

## Why is a Primary Election Different?

Voters are sometimes confused by a Primary Election. It is different from any other election they vote in. Sometimes they don't understand why they are given several ballots but are permitted to vote only one ballot. Sometimes they don't understand why they can't vote for candidates on two or more different ballots. Or they may think, mistakenly, that they will have to "declare a party", as voters in some states do.

The Primary Election is different because there are really three different party elections being held on the same day in each polling place – a Democratic primary, a Progressive primary and a Republican primary. A voter is permitted by law to vote in only one of these elections – to help only one of the three political parties to select the candidates that will represent that party on the November (General Election) ballot. Thus the winners in the Primary Election are not really "elected" but rather are nominated as the candidates of their party for the General Election ballot.

### **Why can't I vote for any candidate I wish?**

In a sense you can – by writing in a name on the ballot that you choose to vote. But you should understand what your vote will and will not do.

You may feel that you would really like to vote for someone on one party's ballot and also someone on another party's ballot. But remember that you are helping one party (the party of your choice) to select the candidates to appear on the November ballot. Thus, if you chose to vote the primary election of party A, you may write in a candidate from party B on the primary ballot of party A; but if you do, you should know that you are voting to have that person be the candidate of party A (the party whose primary you have chosen to vote in) in the November election. Your vote will not help that person in the primary of party B, the primary in which the person has chosen to run.

### **Why don't Independent candidates appear on the Primary ballots?**

Again, it is important to remember what a Primary Election is- an election for each of the parties to select their candidates for the General Election. Independent candidates will get on the General Election ballot by another means – by filing petitions with a sufficient number of voters' signatures.

**Remember: In Vermont, you DON'T have to declare your party or tell ANYONE what party you are voting in the Primary Election.** Both your party choice and your ballot are secret!