

Independent Pennsylvanians

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Testimony Submission
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Independent Pennsylvanians is an association of independent and independent-minded voters with a mission to increase the visibility and power of independent voters, now the fastest growing political force in America. Independent Pennsylvanians supports issues and campaigns at the local, state and national level, designed to enhance voting rights for all, particularly independents. We have been advocating for Pennsylvania to open the primaries for over a decade, and we support Senate Bill 300.

Last year, a young voter called our organization, Independent Pennsylvanians, half crying, half yelling: “I went to my polling site today to vote in the primary, as I know how important the primaries are. I am a nurse, starting my career, never broke a law, consider myself a good citizen. I was turned away - told I could not vote. At first, I thought it was something easy to fix like I was at the wrong polling site. I can’t vote at all because I am registered nonaffiliated. I went home and found your site and read that my tax dollars pay for the primaries, but I still can’t vote!”

Why Open Primaries?

Increases voter turn out

Pro-voter policies and laws drive up participation of all voters. This is critical to the health of our democracy. When people exercise their power as voters, they can elect local, state, and national leaders who are responsive to and reflective of the communities they serve.

[Journalist John Baer](#) wrote about the abysmal primary turnout in the 2018 elections (18 percent statewide). He believes that opening Pennsylvania’s primaries is critically important:

I've long argued that barring independents from primaries – especially in a large, diverse state in which the primary, thanks to gerrymandering, is often THE election — amounts to disenfranchisement.

Open Primaries in PA would recognize to trends towards independents

We will be joining 17 states that already have some version of [open primaries](#).

Independents are a growing force and outnumber Democrats and Republicans nationally. [27 % R 26% D 44 % I](#)

In Pennsylvania, we are the fastest growing voting population

[Total Voter Registration by Party](#)

Affiliation	2017 Registration	Change Since 2013	% Change Since 2013
Democratic	4,030,797	-61,910	-1.51%
Republican	3,222,286	+189,905	+6.26%
Other/No Affiliation	1,181,932	+89,815	+8.22%
Total Registration	8,435,015	+217,810	+2.65%

Independents should not have to affiliate with a political party in order to fully exercise our voting rights. Independents should not pay for elections that undemocratically exclude us. Open primaries and top to elections work well in other states, and passing Senate Bill 300 will be a critical step toward making Pennsylvania's election system fair, open, stronger and more participatory. Thank you.