Super Tuesday is March 1, and twelve states will hold caucuses or primaries to help determine presidential candidates. This is the single greatest day of primary voting, with the greatest number of delegates hanging in the balance (see the Primary v. Caucus brief for a description of how delegates are awarded). A candidate can make great progress toward the presidential nomination on this day. Alternatively, a candidate who performs poorly in the geographically diverse states voting on Super Tuesday shows little indication that he or she could win national support in November.

Up for grabs on Super Tuesday are about one half of the delegates a candidate needs in order to win his or her party’s nomination. Most of the states voting on Tuesday use a proportional allocation system; that is, if a Democratic candidate wins 1/3 of the vote in Oklahoma, he or she will get 1/3 of Oklahoma’s Democratic delegates (this is in contrast to the “winner take all” system in some states where the candidate with the highest number of votes is awarded every delegate).

With primaries lasting until June (California is among the last six states to hold a primary – June 7), the race for the presidential nomination is not over after Super Tuesday. But the momentum gained or lost on this day is significant. In the case of the relatively crowded Republican field, those candidates winning few votes may very well choose to withdraw from the election after Super Tuesday. And it is possible that a leading candidate can win enough delegates on Tuesday to appear the clear nominee for his or her party in the 2016 presidential election. Make sure to check our Primary and Caucus Results for updates after Super Tuesday!

Did you know?

Though state primaries have been in existence since the early twentieth century, it wasn’t until the 1970s that this democratic exercise has had so much influence. Since then, it has been the citizens voting in primaries and caucuses (not the Republican and Democratic Party leaders) who dominate the nominating process for presidential candidates.