

Submitter: Bryan Cutchen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HJR201
Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bryan Cutchen, a retired Navy veteran. I am submitting this testimony in support of HJR 201 and SB 1592, which amend Initiatives Petition 55 and 56 to allow all Oregon voters to participate in taxpayer-funded primary elections.

I support open primaries because every voter should be able to vote in elections that determine who appears on the general election ballot for our state's most important offices. When the public funds an election, participation should not be limited by party registration. Today, more than 1.1 million Oregon voters are not affiliated with a political party and are therefore excluded from most primary elections that effectively decide statewide and legislative races.

Closed primaries disproportionately suppress participation among groups Oregon has worked hard to engage, including veterans, 59% of whom identify as independent or unaffiliated. Unaffiliated voters are largest voting bloc in 21 of Oregon's 36 counties and the largest voting bloc in 5 of Oregon's 6 U.S. House districts. This means that in much of the state, the largest group of voters has no voice in selecting the candidates who ultimately represent them. That outcome is neither democratic nor sustainable. Open primaries are the single most impactful reform available to increase voter participation in low-turnout primaries, reduce polarization by rewarding candidates who appeal beyond narrow partisan bases and ensure that elected officials better reflect the electorate they serve. By allowing all voters to participate, Oregon can strengthen trust in elections while preserving voter choice and party identity.

HJR 201 and SB 1592 offer a straightforward, voter-centered solution. If taxpayers fund an election, all taxpayers should be allowed to vote in it.

I respectfully urge you to support HJR 201 and SB 1592, as amended to mirror IP-55 and IP-56, and to ensure that every Oregon voter has a voice in choosing their representatives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.