

Opinion: Caucus fumble makes Nevada look amateurish

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When Nevada first became an early caucus state four years ago, it wasn't one of our finer moments.

Organizers, particularly on the Republican side, were not prepared for the higher-than expected turnout, which awarded victories to Hillary Clinton for the Democrats and Mitt Romney for the Republicans. Ballots were in short supply, and some caucus goers, waiting in long lines outside on that cold January day, gave up and went home without taking part.

It was so chaotic in some caucus locations that then State Senate Minority Leader Dina Titus, D-Las Vegas, considered legislative action to restore Nevada's primary election.

"This notion of neighbors getting together with neighbors to talk about politics, that's just not Nevada," she said at the time. "What I found in my caucus is that the meeting didn't lead to collaboration, cooperation and a good discussion. It led to hostility."

But when tempers cooled, most observers chalked up the chaos to inexperience. Organizers promised to be better prepared next time.

So much for that notion.

At the moment when our state needed to convince the nation we have our act together and are deserving of political relevance, we took chaos to a new level. Reacting to Florida's move to hold its primary on Jan. 31, Nevada Republicans announced they would hold their caucus on Jan. 14. What

followed was an embarrassing game of chicken. New Hampshire cried foul. Our GOP leadership said the date was firm. Then it wasn't so firm. Responding to boycott threats from several GOP candidates and the risk of losing delegates at the national Republican convention in Tampa next year, they moved the date to Feb. 4.

The date, in and of itself, isn't terrible. Nevada will be the first western state to cast its votes. But by then it might not matter. Just look at how the candidates have responded to the final early state schedule, which puts Nevada fifth after Iowa (Jan. 3), New Hampshire (Jan. 10), South Carolina (Jan. 21) and Florida (Jan. 31).

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