

Submitter: Jennifer Brusa

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3166

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Rules Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 3166, which proposes opening Oregon's primary elections to all registered voters regardless of party affiliation.

One of my primary concerns is that HB 3166 diminishes the fundamental role of political parties in our democracy. Political parties exist to represent specific ideologies and policy positions, and their ability to select candidates who align with their values is a crucial aspect of the electoral process. Allowing nonaffiliated voters to participate in party primaries disrupts this structure and could result in candidates who do not fully represent the principles of the party they claim to belong to.

Additionally, this bill could lead to unintended consequences such as strategic voting and manipulation by opposing parties. In an open primary system, voters who do not genuinely support a party's values may participate in its primary to influence the outcome in a way that weakens its general election prospects. This is not only unfair but also detrimental to a healthy and competitive political landscape.

Another major concern is the potential loss of voter clarity and choice in the general election. Under the proposed top-two primary system, there is a significant risk that voters may end up with two candidates from the same party, thereby limiting ideological diversity on the final ballot. This could disenfranchise voters who do not align with the dominant party in a particular district or statewide election.

Oregon has previously considered open primary initiatives in 2008 and 2014, both of which were rejected by voters. This repeated opposition indicates that Oregonians value the current system and recognize the risks associated with an open primary model. The Legislature should respect the will of the voters and avoid reviving a measure that has already been deemed unfavorable.

Instead of adopting HB 3166, I urge the committee to explore alternative ways to engage nonaffiliated voters without compromising the integrity of party primaries. Voter education programs, improved access to information about party positions, and voluntary party registration options are all viable solutions that can enhance participation without fundamentally altering the primary election process.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose House Bill 3166 and preserve the

integrity of Oregon's electoral system. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Brusa