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## Highly partisan U.S. election administration should become nonpartisan to preserve democracy, new report recommends

### Study of how voting is overseen in 30 states shows how two major parties prioritize power at exclusion of all others, authors say

**PHOENIX (July 28, 2022)** – If you were to read through the electoral code of any particular state, you might imagine finding a dry recitation of rules for how elections should be conducted to ensure a fair and impartial outcome.

#### You would be wrong.

In a recently released report, [Election Administration In America – Partisan by Design](#), the [Center for an Independent and Sustainable Democracy](#) at Arizona State University and [Open Primaries](#), a national election reform organization, reviewed the electoral codes of states with partisan voter registration systems. The report, written after the authors studied election administration in 30 states, found the electoral code of every state is ripe with rules for how the two major parties – Republican and Democratic – prioritize their power at the exclusion of everyone else.

Nonpartisan election administration is the norm in most western democracies, but this is not the case in America. The United States is the only democracy in the world that permits partisan contests for election officials. In other democracies, elections are run by independent commissions or governmental agencies shielded from political influence.

In an [op-ed appearing today in The Hill](#), two of the report’s authors, [Jeremy Gruber](#), senior vice president of Open Primaries and ASU School of Public Affairs Professor [Thom Reilly](#), call for radical change in U.S. election administration to preserve democracy. By implementing a nonpartisan status for each state’s chief election official (usually the secretary of state) and the individuals who staff election boards, locally and at the state level.

The report's authors believe America's system of election administration **puts our democracy at risk**, that there is a need for a conversation about how we **fundamentally restructure election administration in America** and move to a **more nonpartisan system**.

**Learn more:** Reilly wrote a [column appearing today in Governing](#) magazine about how independents could be a bridge over America's partisan divide.

*To arrange for an interview with Reilly, Gruber or their co-authors, contact Mark Scarp, [mark.scarp@asu.edu](mailto:mark.scarp@asu.edu).*

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#### **About ASU**

[Arizona State University](#), ranked No. 1 "Most Innovative School" in the nation by U.S. News & World Report for seven years in succession, has forged the model for a New American University by operating on the principles that learning is a personal and lifelong journey for everyone, and that people thrive on experience and discovery that cannot be bound by traditional academic disciplines. Through innovation and a commitment to educational access, ASU has drawn pioneering researchers to its faculty even as it expands opportunities for qualified students.

#### **About Watts College**

The [Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions](#) consists of four schools – Community Resources and Development, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Public Affairs and Social Work – and more than 20 research centers, all with the shared goal of advancing research and discovery of public value, and furthering the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities they serve. The college trains the next generation of public service professionals through an expanding number of bachelor's, master's, doctoral and interdisciplinary degree programs, and is home to the university's highest percentages of underrepresented populations, military veteran students, first-generation college students and transfer students.

#### **About Open Primaries**

[Open Primaries](#) is a movement of diverse Americans who believe in a simple, yet radical idea: No American should be required to join a political party to exercise their right to vote. The mission of Open Primaries is to advocate for open and nonpartisan primary systems, counter efforts to impose closed primaries, educate voters and policymakers, advance litigation, train spokespeople, conduct and support research, and participate in the building of local, state and national open primaries coalitions. We provide information to the public about open and nonpartisan primaries. We engage all sectors—voters, policy makers, good government and civic organizations, business leaders, community activists—to educate, build bridges and develop the primary reform movement.