



APRIL 2022

LONG RUNNING CAMPAIGNS HEAT UP & CLOSED PRIMARY CAMPAIGNS SUCCESSFULLY DEFEATED

April 29, 2022:

It's been a busy and exciting quarter here at Open Primaries: critically important new developments in both long-running and emerging campaigns, successfully defeating closed primary efforts in multiple states and a successful annual campaign that has helped position us for the year ahead. Here is a snapshot of local and state campaigns, debates, and political fights happening across the country to engage and transform our primary election systems.

State by State

Maine Legislature Votes to Fund Open Primaries Bill Now Awaiting Governor's Signature...

Big news out of Maine this week!

350,000 Independent Maine voters are very close to being able to finally participate in the 2024 primaries after BOTH chambers of the Legislature authorized \$250,000 to fund the open primaries bill we worked to pass last year. The bill originally passed on a significant bipartisan vote, with sizable numbers of Republicans joining with a majority of Democrats to pass the bill 27-7 in the Senate and 92-52 in the House. The bill now sits on Governor Janet Mills desk awaiting signature (which we anticipate her doing!) and then we'll finally be able to say: Maine has repealed closed primaries!

We've been working for over 5 years to make this happen with a broad coalition of local leaders including our sponsors, Senators Chloe Maxin (D) and Matthew Pouliot (R), and the amazing team of Kaitlin LaCasse and Betsy Sweet at Maine Open Primaries.

Effort to Repeal Closed Primaries Heats up in PA...

Our friends at Ballot PA have officially launched their campaign to repeal Pennsylvania's closed primary system:

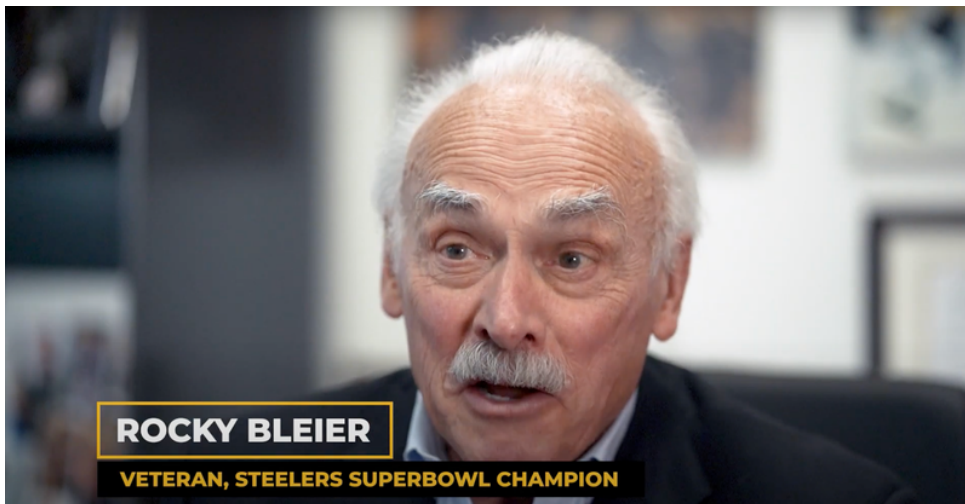
"It is time to #RepealClosedPrimaries and allow every legally registered voter to cast a ballot in PA's primary. Legislators across the Commonwealth can change this unfair election practice by acting now to ensure voters their right to vote in PA primaries."

We're proud to be a founding supporter of this effort, which is quickly gaining momentum. Last week the PA Senate State Government Committee held a hearing to discuss legislation, SB 690, to open PA's primaries to ALL Pennsylvania's 1.1 million independent voters. The hearing featured testimony in support from bill co-sponsors Senators Laughlin (R) and Collett (D), statements from former Republican and Democratic party chairs Alan Novak and TJ Rooney, Independent Pennsylvanians leader Jenn Bullock, and Campaign leader David Thornburgh.

The hearing also featured a powerful endorsement of open primaries from none other than Rocky Bleier; four-time Super Bowl champion with the Pittsburgh Steelers and veteran of the Vietnam War (where he received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star). Mr. Bleier declared:

