

The love-hate view of the Iowa caucus

by UPI

DES MOINES, Iowa -- The complex and eccentric Iowa caucus highlights the high-stake politics of the U.S. presidential race as the sparsely populated state helps decide its outcome. Republican and Democratic presidential candidates spent a combined total of 18 months stumping in Iowa despite that fewer than 250,000 of the state's 2.9 million residents were expected to participate in Thursday's caucus process, USA Today said Wednesday. Election observers, including David Yepsen with The Des Moines Register, said that with no incumbent president or vice president running in 2008 and with no Midwestern candidate emerging as a clear front-runner, the Iowa caucus Thursday may be the most tenacious event ever. Yepsin said the influence of the Iowa caucus is more important this year as several states moved their primary votes to earlier dates, suggesting that "a candidate can't do poorly in Iowa and hope to recover." No presidential candidate placing lower than third in the Iowa caucus went on to win the presidency since 1972. Some members of Congress, however, refute the importance bestowed on Iowa as Sens. Carl Levin, D-Mich, and Bill Nelson, D-Fla., said they plan to introduce legislation to establish a rotating six multi-state primary system.

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