

Proposed Concurrence on Open Primaries

The LWVSC Board proposes adopting the following position:

“LWVSC supports retaining the current practice of open primaries, in which citizens can vote in either party primary but not both.”

Background Information:

In SC, we currently have open primaries; that is, citizens can choose which party's primary to vote in (although, of course, if you vote in the primary for a particular party, you are only eligible to participate in runoffs for that same party).

LWVSC currently has no position on this important issue; therefore, the LWVSC Board proposes adopting the position at the top of this page. Having a position in favor of open primaries would enable us to oppose party registration and limiting voting in a primary for candidates for that party's nomination to those registered as members of that party.

Florida currently has closed primaries. The Florida LWV did a study of open vs. closed primaries and subsequently adopted a position in favor of open primaries. LWVSC will, if the members so decide at Convention, adopt the position at the top of this page through concurrence with the Florida study, without having to conduct a separate study on our own.

Main arguments in favor of open primaries:

1. Turnout in primaries is higher in open primary states. (The Florida study offered extensive statistical data to support that statement).
2. Closed primaries exclude a large number of unaffiliated voters and minor party voters, who would like to have a voice in all elections, including the selection of candidates in primaries, as well as the general election.
3. In many parts of the state, the party nomination is tantamount to election because there is no opposition or only token opposition in the general election (viewpoint offered by LWVSC, not from the Florida study).
4. Changing the primary election type may confuse voters.

Main arguments against open primaries:

1. Political parties see open primaries as losing control.
2. Only party members should have a voice in selecting their party's candidates.
3. The argument has also been raised in South Carolina that voters may cross over to choose the weakest candidate.

The Florida study, which includes other issues in addition to open primaries, can be found at <https://www.lwvfl.org/league-finishes-open-primary-study/>