

PARTY REGISTRATION STILL MATTERS, EVEN WITH THE “TOP-TWO” PRIMARY CHANGES

California voters are about 75 days from casting their ballots under the new “Top-Two” primary system that was adopted in 2010 with the passage of Proposition 14. As we enter this Presidential primary season it is important for voters to understand the effect of the new primary system on their ballot in the upcoming election, particularly for the Presidential nominee contests.

TO PUT IT SIMPLY: PARTY REGISTRATION DOES MATTER

Many voters believe that under the top-two primary system, the party registration of the voter does not make a difference. However, under the new rules, selecting the Presidential nominee for each political party continues to be a partisan contest and while all voters will see the same candidates for other contests, the voter’s party registration will determine which candidates for Presidential nominee will be on the voter’s ballot.

HOW THE TOP-TWO PRIMARY ACT EFFECTS OTHER CONTESTS

Prior to the Top –Two Primary Act, candidates running for partisan office appeared only on their own party’s ballot. The candidate who received the most votes in each party would then move on to the General Election. Now, under the Top-Two primary system, all candidates, regardless of their party registration, will appear on a single combined ballot and all voters, regardless of their party registration, can vote for any candidate from any political party. Only the two candidates who receive the highest and second-highest vote totals will appear on the ballot in the General Election. Offices that will be voted on in this manner are now called “voter-nominated” offices and include all state and federal offices such as U.S. Senate, U.S. Congress, State Legislators and State offices (Governor, Lt. Governor, etc). As stated before, this change in the primary system does not affect the contest for President or the non-partisan offices that represent counties, cities, school and special districts.

WHAT THIS CHANGE MEANS FOR VOTERS IN THE JUNE 5 PRIMARY ELECTION

In California, there are 7 qualified political parties: Americans Elect, American Independent, Democratic, Green, Libertarian, Peace & Freedom and Republican. Any voter who is registered with one of these parties will receive that party’s ballot. The party ballot will contain the following: President- only the presidential candidates for that party; U.S. Senate, U.S. Representative, State Senate and State Assembly- all candidates regardless of party registration; County Supervisor (1st, 3rd and 5th district), City of Morro Bay, state propositions and local measures.

Any voter who is not registered with a political party (No Party Preference (NPP) voters - previously called Decline to State voters) will be issued a ballot which will contain all contests listed above except for President. NPP voters can also choose to vote a party ballot IF that party allows their participation in the party’s Presidential primary election. For the June 5, 2012 election, only the American Independent and Democratic parties are allowing NPP voters to choose their party ballot.

Even though the primary rules have changed it is important that voters make sure they are registered with the party for the ballot they wish to vote in the primary election. Voters can check their voter

registration status, including party choice, on the Clerk-Recorder's website under Elections and Voting-
www.slocounty.ca.gov/clerk. If a voter chooses to change their registration, they can complete the
online voter registration form to be printed and mailed, obtain one from most post offices, city clerks
and other locations or call the 805 781-5228 to request a form. While the deadline to make any
changes to a voter's registration is May 21, voters are encouraged to register as early as possible to
ensure that they receive the correct voter information and ballot in the upcoming election.

Voter's Political party Preference	Ballot issued to voter	Candidates included for Presidential Nominee	Candidates for U.S. Senate, U.S. Congress and State Legislators
American Independent	American Independent	American Independent	All
Democratic	Democratic	Democratic	All
Green	Green	Green	All
Libertarian	Libertarian	Libertarian	All
Peace and Freedom	Peace and Freedom	Peace and Freedom	All
Republican	Republican	Republican	All
No Party Preference (Decline to state voters) Can select one of these three ballots	Non-Partisan Or American Independent Or Democratic	None American Independent Democratic	All All All