

Proposed Concurrence on Open Primaries

“LWVSC supports the practice of open primaries in which any registered voter may participate in the primary of either party.”

In SC, we currently have open primaries, although if you vote in the primary for a particular party, you are only eligible to participate in runoffs for that same party.

LWVSC has no position on this issue. Having a position in favor of open primaries would enable us to oppose party registration and limiting voting in a primary for candidates for that party’s nomination to those registered as members of that party.

Florida currently has closed primaries. The Florida LWV did a study of open vs .closed primaries and subsequently adopted a position in favor of open primaries. LWVSC can, if the members so decide at Convention, adopt a position through concurrence with the Florida study, without having to conduct a separate study on our own.

Each local league should discuss this issue during their program planning sessions, so as to be able to take an informed position at Convention.

Here are the main arguments offered.

Pro open primaries:

1. Turnout in primaries is higher in open primary states. (The Florida study offered extensive statistical data to support that statement).
2. Closed primaries exclude a large number of unaffiliated voters and minor party voters, who would like to have a voice in all elections, including the selection of candidates in primaries, as well as the general election.
3. In many parts of the state, the party nomination is tantamount to election because there is no opposition or only token opposition in the general election (viewpoint offered by LWVSC, not from the Florida study).
4. Changing the primary election type may confuse voters.

Con open primaries:

1. Political parties see open primaries as losing control.
2. Only party members should have a voice in selecting their party’s candidates.

The argument has also been raised in South Carolina that voters may cross over to choose the weakest candidate.

The Florida study, which includes other issues in addition to open primaries, can be found at <https://www.lwvfl.org/league-finishes-open-primary-study/>