



FEB. 2022

# GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION & THE FIGHT TO PROTECT OPEN PRIMARIES

## February 23, 2022:

This year is already proving to be one of dramatic growth and transformation for the open primaries movement. New skirmishes and fronts in the fight for fair and equal elections are emerging across the country. They are being powered by a regular influx of new leaders and activists with diverse politics, concerns, and solutions.

The following is just a snapshot of the local and state campaigns, debates, and political fights happening across the country right now to engage and transform our primary election systems:

## State by State Petitions Launch...

### Nevada

Vote Nevada, Better Voting Nevada and Nevadans for Election Reform are pursuing a ballot initiative to bring Final Five Voting (nonpartisan open primaries + ranked choice voting in the general election) to Nevadans this year. At the end of last year, a lawsuit challenging the initiative was brought forward by Democratic party insiders and this month a judge ruled in favor for the ballot measure to move ahead!

*What's next:* Our friends in Nevada now have the green light to begin gathering petition signatures to get this on the ballot for the people to actually weigh in on. We'll keep you updated every step of the way.

### Oregon

Our colleagues at Oregon Open Primaries are in the midst of collecting signatures for an initiative petition to amend Oregon's constitution to require all publicly funded elections be open to every voter.

The team has been hosting petition drives across the state, collecting signatures electronically and getting their voice heard in [Oregon's largest newspaper](#).

*What can you do?* If you're an Oregonian and want more info or to sign the petition click [HERE](#)

### **Legislation Introduced...**

#### **Oklahoma**

A top two open primaries bill (SB 1754) has been introduced and our Oklahoma state partners: [Oklahoma United](#), [Let's Fix This](#) and [The Oklahoma Academy](#) are organizing on the ground to build support around it.

Margaret Kobos laid out why this change is so needed in her [recent op-ed in Tulsa World](#):

*"The real decisions are made in primary contests. In Oklahoma's closed primary system, only the most partisan voters participate. To these voters, and these voters alone, our resulting politicians believe they're accountable. This closed loop produces a revolving door through which politicians are elected and re-elected by placating the most partisan voters, at the expense of the rest of us."*

*What we're up to:* This week Open Primaries Senior VP Jeremy Gruber led a forum for our Oklahoma partners on what people could expect with a nonpartisan, top two system. More information on this developing campaign coming soon!

#### **Pennsylvania**

Open Primaries PA has launched a legislative campaign (in both the Senate and the House) to allow independent voters in the state the right to vote in Republican and Democratic primary elections. Both pieces of legislation aim to address the voter suppression currently happening in the state and enfranchise the 1.2 million Pennsylvanians currently locked out of the process.

The Bucks County League of Women Voters has come out in support of the effort and just held a public hearing to bring attention to the issue and connect with more supporters.

