

Opinion: Candidates need reminder that Nevada is important

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Now that Nevada Republicans have settled on Feb. 4 as the date for their presidential nomination caucuses, their challenge is to sell the idea to the candidates, as well as to the party's own rank-and-file members.

That may not be as easy as mollifying those Eastern states that insisted on keeping some distance between their primaries and the Nevada caucuses, but it's even more important.

With campaign money and time tight nearly a year before the presidential election, the Republican candidates are carefully choosing their spots, campaigning where they believe they have something to gain, or lose. So far, they hadn't shown much interest in Nevada until former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney visited Las Vegas last week and told an audience in the state hit hardest by the mortgage crisis that the foreclosure process should be allowed to play itself out. (That was followed by a quick visit to Vegas, a city he's already insulted several times, by President Barack Obama, who announced an expanded program to help homeowners refinance their mortgages.)

That's pretty much what happened four years ago. The Republican candidates generally stayed away from Nevada, while the leading Democrats regularly made the rounds. That likely helped Democrats get out the vote in the 2008 election for Obama.

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