

Proposed Initiative
"Top 4" Open Primaries

We need your advice and comments!

We plan to advance a ballot initiative for voter approval in the 2022 election cycle

May 10, 2021



Our primary system is broken

Our primary system is not "free and equal" - Oregon Constitution

- Disenfranchises many voters
- Inhibits competition
- Skews election results
- Overcomplicates the electoral process

Large share of voters are shut out

Bars ~40 percent of voters from participating in public primaries

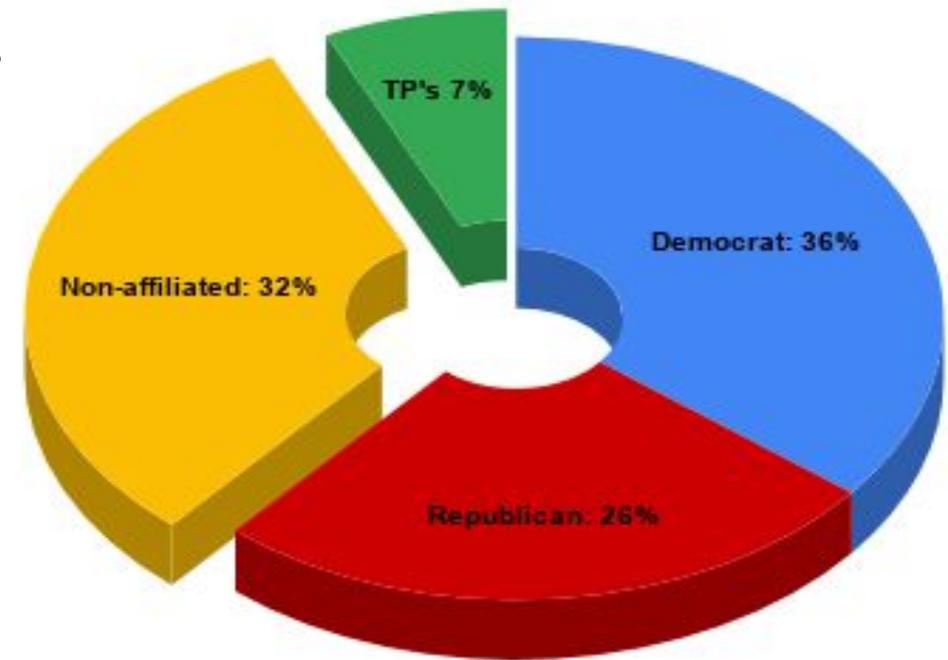
- Non-affiliated voters
- Third party voters

Many are from minority communities

Many, if not most, are young

Over 1.1 million voters are shut out

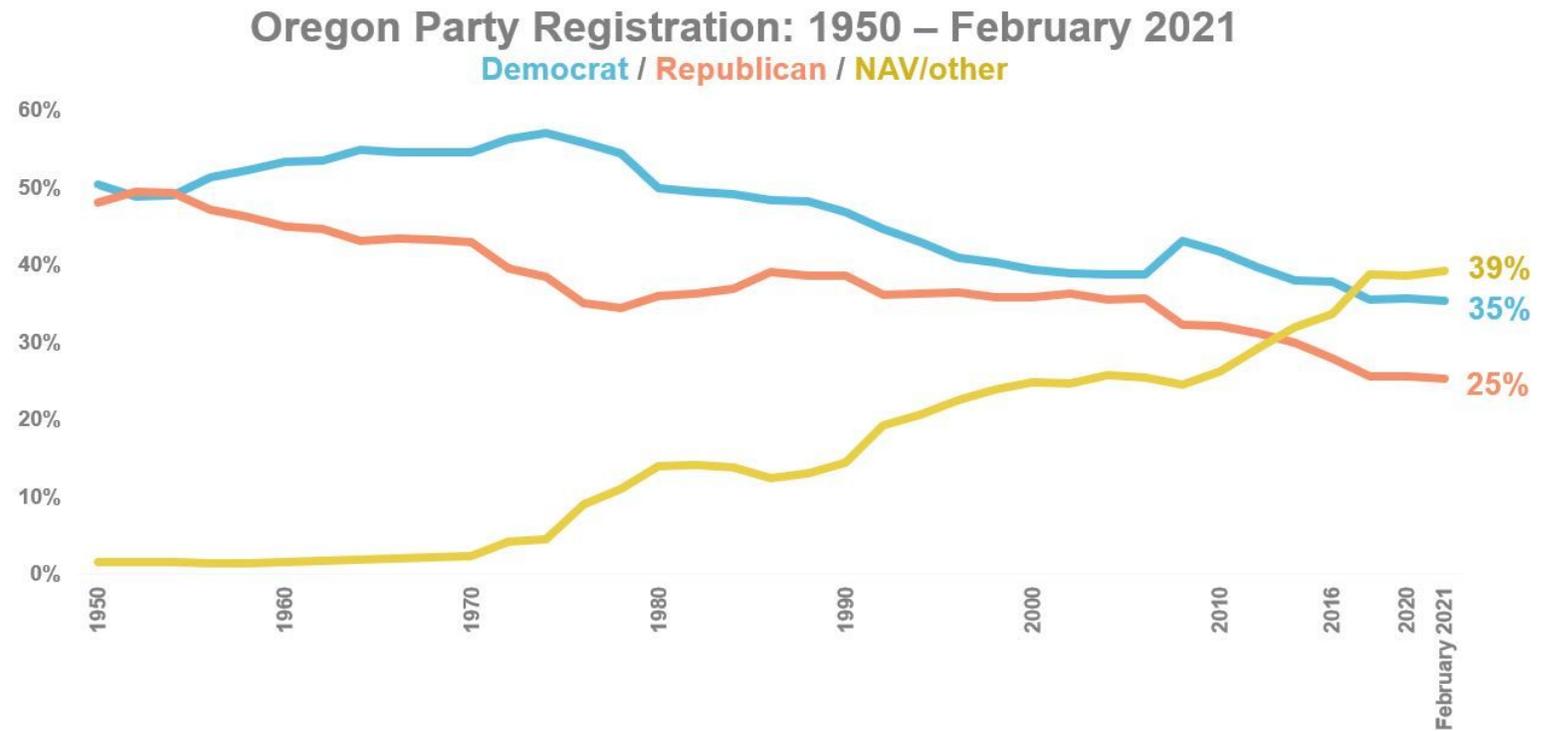
Total voter registrations: 2,946,000 (Nov 2020)