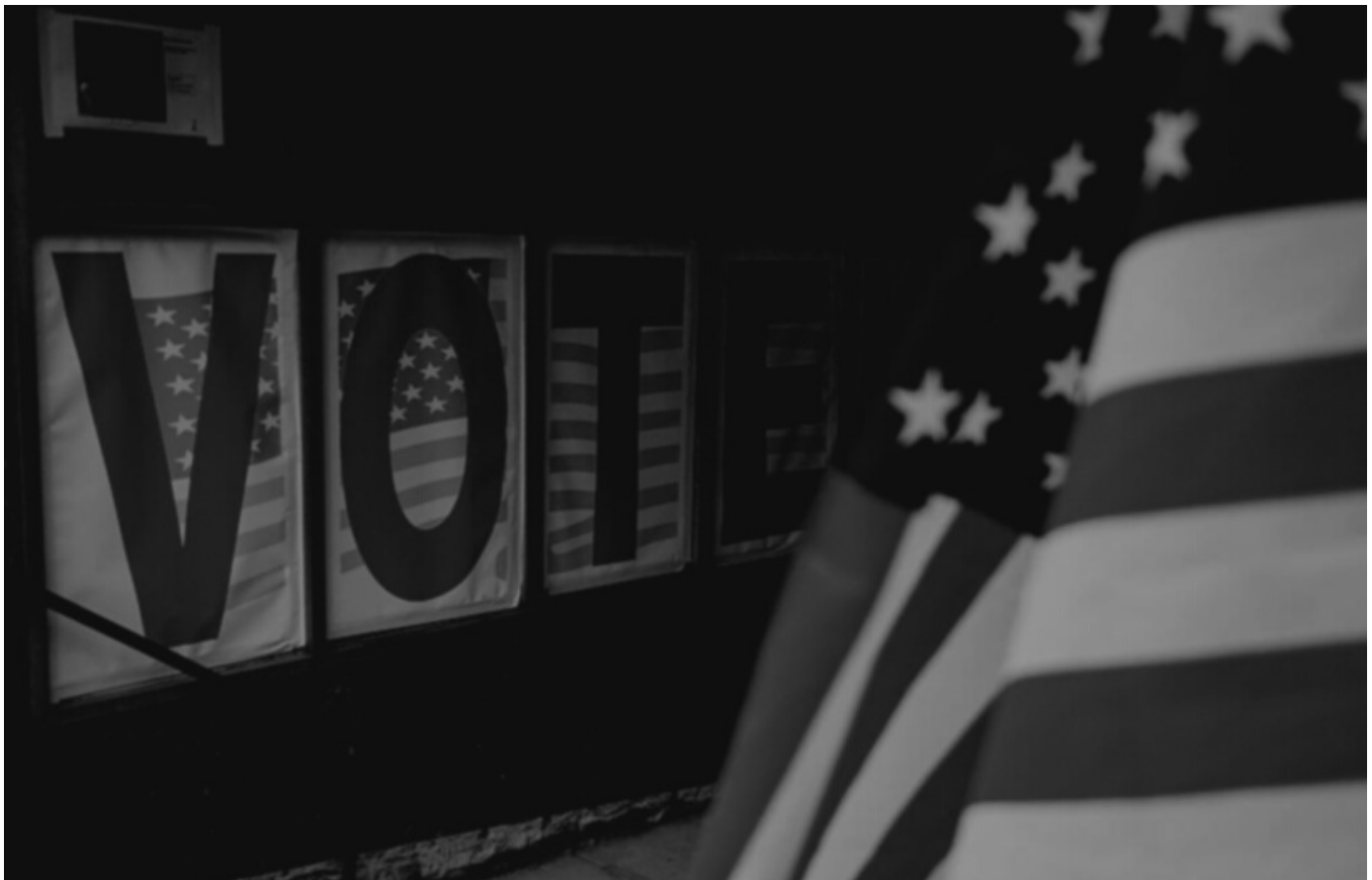
"Half of all veterans identify as political independents. That veterans chose to identify as independents doesn't surprise me—when you fight for our country and our freedom—you're not fighting for Republicans or Democrats, you're not on the red team or the blue team—you're on the red, white and blue team. That's why it's particularly disappointing to know that independent voters are barred from primary elections in Pennsylvania. How would you explain to a young man or woman returning to their family in PA from their service in Iraq or Afghanistan that they can't cast a vote in a primary election? It's unAmerican. Now it's time we do something in Pennsylvania."

[Watch Rocky Bleier's whole endorsement video:](#)



Pennsylvania is one of only 12 states that currently has fully closed primaries, so we couldn't be more thrilled to be supporting and working with our friends at BallotPA to right this wrong.

Keep an eye out for more developments coming out of PA soon!



DEFENSE

4 months into 2022 and we've defeated closed primary efforts in 3 states.

New Hampshire:

In January, HB1166 was introduced to close the primaries and shut out over 400K independent voters (the largest voting bloc in NH) –the antithesis of their state motto: “Live Free or Die”

What did we do: Organized support and put pressure on the legislature to vote no! OP SVP Jeremy Gruber appeared before the NH House Election Law Committee to oppose the bill:

“This bill would move New Hampshire backwards and suppress the vote of upwards of half a million of the state’s voters. It would render the state’s election system fundamentally undemocratic. That’s an egregious mistake.”

Read his full testimony [HERE](#).

The bill was voted down in committee!

Wyoming:

An effort encouraged by former President Trump to roll back independent voter registration deadlines was introduced early this year (SF 97). Wyoming already suffers from chronic low voter turnout and any effort to strip back the rights of voters would have set the state back even more.

