



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

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June 14, 2007

The Honorable André Bauer
President of the Senate
State House, 1st Floor, East Wing
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval S. 99, R-108.

I struggled down to the wire on this bill because it contains two principles seemingly in conflict with each other. Before I get into these principles, I would like to thank my party chairman for his persistent, but reasonable, advocacy of this bill. In addition to valid legal questions he raised, because of our funding, we find ourselves in the odd spot of being the only state in the country to do it as we do – which, in fairness, puts him at a most unusual spot as well.

Here is what I have been deliberating.

On the one hand, there is nothing more fundamental to the democratic process than fair and open elections, and if this were just about the presidential election, I would have supported it. There were also a number of additional considerations in the form of news coverage, candidate presence, and ultimate voice in Washington – but it seems these things would be sustained with or without public funding as long as South Carolina maintains its position as the gateway to the South in presidential elections.

On the other hand, it is our belief that government money should not be used in political party activities. As there are two separate elections, one for Republicans and another for Democrats, this seems to fall into this category. These party activities, indeed, still provide a public benefit – but in their present form, would come at double the cost of a single election to the taxpayer. As long as this is the case, I am, unfortunately, compelled to veto this legislation. Were parties willing to reimburse the Election Commission for the two separate events, I would be willing to support this legislation. Alternatively, if the parties were able to come together on a single election, I could support the legislation.

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The administration's position, if sustained, may carry with it several benefits to the parties themselves and people at large in South Carolina.

As onerous as it may be to raise money, doing so brings with it complete flexibility on setting the date of South Carolina primaries. Our state's agility and flexibility going forward in responding to what other states do may be one of the keys to keeping South Carolina in its very important position in the presidential election process. At present, we do not have to wait on the deliberations of a commission, board, Governor or legislative body in determining our primary date.

In addition, because of the way we have done things differently in presidential primaries, our state engages civil society and the electorate at large in a way that I think is profoundly good. I know that it is cumbersome and a lot of work to enlist hundreds and even thousands of people across our state to be involved in the running of an election, but it is that spirit of volunteerism that most struck de Tocqueville during his early visit to America two hundred years ago. Rather than having government take over yet another function of our lives, isn't there something quite healthy about people volunteering to administer elections that will impact the state and country in which they live? I believe that a lot of people are looking for areas in which to serve things bigger than themselves, and having civil society continue to be engaged in the administration of an election could be a great outlet for doing so.

Finally, why add to taxpayers the cost of something that has been well handled by the parties themselves the last twenty years?

For the reasons stated above, I am vetoing S.99, R.108, and returning it without my approval.

Sincerely,



Mark Sanford