



2008 washington primary media kit

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top 2 primary

Quick facts:

- A Top 2 Primary allows voters to choose among all candidates running for each office. Voters do not have to declare a party affiliation or select one party's ballot to vote in the primary.
- Candidates for each partisan office may state a preference for a political party, which is listed on the ballot.
- Candidates do not have to be supported, nominated or endorsed by the party they prefer, and that preference does not imply that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.
- The two candidates who receive the most votes for each office in the Primary Election qualify for the November General Election. Candidates must also receive at least 1 percent of the votes cast in that race to advance to the November General Election.

History:

The Top 2 Primary was passed by the people in 2004 as an initiative. Nearly 60 percent of voters approved I-872.

In May 2005, the state Democratic, Republican and Libertarian parties sued in federal court to prevent its implementation. The political parties argued that the Top 2 Primary system violated their right of free association. The federal District Court agreed with them and in July 2005 prohibited the State from implementing the Top 2 Primary. In August 2006, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the District Court.

The State appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In March 2008, the Supreme Court overturned the lower courts and upheld the constitutionality of I-872.

The opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court said:

“The First Amendment does not require this extraordinary and precipitous nullification of the will of the people.”

The Court also says the new primary:

“[...]does not, by its terms, choose parties' nominees. The essence of nomination – the choice of a party representative – does not occur under I-872. The law never refers to the candidates as nominees of any party, nor does it treat them as such. To the contrary, the election regulations specifically provide that the primary ‘does not serve to determine the nominees of a political party but serves to winnow the number of candidates to a final list of two for the general election.’”

primary systems comparison

Old Pick-a-Party Primary

The voter's options when voting the ballot:

The voter had to pick a political party, and only vote for candidates of that party, commonly called "vote down party line." For example, if a voter wanted to vote for a Democratic candidate for Congress, the voter could only vote for Democratic candidates for all of the other partisan offices.

The meaning of each candidate's party information:

Each candidate who listed a political party was affiliated with that party. The candidate from each party who received the most votes in the primary became that party's nominee, representing the party in the General Election.

The purpose of the Primary:

In each race, the purpose of the primary was to nominate **one** candidate from each major political party to advance to the General Election. For example, if three Democrats and two Republicans filed for a legislative office, Democratic voters nominated one Democratic nominee, and Republican voters nominated one Republican nominee, who advanced to the General Election.

Does the Primary decide each political party's nominees?

Yes.

New Top 2 Primary

For each race, the voter has the freedom to vote for any candidate running. The voter is voting for the person, not the party, because voters are not selecting a party's nominees.

Each candidate may state a political party he or she prefers. A candidate's preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.

The purpose of the Top 2 Primary is to winnow the number of candidates for each race down to two. The two candidates who receive the most votes in the Primary advance to the General. Candidates must also receive at least 1 percent of the votes in the Primary in order to move on to the November General Election. The candidate's party preference is irrelevant to qualifying for the General Election.

No.

primary systems comparison ctd.

Old Pick-a-Party Primary

Minor party and independent candidates:

Minor party and independent candidates conducted nominating conventions to gather signatures of support. If the candidates gathered enough signatures, they qualified to appear on the General Election ballot. These candidates did not appear in the Primary because the Primary was only for major parties.

The two major parties in the Primary and the General:

The Pick-a-Party Primary was the **parties' primary**. Because the purpose of the primary was to select the nominees for the two major parties, each major party had a guaranteed spot on the General Election ballot, regardless of whether a nominee had much support at all.

New Top 2 Primary

Candidates who prefer minor parties, or who state no preference, file for office and appear on the Primary ballot like all other candidates. They no longer are required to conduct nominating conventions. Party preference information is irrelevant to qualifying for the General Election.

In the Top 2 Primary, voters are voting for a candidate, not a party. Candidates are allowed to name a party that they prefer, or may choose to not state a preference. Either way, party preference is irrelevant to advancing to the General Election. A candidate must be one of the top two vote-getters in order to qualify for the General Election. Major party nominees are not guaranteed a place on the General Election ballot because qualifying for the General Election is based on the number of votes received at the Primary, not on party affiliation.

voter registration

- Voters have until July 19, 2008, to register to vote or update their registration for the August 19 Primary.
- Citizens not currently registered in Washington State have until August 4, 2008, to register in-person at their local election office.
- Washington has a statewide voter registration database that screens the voter rolls for duplicate registrations, felons, and deceased persons.
- The database is made up of three categories:
 - Active Registrations**
 - New registrations are added to the database when people decide to register for the first time, turn 18 and register, or move into the state and register.
 - Registrations may be pending because more information is needed.
 - Inactive Registrations**
 - A registration is put in an inactive status when election material is mailed to a voter and returned by the post office as undeliverable.
 - A voter who is on inactive status may switch back to active status simply by updating his or her registration information.
 - An inactive registration is eventually canceled if it remains inactive through two federal general elections.
 - Canceled Registrations**
 - An inactive registration is canceled if it remains inactive through two federal general elections.
 - An active or inactive registration is canceled if it duplicates another registration that is more up-to-date. Duplicate registrations may occur when people move from one county to another, change their name, or forget they were still registered in another county.
 - A registration is canceled if the registration is identified in a screening for people who are deceased or convicted of a felony.
 - A registration is canceled if a voter requests to be canceled.
- Citizens who have a Washington driver's license or ID card can register to vote online at www.vote.wa.gov
- From January 7 to the end of May 2008, approximately 49,160 people chose to register to vote online.
- Washington State does not have party registration.