What did we do: Worked with local leaders to oppose and defeat the bill! Then OP SVP Jeremy Gruber helped organize and testified before the Wyoming State Corporations Committee to authorize a legislative study of opening the state’ primaries which was approved! We’ll be working with local leaders throughout the rest of the year to support this important effort.

Idaho:

Partisan insiders in Idaho didn’t feel that closed primaries were restrictive enough and made a move to try and force the state’s 300,000 Independent voters into an arbitrary registration deadline–voter suppression pure and simple.

What did we do: Worked with local groups like the [Idaho 97 Project to stop the bill in committee](#) and with community leaders to offer a new vision of open primaries for the Gem state.

All 3 states were on the precipice of rolling back the rights of their voters and we led interventions that stopped them dead in their tracks.

YOUNG LEADERS AT WORK

Jarell Corley - Open Primaries Spokesperson, Students for Open Primaries Ambassador and native Chicagoan - made a splash in the Chicago Tribune advocating for Illinois to take action on some of the very real problems the state's currently facing and embrace primary reform:



The image shows a snippet from a Chicago Tribune article. At the top right is the "Chicago Tribune" logo. On the left is a large orange quotation mark. The text of the quote reads: "Lack of competition leads to politicians from both parties being 'captured' by well-organized special interests, ultimately creating a legislature incapable of doing the people's bidding." Below this, in orange and white text, it says: "Illinois needs a new system, and the time has come to get serious about reengineering state politics." At the bottom left is the name "Jarell Corley" with his title "Ambassador, Students for Open Primaries" below it. To the right of the text is a circular portrait of Jarell Corley, a Black man with a beard wearing a suit and tie.

We're thrilled and inspired every day to work hand in hand with local leaders across the country like Jarell to build this movement.

WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

- Cleveland Plain Dealer: War in Ukraine Shows Why We Need to Reinvest in Democracy at Home-Open Primaries SVP Jeremy Gruber & Veterans for Political Innovation Ryan Haerer on how the current

war in Ukraine shows why we need to reinvest in democracy at home and enact structural reforms to our political processes that put voters ahead of partisan interests:

"A less democratic America is a weaker America. If we continue on this path, we will become less principled, less cooperative, and more transactional in our geopolitics."
We couldn't agree more-[Read the full article](#)

- Tulsa World: Oklahoma's political middle could gain a voice with open primaries- The real decisions are made in the primaries and one Oklahoman leader, Margaret Kobos ([Oklahoma United for Progress](#)) thinks it's time her state ditch closed primaries and adopt top two open primaries to give the state a leg up in addressing many of the "real world problems" they're currently facing. Kobos is a welcome and needed voice not only in local Oklahoma politics but also the reform movement. [Read the full article](#)

- The Fulcrum: Trump wants to control who votes in primaries. Will anyone stand up to this? Trump aligned Republicans have set their sights on controlling the rules of primary elections as an efficient way to affect voter suppression. Democratic leaders are too compromised by their own partisanship to oppose them. Who's going to stand up? OP President John Opdycke and SVP Jeremy Gruber explore this critical moment. [Read the full article.](#)
- The Atlantic: Why the past 10 years of American life have been uniquely stupid. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt says America is in trouble. He places much of the blame on social media. "Social media is incredibly powerful for tearing things down...In an ailing democracy like ours where our institutions need to be improved — not ripped apart — it generally has made things worse." Haidt sees primary reform as one of many reforms necessary. [Read the full article.](#)



What's Coming Up

Our Virtual Discussions Series continues **TOMORROW Friday (4/29 at 3:00PM EST)** with an important discussion on [How Closed Primaries Disproportionately Impact Latino & Asian Voters](#) featuring groundbreaking research coming out of USC that conclusively shows that closed primaries depress not just primary turnout but also **general election participation**, and that they disproportionately impact POC, **especially Latino and Asian voters**.

The discussion will feature:

- USC research authors Professor Christian Grose and Raquel Centeno. Grose is Academic Director of USC's Schwarzenegger Institute and has published more than forty peer-reviewed articles, chapters in edited volumes, and policy reports in his 25 year career. Centeno is currently a PhD student in Political Science at USC.
- Danny Ortega who is an OP Spokesperson, attorney & the Former Board Chair of the National Council of La Raza, the largest Latino nonprofit advocacy and civil rights organization in the country. He speaks frequently about the impact closed primaries have on Latino participation, representation, and empowerment.
- Open Primaries President, John Opdycke will host

Latinos and Asians are the two largest demographics of registered independents, and operate nothing like other demographics-much to the consternation of both political parties. As the fight for “the Latino vote” heats up ahead of the 2022 midterms and outreach to Asian voters remains myopic, both parties continue to struggle to understand these key groups of voters. This research exposes how closed primaries are depressing their turnout in elections and can help broaden the conversation on voter suppression in the U.S. today.