

Senate judiciary panel discusses holding earlier presidential primary

By

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(RALEIGH) – Lawmakers raised concerns about the potential cost of an effort to hold North Carolina’s presidential primary in early March.

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee discussed a bill that would move the presidential primary from May to March. No formal vote was taken on the measure.

Bill sponsor Sen. Andrew Brock, R-Davie, said the change would give North Carolina voters a louder voice in choosing each party’s nominee. “What better way to represent our concerns and have an early primary where North Carolina issues are in the forefront,” Brock asked.

Some lawmakers questioned whether the state could afford two primary elections given the current budget shortfall. State Board of Elections executive director Gary Bartlett said a separate election would cost roughly \$5 million. He added that counties would be responsible for picking up most of that expense.

Other lawmakers noted the role North Carolina voters played in the 2008 Democratic primary. “I don’t feel like our current system has rendered us completely irrelevant to the presidential nomination process,” said Sen. Josh Stein, D-Wake.

Stein later said he’s open to holding the election at an earlier date, but only if all there’s one primary. He said a separate election would cost too much and decrease voter turnout for non-presidential races.

Committee chairman Sen. Pete Brunstetter, R-Forsyth, said an additional hearing on the primary bill isn’t planned at this time. The proposal is one of several election law changes being considered by the panel.

Listen to the Sen. Andrew Brock discuss S440:

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