



Fact Sheet: Top-Two Primary



Thurston County Auditor's Office - Elections Division
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Olympia, Washington 98502
(360) 786-5408 www.thurstonvotes.org

What is a Top Two Primary?

A Top Two Primary is a Primary Election in which the top-two vote getters advance to the General Election, regardless of party affiliation. It changes our way of thinking about the Primary. Instead of the Primary Election being an election where each party chooses its nominee, the Primary Election is now simply a means of qualifying candidates to appear on the General Election ballot. The two candidates who receive the greatest number of votes will qualify. Because of this important change, voters will NOT have to select a party ballot, and will be free to vote for whomever they choose, regardless of party affiliation.

How does this change the General Election?

There are two important changes to the General Election ballot. First, independent and minor party candidates will appear on the Primary Election ballot, and will have to qualify to appear in the General. Second, since we are not nominating one candidate from each party to advance, it is possible voters may see two candidates who have listed the same party preference on the General Election ballot.

What does a candidate's Party Preference really mean?

Candidates are allowed to list their party preference on the ballot, as a way of informing voters which party they personally prefer. This designation does not indicate that the party has selected, nominated, endorsed or otherwise agrees with the views of the candidate. The political parties may hold nominating conventions and select their designated candidate, but that designation will not appear on the ballot itself. Voters need to know that the party preference information on the ballot is SELF-REPORTED by the candidate.

Will I still get three ballots for the Primary?

No. Voters will only receive one ballot, listing ALL candidates who have filed for office in our county. Voters may select any candidate for each race, regardless of party preference.

How did we end up with this Top Two Primary?

Voters passed I-872 in 2004, which created the Top Two Primary. A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of I-872, which stopped the state from conducting an election under this system. In March the United States Supreme Court ruled that the state may conduct a Top Two Primary as passed by voters.



Office of the Secretary of State

PO Box 40229

Olympia, Washington 98504

360-902-4180

800-422-8683 TDD/TTY

Www.vote.wa.gov

Thurston County Democrats

PO Box 164

Olympia, Washington 98507

360-956-0235

Www.TCDemocrats.org

Thurston County Republicans

PO Box 275

Olympia, Washington 98507

Www.thurstonrepublicans.com

Washington State Democrats

PO Box 4027

Seattle, Washington 98194

206-583-0664

Www.wa-democrats.org

Washington State Republicans

16400 Southcenter parkway, Suite

200

Seattle, Washington 98188

206-575-2900

Www.wsrp.org