



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on June 4, 2010

California Proposition 14 — Bad News Independents and Third-parties

According to the old saw, a forlorn man was once told: “Cheer up. Things could be worse.” So the man cheered up and things got worse. If you’re unhappy with the current crop of elected politicians in California, cheer up. Things could get worse, especially if Proposition 14 passes.

Proposition 14 would replace the current system of political primaries, which is an admittedly flawed system, with one much worse. Instead of holding primaries to determine the political parties’ candidates, there would be only one primary election for each office and the top two vote getters would be the only two names on the ballot in the general election.



Opportunities for manipulation of voters abound in such a system. Primary elections are well-known for having much lower voter turnouts than general elections. They have become the mechanism by which the few control the many by gaining control over the choices offered in the general election.

One obvious tool of chicanery will be splitting the conservative vote by running as many conservatives and pseudo-conservatives as possible. This tactic could be employed by any voting block, but typically it is the party bosses who are the ones with the skills and money to pull it off. If that fails, the people in charge of running elections would have the ultimate power to add or remove names from the ballots in the primaries or the general elections based on technicalities. This could be exacerbated as ballot access laws, already more complex than they need to be, could be amended to have even more unnecessary complications in the future, an even further centralization of power.

The candidates who would be adversely affected the most by this are third-party candidates, independent candidates, and write-in candidates. In effect, they would find themselves unable to be on the ballot in the general election. While third party, independent, and write-in candidates are rarely elected to office, their influence has helped immeasurably in keeping many a so-called conservative at least reasonably on track during the campaign season by offering disenfranchised voters the opportunity to voice their disgust by casting a protest vote. Sometimes they are successful in being elected. Don’t forget Strom Thurmond was first elected to the U.S. Senate as a write-in candidate in 1954.

By increasing the power of the primary election, party bosses and special interest groups would see their influence increase because they are well organized and get their voters to turn out in primaries. Election fraud would have an even greater influence as repeater voters, those who vote using assumed names — names of people who have moved, died, or never existed — will also see their influence increased as well because of the consistently lower turnouts in primaries.



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There is much wrong with our current system of political primaries. One blatant example is allowing cross-over voting. That is where voters (or repeaters) of one political party are allowed to vote in the other party's primary. They can work to deliberately nominate a weaker candidate or even a phony candidate who is dedicated to helping the opposition.

Yes, there is much wrong with the current system and the voters are frustrated, but Proposition 14 would do nothing to clean up the mess but would actually make the situation worse. Let's pray the voters of California wisely reject Proposition 14.

Photo of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger: AP Images



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