Non-affiliated voters are growing

38% growth in just 5 years

Growth among Democratic and Republican voters much lower: 11%



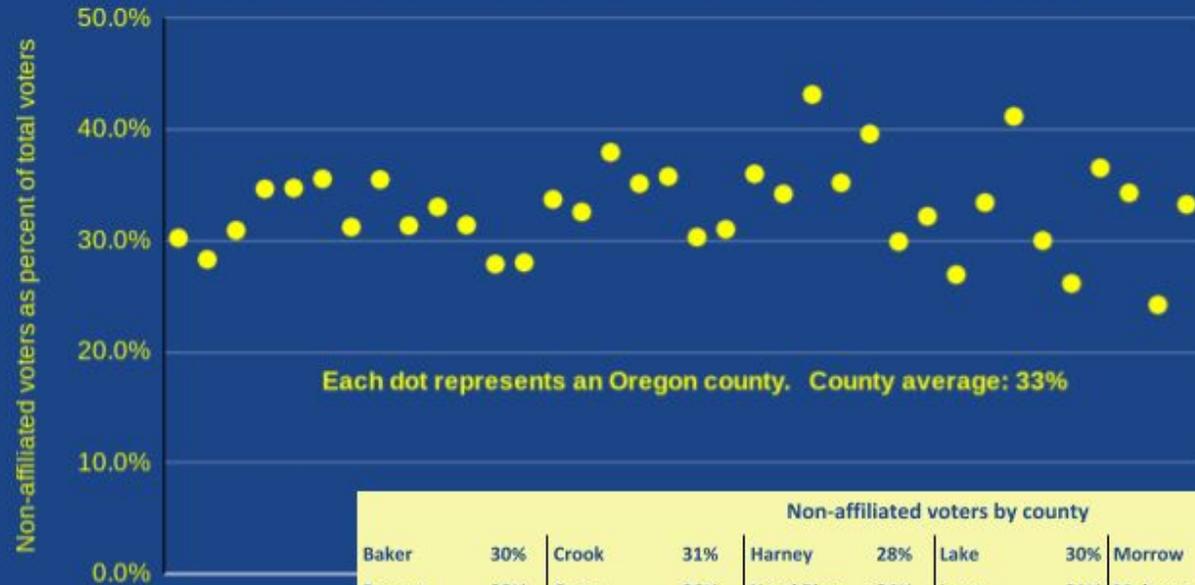
All of Oregon is affected

Urban and rural

West and east of Cascades

Young and old

A very high percentage of non-affiliated voters in every county



In many counties, registered non-affiliated voters outnumber Dem or Rep voters

Non-affiliated voters by county

Baker	30%	Crook	31%	Harney	28%	Lake	30%	Morrow	40%	Union	30%
Benton	28%	Curry	36%	Hood River	34%	Lane	31%	Multnomah	30%	Wallowa	26%
Clackamas	31%	Deschutes	31%	Jackson	33%	Lincoln	36%	Polk	32%	Wasco	37%
Clatsop	35%	Douglas	33%	Jefferson	38%	Linn	34%	Sherman	27%	Washington	34%
Columbia	35%	Gilliam	31%	Josephine	35%	Malheur	43%	Tillamook	33%	Wheeler	24%
Coos	36%	Grant	28%	Klamath	36%	Marion	35%	Umatilla	41%	Yamhill	33%

