



House State Government Committee Advances Two Bills to Repeal Closed Primaries in Pa.

HARRISBURG (Oct. 17, 2023) – The House State Government Committee today approved two measures that would end closed primaries in Pennsylvania. Both bills now advance to the full House for consideration.

David Thornburgh, who chairs [Ballot PA](#), the Pennsylvania-based nonpartisan effort to end closed primaries, applauded the vote and issued the following statement:

“This is an idea whose time has come,” Thornburgh said. “More than a million Pennsylvanians are being denied their right to vote. And that number continues to grow each and every day as more people register as independents. It’s time to let these voters have a say in who represents them and how their government is run.”

The committee approved two bipartisan measures, a bill (H.B. 976) by Rep. Marla Brown (R-Lawrence) and legislation (H.B. 979) by Rep. Jared Solomon (D-Philadelphia). Both sponsors were on hand for the committee vote.

“This really is a historic vote,” Thornburgh said. “It marks the first time in history that a House bill to open primaries to independents has ever received a positive vote to advance from committee. I’m grateful to Chairman Scott Conklin and the bills’ sponsors, Marla Brown and Jared Solomon, for the bipartisan work they did to get the measure approved by the House committee.”

Pennsylvania is one of only seven states to completely exclude independent voters from voting in primary elections. That means nearly 1.2 million voters who are registered as unaffiliated with a political party or independent are denied the right to vote, even though their taxes pay for the primary election, which costs \$50 million to run.

Independents are the fastest growing segment of voters in Pennsylvania.

Half of all veterans identify as a political independent. Given that there are about 800,000 veterans in the commonwealth, some 400,000 Pennsylvania veterans who might register as independents are denied the right to vote in primary elections.

As many as half of young voters --- those who inevitably will gain political power with time --- identify as independent. Young voters are the fastest-growing segment of unaffiliated voters.

On Monday, [more than 50 students from 16 colleges and universities across the state rallied in Harrisburg](#) to advocate for the repeal of closed primary elections in Pennsylvania.

Polling data show that Pennsylvanians from across the political spectrum overwhelmingly support removing this barrier to allow access to the ballot box.

Sixty-nine percent of self-identified Trump Republicans and 67 percent of traditional GOP voters say independents should be allowed to vote in primaries. On the other side, 85 percent of progressive Democrats and 75 percent of centrists Democrats agree.

Similar bipartisan legislation (S.B. 400) was introduced in the Senate in the spring by Sens. Dan Laughlin (R-Erie) and Lisa Boscola (D-Lehigh & Northampton). That bill remains in committee.

Ballot PA is a growing coalition of civic, community and business organizations committed to ensuring independents in Pennsylvania have the right to vote in primary elections. Learn more at: www.BallotPA.org

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