



The Florida Democratic Party Needs to Open the Primary

One thing has united Floridians for the past several election cycles: the growing frustration with a political system they believe to be broken, rigged, and unfair. Why?

A significant reason is the 3.6 million independent voters-27% of the electorate- who are barred from participating in Florida's primary elections.

That's why a 2019 poll found that 73% of Florida Democrats support an open primary that includes independent voters.¹

The Florida Democratic Party has the legal authority to open their primary

- The Supreme Court has ruled that political parties have the legal right under the 1st Amendment to supersede state election laws regarding who can and cannot participate in their nominating primaries.²
- Unlike other election laws and statutes over which the parties have no control, the Florida Democratic Party could insist that independent voters be allowed to participate in its primary elections as early as the 2020 election and the SOS would be required to comply.

Open primaries are already in place in many states

- Independent voters can participate in the Democratic Party primary in 35 states. Democratic state parties have already voluntarily opened their primaries in California, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Idaho and South Dakota.
- The fear of sabotage is just that – a fear, not a fact. It has been widely debunked.³ Dozens of states across the country are able to administer open primaries without a problem.

The electorate is changing rapidly

- If the Democratic Party wants to hold itself out as standing for inclusion, participation, diversity and progress, its electoral selection process should fully reflect those values.
- 27% of Floridians now identify as independent voters⁴, including 50% of millennial voters⁵ and growing numbers of voters of color- like Desmond Meade, who led the successful effort to enfranchise Florida's 1.4 million ex-felons.
- Independent voters are the deciding factor in almost every general election. Democrats should send a clear message to Florida's independents that the Party values their participation, rather than demanding they "just join our party if you want to vote." Bringing independent voters into the Democratic Party's nominating process early gives the party a distinct advantage that will pay dividends in the general election for years to come.

¹ https://www.openprimaries.org/fl_poll_2019

² 1986 - Tashjian v. Republican Party of Connecticut.

³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20100625234325/http://polmeth.wustl.edu/media/Paper/alvar99b.pdf>

⁴ Gallup, Democratic, Republican Identification Near Historical Lows, January 11, 2016.

⁵ Pew Research, Millennials in Adulthood-Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends, March 7, 2014.