Inhibits competition

- Gives preference to major party candidates
- Bars non-affiliated and minor party candidates from public primaries
- Insulates party candidates from having to compete head-to-head during the primary
- Prohibits cross-over voting
- Erects other barriers to entry for candidates who are not affiliated with a party

Not a level playing field. Voter choice is limited!

So what is the solution?

Must haves

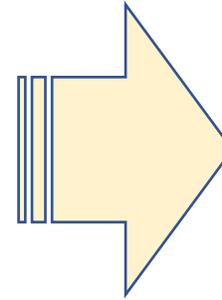
- **All registered voters can vote** in public primaries, regardless of party preference or non-preference
- **All eligible candidates can compete** in public primaries, regardless of party preference or non-preference. Candidates must compete in the primary to make the general election ballot
- All voters in a district vote from the same primary ballot. The ballot includes all eligible candidates for each office. **Voters can choose from any of the candidates** - even candidates from different parties

How would the initiative get there?

Shift in role of primaries

From

Closed nominating process
for major party voters and
candidates



To

Open, nonpartisan process for
all voters to choose the candidates
they want to consider further in the
general election

The initiative *would simplify* the primary system by . . .

- **Sweeping away restrictions** on who can vote in state-sponsored primaries
- **Leveling the playing field** by sweeping away preferential, partisan restrictions on who can compete
- **Engendering greater competition** by removing barriers to entry and requiring candidates to compete head-to-head on a single ballot

All voters can vote

Non-affiliated and minor party voters no longer barred from state-sponsored primaries

Primaries are taxpayer-funded, publicly administered elections that must be accessible to all voters and candidates

No longer will voters and candidates be required to join a private organization – a major party – to participate in a publicly funded election

All candidates can compete

- Non-affiliated and third-party candidates would no longer be shut out
- Filing requirements would be simplified and made uniform
- Candidates may indicate their party preferences or non-preference
- Candidates must compete in the primary to be able to advance to the general election
- Write-in candidates allowed in both primary and general elections

A single primary ballot

- All candidates would appear on the ballot, regardless of party preference or non-preference
- All voters would be presented the same choice of candidates
- Voters may choose any candidate on the ballot - regardless of party preference or non-preference

- Level playing field
- Free, open, head-to-head competition
- Party preference or non-preference no longer a factor
- Party cross-over voting allowed
- Fewer versions of ballots to administer

Which offices would be covered?

- Federal legislative
 - State executive
 - State legislative
 - State nonpartisan
 - County partisan
- Precinct Committeeperson positions no longer covered by state-sponsored elections
 - County Home Rule and local ordinances not impacted

Who advances from the primary to general?

- Top 4
- If field of candidates is 4 or fewer, the candidates automatically advance to the general
- All elections are decided in the general election – candidates who garner 50%+1 in the primary must still compete in the general

Should we modernize our voting method?

Today's plurality voting method has serious defects . . .

- A plurality ballot puts a slate of candidates in front of you and forces you to choose only one candidate, even if you prefer more than one
- Limits the opinions voters can express about candidates
- Enables vote splitting and the spoiler effect
- Contributes to hyper-partisanship by “squeezing out the center”

But this voting method also has attributes . . .

- Simple and well understood by voters
- Ballot spoiling very limited
- Calculation of votes is easy
- Election systems are already set up for this
- Risk-limiting auditing of ballot data is straightforward

Alternative selection and tabulation methods

- There are several alternative methods, any of which would greatly improve upon the plurality voting method
 - Score-Then-Automatic-Runoff (STAR), Approval, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), others
- **We seek to partner with sponsors of a separate, parallel initiative that would adopt an alternative voting method**
- **We support bills introduced in the legislature** that (1) call for a systematic evaluation of alternative methods or (2) adopt a statewide method (RCV, STAR, Approval)
- **Should we include one of these methods in our initiative?**

- **Structural reform of our electoral process – enabling all voters to vote and all candidates to compete – must be the focus**
- Only with a fully open primary will the full benefits of an alternative voting method be realized

Join us!

We are volunteers that come with diverse backgrounds

We are open, objective and nonpartisan in our approach. We have no partisan ax to grind

We seek only to move our great state to a fully open, equitable, non-preferential primary system that benefits all Oregonians

OregonOpenPrimaries.org

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