

League of Women Voters Maine

Primary Elections Reporting Form

Name of Unit Reporting:

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Name of Contact Person:

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Email address or phone of Contact Person:

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**Please use this form to record and submit responses for your unit’s consensus discussion on the LWVME Primary Elections Study. Questions regarding the form and submission can be addressed to Barbara Kaufman at the email address below.**

**Deadline: Monday, June 4, 2018.** If this is impossible, please send by June 11.

**If possible, fill the form in electronically using MSWord. If you know how, please then change that document into a pdf file and email the pdf or the MSWord reporting sheet to: Barbara Kaufman at kaufman.barb@gmail.com.**

**If electronic submission is not possible, print the form, fill it in manually, and mail to:**

Barbara Kaufman

LWVPA

PO Box 38

South Freeport, ME 04078

**Consensus Question #1:** What are the most important principles for a good primary system to encourage?

 *Check the boxes for what you consider the 3-4 most important principles in the list below.*

 € **Simple and easy to understand:** Voters need a system that is easy to comprehend and execute, saving time at the polls and encouraging the voters’ future participation. Basic language, reading levels, and accommodations for visual and other needs should be part of the process of system development. Where feasible, system components should be consistent among local, state, and federal offices; and any changes must include training for election officials, voters, and candidates.

 € **Verifiable and Auditable:** Voters must place their trust in elections. This requires implementation of the voting process by well-trained and ethical state and municipal officials, transparency and oversight of security procedures.[[1]](#footnote-1) To be verifiable, all voting equipment must be tested regularly to find errors in hardware or software, be well-maintained and updated as needed. Auditable voting systems must provide for a physical (paper) audit of voter ballots versus only machine recorded result.

 € **Technically and fiscally feasible:** This principle refers to the affordability of candidate selection systems and the technology necessary to implement legal, fair, and trusted elections. It includes the need for budgetary support for (1) municipal and state governments that run elections; (2) the purchase, inspection, and replacement as needed of election equipment; and (3) technical support, training, and public education related to changing or updating systems.[[2]](#footnote-2)

 € **Allows more voters a choice in candidate selection:** This principle speaks to the enfranchisement of more voters during the candidate selection process. Partisan systems allow members of political parties to select and unite behind one candidate for the general election based upon the party’s platform. However, voters who belong to a minor party running no candidate or those who choose for whatever reason to be Unenrolled are not permitted to vote in closed candidate selection systems.

€ **Encourages voter turnout and engagement:** Unlike the previous principle, this one deals with voter turnout, not the “permission” to allow more citizens a say in candidate selection. Caucuses and primary elections typically have a far lower turnout than general elections. Voter turnout and engagement with issues are influenced by many factors, requiring a multi-pronged approach. Are the options explored in the subsequent CQs ways to improve voter turnout and engagement?

€ **Balances interests of major parties with those of minor parties and independent candidates.** Historically, the two-party system has been the dominant force in the American political system with considerable obstacles in place for minor or third-party candidates wanting to get on general election ballots. Reformers are looking for a “better way” to balance the rights of major party voters and candidates with those of the growing numbers of Unenrolled and minor party voters. Options include fully open or nonpartisan primaries, or proportional voting systems. The extent to which such systems might increase the power of minor parties while decreasing the influence of the two major parties is not well understood—often based on hypotheses rather than empirical findings.

€ **Allows parties to perform their traditional functions of educating and organizing voters, developing party platforms, vetting the candidates, and getting out the vote in an effective manner.** There is a major school of thought suggesting that the stronger the political parties are, the better our democracy works. Parties have been the traditional sources for voter education and turnout, building policy platforms, fundraising, moderating candidate selection, and organizing support.

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| **Comments/Clarifications:**  |

**Consensus Question 2a: Does Maine’s current presidential caucus system adequately address the principles identified as most important in CQ1?**

* Yes € No € Uncertain

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 2b: Would Presidential Primaries better address the most important principles identified in CQ1 for candidate selection than Presidential Caucuses?**

* Yes € No € Uncertain

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 2c: What option below best describes the group’s attitude toward government financing of primaries?**

Recall that the Maine Secretary of State has estimated that a switch from presidential caucuses to presidential primaries could cost as much as $980,000 for the 2020 presidential primary ($122,000 for the State and $857,000 for municipalities).

* The public benefits enough from presidential primaries to justify taxpayer financing.
* The benefits of primaries over caucuses are not substantial enough to justify taxpayer financing.
* The public should not pay for primaries unless all voters can participate.

