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ALL VOTERS VOTE IN HD 190 SPECIAL ELECTION But independents to be shut out of April presidential primary

PHILADELPHIA, PA – [Open Primaries PA](#), a statewide coalition committed to reforming the closed primary system in Pennsylvania, is calling attention to the stark contrast in voter access between today’s special election in West Philadelphia’s state House District 190 and the upcoming presidential primary on April 28.

“We have plenty of concerns with special elections, including the typically [closed-door process](#) for choosing major party nominees,” said Pat Christmas, policy director for Committee of Seventy and a member of Open Primaries PA. “But all voters, regardless of their party affiliation, get to cast ballots for candidates in a special, which will absolutely not be the case in a couple months when nominees for state and federal offices including the presidency are on the ballot.”

Pennsylvania remains one of only nine states that still uses [closed primary elections](#), which now bar more than [1.2 million Pennsylvanians](#) from participating in spring nomination contests. And as voter registration in communities across the state becomes increasingly lopsided towards one major party or the other, primary elections (as opposed to the general) are more often than not the election that determines who enters public office.

Like most Philadelphia districts, state House District 190, is a striking example of the partisan math: nearly 6,900 voters cast ballots in the 2018 primary election, but a more than 20-1 Democrat-to-Republican voter registration advantage in the West Philly district all but guarantees a Democratic win. The result was a foregone conclusion when nearly 23,000 voters cast ballots several months later in the 2018 general election; and this includes 4,600 unaffiliated voters and voters registered with a third party in HD 190 who are barred from the May 2018 primary and will be again in April 2020.

Open Primaries PA currently supports [Senate Bill 300](#) and [House Bill 192](#), legislation that would allow the state’s more than 800,000 independent voters to choose a party primary to vote in.



The Senate bill, sponsored by Sen. Joe Scarnati, passed the chamber in June 2019 with a historic [42-8](#) bipartisan vote. Now both bills sit in the House State Government Committee but have not yet had a public hearing.

“The impact our electoral systems have on competition for office and accountability from our public officials is fundamental,” said Christmas. “American politics and parties are not what they were in the early 20th century when closed primaries were a reform to bring nominations out into public view. It’s time for a serious debate around the status quo.”

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Open Primaries PA is a growing coalition of civic and business organizations committed to open and free elections in Pennsylvania that lead to responsive and accountable government. Learn more about the new coalition and why Pennsylvania’s closed primary system must change at OpenPrimariesPA.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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