

# Surprising 2016 – A Snapshot in Time



**Andrew Downs**

There were 14 presidential elections from 1868 through 1920. In 12 of those elections, the winner of the presidential election won Indiana. Also in 12 of those elections there was a candidate for president or vice president for a major political party from Indiana, including 1916 when both major party vice presidential candidates were from Indiana. Four of the five vice presidents from Indiana were elected during that period. For many, this was the high point for Indiana in national electoral politics.

In 2008, Indiana relived some of that influence and excitement with a hotly-contested Democratic primary and a rare win in the state for the Democratic candidate. At that time, many voters thought they were experiencing something that would not happen again in their lifetimes. Then 2016 came along and once in a lifetime became twice in a lifetime.

In 2016, the presidential primaries for both major parties mattered in Indiana and an incumbent gubernatorial candidate has vacated the ballot so that he can be the vice presidential candidate for a major political party. This year also has included a lieutenant governor stepping aside and a new one being confirmed, a United States Senate candidate stepping

aside and a former office holder re-emerging as a candidate for that opening, and at least five caucuses to fill major ballot vacancies. All of this before the heat of the fall campaigning activities.

Each of these events is unusual, but not completely unimaginable. What makes 2016 so unique is the confluence of all of these events in one year. We have reached a point where we may no longer be surprised by what happens next and instead we ask what will happen next.

For young voters and voters who are new to the state, two of three presidential elections have been exciting. For the rest of us, we think we know better. More often than not since 1972, presidential nominations have been decided before Indiana holds its primary in May. The Republican presidential candidate has won Indiana in 17 of the last 19 elections. In other words, presidential elections in Indiana are formalities, not exciting.

Based on what has happened so far, it is not out of line to suggest that the most surprising thing has not happened yet, so enjoy this year and store the memories and lessons away. If history is any indication, you may not have an experience like this again ... but then again maybe you will.

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