

Thank you for holding this hearing, and for affording American's the opportunity to weigh in on their democratic process.

The President's Commission on Election Administration has come together to address several problematic narratives that plague the American election system. There's the narrative of the disabled, who can't reach the polling place, that of the soldier who is overseas during elections, and that of the understaffed polling place which cannot keep up with the volume of voters. These, and many others, are being considered by the Commission. However, one narrative is being ignored. The narrative of more than thirteen million Americans - the narrative of primary election exclusion.

In nineteen states, closed primaries lock out over twenty-two percent of their electorate through Political Party control. Nationally, this number accounts for just over seven percent of the total electorate. Thirteen-million, one-hundred ninety-three thousand, seven hundred fifty-three Americans have no say who they choose from in the general election, because political parties close the primary process. Primary elections are paid for partly with independent voter's tax dollars - yet these voters are excluded because they do not wish to register into a political party.

This mechanism forces voters to join political parties they do not support in an effort to retain their right to vote. Over forty percent of Americans now identify as "independent". This suggests that in the states with twenty-two percent unaffiliated voters, another twenty percent have registered into political parties just to retain their right to vote in primary elections.

This phenomena may cause political leaders to feel a false sense of support on Party issues. Because leaders look at registration numbers, and assume members join their political party because they support their stance on issues, leaders may not realize they are failing to represent the will of their constituents - but they are.

Polls given across America suggest our Nation's leaders are lagging behind the American public on a number of social issues. To move forward, America needs the Overton Window to shift. We need our leaders to catch up, and forcing people to join a political party to retain their right to vote is stifling the message that Americans want change.

I understand the reasoning behind party primaries - I understand why they were developed, and what their intentions were. But a truth remains - a mechanism which denies otherwise qualified voters from casting a ballot is an unacceptable means to an end. I implore the Committee to include these numbers, and include this structural barrier into their research.

To ignore this narrative is to ignore the injustice forced upon Thirteen-million, one-hundred ninety-three thousand, seven hundred fifty-three Americans, and is a blatant abdication of democracy.

Thank you.