

What does the All-Party Primaries Ballot Question in MA improve?

While not a cure-all, we have the opportunity this November to choose a voting system that is a significant improvement on *what we've got now*. It would particularly solve these issues:

1. Competition & Voter Choice

- MA is consistently the least electorally competitive state¹ in the US, leaving voters frequently with no choices on the ballot and elected officials with little incentive to produce outcomes for the people. In 2024²:
 - Only 10% of incumbents had a primary challenger.
 - Only 20% of November races had more than one candidate.
- When CA and WA introduced all-party primaries, each saw a significant increase in competitive races.³
- Primary turnout in MA (~20%) is dramatically lower than General turnout (~60%).

2. Inclusion & Representation

- The primary electorate is older, whiter, and wealthier than the general election population. For example, the proportion of under-35s and Latinos voting is *twice as high* in the general election compared to the primary (see page 2).
- CA and WA, states with all-party primaries, do a much better job of representing women and people of color than MA (see page 3).

3. Voter Information

- Fusion endorsements differentiate same-party candidates on the ballot (see page 4):
 - Right now, primary voters see just a field of names on the primary ballot, giving candidates with higher name recognition an advantage.
 - Under the proposal, primary voters would see not just names and party labels, but endorsements by third parties and community groups *directly on the ballot* as long as agreed upon by the candidate and the political designation.

What this ballot question will not fix, but will not make worse:

- Vote splitting: without ranked choice voting, vote splitting primaries will persist.
 - There is currently a split field of 7 candidates in the MA-6 House race.
 - Lori Trahan in 2018 and Jake Auchincloss in 2020 won their House primaries with 22% of the vote against a wide field of candidates.
- Money in politics: we need real campaign finance reform to address.
 - Our neighbors in NY saw the most expensive House primary to date⁴ in 2024 and Dan Goldman (NY-10 race) is matching every dollar donated.
 - According to one study⁵, All-Party Primaries may reduce the influence of ideological special interest spending in primaries by about two-thirds.

¹ [WBUR: Mass. voters face least competitive legislative landscape](#)

² [Ballotpedia competitiveness report](#)

³ [Steven Sparks, Quality challenger emergence under the top-two primary](#)

⁴ [The Guardian: Race to unseat New York progressive 'most expensive House primary ever'](#)

⁵ [Unite America: All-Candidate Primaries Lessen the Impact of Money in Politics](#)

What does the All-Party Primaries Ballot Question in MA actually do?

The initiative changes MA's election structure to look more like that of its cities and towns:

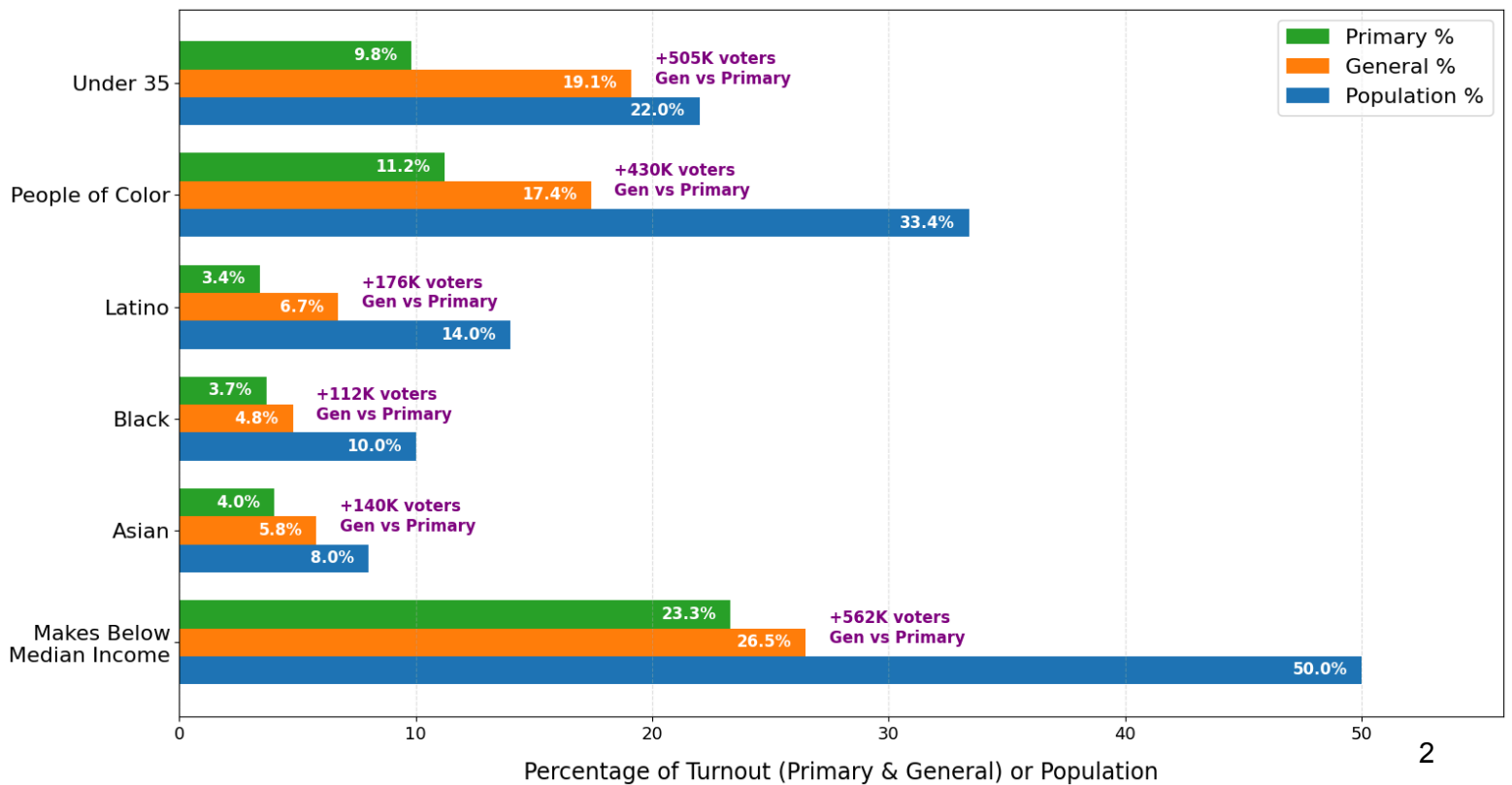
- For all state and federal races (besides Presidential), separate party primaries would be replaced with a single, open primary.
- In that primary, everyone would appear on the ballot: in a more competitive race you might have 5 Ds, 2 Rs, 2 unenrolled, and a third-party candidate.
- Candidates would also be able to have multiple fusion endorsers, strengthening community groups (see page 4).
- The top two vote-getters for each office would advance to the general election, which would have a write-in spot like now.

