

# Super Tuesday favors Clinton



TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The Super Tuesday regional primary, invented by Democrats to boost Southern moderates, may well live up to its billing this year after proving a disaster for its architects in 1988.

Of the 783 Democratic convention delegates at stake in the biggest day of the primaries, 633 are in seven Southern and border states. And Florida seems to be the only uncertainty as Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton looks for a Southern sweep to rocket his campaign into the Midwest.

"I just don't see any contest except in Florida, and I don't know how much of a contest it is there," said former Democratic Party chairman John White. "Clinton will of course pile up a prodigious amount of delegates, and only a Tsongas upset in Florida would puncture to some degree the so-called Super Tuesday concept."

Southern moderates, frustrated by liberals' success in winning Democratic nominations but failure in general elections, designed Super Tuesday to give a more moderate candidate early strength in the primary season.

This year's version is a scaled-down version of 1988's regional primary, when 21 Democratic primaries and caucuses were staged. At the outset of that race, Tennessee Sen. Albert Gore Jr. was the presumed beneficiary of the Super Tuesday concept, but the winners ended up being liberals Jesse Jackson and eventual Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis.

Dukakis, then the Massachusetts governor, won seven contests outside the South that day and captured the two biggest Southern trophies — Florida and Texas. Jackson won five states and ran second in 11 more. Those performances left Dukakis the front-runner and Jackson a serious contender while Gore never shed the label of regional candidate.

"It has been an absolute failure up to now," Atlanta pollster Claiborne Darden said of the Super Tuesday concept. That it seems to be working this year, he said, is "more a function of who is in the race. Clinton is winning the South virtually by default because he is a neighbor and this is a weak field."

Clinton is the favorite in all seven Southern and border contests: Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas.

Only in Florida is the race with Tsongas considered com-

petitive, and both candidates were campaigning in the state on the eve of Tuesday's voting.

"This is Bill's back yard," Tsongas said during one Florida stop. "So we have a silver medal strategy for these primaries."

A Southern sweep, particularly if his victory margins are large, would give Clinton a huge delegate lead and make good showings in next week's Michigan and Illinois primaries even more important for Tsongas and former California Gov. Jerry Brown.

Tsongas is hoping for a Florida upset and is aiming for the gold in the two New England contests on Tuesday, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Clinton is considered the favorite in Hawaii, while Delaware is considered a tossup because of little campaign activity there.

Ironically, two states' decisions to abandon Super Tuesday helped set the stage for Clinton.

Knowing Super Tuesday would be less crowded this year, South Carolina decided to switch its contest from a caucus to a primary and leapfrog from a few days after Super Tuesday to March 7.

Then Georgia decided to move its primary up to March 3, a decision that gave Clinton a Southern beachhead to counter losses in such states as Maryland and Colorado.

# Poll shows Bush even with Demos

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush's public approval rating has hit an all-time low and, for the first time, he's no better than even money against either of the two leading Democratic contenders for the White House, according to the latest ABC-Washington Post survey.

The nationwide poll of 1,030 Americans between March 4 and March 8 showed only 39 percent, a record low, approved of Bush's handling of the presidency. That is 51 points below his rating in the same survey at the end of the Persian Gulf War a year ago.

The poll also showed Bush in a dead heat, 44-44, when hypothetically paired against former Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas. Against Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, Bush was preferred by a scant 45 percent to 43 percent edge — again, too

close to call, given the poll's statistical margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

When the poll was limited to just registered voters, Bush ran a few points behind both Democrats. And when pitted against an unnamed Democrat, he trailed both among the general population, 52 to 37, and among registered voters, 54 to 36.

The president's "disapproval" rating among all those surveyed was a solid 58 percent, 8 points worse than the previous high in mid-January.

The poll also showed that 73 percent of those surveyed, another record, disapprove of the way the Congress is doing its job. And a 52 percent majority opposes a \$400 annual income-tax cut for most Americans, though a solid 41 percent minority supports the Democratic plan.

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