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State should consider moving primary back

By Bob Hussey

The Star Tribune's Feb. 23 editorial that endorses a June primary completely missed the mark. The Grove commission reforms would give political parties more influence in the nominating process and increase the importance of money in the electoral system. There aren't two better reasons why such reforms should *not* be adopted.

Any changes to Minnesota's electoral system should be centered around four major

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goals: 1) making it easy for eligible citizens to vote; 2) ensuring that each vote is accurately counted; 3) minimizing the ability of political parties to control the system; and 4) reducing the influence of money.

On the first two points, Minnesota appears to be in good shape. Rules such as same-day

voter registration have been a success. Likewise, the accuracy of our system has not caused camps of lawyers and reporters to descend on our state, as in Florida or Ohio.

But if we were to adopt the Grove Commission reforms, we would be moving in the wrong direction in both the areas of political party influence and campaign finance.

Don't get me wrong: Anyone who gets involved in politics should be applauded for their public service. However, so-called "party activists" tend to be more extreme in their views than the average voter. Giving them too much influence in deciding which candidates get on the ballot will make it more difficult for moderate candidates to ultimately be considered for office. Ballot access should not be restricted to those candidates who are considered ideologically pure by a small cadre of party loyalists.

Does the Star Tribune actually want to give our politicians more time to raise money? Shouldn't we be looking for ways to take the

money out of politics and lessen its influence? Here's an idea. Let's move the primary date back to late September, shrinking the general election to six weeks. With less time to campaign, the candidates may actually spend more time talking about the important issues that really matter to Minnesotans and less time defining (a.k.a. attacking) each other. A shorter campaign season also would mean a summer relatively free from politics, something that everyone except political consultants would sup-

port. And voters, who normally begin suffering from campaign fatigue by late September, might actually pay closer attention to the resulting debate on the issues and get more involved in the process.

Electoral reform is a worthy issue for the Legislature to consider, but let's keep our priorities straight. Any changes should benefit and empower voters, not candidates or political parties.

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