

FUSION VOTING

Fusion is also called Cross-Endorsement or Open Ballot Voting. Affects only general elections, not primaries

- Fusion is a way for candidates to accept the nomination of more than one party.
- Once common, now only allowed in eight states: NY, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Mississippi, Oregon, S. Carolina, Vermont.
- Two variations on fusion ballot:
 - Ballot lists a candidate multiple times if received multiple endorsements. NY does this.
 - Ballot lists candidate's name once, with all endorsing parties listed
- In NYS, candidate seeking nomination by party to which she does not belong to must seek permission of that party's exec. committee. Can be done by presentation of signatures from party members or through WILSON PAKULA certificate.
- History: When fusion was common, minority parties had strong voice and parties could fuse at will. Result was highly competitive elections. Gradually states other than the eight listed above banned fusion voting in an attempt to combat corruption and to give government more control over the process. Major parties gained strength at expense of minority parties, reducing competition
- States with fusion have stronger third parties. In NY there are three strong third parties: Working Families, Independence and Conservative. Benefits of strong third/minority parties:
 - Bring new ideas and creativity. E.g. Prohibition party
 - Provide way for voters to highlight priorities, issues and solutions major parties ignore.
 - Offer voters means of participating without compromising their minor party positions
 - Some evidence it increases voter turnout
 - Can influence majority parties to move to edges rather than both picking middle
- Fusion can help avoid a win by a "spoiler candidate" as when two liberals run on two different party lines and split the vote, giving plurality to the conservative candidate.
- Voters get bigger voice against party leaders by voting for a candidate on a minority party line.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilizes voters who think their voice will be heard • Improves competition • Encourages "sincere" voting if voters see a chance for their party's endorsed candidate to win • Makes third parties more effective • Candidate with most votes still wins, but by voting for winner on a minority party line, voters gain a voice in the policy made by majority party. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can promote patronage. • Could empower fringe groups. E.g. the Tea Party's hold on candidates for Republican party • Some feel fusion undermines two-party system • Threat to identity of third parties if they just endorse majority party candidate instead of nominating own candidate • Third party can corrupt political process by "selling endorsement" to highest bidding candidate. (e.g., former Senate majority leader Malcolm Smith bribery scandal)