Unified Primary Act (HB #3166-2)
FAQs & Research

Why should we open Oregon's closed primaries?

Currently, 43% of Oregon voters (1.3M voters) are not affiliated as Democrats or Republicans, are barred from voting in the state's taxpayer-funded primary elections and are not fairly represented. Closed partisan primaries shut out non-affiliated voters, impede fair competition, erect unnecessary barriers, and limit voter choice. League of Women Voters of Oregon, Election Methods Study Update 2023, p.27. The Oregonian 9/29/24 "Editorial: Vote 'no' on Measure 117's premature adoption of ranked choice."

Non-affiliated voters (NAVs) have grown 4x the rate of major parties since 2014, when Oregon adopted Motor Voter. NAVs are younger, more diverse, and not fairly represented. Nonaffiliated Oregon Voters Now Outnumber Democrats and Republicans for the First Time (wweek.com); Reforming our elections: Oregon registers, but does not empower all voters (substack.com).

Letting NAVs vote in open primary is the most impactful reform to improve voter turnout and decrease polarization. Princeton Electoral Innovation Lab presentation (2/5/25)

A small percentage of voters are deciding Oregonians' choices in the general election. Open primaries boost participation in lower-turnout primaries and help ensure a broader set of Oregonians are shaping the November ballot. The Oregonian 4/10/24 "Editorial: Join a major party, just for the primary" (Shemia Fagan SoS won primary 7% registered voters; Thatcher just 11%) The Oregonian 10/27/19 "Editorial, Opening Oregon's primaries would give voice to people, not parties." (AG Rosenblum elected by less than 16% registered voters).

Closed primaries disproportionately suppress young, diverse voters and Veterans.

> 69% of Hispanic voters under 40 in Oregon are independent. Unite America, p.20.
>
> 59% of younger voters are independent. Unite America, fn 19.
>
> 49% of Veterans identify as independent or unaffiliated. Veterans for All Voters
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> "Closed primaries have large demobilizing impacts on Asian American and Latinx voters" University of Southern California, "The Demobilizing Effect of Primary Electoral Institutions on Voters of Color" (6/3/21)
>
> "Asian American voters are twice as likely to identify as purely independent." AAPI Data, NYT, "Asian American Voters Could be Key Swing Voters of 2024" 8/13/24

"[J]ust 8% of the U.S. voting age population effectively elected 83% of the U.S. House in partisan primaries. The result is that elected officials are not accountable to the vast majority of voters, which rewards extremism, fuels division, and distorts representation." Unite America Institute, Not Invited to the Party Primary,

"Closed party primaries are force multipliers for the polarization that afflicts the United States . . . Fear among moderate, measured or mainstream candidates of being "primaried" moved them away from bipartisan cooperation and edged their politics further to the extremes." Compare Cheney and Murkowski's Political Fates—It's All About the Primary - Sightline Institute 8/19/22

Why should candidates have party endorsements (up to 3) next to their name on the primary & general election ballot?

Endorsements on the ballot provide voters important information about candidates and encourage political party participation. Allowing parties to cross-endorse multiple candidates (i.e. D/I/Working Families, R/I/Libertarian) helps elect leaders who represent broader coalitions.

Endorsements are designed so candidates cannot self-endorse but need legitimate endorsement from a party to avoid party label hijacking. WA, CA, Alaska, NV allow party label hijacking by persons not connected to the party.

Fusion voting (up to 3 endorsements on the ballot) allows minor parties to elevate their policy agenda and gives voters a greater choice of policy platforms and priorities. Protect Democracy Fusion voting, explained 12/19/23 American Bar Association Task Force for American Democracy, Reviving the American Tradition of Fusion Voting 5/31/24

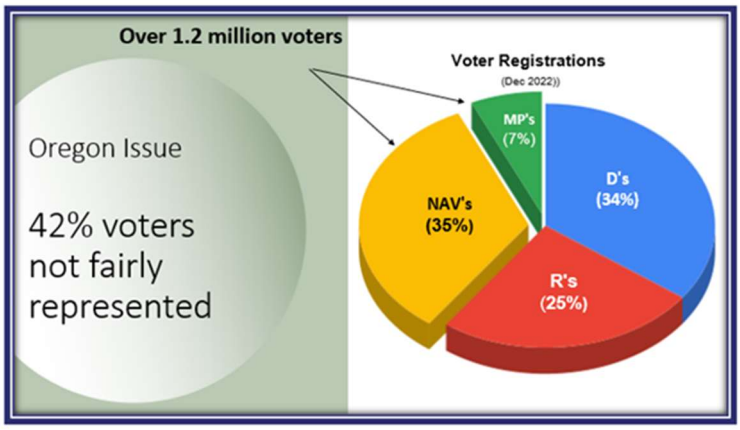
Protect Democracy, Fusion Voting and a Revitalized Role for Minor Parties in Presidential Elections 12/14/23

The New Republic, "What Is 'Fusion Voting'? Just a Way to Save the Country, That's All" 6/15/24 https://newrepublic.com/article/182739/fusion-voting-just-way-save-country-thats

Fusion voting allows parties to cross-nominate candidates and can be a first step toward multiparty democracy and broader electoral reform, such as proportional representation. New America, "From Polarization to Pluralism: Harnessing Parties and Fusion Voting for a Healthier Democracy" 6/26/23

What will the Oregon Unified Primary Act Do?

- ***Allow all voters to vote***
- ***Promote fair competition***
- ***Ensure fair representation***



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