

A black and white photograph of a man in a light-colored button-down shirt standing next to a dark-colored SUV. The man is smiling and has his hand on the side of the vehicle. The SUV has a banner on its side that reads 'Open Primaries' and 'ballot PA'. The background is slightly blurred, showing some foliage.

OPEN PRIMARIES MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER

Momentum Builds to Repeal Closed Primaries in Pennsylvania

For several years [Ballot PA](#)—a coalition of civic, community and business organizations committed to ensuring PA's over 1 million independents have the right to vote in primary elections—has been building a team of key political figures, longtime activists, frustrated Pennsylvanians and even [Vietnam veteran and four time Super Bowl Champion Rocky Bleier](#).

Now PA Sens. Dan Laughlin (R) and Lisa Boscola (D) have [introduced Senate Bill 400](#), a renewed effort to repeal closed primaries. As Sen. Boscola [pointed out in a recent press conference](#), this kind of bipartisanship coalition “couldn’t have happened 20 years ago” but now with more and more people identifying as independents, there’s momentum building that’s making PA ripe for change.

Ballot PA Chair David Thornburgh and OP President John Opdycke’s [latest piece in RealClear Politics](#) gives some important context on why PA is finally ready for primary reform and over [20 media outlets](#) [have already endorsed](#) their effort!

Last week, we hosted [a timely virtual discussion](#) to get an inside look at the PA campaign. As David Thornburgh said on the call: “We’ve introduced bills in each of the four legislative sessions—the way I look at it—the tide comes in a little further each time and I’m convinced that this is the year the tide’s going to come all the way up the beach.”

We look forward to championing this campaign in every way we can. Stay tuned!

Effort to Close the Primaries in Missouri is defeated.

As we shared in our last newsletter, we've SUCCESSFULLY DEFEATED efforts to close the primaries in 4 states already in 2023: **Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi** and **New Hampshire**. We can now officially add a 5th state to that list: **Missouri**!

In 2018, the Missouri Republican Party adopted closing the primaries as a priority for its state platform and began introducing multiple bills to such effect each legislative session. Ever since, Missouri has been ground zero for our efforts to ensure that every voter who has the right to vote in the primaries-keeps it. This year, we expanded our efforts and joined the [Missouri Voter Protection Coalition](#), a group of over 60 non-partisan organizations that collaborate to advance free, fair, and accessible elections in Missouri and build a pro-democracy movement rooted in civil rights movement building.

This session our national organizer, Doug Balder, and the MVPC worked together to engage the legislature at every level to defeat four separate bills to close the primaries. That hard work has paid off. The bills have been stopped dead in their tracks. Even a last minute attempt at the end of the session to attach closed primaries to a bill to end the presidential caucus and move to a preferential primary failed.

Kudos to Doug and our partners at the MVPC.

We're still monitoring bills/closed primary efforts in Alabama and Texas-more updates soon!

Closed Presidential Primaries Face Legal Challenge in California

The [Independent Voter Project](#) has filed [a petition](#) with the California Supreme Court to [hear its lawsuit challenging the state's semi-closed presidential primary](#), which has caused widespread voter confusion and suppressed the votes of **5.6 million** independent Californians.

The [lawsuit](#) cites 6 distinct violations to state and federal voting rights laws the state commits each presidential election cycle by using semi-closed primaries, including a state constitutional requirement that the publicly-funded and administered primaries be open. IVP is asking the court to recognize that voters should have the same rights as offered to the political parties, and that those rights should be equally protected regardless of a voter's political affiliation.

Open Primaries [has filed an amicus letter in support](#) of IVP's petition.

A New Study Finds Automatic Voter Registration Leads To A Rapid Rise in Voters Registering as Independents

A new study has found a 66% drop in party registration in states with automatic voter registration and a rapid rise in voters registering as independents.