If only one or two candidates run for an office, that primary election does not take place.

Diversity: Primary vs General comparison

Across the board, general elections (which have 3x turnout compared to primaries) do a better job of accurately representing the MA population. In this 2024 graph, the blue bar is the measuring stick: it stands for where the proportion of voters *should* be based on population. The green and orange bars are the proportion of these kinds of voters in the primary and general election, respectively. The purple text shows how many more voters of each group participated in the general election vs the primary.

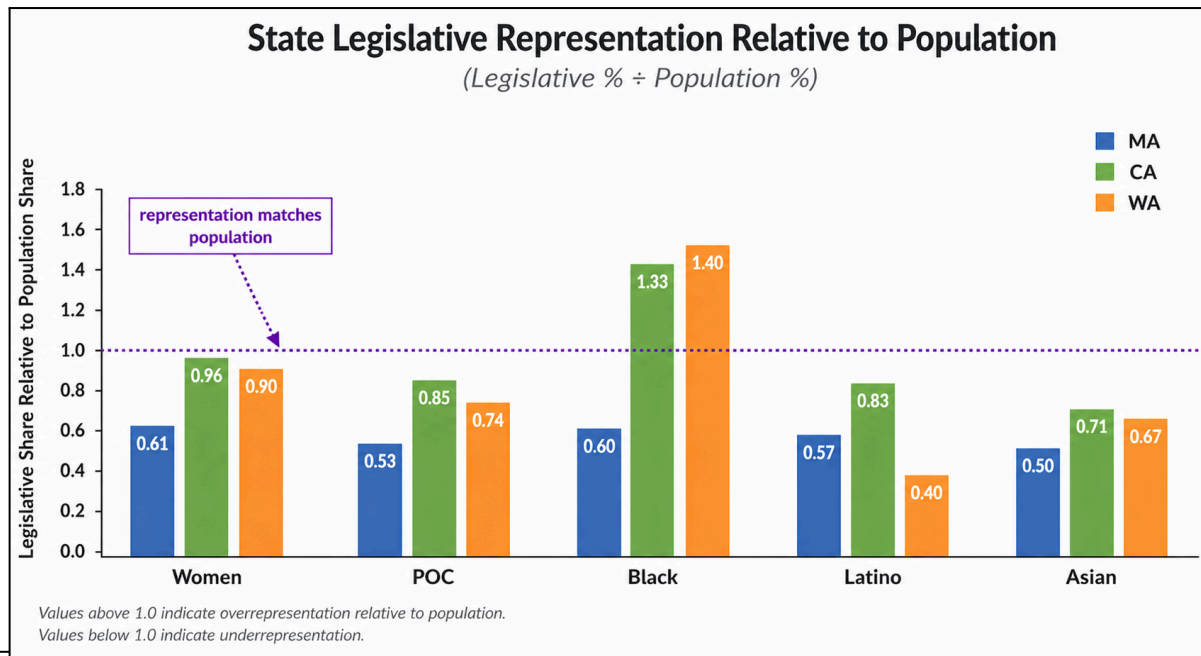
MA Voter Participation vs Population (2024)



