

CALIFORNIA VOTERS URGED TO VOTE "YES' ON PROPOSITION 14

As the former Chair of the Green Party of Washington State I wholeheartedly endorse Proposition 14 in California.

It is unfortunate, and misguided, that third parties should find themselves aligned with the Republican and Democratic Parties in trying to dissuade California voters from supporting the Prop 14, Open Primary initiative.

As the Green Party chair, I have had experience working on campaigns in the state of Washington prior to the adoption of the "Top Two Primary." At that time, independents and third party supporters could only participate in the primary elections at the pleasure of the Democratic or Republican parties. For example, only if we signed a "loyalty oath" could we participate in Party caucuses and conventions to influence which candidate might become the nominee. *We could participate only **if** we were willing to work within one of the two major parties.*

The end result was always a primary election with voters only having a choice between the Democratic and Republican candidate. Many voters, like myself, who saw the two parties as having a lock on the political system either were forced to choose "the lesser of two evils" or not participate in the Primary election.

But with our Top Two Primary in place and the validity of it affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court, independent voters are no longer treated as second class citizens in Washington State and suspicious guests in the democratic process. We are able to vote in each round of voting. The 3.4 million independents in California stand to gain the same by supporting Prop 14.

Our government is broken and many throughout the country are tired of the partisan politics we see at the state and federal level.

We need to wean ourselves from politics per usual and recognize the need to circumvent the power of the two major political parties.

Third party candidates and independents have little chance of breaking through. However, the Open Primary Initiative gives us the opportunity to form a broad movement behind an independent or independent-minded candidate who can reach beyond the ideologies of one particular party or another. Bridges, not moats, need to be built in order to run campaigns that are not simply "protest" campaigns but that can actually gain the support of a wider range of voters wanting to see the power of the government brought back into the hands of the people, not the political parties.

The time has come to stop viewing political parties as we do our favorite sports teams. It is not enough to have a spot on the general election ballot to wave the party's banner. We should never be so presumptuous as to think one particular party should have our support 100 percent of the time. We need to open up the opportunity to those independent and third party voters and candidates who have been shut out of the political system, especially with recent polls showing voters dissatisfied with the Republican and Democratic Party.

Independent voters and Third parties want to bring change to the political process. Prop 14 is an important reform toward that goal.

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