

## **Testimony in Favor of HB 408:**

**“AN ACT moving the date of the state primary to the fourth Tuesday in August.”**

Rep. Timothy Horrigan (Strafford 10)  
House Election Law Committee; February 25, 2025

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The issue of moving the state primary to an earlier date has come before the House Election Law Committee many times in the past. I myself have sponsored two such bills, neither of which went very far.

HB 408 (as introduced) proposes moving the state primary to the fourth Tuesday in August of an even-numbered year. That means the primary would henceforth be held sometime between August 22 and August 28. The next state primary would take place on August 25, 2026.

The status quo is that the state primary is held on the second Tuesday in September of an even-numbered year. That means the primary is held sometime between September 8 and September 14. If our state’s election calendar stays the same, the next state primary would take place on September 8, 2026, the day after Labor Day. Having an election on the day after a holiday poses certain (but relatively minor) logistical difficulties. Once every seven election cycles, the state primary takes place on September 14. When that happens, the Secretary of State and other election officials have just 49 days to get ready for the general election rather than the usual 56 days, which poses major logistical difficulties.

Two years ago, the House passed HB 115, which started out as a June primary bill and was amended by a bipartisan and veto-proof majority in the House to be an August primary bill. The Senate turned HB 115 back into a June primary bill and the House rejected it during the committee of conference process. There was some concern that the Governor would veto an August primary bill, but we have a different Governor now. Also, as I just said, in 2023, the August primary was supported by a veto proof margin.

If we pass HB 408, election officials would have several more weeks to prepare for the General Election, but the basic structure of the biennial election cycle would stay the same. We would still have a late primary, which is a good thing because it gives the voters more time to make their choices, and because lesser-known candidates have more time to catch up with the front-runners. A later primary is much better for legislative candidates, incumbents and challengers alike, since the filing period comes near the end of the second-year session.