



## OPEN PRIMARIES APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER

### Montanans Deserve Genuine Reform

Legislative leaders in Montana just tried to pull a fast one. A bill that had been introduced for top two open primaries was amended to apply to only a single race—the upcoming election for Senator John Tester’s seat—in a naked ploy to try and unseat him. It was then fast-tracked through the Senate.

Some might expect us to be supportive of a bill that is proposing an open primary. But we believe it is a prerequisite of reform that the people themselves both want it and have a hand in creating it. It is the only way of ensuring that reform isn't cynically manipulated.

That’s why we worked to organize opposition to the bill, including supporters of genuine reform such as former Republican Governor Marc Racicot. OP Senior VP Jeremy Gruber testified before the Montana House last week in opposition to the bill:

*“The problem with SB566 is not that it proposes bad policy. The problem is that by applying it to a single race and outside of an open conversation with citizens, it weaponizes good policy to serve narrow partisan interests. And that is bad for the citizens of Montana, poisons genuine debate about reform, and contributes to voter cynicism about our greatest inheritance, our democratic republic.”*

We helped stop the bill dead in its tracks, but not without getting serious minds to admit that primary reform is critical. Now the hard work of organizing and building in Montana can begin.

# The campaign to open South Dakota's primaries has officially launched!

South Dakota Open Primaries is officially gathering signatures to get a top two open primary initiative on the 2024 ballot.

SD Open Primaries Chairman Joe Kirby recently declared: *"I can't think of a more important right for South Dakotans than the right to vote, and it seems wrong to me that independents don't get the right to participate in the primary elections that their tax dollars pay for."*

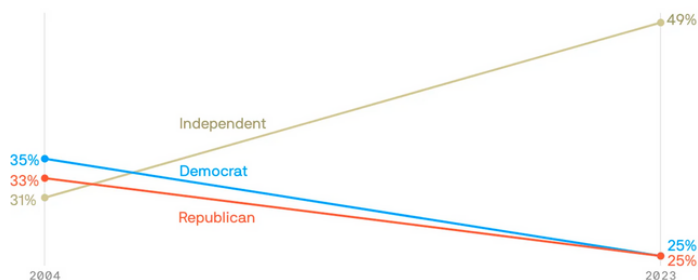


We're excited to partner with and champion the South Dakota team in their mission to let all South Dakotan voters vote!

## The growth of independent voters hits a new milestone

### Share of U.S. adults who identify with select political affiliations

Surveys of at least 10k U.S. adults conducted March 2004 and March 2023



Gallup polling recently found that 49% of Americans identify as independent-the highest they've ever polled.

More and more Americans are ditching the two party system-as OP SVP Jeremy Gruber noted in a recent editorial, states that have adopted automatic voter registration in recent years -inc. Oregon, Nevada and Massachusetts-have seen independent voters outnumber party voters in record numbers. Pundits all over the spectrum are starting to recognize the consequences of this realignment.

OP President John Opdycke appeared on Paul Rieckhoff's Independent Americans podcast this week to discuss these new numbers but is cautioning folks from getting too cocky: *"the amount of pushback and coercion that's going on politically that's targeting independents is very significant and we cannot underestimate that."*

## National Roundup: Defending open primaries

In the first 4 months of 2023, we have already SUCCESSFULLY DEFEATED closed primary efforts in 5 states-Arkansas, Montana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Tennessee. Some highlights:

- **Tennessee:** with the help of The LWV, Civic Tennessee, The Forward Party and local activists and supporters we were able to shut down multiple bills to close Tennessee's primaries and work with legislative leaders to begin a dialogue on keeping primaries open.
- **Arkansas:** Our partners at [Common Ground AR](#) successfully defeated an attempt by the Arkansas Republican Party to adopt rules to close the primaries. They organized a campaign to make the peoples' voice heard and IT WORKED. The Republican state committee voted on the proposal and found itself 18 votes short of moving forward.
- **New Hampshire:** Shout out to Tiani Coleman and our partners at NH Independent Voters for leading the charge to successfully oppose legislation to close the primaries by organizing critical voices-such as the county election clerks- to oppose it.

But the work continues-we're currently monitoring bills/closed primary efforts in Missouri, Alabama and Texas.

## In Case You Missed It!

- **WATCH:** Our virtual discussion with Civil Rights Leader Dr. Benjamin Chavis "Can Bipartisanship Survive the Rise of the Independent Voter?"
- **READ:** Students for Open Primaries Co-Founder Dariel Cruz Rodriguez' new op-ed in The Fulcrum on how open primaries are working in Chicago.
- **READ:** The Case for Nonpartisan Primaries: A necessary fix for a changing political landscape (Smerconish.com)

**NEW ANALYSIS:** Bipartisan Policy Center's new study finds states with open primaries have higher turnout than closed primary states.