

Lugar Is Planning To Join Delaware Primary Boycott

By JOHN DISTASO
Union Leader Staff

LUGAR JOINS IN. Add one more to Texas Sen. Phil Gramm's list of New Hampshire "panderers." Today, Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar will announce he won't file for the Delaware primary unless that state moves its primary from four days to a week behind ours.

Lugar is low in the polls but respected. He's hoping to catch on here if Bob Dole slips and a horse race develops. This won't hurt.

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WHAT ABOUT FORBES? As Gramm takes big time heat on the New Hampshire-Delaware flap, no one's been paying attention to Malcolm "Steve" Forbes Jr.

Gramm, at least, has been consistent about it. Tuesday, finally fed up, he verbally thumbed his nose at Gov. Steve Merrill, Secretary of State Bill Gardner and those who've tried to pressure him into staying out of Delaware.

But at least Gramm has also told Iowa, home of the first caucuses in the nation, to take a hike by refusing to sign a pledge circulated out there last week asking candidates to not compete in Louisiana's new caucuses. Louisiana wants to go ahead of both Iowa and New Hampshire.

Forbes, on the other hand, signed that pro-Iowa pledge, according to Iowa GOP Chairman Brian Kennedy. But he won't take the New Hampshire primary "pledge" not to file in Delaware. In fact, Forbes is campaigning and running TV and radio ads there. Go figure.

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PAT'S GAMBLE. Pat Buchanan yesterday took the opposite tack. He refused to sign Iowa's anti-Louisiana pledge and accused Gramm and his allies and "agents" of trying "to virtually fix the outcome of the Republican nomination process."

Gramm "tried to rig the system," to "torpedo" New Hampshire and Iowa, Buchanan told the Status, and, he said, he can't be left unchallenged.

Besides, Buchanan said he has his own "infant organization" in Louisiana and is slated to campaign there later this month. "I can't walk away from those commitments," he said.

Buchanan noted that he promised Merrill "months ago" (long before Merrill endorsed Dole, by the way) that he won't campaign in Delaware, but the Iowa request came to him just in the past few days.

Will this hurt Pat in Iowa? "I think the voters there will know who is responsible for fixing this game," he said.

Expect Buchanan to take heat on this from Dole-backer Terry Branstad, governor of Iowa. But what will Dole Campaign National General Chairman Merrill say? Will he, after blasting Gramm, be equally harsh on the candidate endorsed by his favorite newspaper? Attempts to reach him on this and other issues yesterday were unsuccessful.

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FORBES



GRAMM



Dick Morin/Union Leader

GOP Presidential hopeful Alan Keyes at The Desk yesterday.

A GRAND PLAN? Folks close to Merrill strongly deny it, but there's a theory gaining strength that Merrill and Branstad — while accusing Gramm of playing with the schedule to benefit himself — are themselves holding the primary and caucus dates in abeyance while watching out for their candidate. What happens if Dole slips further in the polls, if his support gets even thinner, if things get a bit uncomfortable?

Will there suddenly be a need on the part of these two governors to play politics with the caucus and primary schedule in the name of tradition? To move them up?

Let's face it, if Bob Dole had his way, the caucus would be today, the primary would be tomorrow and the convention would be Saturday.

Dole would just like to get this nomination thing over with and these two top guns happen to have the power to help him do it.

Crazy? Hey, when you're trekking to the polls between the Sugar and Rose bowls, don't say we didn't warn you.

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YOU PANDERIN', LAMAR? No, said one higher-up in the Lamar Alexander camp. "We ain't panderin'. We're ponderin'."

And that's despite what Steve Merrill says. The governor tried to put Lamar Alexander and his camp in a box yesterday. Knowing full well that the candidate hasn't decided yet whether he'll file in Delaware, Merrill thanked Alexander for his support for the primary and for promising, through state campaign director Bill Cahill, not to file there.

Cute. Very cute. But not quite so — yet, at least. "We are supportive of New Hampshire," said Alexander national senior adviser Tom Rath. "There is no question where Lamar Alexander is on this issue. But the final word will be the candidate's when he files."

Alexander, by the way, was the very first to sign that anti-Louisiana/pro-Iowa pledge and is even running ads in Iowa accusing Gramm of forsaking the first primary.

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THAT'S OUR DESK! The Desk, The Very Desk, the beautiful birdseye maple desk in the Secretary of State's Office at the State House at which the candidates sit to file for the primary ballot was once "kidnapped" by Delaware and held hostage for about 100 years. It's true.

Secretary of State William Gardner says the desk was built by and purchased from, (for \$16), Porter Blanchard of Concord for our brand new State House in 1819.

But some years later, Gardner said, the DuPonts of Delaware, purchased it — Gardner says it's unclear if it was from the state or a third party who had bought it from the state.

No matter. It ended up in the Winterthur Museum in Delaware for about 100 years before being bought back by the state for \$5,000 in the late 1970s.

"It's true," said Gardner. "Somehow, they got it away from us. But now we've got it back."

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HUGE DAY. Tomorrow will be a Big One at the State House. Hillary Clinton arrives at about 2 p.m. to file for her husband in the Presidential Primary, and the Doles, Bob and Elizabeth, check in at about 3:40.

Mrs. Clinton will be accompanied by some of the Dems who filed for the President with her in '91 — Alice Chamberlin and Terry Shumaker of Concord, Kris Durmer of Nashua, Rep. Sharon Nordgren of Hanover and Nancy Richards-Stower of Merrimack. Also on hand will be former backers of other '92 Dem candidates, including current party chair Joseph Keefe, vice chair Mary Chambers and Rockingham County chair Michael Garofalo.

So, who's stepping on whose parade? Secretary of State Gardner says Clinton-ite Shumaker inquired about the Dec. 8 filing date about three weeks ago, a full week before Dole-man David Carney of Hancock. But, Gardner says, Shumaker left it tentative, so he suggested that Carney call Shumaker to work things out, in case each wanted his candidate's own day in the national spotlight.

They didn't work it out, obviously, but it may end up being to their advantage. Having Clinton and the Doles here on the same day is sure to attract a huge press.

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ALL IS WELL. Gramm's national campaign chairman Charles Black arrived in-state last night and will hold a meeting with reporters today to say that Gramm's not slowing down his campaign here, despite the aforementioned flap. Staff shakeups? Nope, said Black. State campaign manager Jim Courtovich, for instance, "is the campaign manager and will be there until Feb. 20."