

VIRGINIA'S PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

By William Nicoson

Now its your turn to choose your favorite Democratic candidate for President. On Tuesday, February 10, the polls open in Reston at 6 AM and close at 7 PM.

Of the dropout candidates, Carol Moseley-Braun, former Congresswoman and former Ambassador to New Zealand, made her decision in time to remove her name from the ballot. Dick Gephardt, former House leader, left the campaign trail after the ballot was printed. His name will remain on the ballot, a forlorn reminder of the hazards of political fortune.

The ballot will also list candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., a cult economist in Loudoun County who has been on every Democratic primary ballot for President since 1980. While serving five years in prison on tax fraud and conspiracy charges, LaRouche nevertheless ran as a Democratic candidate for President in 1992. This year his name has been registered to appear on the primary ballots of 19 states (including New Hampshire) and may appear on ballots in 17 others where he has sought registration. In the universe of 50 states, these addled efforts are less rational than tilting at windmills.

In addition to Messrs. Gephardt and LaRouche, the candidates on the February 10 ballot will be: New York City activist Al Sharpton, Massachusetts Senator John F. Kerry, retired four-star General Wesley K. Clark, former Vermont Governor Howard Dean, Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, North Carolina Senator John Edwards, and Congressman and former Cleveland Mayor Dennis J. Kucinich.

I've been intrigued by the disconnect between endorsements of the candidates and results. The major candidates have all flaunted heavy-hitter endorsements. Howard Dean, riding high in the early polls, was endorsed with fanfare by Al Gore, former Vice President and 2000 presidential candidate. Dean's standing in the polls and in the Iowa caucuses instantly sank.

Joe Lieberman has sought to turn the Gore endorsement of Dean into sympathy support for himself. Lieberman was Gore's Vice Presidential candidate in 2000. As a courtesy to Gore, Lieberman had delayed his entry into the 2004 primaries until Gore announced he would not be a candidate. But whatever sympathy for Lieberman may have resulted, it failed to lift Lieberman from also-ran status in New Hampshire.

I thought maybe endorsements by local rather than national politicians might be more effective. John Edwards was endorsed by New Hampshire's former Senator John Durkin and by New Hampshire's House Democratic leader Peter Burling. Edwards finished fourth in the New Hampshire primary.

Worse was the outcome for Dick Gephardt who enjoyed the endorsement of Iowa Senator Tom

Harkin. Alas, that failed to save him from a similar fourth place in the Iowa caucuses which forced the Congressman from neighboring Missouri to end his political career.

General Clark has been endorsed by former Senator and presidential candidate George McGovern, former Secretary of the Navy John Dalton, and numerous Congressmen. His showing in the New Hampshire primary in a distant third place, after some polls predicted first place, was disappointing.

John Kerry's most ringing endorsement has come from fellow Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy. This was more than a nod and a smile. Kennedy has taken to the hustings beside Kerry and has managed to outshout even Howard Dean. Here at last is an endorsement that may have contributed to Kerry's winning performance in both Iowa and New Hampshire.

Based on his comprehensive experience in both domestic and international affairs, Kerry deserves to win the nomination. This is not an endorsement: I want Kerry to have a fair chance.

William Nicoson last campaigned in the 1968 presidential primary for Nelson Rockefeller.