

Submitter:

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On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HJR201

For democracy to work, people must be able to vote. Oregon's closed primary system keeps many voters from taking part in elections. This group of voters has grown a lot in recent years. No matter why they are unaffiliated, their voices are being left out of the democratic process.

Because of this, primary elections are decided by a smaller group of voters who do not reflect the full population. This often leads to elections with only two extreme choices that do not truly represent what most voters want. Candidates are pushed to campaign for the most extreme voters during primaries. This increases division between political parties and makes polarization even worse in general elections.

If primaries were run only by political parties, it might make sense to require party membership to vote. But that is not the case. Primary elections are paid for with taxpayer money and are part of our public democratic system. Independent voters can only participate by temporarily joining a political party, then changing their affiliation again to vote in future primaries. This creates an unnecessary barrier to participation, comprises the values for those who truly seek to remain independent.

Open primaries would help ensure that all Oregon voters have a voice throughout the entire election process. I encourage you to support solutions that expand participation and strengthen our democracy for everyone.