



## The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Oppose LD 114

### **“An Act To Establish Open Primaries for Certain Federal and State Offices”**

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck, and distinguished members of the Committee On Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as the policy analyst for The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding LD 114, “An Act To Establish Open Primaries for Certain Federal and State Offices.”

Establishing open primaries in the State of Maine would not give more voice to voters. Maine’s established election system allows for unenrolled voters to choose who they want to vote for when the general election takes place. By implementing a top-two primary election system, we would be choosing two candidates that advance to the general election in November. Because there is an unequivocally larger turnout in the general election than there is in the primary election, adopting a top-two primary system would simply give a small percentage of voters more choice and limit the options for the larger voting population.

After California adopted the top-two primary system in 2010, primary election turnout dropped to below 25 percent in 2014. This means that less than 25 percent of registered voters in California chose the two choices that voters had in the general election.<sup>1</sup> It would be irresponsible to adopt a system whereby primary election turnout may drop and the only options in November are chosen by a low turnout model. In other words, it is a concern that a few would be choosing the candidates for the many.

Additionally, supporters of open primaries claim this method would alleviate political polarization in our elections. This characterization of open primaries has been found to be inaccurate. Academic research on opening up primaries suggests that the effects are weak on decreasing polarization. In fact, open primaries can sometimes create more polarized primary elections.<sup>2</sup> As a state that touts its independent status, we should be cautious about potentially increasing polarization.

Lastly, under this proposed voting system, we could end up with one of the least popular candidates in the general election. If one of the two candidates chosen in the primary withdraws within 70 days before the general election, then the person who came in third place would be chosen to take that individual’s place. Theoretically, the person who came in third place could receive only a small percentage of the vote and still would be a contender in the general election under this system.

Because this proposal limits choice in the general election, has decreased voter participation in other states, could be used to manipulate our elections and increase polarization in Maine, I urge the committee to vote “Ought Not to Pass” on this bill. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ppic.org/publication/voter-participation-in-california/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7a3d/a592cb62d3c1ead9bcd36a8aa10536edb82a.pdf?\\_ga=2.237755456.1179346608.1548686611-1965227721.1548686611](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7a3d/a592cb62d3c1ead9bcd36a8aa10536edb82a.pdf?_ga=2.237755456.1179346608.1548686611-1965227721.1548686611)