

Freedom to Choose

Please Support HB 25/SB 2175 to Eliminate One-Punch Straight Ticket Voting

Public dissatisfaction with US electoral politics is at an all-time high. One thing most voters agree on: last year was brutal. Polarization seems to be a permanent feature of our politics. Voter apathy is rampant.

- Voter turnout in the last Presidential election was only 55% – a **20-yr low**.
- 44% (50% of millennials) now self-identify as independents – a larger number than either major party.
- Over half of Texas' legislative races had a single candidate on the ballot. Nearly 2/3 had only one major party candidate, meaning only 1/3 of Texas' legislative races were effectively contested.

It is imperative that our electoral politics embrace the kind of open, pluralistic, and competitive diversity that we Texans enjoy in the marketplace for goods and services. **More competition would help begin to heal our political system.** When elections are about party first, voters may not adequately consider alternative problems and solutions facing their communities.

Texas is only one of ten states that still allows one-punch straight-ticket voting (Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Michigan, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah). West Virginia eliminated this option in 2015. Michigan did so in 2016, though repeal is currently being blocked by judicial action.

The first thing Texas voters currently see on their general election ballot is a list of political parties ("Independent" is not one of the choices). Leading with a with this list effectively places party as a preeminent voter consideration. Many voters who choose the straight ticket don't realize there may be nonpartisan races or propositions on the ballot. They miss out on casting a vote in these local elections.

But **the proper time for voters to consider party is with primaries** and nominating conventions. General elections are a time for voters to consider whether their choices should cross party lines and include independents.

Eliminating the one-punch option would signal to voters that Texas continues to be a state that embraces competition and celebrates the individual.

HB 25 is endorsed by Texans for Electoral Competition
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