

## QUESTION

# 3

## State Primary Elections

### IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

This question asks voters whether Massachusetts should replace its existing primary election system, in which Democrats and Republicans each have separate ballots, with a single “all-party primary,” in which all candidates appear on the same ballot together and the top two vote-getters advance.

# YES

### A YES VOTE WOULD...

Create a single primary system in which every candidate in a race, regardless of their party affiliation, appears on the same ballot. The two candidates who receive the most votes would advance to the general election, even if they are both Democrats, both Republicans, or both from a third party or unenrolled.

### PROPOSERS CLAIM

- Because Democrats have such strong control over Massachusetts politics, many races are effectively decided during lower-turnout Democratic primary elections. The new system could give voters at least some kind of choice in the general election, even if it's a contest between two Democrats.
- In California and Washington, states that have similar top-two primaries, the system reduced the importance of money in politics because less-funded candidates performed better than they do in states with systems like we have in Massachusetts.

*The most prominent figure in support is Danielle Allen, a Harvard University professor who founded Partners in Democracy, which advocates for democratic reforms. Other supporters include former Gov. Deval Patrick, former MassGOP chair Jennifer Nassour, and the NAACP New England Area Conference.*

### OTHER THINGS TO KNOW

- Municipal elections, which do not involve partisan primaries, would not be affected if this measure passes. Candidates would still need to collect the same number of signatures as before to qualify for the ballot.
- Four other states have some form of multi-party or nonpartisan primary elections: Alaska, California, Nebraska, and Washington. Louisiana places all candidates on the ballot in its general election, and if no single candidate receives a majority, the top two advance to a runoff.

# NO

### A NO VOTE WOULD...

Keep the existing electoral system in place. Democrats and Republicans will continue to appear on their party's primary ballot. Whoever wins the respective contests will face off in the general election. Third-party candidates will only appear on the general election ballot.

### OPPOSERS CLAIM

- There's no evidence that a top-two primary system increases the number of candidates in a race.
- The top-two primary system will hurt democratic participation because only two candidates will appear in November, in some cases from the same party, whereas today, general election ballots can feature a Democrat, a Republican, and multiple third-party or unenrolled candidates.
- Wealthy donors are providing almost all of the funding for the all-party primary campaign. Because primary fields will be larger, those who have the most money to spend will have an even greater advantage, giving more influence to wealthy donors.

*Opponents include the Massachusetts Democratic Party, Massachusetts Republican Party, several organized labor groups like the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and progressive activists such as Act on Mass.*