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California's Top-Two Voting System

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California's "top-two" or "open primary" made its debut in California's June primary. It was the result of Proposition 14– The California Two Primary's Act – a measure passed by voters in 2010.

Until recently, California's statewide primary elections were considered "closed", meaning you could only vote for candidates in your own political party (with the exception of non-partisan offices like county and education officials). So, for instance, if you were a Democrat your ballot would only list Democratic candidates for national offices, or state senate, or governor or whatever other political races were happening in that particular voting cycle. Independent party voters who declined to state a party preference were allowed to vote in the general election, but could only vote in the presidential primary elections of the Democratic and American Independent Parties (not the other "qualified" political parties).

California's "qualified" political parties include:

- 1) DEM = Democratic Party
- 2) REP = Republican Party
- 3) AI = American Independent Party
- 4) AE = American Elect Party
- 5) GRN = Green Party
- 6) LIB = Libertarian Party
- 7) PF = Peace and Freedom Party

The candidate from each party with the most votes in the primary election would then advance to the November Election. Each party would then have one candidate on the ballot in November.

With California's new "Top-Two Primary" system, party affiliation is no longer a factor in choosing candidates for the November ballot. That's because every candidate from every party is listed on the primary ballot and any voter, from any party can vote for them. This includes voters who are not registered with any party. Simply, the top-two candidates, regardless of party, who get the most votes, are then listed on the November ballot. This means that there could be two candidates from the same party in the November runoff.

These new rules apply to all state and legislative races, they will NOT however apply to the presidential election.

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