'96 GOP primary has party preference change

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Q. I vote Republican. I didn't like the 1992 presidential preference primary when we had to declare our party affiliation to election workers. Will we have to do that in the GOP primary Tuesday, March 19?

A. No. Public Act 87 of 1995 restores the "open" primary. You need only be a registered voter.

By the way, the hours are 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and you vote in your usual precincts.

Q. Why are so many of the dropouts — like Phil Gramm — still on the ballot?

A. Deadline for withdrawal was Jan. 12, when Gramm was still a candidate.

On the Michigan ballot, in alphabetical order, will be nine candidates: Lamar Alexander, Patrick Buchanan, Bob Dole, Robert Dornan, Steve Forbes, Phil Gramm, Alan Keyes, Richard Lugar and Maurice Taylor.

Q. What if I don't care for any of them? Can I vote for "none of the above"?

A. No. But you may write in another name. Or you may vote "uncommitted."

Q. May I vote absentee?

A. Yes. Absent voter ballots are ready at your city or township clerk's office. Deadline for applying is 2 p.m. Saturday, March 16. You may also vote by AV at the clerk's office until 4 p.m. Monday, March 16.

Voters 60 or older may vote ab-

sentee. Others may vote absentee if they 1) expect to be out of town election day, 2) will be serving as a precinct inspector at a different precinct, 3) are unable to go to the polls for religious reasons, 4) are physically unable to go to the polls, 5) or are in jail awaiting arraignment or trial.

Q. Will we also vote for convention delegates?

A. No. Republican precinct delegates you elected in 1994 will meet in county or congressional district conventions April 23 and pick delegates for a state convention May 17-18 in Grand Rapids.

The state convention will elect Michigan's Republican national committeeman and committee woman as well as national con-

vention delegates.

Party rules will determine how delegates are apportioned between candidates and "uncommitted," based on primary results.

The delegation will attend the Republican National Convention Aug. 11-15 in San Diego.

Q. What if I'm a Democrat or Libertarian?

A. Democrats will have no names on the ballot, and the primary doesn't count for their party. Under national party rules, Democrats will hold caucuses March 16.

The Libertarian Party didn't qualify for the primary ballot because its Senate candidate fell short of 5 percent in 1994. Liber-

tarians will have to use the convention route to nominate any and all candidates. Ditto for any other parties.

Q. The rules seem to keep changing. Why?

A. Michigan used the presidential primary from 1916 to 1928, then abandoned it for the precinct delegate system. It was so "open" that in 1920 Herbert Hoover won the 1920 Democratic primary and finished fourth in the Republican primary.

In 1972 Michigan returned to the primary system, but immediately there was trouble. With President Nixon assured of renomination, many GOP loyalists crossed over to the Democratic primary and gave Alabama's

George C. Wallace the bulk of the votes.

Thereafter, the national Democratic Party decreed that its national convention delegates could come only from a "closed" system in which only declared Democrats participated.

So Michigan adopted a "closed" primary in 1992. Voters in most states have no problem declaring their affiliations, but Michigan voters — particularly Republicans — hated it.

In 1995, with Republicans controlling both chambers for the first time in decades, the state Legislature adopted an "open" primary law. Democrats are forced to shun it and will have a Democrats-only caucus three days earlier.

Democrats must declare affiliation by March 16

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

Q. I consider myself a Democrat. Should I vote in the Democratic Party caucus Saturday, March 16, or the presidential primary Tuesday, March 19?

A. Go to your local caucus Saturday, March 16. No names will be on the Democratic side of the ballot in the March 16 primary. The primary won't count in the allocation of delegates to the Democratic national convention.

Q. Will I have to tell my party affiliation at the caucus?

A. Yes. Party rules say only declared Democrats may take part in the presidential candidate selection process. You'll be asked to sign a statement confirming you are a Democrat.

Q. Do they check to see if you're registered to vote?

A. No, but you'll be asked for identification — either a Michigan driver's license, a state ID card or your voter registration

card. You'll be asked to sign a statement confirming that you are a registered voter.

One little quirk: Persons who aren't 18 and registered may take part in the Democratic caucus if they affirm they will be 18 by Nov. 5 and will register to vote in that election.

Q. Who's on the ballot? Did Paul Paulsen and Lyndon LaRouche make it?

A. Your three choices are Bill Clinton, a write-in and "Uncom-

mitted."

You'll vote on a ballot and drop it in a ballot box — just like a standard election.

Q. Is the March 16 caucus just for precinct delegates?

A. No, it's for all declared Democrats.

Q. May I vote absentee?

A. Only if your religious convictions prevent your participation March 16. To obtain an absentee vote application, write the Michigan Democratic Party, 606 Town-

send, Lansing 48933; or phone (517) 371-5410.

Q. For this caucus, do I vote in my regular precinct?

A. No. The party has divided the state into 300 caucus zones. You may participate only in the zone in which you live. This newspaper will publish announcements from local party leaders about caucus sites.

If you lose the article, call your local party leader or Democratic headquarters in Lansing at the

above number.

Q. Hey! As you've described it, I could also vote in the March 19 Republican primary, too, couldn't I?

A. Yes. Party leaders officially disapprove of Democrats' invading the GOP primary, but the truth is that it can be done.

Republicans opted for an "open" primary, where a voter doesn't have to declare a party affiliation, knowing there was a risk of a crossover.

T-W's 'lockbox' tides parents over for V-chip production

Violence on television ... it's a subject that's surely receiving much attention these days — even in Congress. There are many parents, educators, and politicians who strongly feel violence in the media contributes to violence in society.

In a previous column, I informed you about the V-chip (if

you missed the article, call me at 473-7266 and I'll send you a copy).

The V-chip is a new technological device parents can use to screen violent or indecent programming on their television sets. This little silicon wafer will be installed in every newly manufactured TV set sold in the future.

The V-Chip Provision sponsored by U.S. Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., was part of the Telecommunications Bill that recently passed.

But, the FCC says the impact of the new law will be slow. The V-chip is at least two years away. So, what can you do in the mean-

time?

If you subscribe to Time Warner Cable Company, here's a solution. The 1984 Cable Act and it's implementing rules provide that subscribers are entitled to receive (at a cost determined by the operator) a device called the "lockbox" or "parental lock."

The parental lock is built right into the converter box. It can block out any channel from network to premium, yet give you access when you want access (like when the kids are tucked away safely for the night).

All you have to do is call a Time Warner customer service representative at 553-7300 and

ask for it. In most cases, the representative will give you a four-digit code right over the phone which will perform the function. The service is offered at no cost to the subscriber.

There is also a device available on the market now which you can buy to limit the amount of time children watch TV. It's called the "TV Allowance." Each child receives a time allowance for the week programmed by the parent.

The TV will not turn on without an accurate ID code entered in the TV allowance which has time remaining. TV allowance also allows the complete block of certain channels. The cost of the

TV allowance is $99.

For information on TV allowance, call 1-800-231-4410.

The Technidyne Corporation is in the process of working on the TV Guardian. It allows parents to assess programs on TV and make selections for their children to watch by blocking channels, programs or limiting the number of hours of viewing time.

The TV Guardian works through a set-top box which connects to the TV and VCR. It is equipped with a security PIN system.

You may order the TV Guardian by mail in about 60 days. The cost is $129.95. For information,

call 1-800-873-0952.

There is, of course, another method for ensuring that our children don't watch what we don't want them to . . . it's called the "off" switch!

The next Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission meeting is 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at Farmington City Hall. The next Cable Access Committee meeting will be 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 12, at SWOCC offices.

Mary Linda Calderone is the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Southwestern Oakland Commission.