

Open Primaries

In an open primary, voters of any affiliation may vote in the primary of any party. For example, a registered Democrat can vote for a Republican candidate in the Republican primary. However, they cannot vote in more than one party's primary.

Open primaries stand in contrast to closed primaries. Under the closed primary system, a voter must affiliate formally with a political party in advance of the election date to participate in that party's primary.

Dangers of Open Primaries:

1. **Potential for Party Sabotage:** Open primaries leave room for voters from one party to vote in the primary of the opposite party with the intention of selecting a weaker candidate to face their preferred candidate in the general election.
2. **Dilutes Party Identity:** By allowing non-party members to have a say in choosing a party's candidate, the distinct ideological stances and principles of a party might become blurred or diluted over time.
3. **May Lead to Less Informed Voting:** Since voters aren't required to be party members, they might not be as informed or invested in the party's platform and might make choices based on limited information.
4. **Cost Implications:** Open primaries can be more expensive to conduct since they might have a larger voter turnout and necessitate broader outreach campaigns to educate a more diverse voter base.
5. **Vulnerability to Short-Term Influences:** With a wider range of voters, a candidate's popularity might be influenced by recent media coverage or short-term events rather than long-standing policy positions.
6. **Confusion for Voters:** For those used to closed primaries, the shift can be confusing. Voters might be unsure about their eligibility, the candidates, or the primary's significance.
7. **Possible Suppression of Minority Views:** In an effort to appeal to a broader voter base, unique or minority viewpoints within a party might be overshadowed by more mainstream or popular opinions.
8. **Lack of Accountability:** Candidates might feel less accountable to their party's base since they also have to cater to non-party members, which might lead to ambiguous policy positions.
9. **General Election Redundancy:** If the same broad audience is voting in both the primary and general elections, the primary results might just foreshadow the general, making one of them seem redundant.
10. **Erosion of Party Infrastructure:** Relying on open primaries might lead to an erosion of the importance of party membership, reducing resources like volunteer hours and donations that come from dedicated party members.

Example: California used open primaries to insure its continued Democrat dominance. In many California voting districts, only Democrat names now appear on the ballots.