

Fusion Voting Testimony – Jan. 15, 2008

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1. Fusion Voting Lets People Unite Around Good Candidates

Under current law, it is impossible for more than one political party to unite behind good candidates while ensuring a ballot presence for each party. Since the grass roots of every party generally wants a ballot presence, current law encourages them to nominate candidates where they otherwise would not. This can have the effect of working against the interests of all parties concerned by needlessly dividing what would otherwise be a solid block of votes.

Under fusion voting, more than one political party can unite behind good candidates while ensuring a ballot presence for each party. The grass-roots of all parties will be happier, and the goals of all parties concerned are advanced since the joint voting block is not divided.

2. Fusion Voting Offers More Choices, Forces Nothing

Political Parties. **Under current law**, political parties cannot cross-nominate and maintain a ballot presence. **Under fusion voting**, it becomes possible to cross-nominate and maintain a ballot presence, but is not required - parties may still choose to behave traditionally.

Candidates. **Under current law**, candidates accepting more than one nomination must choose which party's name will appear next to their names on the ballot. **Under fusion voting**, candidates who accept the nomination of more than one party will have the names of each party shown on the ballot – but any candidate may decline any nomination.

Voters. **Under current law**, voters have no way to know if a candidate has received more than one party's nomination and have no way to use this information to send a message to the candidate while still voting for him/her. **Under fusion voting**, voters will know if a candidate has received more than one party's nomination and may send a message (by voting for the same person on a different party line) without voting for an opponent. But the voter still retains the choice to vote traditionally.

In each election, voters demand changes which reduce needless partisanship. Of the alternatives under consideration such as the so-called “Open Primary” proposal and “Instant Runoff Voting,” **fusion voting provides the most promise with the least disruption in current political behavior.** While fusion voting offers new options for political parties, candidates, and voters to come together around good candidates, everyone concerned may still choose to make traditional choices. Supporting fusion voting will also show voters that the legislature is willing to take steps making it easier for parties to unite.

3. Fusion Voting Does NOT Damage Major Parties.

In prior testimony on fusion voting during the 2005 and 2007 legislative sessions, **no evidence ever emerged demonstrating that fusion voting caused harm to either the Democratic or Republican Parties.** Major parties already do outreach to minor parties in hopes of winning their support or avoiding so-called “spoiler” candidates. **Under fusion voting, it becomes politically easier for major and minor parties alike to achieve shared objectives.**