

Primaries

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Closed Primaries

CLOSED

PA uses a closed primary system:
Only voters registered in a political party can vote in that party's primary.

- Registered independents in PA cannot vote for candidates in a party primary, but may vote on ballot questions.
- 11 states use closed primaries
- At the LWVPA 2013 convention, delegates dropped the League's position supporting closed primaries.

Alternatives to Closed Primaries

Primary options include:

- Open
- Semi-Open
- Semi-Closed
- Top Two and Top Four

Open Primaries

An open primary permits any registered voter to vote in a primary regardless of his or her political affiliation.

Forms:

- Voters receive a primary ballot without declaring a party preference.
- Voters can choose a party at the polling place on primary day.

Variations on Open Primaries

- Semi-Open – Unaffiliated voters publicly declare their ballot choice at the polling place. This may become *de facto* registration in that party.
- Semi-Closed – Unaffiliated voters can participate.
- Top Two or top four- Ballot lists all candidates from all parties for each office. Candidates can state party preference. Top two or top four vote getters regardless of party are on general election ballot.

Advantages of Closed Primaries

- Discourages cross-over or strategic voting by members of the opposing party.
- Encourages participation by all party activists.
- Party nominees are believed to lead to stability and representation of the wishes of party members.
- Protects right of free association.
- For PA, requires no change from current system.

Disdvantages of Closed Primaries

- Registered Independents and members of third parties cannot participate
- Contributes to low voter turnout
- Encourages extremism on both left and right
- Disadvantages minor party and Independent candidates

Advantages of Open Primaries

- Candidates reflect the views of a broader range of the electorate and may be more electable.
- Encourages participation by independents and third parties.
- Can spur moderate coalitions and protect against rigid ideological orthodoxy.
- Parties can still endorse candidates.
- May produce competitive, substantive general elections.
- Major parties will not control the primary election process

Disdvantages of Open Primaries

- May discourage engagement by core political party activists and people who believe in the principles espoused by a political party
- Eventual nominees may have beliefs inconsistent with party views
- In ballots with a lot of candidates extreme candidates could win or crowd out moderates.

Disadvantages of Top Two Primaries

- General Election ballot may have only candidates from one party.
- Top two candidates may not be from the party with the most popular support.
- Parties cannot control which candidates can use party name.
- Candidates can misrepresent their political leanings.