Submitter:	Shawn Campbell
On Behalf Of:	NA
Committee:	House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	HB3166

Hello, my name is Shawn Campbell, and I am one of the approximately 1.5 million Oregon voters who are effectively disenfranchised from half of our state's electoral process. For the past fifteen years I have been barred from voting in the primaries by my decision to not support what I view as top-down political organizations, who too often in my opinion seem more interested in the views of their leadership than that of everyday Oregonians. A state of affairs which effectively leaves the exercising of my constitutional right to vote exclusively to a two-person contest, with my decision consistently not based upon who I think will do the best job, but rather who I think will screw things up the least.

Now some might point out that I have the option to vote for a third-party candidate, which is true, though it is not often that such candidates have much of a real chance given the current economics of election campaigns. For example, in the last cycle the candidates for the two major parties collectively spent nearly $28 million just for our state's six congressional districts, 65% of which came from out of state donors, this not counting the vast sums of money spent by PACs and Super PACs, also largely using funds from outside our state. For comparison, third party candidates in these same races collectively spent less than $15,000. The scale of this spending effectively blocks third-party candidates from being able to compete unless they have some very rich friends, and incentivizes those most serious about serving in public office to choose one of the two major parties.

Now some also might point out that I could solve this issue by simply joining one of the two major parties. But I want you to think about that. Does that sound like democracy, where someone has to join one of two parties in order to not be partially disenfranchised from the elective process? And even if I did join one of these parties, wouldn't I still be disenfranchised given I would only be able to vote for slates of candidates for that party for all positions up for election that year, even if my preference leaned more the other way for some positions but not others? What if I preferred a Republican candidate for Secretary of State but a Democratic candidate for Governor?

This is a growing issue in Oregon. Today 45% of our state's voters are not registered with either party, a trend that has been growing for the past forty years and is expected to continue, matching a pattern being seen nationwide. The result is a larger portion of our population being partially disenfranchised over time. It's a problem that is not going away, and it is problem we need to fix. Historic precedent is not an excuse to maintain a system which no longer makes sense.

Once upon a time Oregon was viewed as the foremost progressive state when it came to voter rights and direct democracy. Given we are now one of only eighteen states which still retain the archaic system of closed primaries, it is safe to say any such claims today are at best hypocritical and dishonest. Will we let our system of government be monopolized by a political oligarchy, or will we strive to fully enfranchise our population. I am an independent Oregon voter, and my voice should count just as much as everybody else's throughout the elective process. Thank you for your time.