in any Rules and in fact, intentionally misinterpreted the Rules. No Democrat has the right to tell presidential candidates that they can only talk to wealthy contributors – not regular voters – but that’s exactly what the Four State Pledge did. If “Rules Count,” then why was the 100% delegate penalty not enough for the early states? Why did they make up their own rules? Note that the specific DNC Rule that the Pledge alludes to actually bans fundraising, though the Pledge falsely claims it doesn’t. Clearly, the early states wanted to protect the money flowing into their states. See the FDP’s website for three different versions of the Pledge.

Comment [M10]: The Florida Democratic Party made it very clear to the Legislature that penalties would result. The Republicans figured this out, followed their rules and preserved the early states’ place in the process.

Comment [M11]: The irony here is striking. Carrie Giddins, formerly of the Iowa Democratic Party, has clearly not moved on from her old job. Despite the fact that Iowa and the other early states held on to their privileged place in the process and millions in political money, Giddins and others continue to attack Florida Democrats with lies and distortions. If anyone needs to move on, it’s the early states whose special primaries were not affected by anything that Florida Democrats did.

FACT-CHECKING THE REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA

For Immediate Release
March 19, 2008

Katie Gordon
Contact: (850) 222-7920

RPOF Chairman Jim Greer: Time to Set the Record Straight

Tallahassee-Republican Party of Florida Chairman Jim Greer today released the following statement to regarding Florida Democrats' misleading rhetoric on the Florida primary:

"FDP Chairman Karen Thurman has recently been seen in the national media deceiving Floridians and the nation. It's time to set the record straight since the Democrats obviously wish to rewrite history and distort the facts. Here are the facts: Florida Democrats co-sponsored the bill moving the primary forward. They voted for it unanimously. Later, when they realized that they were disenfranchising 1.7 million Democrats by ignoring the official state primary held on January 29, they scrambled for a political strategy and couldn't find one.

"Governor Charlie Crist demonstrated his commitment to ensuring that every vote cast by Floridians counted, by offering to allow the state to verify the signatures in order to ensure the integrity of a mail in revote, but the Democrats turned him down. Furthermore, I as Chairman of the State Republican Party, did not oppose at any time efforts to ensure that a revote counted.

"Though it is unfortunate that Karen Thurman would say that the Governor did nothing to help, it is certainly not surprising—she and Howard Dean want Florida voters to forget that Florida Democrat leaders supported the early primary and deflect focus off of their failure to provide leadership in resolving this issue.

"It's obvious that Karen Thurman continues to be frustrated about the facts getting in her way. The facts are this: the Florida and National Democrat Parties have ignored voters in Florida and if they continue down this path they will disenfranchise Florida voters from the process of choosing the next President of the United States."

Below, Democrats in their own words support the early primary regardless of the DNC's penalties:

Dan Gelber, House Democratic Leader

"Lawmakers supporting the move -- including House Speaker Marco Rubio, R-West Miami, and House Democratic Leader Dan Gelber of Miami Beach -- downplay the risk of being punished." (Orlando Sentinel, 01/26/07)

"Rep. Dan Gelber, D-Miami Beach, the House Democratic leader, said Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean called him to say the move could have consequences... Florida Democratic Party Chair Karen Thurman also sent the House committee members a letter warning them not to push the primary any earlier than Feb. 5. 'I don't have any constituents in the DNC,' Gelber said. 'I only have constituents in my district. They would like to be more relevant.'" (Sun-Sentinel, 02/09/07)

"This part of the problem is echoed by House Democratic Leader Dan Gelber of Miami Beach, who is backing Mr. Rivera's bill [to move up the Florida Primary to January 29] in part because he represents 'a lot people who would like to be in the primary journey as more than just potential contributors.'" (Tallahassee Democrat, 02/12/07)

"'We'd have a national cat fund right now if we had an early primary,' state House Democratic Leader Dan

Comment [M12]: This is incorrect. Only one Democrat sponsored the bill to move the primary forward

Comment [M13]: Again, incorrect. Rep. Jack Seiler voted against the bill. It's a minor point, but if RPOF seeks to "set the record straight", they should get the facts right.

Comment [M14]: More falsehoods: The Florida Democratic Party began working on alternative processes well before the primary passed the Legislature in May.

Comment [M15]: Conflicting statements have been given by the Governor's staff. Governor Crist's office made it very clear that he did not "offer to allow the state to verify the signatures," and in fact, claimed that the Florida Democratic Party's assertion that he would allow the state to "supervise" signature verification was reading far too much into the Governor's words. Sterling Ivey, the Governor's press secretary and spokesman for Secretary of State, said: "There's no authority under Florida law that would allow county supervisors of election or the state to verify signatures in an election of a state party." [Miami Herald, 3/14/08]

Comment [M16]: Chairwoman Thurman has, in fact, thanked the Governor for his statements of support, however, his staff has made it clear that he would not help in the way that RPOF presents it.

