

*Why Iowa? How Caucuses and Sequential Elections Improve the Presidential Nominating Process*, by David P. Redlawsk, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Todd Donovan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. xvii, 315 pp. Charts, tables, figures, notes, references, index. \$27.50 paper.

Reviewer Norman E. Fry recently retired from teaching American history and government at Southeastern Community College, West Burlington, Iowa.

*Why Iowa?* is a collective endeavor by David Redlawsk, Caroline Tolbert, and Todd Donovan to update the scholarly literature on the Iowa caucuses and the presidential nominating process. The uniqueness of their research, according to the authors, is that it does what no one else has done before: put together all the pieces of the caucus nominating process. The caucus process is an intricate mix of factors: caucus rules, candidate campaigns, voter turnout and participation in the caucuses, analysis of candidate performance, the effect of the caucuses on subsequent primaries, voter participation in online (internet) and offline (in person) political events, and public opinion on the nomination process.

The focus of the book is the Iowa caucuses and how they affect subsequent primaries and caucuses. The Iowa caucuses matter because of their timely position as first in a sequence of primaries and caucuses. Iowa is the first state to set in the mind of the voting public an evaluation of Democrat and Republican candidates, and Iowa begins the winnowing process that eventually separates the winners from the losers. It is the sequence of various nominating venues and the dynamics of those events that are important in understanding the process, but being first has made the Iowa caucuses more significant than they might be otherwise.

The authors use an array of surveys and statistical methods to interpret the vast amount of data on the Iowa caucuses. Among the surveys are a large one of the Super Tuesday primaries, a small survey of the Pennsylvania primary, the University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll, and several telephone surveys of Iowa caucus attendees. These surveys are supported by multivariate statistical methods to measure the significance of responses to several questions on various aspects of the caucuses and the nominating process. The book has four appendixes with statistical analysis of the questions posed to participants in the surveys. The statistical tables are multivariate in that they take into consideration several factors, such as education, age, income, gender, and ethnicity in some cases.

The authors begin by summarizing the results of the 2008 caucus nominating process and follow this summary with three sections, each detailing different aspects of the process. They conclude that Iowa definitely matters in the nominating process. The Iowa caucuses gather

media attention, and it is the media that gives significance to the Iowa caucuses. Candidates who learn the lessons of campaigning in Iowa and perform well can come out of Iowa with momentum, favorable public opinion, and further media attention. Events in Iowa trigger a chain reaction of sorts that works its way through the sequence of primaries that follow the Iowa caucuses.

*Why Iowa?* is written for political scientists who understand statistical methods. The authors claim that they have presented their work in a format that is accessible to readers without a background in statistics, but the tables are sure to be a challenge to anyone not used to reading statistical tables. The authors subtly qualify their own thesis in two ways. First, they observe that the caucuses have become a media event, and it is the media's subjective interpretation of the caucuses that determines their influence on later primaries and caucuses. Second, in any given year the New Hampshire primary or Super Tuesday might be more important than the Iowa caucus. If so, the outcome in primaries after Iowa might result far more from the influence of the media than from the rules of the Iowa caucus game.

The merits of *Why Iowa?* outweigh any of its potential weaknesses. The authors' use of surveys and statistical methodology open up a treasure trove of ideas, data, and insights into the Iowa caucuses and the presidential nominating process. Ultimately, the authors make a strong case for Iowa's importance in the nominating process. They also make a contribution to the scholarly work of the last 30 years on the caucuses and the nominating process, making *Why Iowa?* a valuable resource for anyone interested in the Iowa caucuses and the presidential nominating process.