

Not a horse race

by The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

It's always nice to be ardently wooed. But so-called super delegates need to save themselves for the wedding night. And that would be the Democratic National Convention in August.

Sens. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are scrapping for every delegate apportioned in the state's primaries and caucuses. Neither might have the numbers to clinch by the convention, though mid-Atlantic primaries today could put one candidate more clearly in the lead - and primaries in Wisconsin, Ohio and Texas could add even more clarity.

But if it goes down to the wire, super delegates, who, according to party rules, are free to vote for whomever they wish, will have to be the tie-breakers. Each campaign is now pressing these delegates to commit. They shouldn't. They should wait until the nation's voters have spoken through the party primaries. And then they should cast their votes so that those voters' wishes are respected. Sen. John McCain has all but sewn up the GOP nomination. On the Democratic side, however, matters as of Monday were still very much in the air.

The party's super delegates are Democratic governors, the party's members in the U.S. House and Senate and all members of the Democratic National Committee. More than half already have committed to a candidate.

Of Wisconsin's 16 super delegates, four have gone for Obama and two for Clinton. Ten are undecided.

The remaining super delegates who are being courted need to stand firm, and those who have committed may need to rethink their positions come convention time. The party created super delegates in 1980 to bring cohesion to the party at nominating time - to give a unifying boost to the candidate for whom more people had voted but who might hold only a slim lead in delegates.

Commendably, the state's two U.S. senators and others have remained publicly uncommitted.

It will be a blow to party unity going into the general election if more people end up voting for one candidate over the other in the Democratic primaries and super delegates throw it to the other candidate anyway.

The party that was correctly indignant that the presidential candidate who won the popular vote was denied the victory in 2000 cannot be the same party that denies its nomination to the person with more votes in 2008.

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