Comment [M17]: A juvenile and pathetic error that RPOF constantly makes: it's the Florida Democratic Party (not Democrat Party). Even President Bush apologized for making a similar error.

Comment [M18]: These quotes all come from before the time that the DNC made a serious effort to explain the penalties.

Comment [M19]: This quotation negates what appears earlier in the release.

Gelber said. (Tampa Tribune, 03/07/07)

House Democrats

“Supporters say the change would give Florida a stronger and earlier voice in the primary system while forcing candidates to take stands on issues that matter to Floridians, like a national catastrophe fund to help cover costs of hurricanes and other natural disasters. ‘We have a duty to the rest of the country to be in this process from the beginning,’ said Rep. Keith Fitzgerald, a Sarasota Democrat and political science professor. ‘I think our voters don’t want to be left out.’” (St. Petersburg Times, 02/09/07)

Comment [M20]: See Comment 18.

“But those concerns were largely drowned out by their enthusiasm for making Florida an even bigger player on the national political stage. ‘There will be very little opposition in the entire state, I think,’ said Rep. Elaine Schwartz, D-Hollywood.” (Orlando Sentinel, 02/09/07)

Jeremy Ring, Democratic State Senator and Co-Sponsor

“‘If (DNC chairman) Howard Dean thinks the candidates are not going to campaign in Florida, he’s got to be insane - not with all the Florida money at stake,’ said state Sen. Jeremy Ring, D-Margate, sponsor of the early primary bill.” (St. Petersburg Times, 04/28/07)

Comment [M21]: Senator Ring was the only Democratic sponsor of the primary bill. There were no Democratic co-sponsors. The final omnibus elections bill had numerous Democratic co-sponsors because of the paper trail legislation that was combined with it.

Mark Bubriski, Florida Democratic Party Spokesman

“Florida Democrats are all for [moving the primary up],’ Mark Bubriski, spokesman for the Florida Democratic Party, said at the time.” (The St. Petersburg Times, 10/07/07)

Comment [M22]: Note that this quote came well before the details of the primary bill emerged and the DNC explained the penalties.

Karen Thurman, Florida Democratic Party Chair

“State Democratic Party Chairwoman Karen Thurman agreed. ‘I don’t see any downside to it,’ she said.” (Tampa Tribune, 11/30/2006)

Comment [M23]: See previous comment.

Proposal from DNC for Florida caucus, August 2007

FLORIDA PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUS DRAFT BUDGET

Comments

FLORIDA PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUS DRAFT BUDGET			Comments
Staff			
Caucus director	5 mo @ \$9k/month	\$45,000	
Depty director	5 mo@5k//month	\$25,000	
Regional field staff	5 people , 2mo at 4k/month	\$80,000	to nail down locations, recruit train caucus conveners
Caucus sites			
Average	\$2,000 venue costs		
	per site	\$300,000	Some sites will cost far more but many sites can use free or cheap public spaces that are routinely made available to outside groups
Ballot printing	.55*120,000	\$66,000	
Printing-- instructions & materials		\$15,000	
Optical scan machines	1 high speed x 25 CD's	\$50,000	
Communications/outreach			
Autocalls	.06*3 mil names on file with phones	\$180,000	
Targeted mailings		\$30,000	
Speciality media		\$75,000	
TOTAL		\$866,000	

