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TO: St. Louis Area Residents
FROM: Frank Bommarito
RE: Contested Conventions
Are Nothing New

Here's an interesting one, full of twists and turns.

Before ending his term as President, Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881) let his party know he would become a one-term President by choice.

His announcement began a highly contested battle to succeed him.

Our 18th President, Ulysses S. Grant (1869-1877), who had already served two terms, decided to seek an unprecedented third term as President. Even in those days, party politics was in play and Grant had secured the backing of power broker and deal maker, New York Senator Roscoe Conkling.

At the convention, Grant was opposed by James Blaine of Maine and John Sherman of Ohio. John Sherman asked his friend James A. Garfield, a nine-time elected Congressman from Ohio, to deliver his nominating speech.

Garfield was so impressive, that he was the one who ended up drawing the attention of the crowd, and on the 34th ballot of the convention, the Wisconsin delegation announced to the stunned crowd that it was shifting 16 votes to Garfield and Garfield won the nomination. Then as a concession to Roscoe Conkling, Chester A. Arthur of New York became Garfield's running mate and the pair won by a slim margin in November.

Garfield's time in the White House was brief and tragic. After less than four months in office, he was gunned down in a Washington railroad station. The shooter was Charles J. Guiteau, a fanatic who believed he would be pleasing Conkling by elevating Arthur into office.

Chester A. Arthur then became our 21st President (1881-1885). He did not seek re-election after being diagnosed with Bright's disease (a form of kidney disease). He passed away in 1886.

We are now witnessing another historical and very interesting nomination process and as Yogi Berra often said, "It ain't over till it's over".

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CEO & Founder

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