MA vs CA/WA State Legislature Data

There are fears that an All-Party Primary in MA that advances the top two vote-getters to the November election like in CA and WA could lead to less representation for underrepresented groups. This data on current state legislatures (Leg) as compared to population (Pop) indicates the **opposite**: Massachusetts represents disadvantaged communities far less than CA and WA.

| | MA | CA | WA |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Women (Leg) ⁶ | 31% | 48% | 45% |
| Women (Pop) ⁷ | 51% | 50% | 50% |
| POC (Leg) | 17% | 56% ⁸ | 25% ⁹ |
| POC (Pop) | 32% | 66% | 34% |
| Black (Leg) | 6% ¹⁰ | 8% | 7% |
| Black (Pop) | 10% | 6% | 5% |
| Latino (Leg) | 8% | 34% | 6% |
| Latino (Pop) | 14% | 41% | 15% |
| Asian (Leg) | 4% ¹¹ | 12% | 8% |
| Asian (Pop) | 8% | 17% | 12% |



⁶ [RepresentWomen Gender Parity Index 2025](#)

⁷ [US Census estimates, 2024](#)

⁸ [CA legislature data '24-'25](#)

⁹ [WA Community Alliance data on '23 state legislature](#)

¹⁰ [MA '26 Black & Latino Caucus members](#)

¹¹ [MA '26 Asian Caucus members](#)

What would Fusion Voting look like in MA?

Unlike in CA and WA, the MA proposal for All-Party Primaries incorporates fusion voting in order to empower community organizing and provide voters with an important signal directly on the ballot. Under this system, **any parties or groups with a political designation could appear next to a candidate if they and that candidate agree on an endorsement.** See the sample ballots below for an example.

With increased competition between candidates of the same party, name recognition (i.e. money, fame, or incumbency) could grow more important without additional information on the ballot. That's where fusion endorsements come in to support community groups and inform voters: instead of paying for expensive mailers and ads, groups can obtain a political designation - 50 voters submitting a form to the Secretary of State - and appear directly on the ballot as an endorser. They can then focus organizing efforts on building trust with the community, since endorsements have been shown to carry more weight if voters recognize and value the endorser.¹² Thus, under this fusion voting system, community organizing could compete on more of a level playing field with big money and entrenched power.

| Sample Primary Ballot | |
|---|--|
| State Senate | |
| All registered voters receive the same ballot. Vote for ONE. | |
| <input type="radio"/> | Albert Anderson Democrat Endorsed by: Democratic Socialists of America; Working Families; NAACP Party |
| <input type="radio"/> | Bella Bonilla Democrat Endorsed by: Democratic Party; AFL-CIO Party; Latino-Vote Party |
| <input type="radio"/> | Carla Choi Republican Endorsed by: Republican Party; America First Party |
| <input type="radio"/> | David DiSalvo Unenrolled Endorsed by: Libertarians |
| <input type="radio"/> | Frank Fitzgerald Unenrolled Endorsed by: Green-Rainbows |
| <i>The top two vote-getters advance to the general election, regardless of party.</i> | |
| Example shown for educational purposes only | |

| Sample General Ballot | |
|---|--|
| State Senate | |
| Vote for ONE. | |
| <input type="radio"/> | Albert Anderson Registered Party: Democrat Endorsed by: Democratic Socialists of America; Working Families; NAACP Party |
| <input type="radio"/> | Bella Bonilla Registered Party: Democrat Endorsed by: Democratic Party; AFL-CIO Party; Latino-Vote Party |
| Example shown for educational purposes only | |

¹² [Arthur Lupia: Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

I heard that the California Governor Race could result in a Republican governor...?

In spring 2026, there was fear from CA Democratic leadership that the wide field of Democratic candidates for governor could split the vote and allow two Republicans to advance to the general election and lock out Democrats (CA, unlike MA and WA, has no write-in option). This did not happen: the 20 polls leading up to the election correctly projected at least one Democrat advancing, and Governor Newsom joined Joe Biden and Kamala Harris in not issuing an endorsement in the race, saying of the lockout possibility “I do not see that scenario taking place.”¹³ Over the history of CA and WA using all-party primaries, a lockout like this has only happened in 3 out of over 2000 races. Meanwhile, deep blue MA has had 5 GOP governors in the past 30 years.

How do voters in CA and WA feel about their similar voting systems?

