
To: Interested Parties
From: Alex Lundry, Redbud Consulting
Re: Centerline Liberties National Issues Survey - Primary Reform
Date: October 2024

The following key findings and data come from Centerline Liberties' recent national survey of 800 registered voters conducted September 12-16, 2024, via mixed mode methodology (cell phones, landlines, online and text-to-web). The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3%.

The survey covered a number of topics; this memo focuses on data collected regarding primary election reform.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **The American public is ready for primary reform.** The survey asked about three different reforms that could be made to primary elections. Each of those reforms enjoyed more support than opposition, including two that had meaningful majority backing.
2. **The top-two primary system and open primaries are extremely popular.** Of the three reforms tested, the one with the most support was the top-two primary system: 61% support and only 24% opposition. A very close second behind that was open primaries, supported by 58% of registered voters (27% opposition).
3. **Pro-reform arguments are more compelling than anti-reform ones.** When asked to choose between pro-reform and anti-reform statements, 64% preferred the pro-reform one that read *"Primary reform, such as open primaries or all-candidate primaries like the top-two system, are essential to a healthy representative democracy. Elections are the way we make decisions in this country, and no eligible voter should be excluded from taxpayer funded elections."*

Only a third of voters (34%) agreed with the statement *"Primary reform is unnecessary. Parties should be able to restrict participation to their own members so that they nominate a candidate reflective of their party and values."*

4. **Voters worry about primaries producing extreme candidates.** Similarly, 68% of American voters agreed that "The current primary system tends to produce candidates who are not reflective of the broader electorate, favoring more extreme positions. Changing the system would result in a more representative selection of candidates." 23% strongly agreed. This compares very favorably to the 29% that disagreed with it (only 8% strongly).

5. **Ranked choice voting has plurality support.** With a net support of +6, ranked choice voting does enjoy more support than opposition. But support is below fifty percent (45%), while opposition is 39%.

6. **Most of these reforms enjoy cross-party support, even among strong partisans.** Open primaries are supported by 55% of Independents, 66% of Democrats and 51% of Republicans. Top-two primaries have the backing of 52% of Independents, 70% of Democrats and 59% of Republicans. The only exception can be found among Republicans and ranked choice voting, where it has the support of only 36% - though opposition does not break fifty percent, and 15% are unsure. Independents are a little hesitant here as well, supporting ranked choice 44% to 37% and 20% unsure.

Looking only at strong partisans - those who might be the most concerned about partisan primary reform - we still see strong support: 66% support for open primaries among strong Democrats and 51% support among strong Republicans. 71% support for top-two elections for strong Democrats and 57% support among Strong Republicans.

7. **Strong support across key demographic groups:** Looking at a composite score across each of our election reform questions, we found there is net support of at least +6 among every single demographic group studied. The average across all demographics analyzed is +21. This includes Trump voters at +6, Republicans at +9 and Seniors at +9 as well.

8. **Swing voters want primary reform in principle, but need more on the specifics:** 61% of undecided voters in the presidential election agree with our pro-primary reform statement that it is “essential to a healthy, representative democracy.” 72% agree that the current system produces extreme candidates. But when it comes to specific reforms, uncertainty runs high with 29% saying they “don’t know” on open primaries, 31% on ranked choice and 36% on top-two primaries.

9. **States across the country want electoral reform.** Modeling of state-level estimates indicates that on average about 68% of RVs in each state agree with our statement that “Primary reform is essential.” The issue has remarkable appeal across the country, including key swing states like Arizona and Michigan.