

PRIMARIES

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It's a difficult task for a group that now has about \$6,500 in a campaign bank account and will need to pay petition circulators.

"It's really an uphill battle for us to actually get the signatures in order to get on the ballot," Doyle said. "It will really depend on funding as we go forward."

The proposed initiative is simple — just a two-sentence addition to a section of the Constitution. It would require that all voters be able to vote in a state-funded primary for any candidate for Congress, U.S. Senate, the Oregon Legislature and statewide elected offices like governor, regardless of political party.

It wouldn't apply to presidential primaries or to partisan primaries for local races like county commission.

It also doesn't prescribe how the state would hold open primary elections, just that all voters must be able to vote for all candidates. That could take the form of the top-two pri-



Candidates and their families watch names scroll across three large screens in the Oregon House chamber on Tuesday, March 8, 2022, the filing deadline for the governor's race.

maries held in Washington and California, or it could resemble a new Alaska election system that will be used for the first time in a special congressional election this summer.

Alaska voters in 2020 established an open primary that sends the top four vote-getters to a general election. Voters then rank their first through fourth choices in the general election, and if no candidate is the first choice of more than 50% of voters,

vote tabulators look at the second choices from voters who picked the candidate who came in last place.

In some other Western states, nonaffiliated voters can participate in primaries — but they have to choose a party's ballot. In Colorado, nonaffiliated voters receive both Democratic and Republican ballots in the mail and choose one to fill out.

In Arizona, nonaffiliated voters who opted to receive ballots by mail have to

contact their county clerk ahead of time to request a Republican or Democratic ballot. Otherwise, they can go to a polling place in person and ask for a partisan ballot.

Doyle said a system like that in Colorado or Arizona isn't the goal, but that the initiative is purposefully vague on what Oregon's election system should look like. It would force the Legislature to pass laws that would comply with the amended Constitution.

WHAT THE INITIATIVE SAYS

Amend Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution of the State of Oregon to read:
Section 1. Elections Free. All elections shall be free and equal.
(1) In all publicly funded elections for state and federal office, the state shall only select candidates for the general election by conducting an open primary election in which all qualified candidates and electors may participate regardless of political party affiliation or non-affiliation.
(2) As used in this section, "office" means all state and federal legislative offices and all statewide elected offices.

BY THE NUMBERS

As of March 18, Oregon had
• 1,022,556 nonaffiliated voters
• 1,019,668 Democrats
• 723,728 Republicans

cans, who have opposed similar efforts over the past two decades. Oregon voters defeated ballot measures in both 2008 and 2014 that would have created a top-two primary system akin to California and Washington.

State Sen. Dallas Heard, a Roseburg Republican who until recently chaired the state GOP, proposed opening the Republican primary to nonaffiliated voters. Other party leaders rejected the idea.

Carla "K.C." Hanson, chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon, said party leaders will decide whether to support or oppose the initiative if it moves forward, but they've historically opposed the idea of opening primaries to all voters.

"In the past, the Democratic Party has not viewed it as a viable option and neither have the people of Oregon," she said. "Oregon voters have consistently voted it down every time it comes up, and they're right."

The rise in nonaffiliated voters, though, means both parties need to reach voters in the general election who haven't chosen either party.

SURVEY

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to consider in education, he worries schools are being asked to teach too many things.

"Are we asking the school systems to do too much, where it's underserving the primary good?" Warman said. "We're not treating teachers like professionals and letting them focus on what they're supposed to be doing."

Warman said while he disagrees with many of the more extreme arguments, he shares some of the core concerns about overreaching school curriculum as those expressed by those on the right in recent debates over school curriculum.

"There's a conservative attack on education

"Are we asking the school systems to do too much, where it's underserving the primary good. We're not treating teachers like professionals and letting them focus on what they're supposed to be doing."

— Noah Scott Warman, 52, a labor attorney from Portland and a survey respondent

that I don't want to echo. I think there's some interesting observations we need to think about," Warman said. "I think the common thread, to start with, there is a view of what is the primary goal — it's not at odds with other goals. What is the primary purpose of getting this education?"

The survey revealed other spaces for common ground: Reducing barriers to behavioral health services, culturally responsive suicide prevention programs for communities

at risk, increasing access to extracurricular and tutoring programs all saw upwards of 70% support from both Democrats and Republicans.

Survey taker Susan O'Neill, 68, a Republican from Medford who's retired and describes herself as "slightly conservative," told The Bulletin she supports using tax dollars for expanding access to behavioral health programs in schools.

"The whole idea, for me, of school is to help a

small child grow up to be — if not happy — a contented and fully functioning human," O'Neill said. "And to do that, you need to not only teach Johnny to read and write. If he's got a mental illness, you also have to teach him to deal with that."

Access to those kinds of services for students could reduce the stigma around mental illness and expand access to mental health providers for people of all ages, O'Neill, who has bipolar disorder, told The Bulletin. "It can cause the older relatives to question their own beliefs," O'Neill said.

Survey researchers found two other key predictors of a person's support for particular programs:

age and homeownership. Older respondents tended to be less likely than younger respondents to support programs that included terms

like "cultural awareness." Across the board, renters were more likely to support a given family service than homeowners.

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