

JULY 2022

# COURT WINS, MOVIE SCREENS & TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

## July 1, 2022:

It's been a busy and exciting month for the open primaries movement. Court wins, movie screens, debates...and taking the show on the road!

## State by State

### **Oklahoma United Wraps First Phase of UnMute OK Campaign to REPEAL Closed Primaries**

Oklahoma United just wrapped up the first phase of a statewide campaign dedicated to repealing closed primaries in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has the reputation of being a very red state. Republicans hold supermajorities in the legislature, every state-wide office and every seat in Congress. But 49% of Oklahomans aren't registered Republican and are shut out of the Republican primaries where 94% of races are decided.



Margaret Kobos, founder Oklahoma United for Progress, launched a “road show” in early June. Their flatbed truck carried a message to every part of the state: “Oklahoma, You’re on mute,” ([watch a quick highlight video of the road show here](#))-if you’re an Oklahoman you can [sign the petition here](#). They held rallies in every city they visited - [watch some of the great media coverage they generated!](#)

Oklahoma United also took out a [full page ad in Tulsa World](#) outlining the many reasons why Oklahoma should adopt open primaries and wrapped up the statewide tour with a rally & concert at ONEOK Field in Tulsa on primary day.

[Polling that Open Primaries did in 2015](#) showed 74% support among all Oklahoma voters for repealing closed primaries and moving to a nonpartisan primary. Margaret and OUP are turning that support into real on the ground organization. We can’t wait to see where this campaign moves next!

### ***Democrats Lose in Court- Fail to Torpedo Efforts in Nevada and Oregon***

#### **Nevada**

Last year [Nevada Voters First](#) launched a campaign 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, but in February a lower court judge ruled in favor for the ballot measure to move ahead. Yesterday, in a 4-3 decision, the Nevada Supreme Court [dismissed the most recent challenge](#) to the ballot initiative concluding that “changes to both primary and general elections did not violate a rule that ballot initiatives must focus on a single subject.” All legal hurdles for the initiative have now been overcome. Nevada Voters First have collected 266,000 signatures for the initiative, more than the 141,000 needed to qualify for ballot, and submitted them this week for verification. Click [HERE](#) to support the Nevada Voters First campaign.

#### **Oregon**

Earlier this year [Oregon Open Primaries](#) collected the initial slate of signatures needed for the “Free and Equal Elections” initiative, a groundbreaking proposed constitutional amendment calling for all voters to be free to vote in every publicly funded election. Oregon currently bars over a million independent voters, 34% of the electorate and now the largest group of voters in the state--from participating in round one, the primaries. Why groundbreaking? Because they didn’t prescribe the form of open primary, but the simple principle that all taxpayer funded elections should be open; leaving it to the legislature (and the organized reform community) to determine how to comply (with semi-open, top-two, top four/five or something entirely new!). It’s an innovative approach to reform that holds a lot of promise for Oregon and other states as well. The initiative was validated by Oregon’s Elections Division and given a certified ballot title by the OR Attorney General. In early May, the Democratic Party affiliated group Our Oregon filed an appeal with the Oregon Supreme Court to challenge the ballot title and just this week we got the news that the Oregon State Supreme Court rejected the appeal and approved the ballot language!

The initiative won't make the ballot in 2022 unfortunately, but the ballot language is now fully vetted by the courts and the Open Primaries Oregon team is already building for a 2024 campaign. Click [HERE](#) to support Open Primaries Oregon.

## **Millions shut out or intimidated from voting in the primaries**

We're in the middle of the 2022 primary season—and that means that millions of Americans are actively being shut out of taxpayer funded primaries. And this only captures half the picture. In states like Tennessee, which gives all voters the right to vote in primaries *on paper*, partisan misinformation and intimidation keeps many voters at home, as OP President John Opdycke and Tennessee journalist Gabe Hart point out in this [recent editorial](#).

Here's a quick roundup of states that have recently held closed primaries and how many of Americans were disenfranchised:

*May 17, 2022:*

- Idaho: **320,000 voters**
- Kentucky: **320,000 voters**
- Oregon: **1,000,000 voters**
- Pennsylvania: **1,200,000 voters**

*June 7, 2022:*

- New Jersey: **2,400,000 voters**
- New Mexico: **300,000 voters**
- South Dakota: **140,000 voters**

*June 14, 2022:*

- Nevada: **600,000 voters**

June 28, 2022:

- Maryland: **820,000 voters**
- New York: **3,500,000 voters**

That's 10,600,000 Americans who had no say in the all-important first round of elections. Every year our elections become less representative. In 2020, only 10% of voters effectively elected 83% of Congress. And we're not the only ones covering this—take a look at Unite America's recent report they've been updating in real time based on 2022 results.

## YOUNG LEADERS AT WORK

Students for Open Primaries –who recently launched a new and improved website–appear in the new film *The Young Vote* from filmmaker Diane Robinson. They just attended the world premiere at the American Black Film Festival in Miami along with OP Senior VP Jeremy Gruber who also appears in the film.

The new film highlights SFOP's fight to open Florida's primaries during the Ballot Measure 3 campaign in 2020 and places their work in the context of other young activists across the country working to reform our democracy that the film also highlights. We'll be sure to update you as soon as the film secures a distributor and you can watch it.

For more information on the film or to sign up for future screenings visit:  
<https://bit.ly/3b5ArM6>



## DEBATE

In *Divided We Fall*'s [most recent Penpal Debate](#) OP Senior VP Jeremy Gruber articulates why & how open primaries offer up meaningful change to our primary process in a wide ranging and expansive debate with Dan Butler of Washington State University:

*"Political scientists often make the mistake of thinking that democracy is primarily about outcomes because outcomes are more easily studied. It's not. Democracy is primarily about values. Almost 250 years ago, our founding fathers launched a bold experiment in self-government with no way of proving the outcome would be any better. Just read any of the founding documents of our republic and you'll find nothing but a discussion of values. Values like fairness, equality, and freedom. Our founders knew that when an election system reflects the values of voters, they trust it regardless of the outcome."*

[Read the whole debate here](#)—a compelling and helpful tool as we continue to challenge the political science status quo, which dismisses primary reform as unimportant.