General Information

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Description

In New Hampshire before the primary, NBC's John Chancellor criticizes the political process that prevents late entry for potential candidates because of filing deadlines.

Keywords

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Citation

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Transcript
Commentary: Is the Way We Pick Presidential Candidates Flawed?
Tom Brokaw, anchor:
With the presidential campaign now upon us, you might expect that John Chancellor would be in New Hampshire with his commentary tonight. You'd be right.
John Chancellor, reporting:
Well, here we are in New Hampshire again, and the Democrats are in disarray again. Bill Clinton has the best organization and the most money, but he's falling in the polls. Paul Tsongas is a little-known long shot without much money, and he's rising in the polls. The results here may be inconclusive. The winner may not get the rush of national attention New Hampshire has provided in the past. That's why there is talk about other Democrats, famous Democrats, making late entries into this year's race: Mario Cuomo or Richard Gephardt or Senator Lloyd Bentsen.
And that exposes a flaw in the way we pick presidential candidates. Most of the delegates who choose the candidates are won in primary elections. To win those delegates, candidates have to file applications to run in those elections. As of today, many of those filing deadlines have passed. It would be possible, but very difficult, for Cuomo or Gephardt to get into the late primaries. It could happen, but if it doesn't, the Democratic candidate will be named Clinton or Tsongas or Kerrey or Harkin or Brown. Not household names, no heavy hitters. That's why some Democratic professionals are unhappy. It's the trap of the primary system, which allows hardly any room for late entries. The system is unique; the United States is the only democracy that holds elections to choose candidates for high office. The Democrats may pay a high price for that this year.