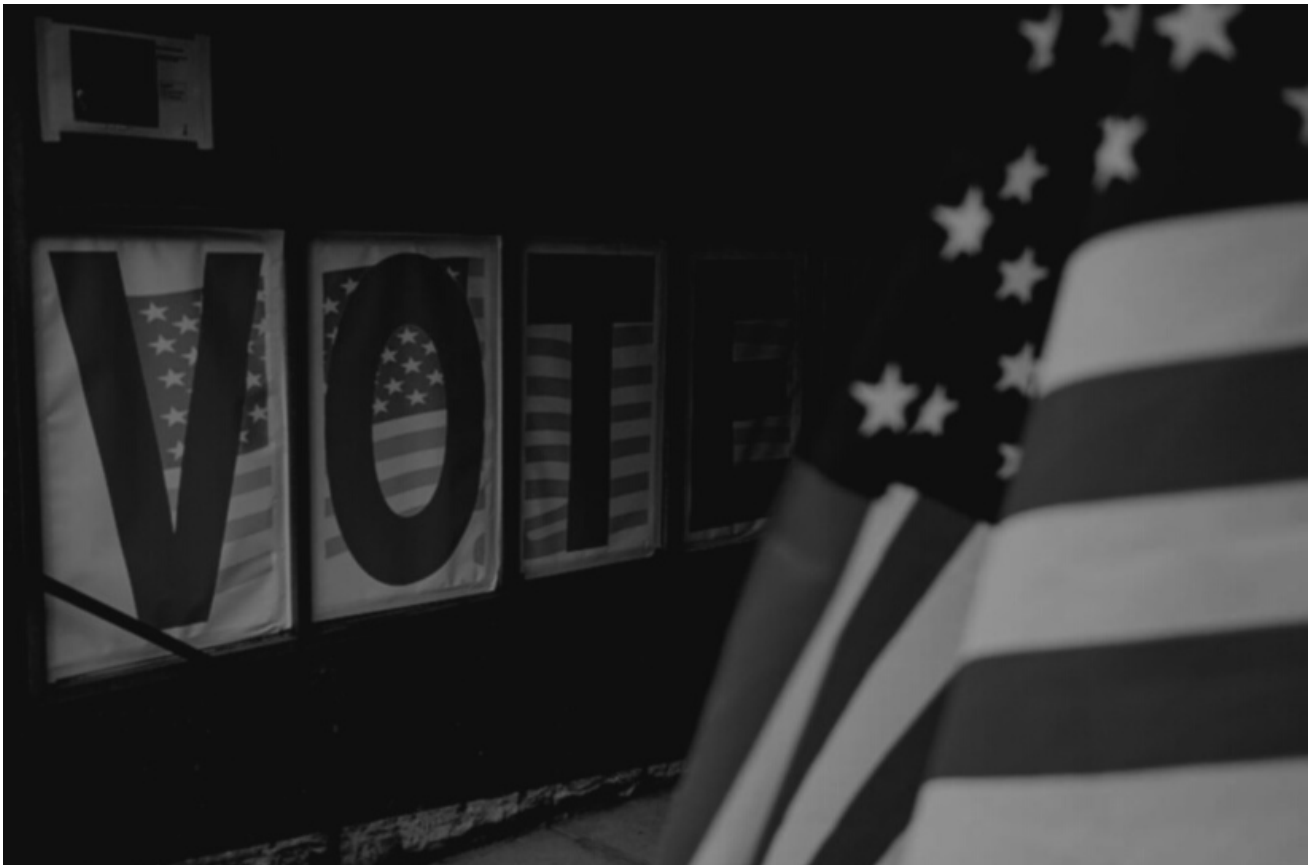
#### **Rhode Island**

A top 2 open primaries bill has recently been introduced. Rhode Island's last two Governors were each elected w/ less than 50% of the vote, a top 2 open primaries bill would better "ensure no candidate is elected to a state or municipal office without the support of a majority of voters."

#### **Kentucky**

Rep. Bud Wheatly (D) has filed a bill to move from fully closed primaries to a semi-open primary system.

*Our thoughts:* Moving from closed to semi-open primaries (like Maine did last year) is a smart first step to fully enfranchising the largest group of voters in the country-independents. We hope it will build a new conversation about how to make our elections work for EVERYONE.



## Calling Out the Parties

### Florida

Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber is calling on the Democratic Party of Florida to open their primaries to all voters in order to address hyper-partisan politics & division by reaching out and listening to a broader spectrum of voters.

*Our thoughts:* Florida is one of the largest states in the country with closed primaries and locks out over 3.5 million voters who want to open the process. Both major parties have the power to open their primaries. We hope more political insiders take a stand within their own party, even as we explore ways to put a more powerful and permanent solution before the voters.

**The Fight Continues...**

### New Mexico

Earlier this year a constitutional amendment (from our friends at NM Open Elections) was proposed that would allow independent voters to vote in primary elections. It cleared a Committee in the House but last week the amendment died in the House Judiciary Committee due to party leadership opposition and a shortened legislative session.

*What's next?* New Mexico activists and leaders are already working on another effort for the next session in order to address the rights of 300,000 New Mexicans currently barred from participating in the first round of elections.

# Defense

## Closed Primary Bills Introduced...

### New Hampshire

A closed primary bill has been introduced in New Hampshire that would effectively shut out over 400,000 voters in the state.

*Our thoughts:* As OP SVP Jeremy Gruber declared in his opposition testimony: "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](#).

### Missouri

For the 3rd year in a row, efforts are underway by the Missouri GOP to close the primaries. Our friends and partners, Veterans for Political Innovation, are helping lead the effort to keep the primaries open.

OP Spokesperson & Veterans for Political Innovation Co-founder Eric Bronner recently penned an op-ed on why he's vowing to fight on behalf of the 180K independent veterans who would lose their right to participate if this moves forward.

Meanwhile, we're working with our friends at Show Me Integrity to oppose the repeal of Prop D in St. Louis which brought the city a nonpartisan top two primary and approval voting. *What can you do?* If you live in St. Louis and want to help with this effort--contact our Senior VP Jeremy Gruber at [jgruber@openprimaries.org](mailto:jgruber@openprimaries.org) for more info.

## Further efforts to shut out independent voters...

### Idaho

A bill has been proposed in Idaho to move up the registration deadline for the Republican primary in order to shut out the state's over 300,000 independents from participating in the only election that matters in Idaho.

Our friends at Idaho 97 joined with the State League of Conservation Voters to testify against this act of voter suppression.

### Wyoming

Similar efforts to shut out independent voters by changing voter registration deadlines has been introduced in Wyoming after former President Trump called on state lawmakers to pull out all the stops in preventing the re-election of Congresswoman Cheney.

## YOUNG LEADERS AT WORK

Students for Open Primaries participated in Florida's Association of Student Councils and they were able to pass a district resolution endorsing top two open primaries with resounding support. It will soon be considered on the state level by all state student councils in Florida in April!

Recently, SFOP joined The Forward Party for a national call to discuss open primaries and their campaign to build a national network of young activists for primary reform. If you or someone you know is interested in being a Student Ambassador or getting more involved click [HERE](#).



## What We're Talking About

- **New York Times: 'Taking the Voters Out of the Equation': How the Parties Are Killing Competition**--When general elections are no longer competitive, the primaries are the only elections that matter. A major New York Times piece exposes the open secret of America's elections and shows how Open Primaries and our friends & partners have moved the needle in the way the media views this issue. [Read the full article](#)
- **The Hill: The case for pluralism in a tribalistic nation**--David Holt, the Mayor of Oklahoma City and a champion of nonpartisan elections and open primaries, has written a new op-ed on Oklahoma City's experiment and commitment to pluralism:

*"Pluralism is a political science word that's not used as much as it should be. It describes a system where many perspectives co-exist. They don't surrender to each other or attempt to eradicate each other. A pluralistic approach arrives at outcomes that represent enough of each worldview to satisfy the greatest number of people."*

We applaud Holt's rare approach to governing and urge more leaders to take his lead. [Read the full article](#)

- **John Avlon on CNN: How Political Extremes (and Closed Primaries) Hijack American Politics**--Avlon recently highlighted campaigns across the country to enact closed, partisan primaries which give power to the few at the expense of the many. We're glad he spoke out on our efforts to prevent this form of "hidden" voter suppression.

[Watch the full interview](#)

- **New York Times: More Places Should Do What Alaska Did to Its Elections**--All eyes are on Alaska! More and more Americans are looking at Alaska's new nonpartisan open primary and ranked choice voting as "among the most promising structural solutions that could help mitigate the forces of extremism in our politics." [Read the full article](#)