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 2d: Rank the following factors relevant to setting Maine’s presidential primary dates in order of importance (1= most important)**

* The date should be set (e.g., first or second Tuesday in March) rather than variable (e.g., held on a Tuesday in March) as currently stated in pending legislation.
* The date selected should not increase costs.
* The date selected should not cause a party to lose delegates at their national convention due to clashes with national calendars.
* The Maine League should encourage the LWVUS to study proposed plans and come up with a League policy.

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 3a: What would be the anticipated effect on the principles of allowing Unenrolled voters to participate in candidate selection for the party of their choice?**

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| *Please discuss and circle the group’s consensus opinions on anticipated effects below* |
| **Principles** | **Anticipated Effect** |
| 1. Simple and easy to understand
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Verifiable and auditable
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Technically and fiscally feasible
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Allows more voters a voice in candidate selection
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Encourages voter turnout and engagement
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Balances interests of major parties with those of minor parties and independent candidates.
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Allows parties to perform their traditional functions in an effective manner
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 3b: Given the group’s review of the principles chart in 3a and the arguments for and against allowing Unenrolled voters to participate in primaries, does the study group think that Unenrolled voters should have an opportunity to participate in the primary and caucus for the party of their choice without having to enroll in that party?**

* Yes € No € Uncertain

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 4a: What would be the anticipated effect on the principles of allowing minor party voters to participate in another party’s caucus/primary if the minor party was not running a candidate?**

**Consensus Question 4b: Given the analysis of principles for CQ4a, should minor party voters have an opportunity to participate in another party’s caucus/primary if their party does not have a candidate**?

* Yes € No € Uncertain

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 5a: What would be the anticipated effect on our principles of allowing all voters to participate in the party primary/caucus of their choice?**

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| *Please discuss and circle the group’s consensus opinions on anticipated effects below* |
| **Principles** | **Anticipated Effect** |
| 1. Simple and easy to understand
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Verifiable and auditable
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Technically and fiscally feasible
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Allows more voters a voice in candidate selection
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Encourages voter turnout and engagement
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Balances interests of major parties with those of minor parties and independent candidates.
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Allows parties to perform their traditional functions in an effective manner
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 5b: Given your results in the table above, do you agree that any registered voter should have an opportunity to participate in the party primary/caucus of their choice?**

* Yes € No € Uncertain

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 6a:** What would be the anticipated effect on our principles of introducing nonpartisan primaries that are open to all voters?

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| Principles | Anticipated Effect |
| 1. Simple and easy to understand
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Verifiable and auditable
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Technically and fiscally feasible
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Allows more voters a voice in candidate selection
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Encourages voter turnout and engagement
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Balances interests of major parties with those of minor parties and independent candidates.
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |
| 1. Allows parties to perform their traditional functions in an effective manner
 | Positive Negative Uncertain |

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Question 6b**: Given responses to 6a, would nonpartisan primaries represent a net improvement over the continuation of any type of partisan primary?

*Please review and discuss the table below listing the perceived advantages and disadvantages of top-two and top-four primaries before responding*.

* Yes € No € Uncertain

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Statement 6c**: If your group agreed in 6b that a nonpartisan primary would be an improvement over any type of partisan primary, which of the following nonpartisan primary methods does your group think would be best for Maine?

*Please review and discuss the table above of perceived advantages and disadvantages of the different primaries before responding.*

* Top-two (WA and CA for congressional & state primaries)
* Top-four (Not currently used anywhere)

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**Consensus Statement 6d:** If your group disagreed in 6b that a nonpartisan primary would be an improvement over all types of partisan primaries, which of the following partisan primary methods does your group think would be best for Maine?

*Please review the perceived advantages and disadvantages covered in Section VII on “Evaluating Degrees of Openness for Maine Primaries” if necessary before responding*.

* current system of partisan (party) primaries where each party selects its own candidates with limited opportunity for non-party members to participate
* semi-open partisan primaries where Unrolled voters can participate in the party primary of their choice
* fully open partisan primaries where every registered voter can vote in the party primary of their choice

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| **Comments/Clarifications:** |

**THANK YOU ALL FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY**

1. See [DeGregario and Ambrogi](http://www.governing.com/gov-institute/voices/col-5-principles-integrity-election-administration.html), 2016. For a discussion of “The 5 Principles of Integrity in Elections”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See [Maine Secretary of State](https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/reports/documents/presprimaryreport17.pdf), 12/1/17 on fiscal feasibility of a return to presidential primaries in Maine. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)