

AUGUST 2022

## WE'RE ON THE BALLOT, AN EXPLOSIVE NEW REPORT ON PARTISAN CONTROL OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATION & PREPPING FOR BATTLE .

### August 2022:

Things are heating up at Open Primaries this summer: an open primary initiative makes the ballot in Nevada, an explosive new report on partisan control of election administration - and we're prepping for battle in 10 open primary states where legislators want to enact closed primaries.

### NEW REPORT: US ELECTION ADMINISTRATION: PARTISAN BY DESIGN

The United States is the only democracy in the world with a partisan system of election administration-by design. In other democracies, elections are run by independent commissions or governmental agencies shielded from political influence.

A new report out from The Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy at Arizona State University and The Open Primaries Education Fund has found that "there is virtually no firewall between electoral competitors and electoral administrators, leaving the voting public at the mercy of shifting partisan currents."

The report's authors examined the electoral codes of the 30 states with partisan registration



and found them ripe with rules for how the two major parties—Republican and Democrat—prioritize their power at the exclusion of everyone else.

In a [recent op-ed in The Hill](#), co-authors Reilly and Gruber outline how there is much work to be done to assure the American people that our democratic elections are safe:

*“Half of state Attorney General races and two thirds of Secretary of State races this year have a candidate running who denies the results of the 2020 election. Thirty-three states are considering 229 bills that would politicize, interfere with, or criminalize the election administration. The threat to democracy is growing and won’t recede until we address the fundamental flaw that makes these attacks on election administration possible.”*

It’s long past time we have a conversation about how we can fundamentally restructure election administration in America and move to a more nonpartisan system—before it’s too late.

## **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK: OPEN PRIMARIES UNDER ATTACK IN 10 STATES**

There’s been many shocking twists and turns throughout this primary season but something that has gone largely unnoticed is the emerging effort by Trump-aligned legislators to prevent millions of Americans from voting in primaries at all.

Efforts by career politicians to pass legislation closing primaries isn’t new—we’ve helped defeat previous bills in 15 states over the last decade. But this is different—as OP President John Opdycke [states his latest op-ed](#):

*“Conservative Republicans have made “crossover voting” public enemy number one. They’ve convinced many in the political mainstream that crossover voting is meddling that undermines democracy. The broad voting rights community is mostly silent, and some even agree with the far right that voters should stay in their lanes. So, while Trump-aligned Republicans are clamoring for more restrictive rules that would seriously impact voter mobility, they are doing so in an environment of little opposition.”*

Both the Democratic and Republican parties have taken the position that, as private entities, they have a First Amendment right to decide who can and cannot vote in “their” primaries. And [as OP SVP Jeremy Gruber outlines](#), GOP factions in some states are changing laws to improve their chances of successfully enforcing that right in court as well.

So, with Trump Republicans aggressively going after open primaries in nearly a dozen states in the lead up to 2024 and a Democratic party willing to sit back and let it happen it’s going to have to be up to “we the people” to make sure our primaries remain *ours*.

## OPEN PRIMARIES MAKE THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

An open primaries and ranked choice voting initiative has been approved by the Nevada Secretary of State for the November 2022 ballot!



Our partners at Nevada Voter First, including OP Spokesperson Sondra Cosgrove, gathered enough signatures to get the initiative on the ballot for November and now the 35% of Nevadans who aren't registered into either major party are one step closer to having voting access to primary elections.

If enacted, the initiative would officially eliminate closed primary races for partisan offices; voters could cast a primary ballot for any candidate, regardless of political party affiliation. The top five vote-getters would advance to the general election. A ranked choice voting system would then be used in the general election.

A recent poll from the Nevada Independent found that voters currently favor the initiative by a 15 point margin. If passed by voters in November, the measure would still need to pass another popular vote in 2024.

We're standing with Nevada Voter First, and working with reform activists in cities and states across the country to advocate for open, nonpartisan primary election systems like those in California, Washington, Alaska, Louisiana and Nebraska.

### WHAT TO WATCH

Our Latest Virtual Discussion:

This week our Virtual Discussions Series returned for a timely conversation with social psychologist & author Jonathan Haidt about his recent piece in the Atlantic "*How the Last Ten Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid.*"

Co-hosts Jeff Bewkes (Former CEO of Time Warner) and John Opdycke (President of Open Primaries) explored with Haidt the relationship between the advancement of technology/social media and an outdated, partisan political system; a relationship that has led to the democracy crises America has found

itself in. We encourage you to **watch and share the entire conversation** with your networks.

**Catch up on all our exciting past discussions on our dedicated channel as well.** Stay tuned for the return of our series in the Fall.

#### OPEN PRIMARIES VIRTUAL DISCUSSIONS SERIES

## ALGORITHMS & ANACHRONISMS: HOW NEW TECH & OLD POLITICS ARE HOLDING US BACK

Featuring:

Social Psychologist & Author Jonathan Haidt

Hosted by

Jeff Bewkes (Former Time Warner CEO)  
& John Opdycke (President of Open Primaries)

## The Maine Story That Needs to be Told

Maine enacted semi open primaries this year—a major win for Maine voters, Open Primaries and democracy activists alike. But the story of how Maine accomplished this historic victory is one that folks all across the country need to hear.

This groundbreaking, grassroots campaign featured a rare mix of dedicated lawmakers from across the political spectrum (Republicans, Democrats and Independents), veterans, business and community leaders, and thousands of committed, everyday Mainers who were willing to make their voices heard and years of perseverance.

The lessons learned from Maine are powerful tools that should be utilized in reform campaigns across the country. Earlier in the year we put together a comprehensive report [“What it Took To Bring Semi Open Primaries to Maine.”](#) Now we’ve put together [a short video](#) that tells the Maine story and we encourage you to read, watch and share both of these resources with your networks—more Americans need to know that true reform is possible—it’s not easy—but there is a way forward.

Bringing open primaries to Maine was a testament to the kind of local and national partnerships that can create meaningful, lasting change. Now we need to tell this story far and wide. Can you help?

## IN THE NEWS

- Politico: Washington’s Primary Could Dethrone Trump’s Kingmaker Power by Natalie Fertig
- NY Post: Why NYC Needs Final Five Voting by Sal Albanese
- WATCH: CNN’S John Avlon Reality Checks the Primary Problem
- The Colorado Sun: Colorado’s Semi-Open Primary a Success. A Fully Open Primay Would be Better by Kent Thiry
- RealClear Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania—The State of Independents by David Thornburgh
- The Columbian: Election a victory for state’s top two primary