

TJ Rooney

Thank you for holding today's hearing and considering legislation to repeal closed primaries in Pennsylvania.

As a former Democratic state legislator and a former chair of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party, I have a unique perspective on repealing closed primaries.

From both sides of the aisle, you hear concerns that repealing closed primaries will benefit one party disproportionately. In the 41 states where primaries are already open, there has not been a benefit to one party over another.

Instead, it provides more time and incentive for parties to welcome Independent voters into their tents and speak to them meaningfully. Repealing closed primaries provides access to hundreds of thousands of new voters who could be members of a robust coalition for either party or any candidate.

There has never been a more important time than now to start the process of welcoming these voters into our full electoral process - primaries and general elections.

Independent voters are the fastest growing bloc of voters in Pennsylvania. Younger people are especially likely to register as Independents. It's critically important for candidates and party committees to reach out to these voters, and repealing closed primaries will provide more time to talk with them and an incentive to include them earlier.

This spring, closed primaries left more than 1.1 million voters out of our elections, and we cannot risk further alienating this growing voting bloc.

And by blocking them from participating in our primaries, we are alienating them.

Primary elections cost taxpayers approximately \$25 million every spring, and those Independent voters have to shoulder just as much cost as Republicans and Democrats who are allowed to participate. We cannot let unfairness like this fester.

Repealing closed primaries is the right thing to do. It's the fair thing to do, and for candidates and parties, it's the smart thing to do.