

California leaning toward returning to June for primary election

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

Tired of presidential candidates treating California like an ATM, raising vast sums of money here but spending it in states where campaigns cost less and matter more, state officials four years ago agreed to hold the 2008 primary in February.

The early date, they hoped, might focus more attention on the Golden State. "Now California is important again in presidential nominating politics," Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said at the time.

But more than 20 other states moved their primaries up, too, and California, if not the afterthought it was in previous elections, was marginalized yet again.

Now, Gov. Jerry Brown is expected to sign legislation moving next year's presidential primary back to June, consolidating it with the statewide primary election.

"We've learned that shifting a date doesn't matter," said Jaime Regalado, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute of Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles. "Only if we had a more competitive balance between the two parties, then I think we would play a larger role ... Then they simply wouldn't drop in, parachute in to get money, and leave."

Assembly Bill 80, by Assemblyman Paul Fong, D-Cupertino, to shift the primary election to June, moved through the Legislature with bipartisan support, though some Republicans said they voted for it reluctantly only because of the cost

savings involved.

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