



MAINE INDEPENDENTS ALREADY CHAFING AT SEN ALFOND'S BILL TO CLOSE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTIONS

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Independent voters in Maine are already chafing at Senator Justin Alfond's proposed bill to change the presidential caucus system to a closed primary that will exclude almost 37% of the state's voters—the independents.

“The current rush to pass a partisan primary is mired in the past when Maine should be moving into the future,” said Joe Pickering, a Bangor resident and activist with IndependentVoting.org. “I take issue with Sen Alfond's stated position that *‘I don't see why any unenrolled voter is disenfranchised or is paying for something they can't participate in. They just have to decide to enroll in a party.’* This undermines the commitment 37% of Maine voters have to being independent by requiring them to change their voter registration to a political party. In this day and age, it is simply an act of voter suppression to do so.”

“I don't believe,” continued Pickering, “that any American should have to join a party in order to participate in an election. Why should the Maine taxpayer foot the bill for the partisan primaries of two private organizations? Haven't *we the people* had enough of the rancor? There should be voter freedom for all.”

Last week, Arizona closed presidential primary excluded independents - also 37% of the electorate in that state. The election was a debacle and has left elected officials scrambling to respond to voter outcry.

In a statement issued by Independent Voters for Arizona and IndependentVoting.org, Tim Castro and Jacqueline Salit stated “What occurred in the Arizona presidential preference election was another black eye on the state of politics in Arizona. The exclusion of Arizona’s 1.2 million independent voters is a systemic form of voter suppression and undemocratic in the extreme. We note Governor Ducey’s remarks calling for an opening of the presidential primaries to independents; however, it appears to be politically convenient that he waited until after the election.”

For months, thousands of independent voters—led by Independent Voters for Arizona—pressured party leaders and elected officials to open the presidential primaries. Over 30,800 Arizona independents signed protest letters to the chairs of the Democratic and Republican parties asking them to open their primaries to independents which were delivered to them on February 22nd. They refused to do so.

“The outcry was ignored by the Governor and the party chairs until it contributed to a crisis at the polls,” stated Castro and Salit. “Independents want more than after-the-fact symbolic support. We want a system that is fair and inclusive of all.”

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