A majority of California voters have consistently felt their top-two system is “mostly a good thing,” with support increasing over time: 59% in 2012, 60% in 2017, 62% in 2022, and 68% in 2024. The only polling on this from Washington is older but very favorable: in 2008, 76% of voters liked their top-two system.¹⁴

Is All-Party Primaries shown to have any actual impact on peoples' lives?

A new study¹⁵ reveals a significant pattern of improvement across 9 out of 14 outcome areas following all-candidate primary implementation, while none show significant deterioration. The results:

- *Economic Outcomes:* All-candidate primary states have higher per capita income, more new business formation, and less income inequality. There is some evidence that they also experience lower unemployment and poverty rates.
- *Educational Achievement:* All-candidate primary states have significantly higher 4th grade scores, but show no difference in math scores or graduation rates.
- *Health Outcomes:* Residents in all-candidate primary states have a higher life expectancy, which increases by 10 months.
- *Public Safety:* The murder rate is lower in all-candidate primary states, while vehicle theft rates are indistinguishable.
- *Housing:* All-candidate primary states are associated with slightly less homelessness.

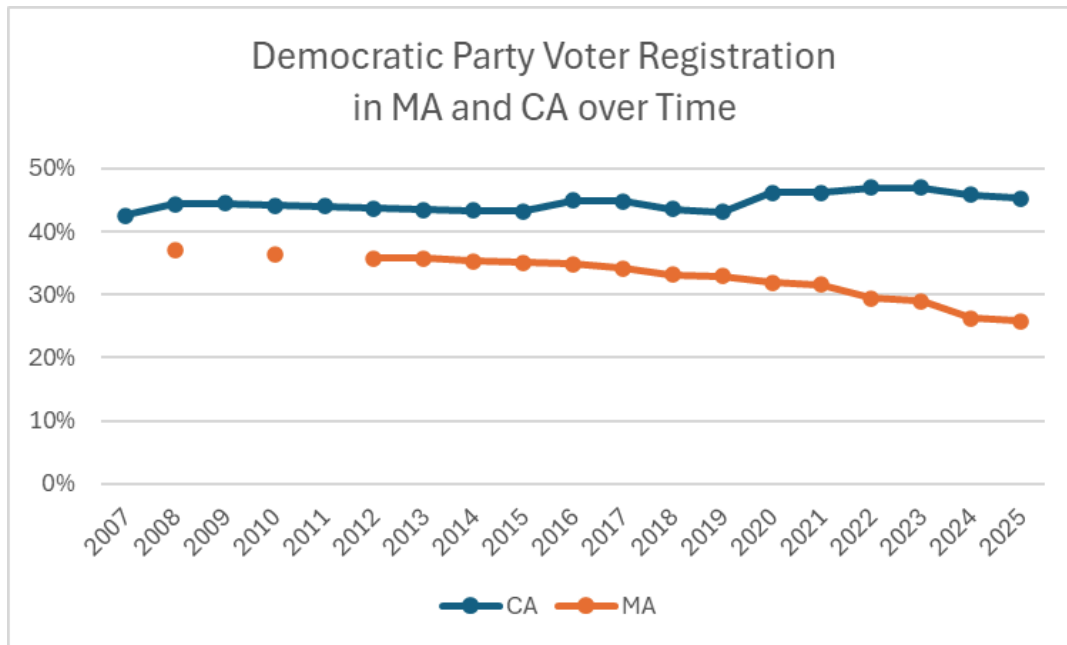
Will this weaken the Democratic Party?

¹³ [Politico: Newsom says Dems have 'break-the-glass' contingency plan for California gov's race](#)

¹⁴ [Washington Secretary of State: History of the WA Primary](#)

¹⁵ [Unite America: How Primary Elections & Reform Shape Governance and Citizens' Lives](#)

It hasn't in CA: Democratic party enrollment has risen there while it has decreased in MA, as shown in this chart. (WA doesn't have party-based registration.) More competitive elections can strengthen complacent parties, forcing them to hone ideas, earn votes from a more diverse electorate, and deliver on promises.



Will this erode Progressive power, empowering moderates and conservatives?

Candidates will certainly need to appeal to a broader swath of their constituents, but those constituents will still want real transformative solutions for working people: as shown on page 2, general election voters are younger, less wealthy, and more racially diverse than primary voters. California, while having a slightly less Democratic electorate than Massachusetts, has a significantly higher percentage of its House delegation in the Congressional Progressive Caucus: 44% (23 out of 52 members) compared to 33% (3 out of 9 members)¹⁶.

Will this make it harder for new candidates to run?

This may make it easier. The November election has far more coverage than the early September primary, providing more earned media opportunities and a more politics-oriented populace leading up to the election that counts most. The November electorate is also less controlled by party insiders, making it more possible to break through. Primaries would require less effort than in our current system: they would often be cancelled, and when there is one, candidates would only need to vie for second place to make the cut.

¹⁶ [Wikipedia: List of members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus](#)