

The Top Two Vote Getter (TTVG) primary system is often what is meant when referring to an “open primary.” An open/top two primary means that primary elections for partisan offices are open to all voters regardless of party affiliation or nonaffiliation. In addition, all candidates regardless of party affiliation or nonaffiliation run in this form of primary. In other words, this primary system is no longer a state-paid mechanism for major parties to select their general election nominees. No political party, major or minor, could use the primary election to select their candidates and will presumably find other mechanisms to do so, such as caucuses or conventions. The next step is that the top two vote recipients from the primary continue to the general election. No other means to appear on the November ballot are available. This can mean that the two general election candidates can be from the same party. A brief analysis of this system is provided further in this section.

Voter-Nominated Offices

Political parties are not entitled to formally nominate candidates for voter-nominated offices at the primary election. A candidate nominated for a voter-nominated office at the primary election is the nominee of the people and not the official nominee of any party at the general election. A candidate for nomination to a voter-nominated office shall have his or her party preference, or lack of party preference, stated on the ballot, but the party preference designation is selected solely by the candidate and is shown for the information of the voters only. It does not mean the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party designated, or that there is an affiliation between the party and candidate, and no candidate nominated by the voters shall be deemed to be the officially nominated candidate of any political party. In the county sample ballot booklet, parties may list the candidates for voter-nominated offices who have received the party’s official endorsement.

Any voter may vote for any candidate for a voter-nominated office, if they meet the other qualifications required to vote for that office. The top two vote-getters at the primary election move on to the general election for the voter-nominated office even if both candidates have specified the same party preference designation. No party is entitled to have a candidate with its party preference designation move on to the general election, unless the candidate is one of the two highest vote-getters at the primary election.