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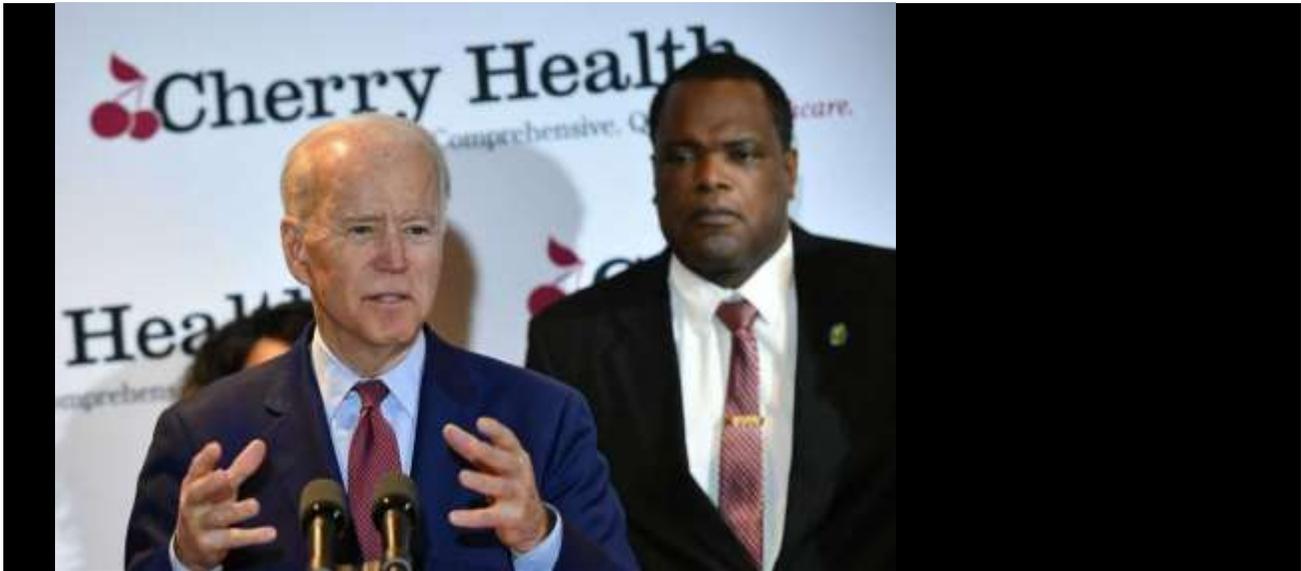
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## **THE REGISTER CITIZEN**

# Opinion: Ranked choice voting would help primaries

By Edward L. Marcus

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*Photo: Getty Images; Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden speaks during a campaign stop at the City Health Center, in Grand Rapids, Mich.*

The Democratic presidential primaries are teaching us many lessons.

First, it is a really bad idea to have Iowa and New Hampshire as the first states to vote. These are two of the smallest and least diverse states in the nation but get out-of-proportion attention in the media. In one race it was former candidate Pete Buttigieg that was the crowd favorite. In another it was former candidate Amy Klobuchar. Neither is left standing.

The last debate was an embarrassment for everyone but former Vice President Joe Biden and former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg. Candidates screaming at each other so that they are down to the level of an afternoon talk show are not what we want to hear. Debate moderators need to maintain control of the process. They haven't yet.

We may see Bernie Sanders with a plurality in some additional states but probably not, at this point, much of a majority when looking at the nation as a whole. His winning 11 delegates in Vermont's primary was only a surprise because he didn't win all of them — five went to Biden.

Creating a cult movement is enough to develop a solid base of passionate supporters. It brought Donald Trump the Republican nomination in 2016. Let's hope it doesn't work that way for Sanders.

Sanders expresses the same rage and bitterness that pushed Trump into office. If Sanders wins the nomination, we would see the continued — and even exaggerated — political and social polarization. People drift to the far left and the far right out of having to personally face real, existing problems. But they promote extreme, unworkable and unrealistic options rather than real answers, true compromise or workable solutions.

Our form of government still works. We do not need to abandon democracy. We do not need class "warfare" and further division. Sanders' agenda would double the cost of government with the middle class cursed by additional taxes.

But a new look at the primary system is in order. Clearly, it needs reform. Ranked choice voting may be the answer.

Put simply, ranked choice voting is the same as an instant runoff. If a candidate wins a majority of the vote he or she is the winner. If not, the ballots would be tallied in as many rounds as necessary to obtain a majority vote for a single candidate. In each round the candidate with the least first place votes is eliminated.

In a ranked choice campaign the odds are that there would be less negativity and decisiveness because, in a sense, everyone's vote would count.

New York City will begin utilizing ranked choice voting beginning next year for its mayoral election. That will give us a good opportunity to see how it works in a large primary.

Meanwhile, if Sanders should, by some miracle, win the nomination at the Democrats' convention, it would be handing the election to Trump. A Sanders/Warren ticket for example, would leave the Democratic Party in total turmoil and would be an electoral disaster, effectively ostracizing all the moderate Democrats in the nation.

Bloomberg is now out and supporting Biden. I am back where I was at the beginning of the primary season supporting a resurgent Biden. Personally, I would like to see a Biden/Kamala Harris ticket. How about Bloomberg for secretary of state?

Biden showed that when he had to step up he could, and he did, and certainly has my appreciation for being able to put the center of the Democratic Party together as a unified force in the upcoming primaries.

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