vote by mail

- Thirty-seven of Washington's thirty-nine counties vote by mail. King and Pierce counties still maintain poll sites, but King County plans to switch to vote-by-mail elections in 2009.
- In the 2007 November General Election 92.2 percent of Washington voters cast ballots by mail.
- Once a ballot is returned to the elections department, the voter's registration file is checked to confirm that the voter has not already returned a ballot.
- The signature on the envelope is verified against the signature on the voter registration file. If the signature on the envelope does not match the signature on file, or if the voter failed to sign the envelope, the County Auditor must attempt to contact the voter to correct the situation.
- Ballots are returned approximately:
 - 20 percent through the end of the first whole week ballots are out;
 - 23 percent from then through the end of the second week;
 - 10 percent the Monday before Election Day;
 - 21 percent on Election Day;
 - 26 percent come after Election Day.
- Ballots to overseas and military voters will be mailed by July 20, 2008.
- All other mail ballots will be sent by August 1, 2008.
- Many vote-by-mail counties have established voting centers to accommodate voters who prefer to vote in person or wish to vote on an accessible voting device. At a community voting center, voters may drop off ballots, request provisional ballots, vote on accessible voting equipment, and receive "I Voted" stickers.
- Each County Auditor is required to provide at least one location in addition to the County Auditor's Office for voters to drop off their ballots.

voting at the polls

- King and Pierce counties still maintain poll sites, although most voters cast ballots by mail.
- Polls are open on Election Day from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Voters choosing to vote at polling places are required to show identification. Most voters choose to show photo identification, such as a driver's license, state ID card or student ID card. Federal law allows voters to present other forms of identification such as a voter registration card, utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or other government document.
- A voter who does not present ID may vote a provisional ballot.

voting equipment

- In Washington State, there are three types of paper ballots:
 - Fill in the oval
 - Fill in the rectangle
 - Connect the arrow
- Approximately 1 percent or less of the total ballots cast in an election are cast using electronic voting devices.
- In Pierce and King counties, approximately 2.2 percent of the ballots are cast on electronic voting devices.
- In the remaining counties, approximately 0.08 percent of the ballots are cast on electronic voting devices.
- Washington State requires a voter verified paper trail. Voters who cast ballots using electronic voting equipment can verify that their selections have been recorded properly.

certification of election

- Counties have until September 3, 2008, to certify the August 19 Primary.
- The Office of the Secretary of State has until September 9, 2008, to certify the August 19 Primary.
- To trigger a mandatory machine recount, the difference between the top two vote-getters must be less than 2,000 votes and less than one-half of 1 percent of the total number of votes cast for both candidates.
- To trigger a manual recount in a statewide election, the difference between the top two vote-getters must be less than 1,000 votes and less than one-fourth of 1 percent of the total number of votes cast for both candidates.

statistics

- Washington has approximately 3.4 million registered voters.
- Voter participation in the 2004 Primary Election was 45 percent.
- Voter participation in the 2004 General Election was 82 percent.
- Voter participation is much higher for vote by mail than for poll voting.
 - In the 2008 Presidential Primary, King County mail voters turned out 29.8 percent, while poll voters turned out only 3.5 percent.
 - In the 2008 Presidential Primary, Pierce County mail voters turned out 34.61 percent, while poll voters turned out only 2.37 percent.
- The state is a very mobile population.
 - Each year approximately 96,000 people turn 18.
 - Each year approximately 46,000 to 49,000 people die.
 - Each year approximately 15 percent of the population moves.
 - Each year approximately 42,000 people change their name.

dates to remember

July 19, 2008 - Last day for mail in and online voter registrations and transfers for the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.08.140)

July 20, 2008 - Overseas and military ballots mailed for the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.40.070)

July 30, 2008 - Absentee ballots available for the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.40.070)

August 1, 2008 - Absentee ballots mailed for the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.40.070)

August 4, 2008 - Last day of in-person registration for voters not currently registered in Washington State for the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.08.145)

August 19, 2008 - Primary Election Day
(RCW 29A.04.311)

September 3, 2008 - County Canvassing Boards certify the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.60.190)

September 9, 2008 - Final day for the Secretary of State to certify the August 19 Primary
(RCW 29A.60.240)

top 2 primary voter education

July 14, 2008 - TV, internet and ethnic print ads start

July 28, 2008 - Radio ads start