In 2016, Oregon became the first state to implement AVR but now 22 states have similar systems in place—early research on the impacts of this innovation has shown an increase in the number of people registered, and greater diversity among the registrants—but now researchers using Oregon voter data have identified an unanticipated consequence of automatic voter registration: a steep drop in party registration and a rapid rise in independent voters. Perhaps most interesting, researchers found voters stayed registered independent over time.

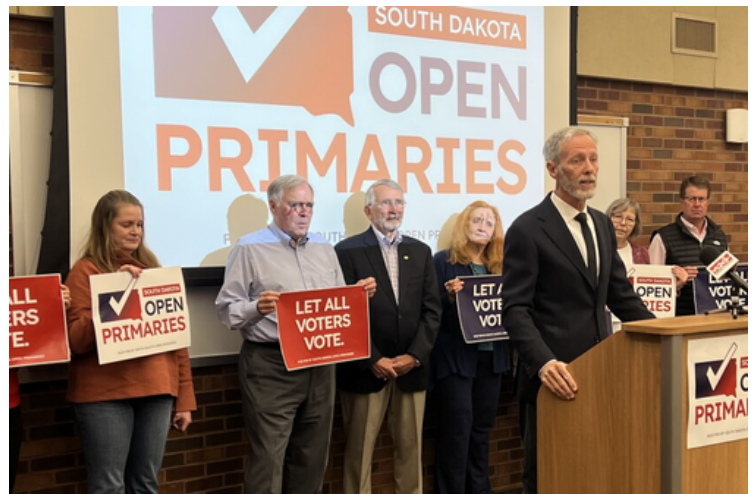
As the study noted, this means in closed primary states with automatic voter registration a large majority of new voters will not be able to vote in the primaries.

South Dakota Campaign Rollout & Expansion

South Dakota Open Primaries' campaign to put open primaries on the 2024 ballot is charging ahead—the team has already organized 40 volunteers to help collect the 35,000 signatures required ahead of the May 2024 deadline (for a November 2024 ballot referendum).

SDOP is also launching their West River signature drive tomorrow Wednesday May 17 at 11:00 am MT at Pure Bean Coffeehouse – 201 Main Street, Rapid City, SD 57701 with speakers Nick Reid (Independent, Business Owner), Nicole Heenan (2022 District 32 State Senate candidate), Chuck Parkinson (Lifelong Republican, Former political staffer) and Holly Knox (Registered Republican, Nurse)

If you're from South Dakota or have connections to anyone in the state—let us know! Now is the time we mobilize everyone we can to gather signatures and do everything we can to let ALL South Dakotans vote.



New Amendment to Bring Open Primaries to Oregon

Last year a ballot measure for a constitutional amendment to repeal closed primaries was submitted in Oregon with 1,000 signatures. Our friends, [All Oregon Votes](#), disagreed with the ballot title generated in January by the Oregon Justice Department.

Michael Calcagno, President of All Oregon Votes: "We thought it was not very clear and it was not impartial and so we petitioned the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court did not order a modified ballot title."

Now they're doing something about it. All Oregon Votes are planning to recollect 1,000 signatures to trigger a new ballot title and summary from the state Justice Department. Under the new amendment, Initiative Petition 26, closed primaries would be repealed and any ballot an Oregon voter receives would be required to include all candidates for an office, regardless of the voter's or candidate's political affiliation. It also would require the same candidacy and filing standards for all candidates regardless of their political affiliation. They're already generating positive press.

Calcagno said they expect to collect the 1,000 signatures within a week, and a new ballot title for IP-26 in 60 days. Next, 161,000 signatures would be needed by July 2024 to make the November 2024 ballot.

Students for Open Primaries Continues to Grow



[Students for Open Primaries](#) is out all over the country educating Millennial and GenZ voters and organizing them in support of open primary movements. Over half of young people are independent and shut out in closed primaries.

If you're developing primary reform campaigns and need experts on youth organizing, please reach out. And if you know young people who want to join the fight for election reform, they can join [SFOP's Ambassador Corp](#) and make a difference in their state.