

# Missouri's \$7 Million Question

By: Kevin Schwaller

Missouri taxpayers will foot a several million dollar bill for a February presidential primary that has no direct impact on the candidate Republicans will choose as their nominee

When voters pick their favorite GOP contender on February 7, they're participating in what amounts to a large poll (and one that is missing a key player at that).

Republicans are instead using a caucus process, starting in March, to figure out which delegates will go to the national convention.

According to current estimates from the Missouri Secretary of State's Office, the presidential primary will cost taxpayers \$7 million. That figure doesn't include what local governments pay to put community issues on the ballot.

## How This Happened

A long, long time ago (ok, [it was 2010](#)) in a decision not so far away, Republican National Committee and Democratic National Committee said only a few states could pick delegates before March of 2012. Lawmakers in the Show-Me state tried to try to change the date of Missouri's legally-mandated February primary.

A bill cleared the Missouri House and Senate, but Gov. Jay Nixon (D-Missouri) vetoed the legislation. Gov. Nixon says [he had problems](#) with two election provisions attached to the bill. The special session didn't solve the issue either.

So, the Missouri Republican State Committee faced a choice: change the time of the delegate selection or lose some of their delegates.

"We wanted to make sure that we had our full delegate strength at 52 and not be cut in half. And that was going to be the penalty the RNC was going to do if we had held our primary and bound our delegates in February," Smith said.

Now, [Republicans are holding caucuses in March](#), more than a month after \$7 million (estimate) presidential primary.

"I think everyone should be involved in this particular primary election and vote," said Smith. "Some areas will have other things on the ballot besides this related to maybe school bond issues or tax issues in their local communities. So, we always want people to take the opportunity to vote."

## The Ballot

Yes, you are probably looking at the picture below and asking yourself why this doesn't look like what you're seeing in current political coverage.

After all, of the four Republican candidates in last night's NBC debate, one of them isn't on the ballot. That's right, you won't find Newt Gingrich, the man who [just won South Carolina's primary](#) and is [polling well in Florida too](#). Gingrich has said his decision not to participate in the Missouri primary [was intentional](#).

The primary is non-binding; it is followed a month later by caucuses where Missourians pick their convention delegates. But every other major candidate is participating in the primary, which gives the public an idea of where Show Me State voters stand.

"We have never participated in beauty contests," Gingrich said when asked about his failure to qualify for the ballot. "We didn't participate in Ames [the Iowa straw poll], we didn't participate in P5 [a Florida straw poll]."

-The Washington Post 12/05/2011

"It's very simple here. You actually pay \$1,000 and you actually do a small amount of paperwork and you're on the ballot," said Smith. "The Gingrich campaign either chose not to do that or they let the date slip by, one of the two. I'm not real sure. But I know they are going to be involved in the caucus process."

And no, you are not seeing things. Herman Cain is still [endorsing "we the people"](#). Rick Perry and Michele Bachmann are also out. And yes, they will still appear on Missouri's ballot. Maybe if [Stephen Colbert focuses his efforts](#) on Missouri, Cain could pull out a win in February!

Poor attempts at comedy aside, there [are still questions](#) about how much clout Missouri's Caucus will have come March.

### **Why Missouri's Primary Could Still Count**

Brian Calfano, KOLR10/KOZL political analyst and Missouri State University associate professor, says the primary could help candidates.

"Even though you can say it doesn't count, it doesn't matter, the actual real stuff is going to be in March, the point is that it's a chance to get out in front of voters who are going to matter in less than a year," Calfano said. "And if anything, I think that's why everyone still wants to go to Iowa, even though it means really little. Jon Huntsman didn't campaign there and to his own peril."

And the Missouri Republican Party also sees some value in the primary as well.

"I think all elections are important, and particularly something like this," said Lloyd Smith, executive director of the Missouri Republican Party. "I think it helps [the candidates] to start to energize their folks to get to the polls. I think it is kind of a first step for most of these candidates to prepare themselves for the delegate selection process."