



INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Open primaries let all voters vote!

Our 2024 Proposal – Our ballot initiative will give voters in 2024 a chance to change the state’s constitution to establish a top-two open primary for “the office of governor, a legislative office, a county office, the United States Senate, or the United States House of Representatives.” The legislature will have the ability to add other offices to the open primary in the future.

We believe South Dakota will be a better place when more South Dakotans are involved in the election process.

All Registered Voters Should Be Able to Vote – With a top-two open primary, all candidates for an office run against each other in the June primary election and all registered voters get to vote. Candidates have the option to show their party preference on the ballot. The two candidates who get the most votes move on to the general election in November.

Large Number of Voters Excluded - The number of independent or unaffiliated voters in the US has jumped with 45% now identifying themselves as independent. Independents often have little say in who will represent them. In South Dakota’s closed primary, over 148,000 registered voters cannot fully participate. That’s unfair and undemocratic.

Many States Have Open Primaries - About half the states have one form or another of open primaries. Three states have top-two open primaries.

Public Funds Pay for Primary Elections - Primary elections are conducted with taxpayer money, even in closed primary states like South Dakota. Independents pay for elections they cannot vote in. That’s not fair.

Primary Elections Are Usually More Important than the General Election - Most legislative elections in South Dakota are decided in the primary. In 2022, 86% of legislative elections were uncontested or minimally contested in the general election. A disappointing 21 of 35 state Senate seats were uncontested. There’s nothing competitive about that.

Political Parties Promote Partisanship - Party run primaries tend to promote partisanship and reward party loyalty. They also result in low voter turnout. Political loyalists and the partisan folks who have messed up American politics tend to dislike open primaries.

South Dakota’s Conservative Values – South Dakota embraces conservative values like fairness and competition. We believe South Dakota will be a better place when more South Dakotans are involved in the election process, and all will benefit from competitive elections where successful candidates try to appeal to all voters.

Not a Partisan Issue – Open primaries is a non-partisan issue. History suggests that top-two open primaries do not change political leanings in a state. Red states stay red, and blue states blue. But most importantly, all voters get to vote.

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