

Hello, again, and welcome. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. On today's program, we are talking U.S. politics. There are many people who want to be president of the United States. But, of course, not everyone can be. That is why there is a long process through which political parties choose candidates for the nation's highest office. The process can easily begin as early as two and a half years before the presidential election.

The leading parties hold primary elections and caucuses to help reduce the number of candidates. Then the party's nominee is officially named at a national convention or meeting.

The next US presidential election is still more than two years away. But some of the possible candidates are starting to organize their campaigns. Today Milagros Ardin looks at the race for the presidential nomination in the Republican Party.

For the first time in many years, there appears to be no clear leader for the Republican nomination. At this early date, there are some individuals who are at least considering a run for the White House. Among them is Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky. He recently won a test vote at a meeting of conservative activists. The senator is a strong critic of President Barack Obama.

“We will challenge you in the courts. We will battle you at the ballot box. Mr. President, we will not let you shred our Constitution!”

Senator Paul is likely to have plenty of competitors. One of them is another Senator, Ted Cruz of Texas.

“People are hurting, tragically, and we need to turn this country around. We did it in 1980 with a grass roots movement that became the Reagan Revolution, and let me tell you, the same thing is happening all over today.”

Senators Cruz and Paul are popular with Tea Party activists. The Tea Party has been a force within the Republican Party ever since it helped the Republicans win control of the House of Representatives in 2010.

Former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin has urged Republican leaders not to forget the importance of the Tea Party.

“You know that 2010 election victory that swept you into power? You didn’t build that. The Tea Party did!”

Carroll Doherty is with the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC. He says the split within the Republican Party will play out during the US congressional elections later this year.

“The Republican Party is going through a lot of turmoil and a bit of division. They are struggling to find their way a bit as parties out of power are often in this position. Democrats have been in this position in the past.”

Some Republicans say there is nothing to fear from all the divisive talk. Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan was the party's vice presidential candidate in 2012.

"It's Tea Party versus establishment, libertarians versus social conservatives. There is infighting, conflict, backbiting, discord. Look, I'm Irish. That is my idea of a family reunion."

Paul Ryan is also seen as possible candidate for the presidency in 2016. Another is New Jersey Governor Chris Christie.

"We don't get to govern if we don't win. And it is not only bad when we don't get to govern because we don't get to mold and change our society. What is worse is they do and they are doing it to us right now."

But Carroll Doherty of the Pew Research Center says, for the first time in years, there is no clear Republican frontrunner.

“I really think it is going to be interesting. There is no heir to the throne, as it were, as there often is in Republican races. It is a wide open race.”

It is a different story for the Democratic Party. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remains a strong favorite in 2016 -- if she decides to run. I'm Milagros Ardin.

We would like your opinion. Send us a letter or an email and tell us who you think will be the next leader of the United States after President Barack Obama's term ends.

Now we turn to something a little more personal. The World Health Organization says human rights must be respected and protected when women seek birth control services. The WHO recently produced new guidance on the subject for policymakers and healthcare providers. The guidelines were released earlier this month in connection with International Women's Day. Bob Doughty has more.

The WHO estimates that more than 220 million women are not able to meet their needs for birth control. It says the most threatened are poor women, those living with HIV and women displaced by armed conflict or other causes.

Marleen Temmerman directs the WHO's Department of Reproductive Health and Research. She praises the fact that the words "human rights" are included in the name of the WHO guidance statement.

"It is the first time that there is a guidance from the WHO where human rights is actually in the title – and not only in the title, but also in the content of the guidelines. We have guidelines for contraceptive use ((birth control)) from a medical perspective, looking at what is safe – what are the medical eligibility criteria – what are the contraindications and so on. But now we have worked towards ensuring human rights in the contraceptive guidelines."

The WHO has been developing the guidelines for the past year. Doctor Temmerman says a number of women's needs should receive special attention.

"We want to make sure that the human rights principles such as acceptability, accessibility, affordability choice, informed consent are high in the guidelines."

The guidelines suggest providing sexual and reproductive health services to women and girls. They include family planning information and methods to prevent pregnancy. Dr. Temmerman notes that reducing deaths of mothers involving childbirth is fifth on the list of the Millennium Development Goals. And she says politicians have been giving more attention to birth control in their policy planning in recent years.

"And that, of course, is linked to better care, better antenatal care, better delivery care, but also to the rights of a woman to decide when she will get pregnant – how many children she wants."

The doctor says millions of women must seek permission from their husbands to get help with birth control. At the same time, teenage girls need permission from their parents or guardians. Many young boys also need to have modern contraception help.

Dr. Temmerman says many women are forced into their decisions about whether to become pregnant – or not. Family members, the community and cultural and religious barriers may make these decisions for them. And she says some governments order women to have tubal ligation surgeries. These operations make a woman unable to bear children.

She further says teenage girls who become pregnant may face severe threats. The WHO estimates that 16 million girls between ages 15 and 19 give birth each year. This happens mostly in countries where the majority of people do not earn much money.



Many pregnant adolescent girls face dangerous conditions and death. Dr. Temmerman called this, a “huge health burden.” I’m Bob Doughty.

And I’m Jim Tedder in Washington. World news follows at the beginning of the hour on VOA.



