

Here's How the Road to Cleveland Looks for the GOP Contenders

Following Tuesday night's caucuses and primaries in five states and one U.S. commonwealth, the road to an outright presidential nomination before the Republican National Convention ended for two of the four candidates.

Only one of them bowed out, though.

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) gracefully announced he was suspending his campaign following a disappointing—and distant—second-place finish in his home state. By the end of the night, he had been mathematically eliminated from winning the 1,237 delegates necessary to secure the party's nomination.

"And so while it is not God's plan that I be president in 2016 or maybe ever, and while today my campaign is suspended, the fact that I have even come this far is evidence of how special America truly is, and all the reason more why we must do all we can to ensure that this nation remains a special place," he said. "I ask the American people, do not give in to the fear. Do not give in to the frustration. We can disagree about public policy, we can disagree about it vibrantly, passionately. But we are a hopeful people, and we have every right to be hopeful."

Also mathematically eliminated from winning an outright nomination was Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who was able to win his home state—the only loss of the night for front-runner Donald Trump—by a comfortable margin. But by finishing third or fourth everywhere else, his actual delegate haul was only the third-largest of the night.

He vowed to continue campaigning in an effort to block an outright Trump nomination and to win at a contested convention later this summer.

Logistically, it would be difficult to imagine how Kasich—despite being the governor of a key “swing state”—could manage such a feat. So far, he has won less 13 percent of the popular vote, a third of which came from his home state.

Under Rule 40(b), a candidate must win delegate majorities from eight states or territories to be eligible for the nomination. The rule could be changed, but not without causing a tremendous outcry that the party’s leadership is gaming the system to block either of two candidates who still have a chance to win the nomination outright.

Those candidates would be Trump and U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who have combined for two-thirds of the popular vote and three-fourths of the delegates awarded thus far. Depending on how Rubio supporters in upcoming states shift their votes, both candidates have the possibility to win the nomination.

For Cruz, the chances are slim, though, after Tuesday night. The Texas senator fared only marginally better than Kasich. And if the unofficial results from Missouri—where he lost the popular vote by less than 1,700 votes—hold up, he will have been shut out of any state wins.

(As of this writing, Trump is projected to win 42 of the Show Me State’s 52 delegates.)

Although he is not yet mathematically eliminated, Cruz must win approximately 83 percent of the remaining delegates to win the GOP nomination prior to the national convention. Trump, on the other hand, needs to win about 55 percent of the remaining delegates to secure the nomination outright.

The primary process entered a new phase Tuesday as winner-take-all contests dominate the remainder of the calendar. In

those states, the candidate with the most votes wins all of the delegates. More than three-fourths of the remaining delegates are awarded through winner-take-all contests.

For Cruz, this means he needs as many Rubio supporters to come to his side as he can get.