

League of Women Voters of Sanibel  
Open Primary Study Consensus Meeting

March 28, 2017  
Report Summary

The League of Women Voters of Florida worked for more than 20 months researching the issue of whether or not Florida should change its primary system to an open (or other) system versus the current closed system. It will help answer the following important questions:

1. Do you think that we should have elections in which only 17% of voters determine a candidate for public office?
2. Do you think our current primary system works well for Florida voters?
3. Do you believe that everyone who wants to should be able to participate to their fullest?

Twenty-three Florida Leagues participated in the study in order to provide input to six consensus statements culled from research done by LWV Florida.

The Sanibel LWV meeting took place on March 28, 2017, from 10 a.m. to noon. A group of ten members attended the meeting at the Sanibel Public Library. Each of the members had reviewed ahead of time a multi-page Open Primary Study Kit.

The attendees reviewed the Consensus Statements provided by the LWVFL. The goal was not to "vote" in absolute terms, but to reach a decision that the group could accept, not necessarily a decision that fulfilled every member's wishes. Members agreed through a series of give and take and exchange of viewpoints. Thank you to those of you who attended; the discussion was lively and substantive.

Here are the Consensus Statement results:

1. The current primary system in Florida hinders voter turnout: Agree  
Comment: The statement would be better if reworded to reflect that the system is "closed, party" system
2. No Party Affiliation and minor party voters deserve an opportunity to vote in all primary elections: Agree  
Comment: A few disagreed in that they were not comfortable with the wording.
3. The primary system that would best serve the voters of Florida: #1 Top Two; #2 Open, #3 Open Unaffiliated (refer to the Study Kit for further explanation).  
Comment: Feeling that the Top Two system would increase the number of voters.
4. The best election system for the Presidential Preference Primary would be which one of the following: Closed/Open Unaffiliated/ Open: Most agreed that Open would be best.
5. Threshold criteria should be established for write-in candidates to minimize political manipulation: Agree  
Comment: Desire to reduce party manipulation.
6. Alone or in combination, there are other factors that may improve voter turnout in primaries. These are:
  - 6A. Automatic registration of eligible voters at age 18 by an appropriate government agency. Agree  
Comment: There may be problems implementing.
  - 6B. Exclusive Voter by Mail: Disagree  
Comment: Prefer that this not be "exclusive" way to vote.
  - 6C. Make election voting portable with the county similar to early voting center: Agree  
Comment: Can close under-utilized precincts, however; do this carefully.
  - 6D. Statewide Election Day (same day) Registration: Agree  
Comment: Might be difficult, but technology should help make this dream a reality.

LWV of Sanibel results will be integrated with the rest of the state Leagues and be presented to the League of Florida Board at the June convention. We will be reporting more on this important issue as overall results are made available.