

Presidential primary bill up

The Senate said no to eliminating the 30-day party designation requirement. Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, defended the closed primary: 'A primary is not a public election. It's something we have a right to say is closed.'

(AP) — The Michigan Senate is poised to vote on redefining a presidential primary in the state, although it would require voters to declare a party preference 30 days before the election.

The Senate moved the bill into position for a vote after defeating attempts to remove the party declaration provision.

"The bill would schedule a presidential primary for the third Tuesday in March 1992. The primary would replace the party caucuses that are used by Republicans and Democrats this year to select delegates to their national presidential nominating conventions."

"We need to open up the process so they (citizens) have a more direct say in the nominating process," said Sen. Dick Posthumus, R-Lowell, the bill's sponsor.

"It gives independents the ability to move back and forth" between the major party races in successive elections, he said. "It will be very, very healthy."

But SEN. Sen. Ed Fredricks, R-Holland, pushed to open the process even wider by eliminating the 30-day party designation requirement.

"This simply brings back the form we left," Fredricks said, referring to

the system used from 1972 to 1980. That open primary permitted "cross-over" voting, or Republicans voting in the Democratic race, and vice versa.

Democrats quit using the primary after 1976, and the GOP dropped it after 1980. In 1984, both parties used caucuses to select convention delegates.

Posthumus said he agreed philosophically with Fredricks, but

warned the national Democratic

Party wouldn't accept the results of an open primary.

"We don't have the choice of an open primary, realistically," he said. "It's not a perfect bill, but it's much more open than the current caucus system."

"We have to make a compromise," said Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mount Pleasant. "We can't have all that we want."

SEN. DOUG CRUCE, R-Troy, defended the closed primary system.

"A primary is not a public election," he said, arguing it's a party selection process. "It's something we have a right to say is closed . . . I think it's logical, I think it's good common sense."

Fredricks' attempt to restore the open primary failed on a vote of 16-5.

Victims' rights proposal backed

Two suburban senators are among a group of lawmakers urging a constitutional amendment to enshrine crime victims' rights in law.

"The public strongly supports basic rights for crime victims, and this will fill a gap in the Constitution," said Sen. Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, who co-wrote the Senate Judicial Affairs Committee.

Added Sen. William Faust, D-Westland: "Statistically, one out of three Michigan residents stands to be a victim of crime in his or her lifetime. We must therefore establish in the Constitution fundamental rights of any person who may become a victim of crime."

The Michigan Constitution, they said, protects only basic rights for criminal defendants. Their proposal would add the federal Uniform Crime Victims' Rights Act in the Constitution if their proposal gets on the ballot and is adopted by voters.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL amend-

ment would guarantee crime victims:

- The right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process.

- The right to timely disposition of the case following the arrest of the accused.

- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal justice process.

- The right to notification of court proceedings.

- The right to attend trial and all other court proceedings the accused has a right to attend.

- The right to confer with the prosecutor.

- The right to make a statement to the court at sentencing.

- The right to restitution.

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