



Peace and Freedom Party of California

Legislative Committee

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May 5, 2021

Honorable Senator Dave Min
State Capitol, Room 2048
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Subject: SB 286 OPPOSE

Dear Senator Min:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Peace and Freedom Party of California to oppose Senate Bill 286.

SB 286 would scrap two different types of election systems. One type, which does not include San Francisco, is for elections for nonpartisan county offices, where a candidate is declared the winner in a primary if that candidate received a majority of the vote. SB 286 would instead force these county elections to be conducted by use of a top two system where the candidate with the most votes and the candidate with the second most votes would advance to the general election. Peace and Freedom Party strongly opposes top two election systems, and this is one reason for our opposition to this bill.

The other type of election system that SB 286 deals with is used in general law city elections that are determined by a plurality of the votes with no possibility of a run-off and which are also consolidated with statewide primaries, now and as of January 1, 2022. These elections would be consolidated with the November statewide general elections.

It is hard for us to decide which of these systems is the worst. In one system, by switching to a top two system, it would cause additional effort and cost to a candidate who received a majority vote in the primary to have to run an election all over again against a candidate who under current statuses would have been defeated. It would also create additional work for local election officials to administer an extra election and increase the cost to the county for another election which would eventually be paid for by the taxpayers. In the other system, by moving a general law city plurality election to a November statewide general election does nothing to change winning with a plurality, and when an election is won by a plurality of the vote, that means that a majority of the voters voted for someone other than the winner. This is another reason why we oppose SB 286.

In addition to creating another bad election system (top two) and maintaining another undemocratic one (plurality winner), another problem we find is the confusion to voters who would vote using one system for city elections and a different system for county elections. Another reason for us to oppose SB 286.

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Peace and Freedom Party agrees that our election systems need to be reformed. We have studied various election systems and concluded in the 1980s that a proportional representation system is the fairest system. It is used in most democratic republics around the world. While not as democratic as proportional representation, ranked choice voting in single winner districts, also known as instant runoff voting, does guarantee that a winning candidate receives a majority of the vote on the final count in a single election. Ranked choice voting is being used more and more at both the state level and different local levels, including several cities in California.

If our election systems are to be brought into the 21st century, we suggest a special commission to study our election systems and recommend real democratic proposals. In the meantime, we propose that you amend SB 286 to save our taxpayers millions of dollars by eliminating city and county primaries and we further propose using ranked choice voting in the November general elections for all general law cities and counties.

For these reasons Peace and Freedom Party opposes SB 286 and strongly urge a no vote on this bill. To discuss our position on SB 286 further, please contact me, John Reiger at (916) 456-4595 or reigers@earthlink.org, or our Legislative Liaison C. T. Weber at (916) 422-5395 or ctwebervoters@att.net.

Sincerely,

John C. Reiger

John C. Reiger
Legislative Committee Chairperson
Peace and Freedom Party of California

C. T. Weber

C. T. Weber
Legislative Liaison
Peace and Freedom Party of California