

# Muddling Democrats: Chaos in the Iowa Caucus

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Global Research, February 04, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*Whatever the claims by the Democratic pollsters on the ground, the party has all the work to do ahead of selecting a candidate to make a fist of it come November. Pity for them, then, that the opening in Iowa proved to be a spectacular shambles, notably for those obsessed with the live news cycle. The Iowa Democrats claimed that the delay in voting results across the 1765 precincts had arisen because of a "reporting issue". At this writing, [the "results" page](#) is barren, characterised by the glorious absence of results. The pollsters, rather than the voters, have taken the high ground.*

The Iowan branch was doing its best to trumpet the value of the event, claiming that President Donald Trump was "[terrified](#)" at the prospects of losing "the Hawkeye State" come the elections. (To keep an eye on things, he had "sent near 100 of his buddies" to campaign on his behalf in the state.) "So exciting to see high turnout – Iowa Democrats are fired up!" [went one tweet](#). Another [expressed](#) pride that the caucus "has been more accessible this year than ever before."

One of the Democratic contenders for the nomination, Senator Bernie Sanders, could not resist a [touch of embellishment](#). "The whole world is looking at Iowa today. They are looking to see whether the people of Iowa are prepared to stand up and fight for justice. Let's win this together." Rival contender Senator Elizabeth Warren, mindful of Trump's state of the union speech on Tuesday, was taking things beyond the man [in her address](#):

"Our union is stronger than Donald Trump. And tonight, as a party, we are a step closer to defeating the most corrupt president in American history."

As things slowly panned out, Warren seemed mistaken. Iowa Democratic Party spokeswoman Mandy McClure seem to put a dampener on everything by [revealing in a statement](#) that "inconsistencies in the reporting of three sets of results" had been identified. "In addition to the tech systems being used to tabulate the results, we are also using photos of results and a paper trail to validate that all results match and ensure that we have confidence and accuracy in the numbers we report." Mindful about the leap into conspiracy territory and accusations of foul play, she put it all down to a hiccup in reporting, rather than any malicious intrusion or hack. Suggestions that this had arisen because of a faulty app were dismissed, a view not shared by various county chairs.

Local party chairman Troy Price was hoping to give the whole show an air of fastidiousness; to be thorough was not to err. "We are validating every piece of data we have against our paper trail." As he [explained to reporters](#), "At this point the [Iowa Democratic Party] is manually verifying all precinct results. We expect to have numbers to report later today." Former state party chair Gordon Fischer, sensing the storm of discredit enveloping the

entire process, [told](#) CNN's Gloria Borger that a delay "to make sure the results are accurate" could hardly be a bad thing.

None of this thrilled the candidates, whose personnel were getting stroppy. Dana Remus, campaign general counsel for Joe Biden, [demanded](#) "full explanations and relevant information" in a letter sent to Price and IDP Executive Director Kevin Geiken. No level of fastidiousness could hide the fact that a meltdown had taken place. "The app that was intended to relay Caucus results to the Party failed; the Party's back-up telephone reporting system likewise failed. Now, we understand that Caucus Chairs are attempting to – and in many cases, failing to – report results telephonically to the Party. These acute failures are occurring statewide."

The entire counting and reporting debacle invariably drew criticism about the very idea of having caucuses to begin with. President Barack Obama's chief election strategist David Axelrod [questioned](#) their viability. Jim Geraghty of *The National Review* [deemed them](#) "a terrible way to pick a nominee. There is no secret ballot, so every nosy neighbour and busybody who prefers another candidate knows who you're supporting."

It was a day of non-concession speeches and not entirely convincing victory ones either. The Iowa caucus had not spoken with any clarity, but that did not prevent candidates from having a stab at the result. Senator Bernie Sanders suggested that he was ahead of former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg, according to internal polling data, and doing "very, very well." Buttigieg, in turn, spoke of marching victorious to New Hampshire, since "all indications" pointed in that direction. "Tonight, Iowa chose a new path," he pronounced, though adding, for good measure, that it had "shocked the nation".

This was all money for jam for the Republicans, who now have some material to work with. "It would be natural for people to doubt the fairness of the process," [chortled](#) Trump campaign manager and social media specialist Brad Parscale. "And these are the people who want to run our entire health care system?"

Everyone seemed to think they had won something, though Biden preferred to remain more cautious, hoping to discredit any result that will not favour his case. In truth, the eventual victor of Iowa will have little to go on by the time New Hampshire comes around. There will be no momentum to speak of, no electoral gush to push the victorious candidate on to the next round. But the one person [counting himself lucky](#) in this opening election shot will be the man giving the state of union address on Tuesday. "Big WIN for us in Iowa tonight. Thank you!"

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