

Protect Voter Choice - Vote No on Prop 14

Under Prop 14, candidates for partisan office would run in a single Top Two primary in June rather than seeking the nomination of their political parties. The two candidates receiving the most votes would face each other again in November.

So what's wrong with that?

Top Two limits choice

- In November, voters would only have two candidates to choose from.
- Votes for write-in candidates in November would not be counted – even if both candidates are proven to be crooks after the primary.
- The two finalists would sometimes represent the same political party.
- The candidates in November would almost never include an independent or anyone from a small party.
- Major party politicians would be less likely to compete against members of their own party in primaries because vote splitting might let supporters of the other party choose both finalists. That means fewer candidates to choose from in June.
- Prop 14 includes fine print that would make it much harder for small parties to stay on the ballot. That also means fewer candidates to choose from.

Top Two doesn't elect more moderates

The backers of Prop 14 claim that it would elect more moderate candidates and reduce polarization and gridlock. California politics is indeed polarized and moderate voters are under-represented. This is a critical problem that needs solving, but *Prop 14 won't help*.

Top Two has been tried in Louisiana and is currently being used in Washington state. In both states, legislative bodies continue to be as polarized, and moder-

ates as under-represented, as they were before.

If California had fully closed primaries, a Top Two primary like Prop 14 would probably elect a few more moderates. So would open primaries, in which all voters choose a political party on election day rather than when they register to vote. But *so do the semi-closed primaries we have now*, in which decline-to-state voters can choose a party on election day.

Top Two increases campaign spending

Major candidates would have to wage two separate campaigns in order to reach all voters in both the spring and fall. This would increase spending and dependence on large contributions. It would also add to the advantage of incumbency because incumbents have an easier time raising money than challengers. Experience with Top Two in Washington state and Louisiana shows that it does nothing to reduce incumbent protection.

In addition, Prop 14 would interfere with Prop 15 because the funding formula in Prop 15 assumes that primaries will continue to be partisan. Conflicts between the two laws would have to be resolved by regulatory decree or - more likely - in court. (CfER has not taken a position for or against Prop 15.)

Top Two doesn't tackle the real problem

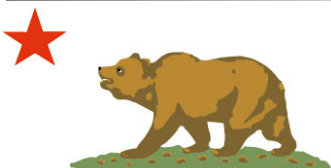
Prop 14 would not do what its supporters claim. But other reforms – especially proportional representation – would address the inaccurate representation of moderate voters and reduce polarization and gridlock.

For more information visit

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