One of Many Versions of Alternative Proposal from the Florida Democratic Party

GENERAL	SPECIFIC	DESCRIPTION	ITEM SUB-TOTAL	ITEM TOTAL	CATEGORY TOTAL
Main Headquarters	Rent	\$5,000/mo	\$35,000	\$35,000	
open for 7 months	Telephone Land Line Deposit	\$120 x 10 lines = \$1200	\$8,400	\$8,400	
	Telephone Monthly	\$50 x 10 lines = \$500	\$3,500	\$3,500	
	Telephone Long Distance	\$200/mo x 10 lines = \$2000	\$14,000	\$14,000	
	Cable Hook up	\$250		\$250	
	Cable Television/Internet Service	\$100/mo	\$700	\$700	
	Insurance	(estimate)		\$2,500	
	Utilities	\$1,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	
	Laptop Computer	\$1400 x 15 = \$15,000		\$15,000	
	High Speed Printers	\$600 x 2		\$1,200	
	Fax Machines	\$200 x 2		\$400	
	High Speed Copier and Toner	\$200/mo	\$1,400	\$1,400	
	Furniture	\$2,000		\$2,000	
	Office Supplies	\$500/mo	\$3,500	\$3,500	
	Wiring for Internet	(estimate)		\$1,000	
	Phone System	(estimate)		\$1,500	
	Technology Hardware/Software			\$10,000	
					\$107,350
Regional Headquarters			x 5 months	x 8 offices	
open for 5 months	Rental	\$5,000/mo	\$25,000	\$200,000	
	Telephone Land Line Deposit	\$120 x 10 lines = \$1200	\$1,200	\$9,600	
	Telephone Monthly	\$50 x 10 lines = \$500	\$2,500	\$20,000	
	Telephone Long Distance	\$100/month x 10 lines	\$1,000	\$8,000	
	Cable Hook up	\$250	\$250	\$2,000	
	Cable Television/Internet Service	\$100/month	\$500	\$40,000	
	Insurance	(estimate)	\$2,500	\$20,000	
	Utilities	\$1000/mo	\$5,000	\$40,000	
	Laptop Computer	\$1400 x 6 = \$8400		\$67,200	
	High Speed Printers	\$700		\$5,600	
	Fax Machines	\$200		\$1,600	
	High Speed Copier and Toner	\$200/mo	\$1,000	\$8,000	
	Furniture	\$1,000		\$8,000	
	Office Supplies	\$200/mo	\$1,000	\$8,000	
	Office Upgrade Needs	\$1,000		\$8,000	
	Office Maintenance	\$100/mo	\$500	\$4,000	
	Secure Server	\$5,000		\$40,000	
	Wiring for Internet/Phones	\$1,000		\$8,000	
	Phone System	\$1,000		\$8,000	
					\$506,000
Outreach and Education					
Statewide Direct Mail #1					
	Postage	5,000,000 reg. voters x .16		\$800,000	
	Printing	5,000,000 reg. voters x .16		\$800,000	

Statewide Direct Mail #2			
	Postage	1,500,000 voters x .18	\$270,000
	Printing	1,500,000 voters x .15	\$225,000
Targeted Mailings	Constituency Based: African American Caribbean/Haitian Creole Language Hispanic/ Spanish Language Senior Print Media Other: faith based, glbt, occupational, etc.		\$30,000
Paid Phones	Deadline Reminder Call	350,000 voters x .06	\$21,000
Specialty Print Media	Constituency Based: African American Caribbean/Haitian Creole Language Hispanic/ Spanish Language Senior Print Media Other: faith based, glbt, occupational, etc.		\$150,000
Specialty Radio	Constituency Based: African American Caribbean/Haitian Spanish		\$150,000
Volunteer Leaflet Drops	County specific doorhanger w/ instructions and drop off site information	300,000 x .15	\$45,000
			\$2,491,000
Voting Equipment Needs			
Ballot Boxes	optical scan/ locked sealed	350 x \$74.25	\$25,988
Staff/Volunteer Official I.D.	Lapel Pin	3000 x .25	\$750
Signage	Democratic Primary Ballot Official Drop-Off Site	2000 x \$1.00	\$2,000
			\$28,738
Voting Equipment and Ballot Transport			
Staff	Drivers	Volunteer	
Materials/Equipment Transport	Delivery to regional offices		\$5,000
Freight	Manufacturer to FL		\$2,000
Drop off Ballot Transport	County sites to Regional office		\$2,500
			\$9,500
Ballots			
Official Ballots	Printing	(estimate)	\$1,800,000
	Official Security Envelope		
	Official Return Envelope		

	Delivery Postage		
Replacement Ballots	Optical Scan Ballot Printing Replacement Security Envelope Replacement Return Envelope Delivery First Class Postage	(estimate)	\$200,000
Provisional Ballot	Optical Scan Ballot Printing Provisional Security Envelope Provisional Ballot Return Envelope Delivery First Class Postage	(estimate)	\$200,000
Spanish Ballots	Printing Spanish Security Envelope Spanish Return Envelope Delivery First Class Postage	(estimate)	\$75,000
Creole Ballots	Printing Creole Security Envelope Creole Return Envelope Delivery First Class Postage	(estimate)	\$50,000
			\$2,325,000

Ballot Processing

Security Guards	\$250/shift x 3 shifts x 7 days = \$5250	x 9 sites	\$47,250
Credentials	Observer Ballot Handler Media Staff Volunteer Security	(all credentials)	\$2,500
Official Recording Forms	TBD	(estimate)	\$2,000
Lockable Storage Cases	TBD	(estimate)	\$10,000
Optical Scan Equipment	Precinct Counters High Speed Counters		
Handheld Bar Code Scanners	5 scanners x 9 sites	(\$400-\$500 each)	\$20,000
			\$81,750

SUBTOTAL	\$5,549,338
STAFF	\$1,834,400
TOTAL	\$7,383,738