

## **ERIC H. BRONNER**

*Independent, Cross-partisan Political Reformer | Founder, Veterans for Political Innovation*

Webster Groves, Missouri

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TO: Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and  
Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

April 8, 2021

**RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of L.D. 231, An Act to Establish Open Primaries**

Dear Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

I hope this letter finds you, your families and your staff healthy and well. I'm writing to you today as a Navy Veteran, a political independent and the Founder of Veterans for Political Innovation regarding the need for semi-open primary elections in Maine.

According to the PEW Research Center, Veterans are more likely than the general population to be politically independent, unaffiliated voters. Indeed, nearly half (49%) of all U.S. veterans and 44.5% of recent war veterans do not identify with a major party. For many of us, our political independence derives from our desire to serve our country, and the ideals embodied in our Constitution, as opposed to a political party or any particular leader.

LD 231 is an important step in the right direction for a more inclusive political process in Maine. While political parties might be private, elections are publicly funded by every single taxpayer in your beautiful state. Closed primary election systems disenfranchise thousands of unaffiliated military veterans like me, resulting in taxation without the ability to vote for our preferred representation. Under Maine's current system, it is very likely that over 60,000 of Maine's approximately 140,000 veterans are locked out from participating in, arguably, the most important election in our democratic process.

On behalf of independent veterans, like me, please fight for our right to vote in primary elections. We fought for our country, and for the right for every citizen over the age of 18 to vote. Some of my fellow service members risked life and limb to help administer elections in foreign countries. Why should we be locked out from participating in primary elections, here at home, simply because we choose to register as unaffiliated? Closed primaries, used by only 14 states in our Union, are an affront to our service and to our political independence.

At a moment of great crises in our country, we should be embracing electoral reforms that bring us together across partisan lines, not further divide us. The best way to thank and support your Maine veterans, today, is by using your office, and your influence, to fight for open primary elections. I urge you to please support LD 231.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Eric H. Bronner

United States Naval Flight Officer, 1997-2005

Founder, Veterans for Political Innovation

PS: I have a very deep, emotional connection with your beautiful state. In the fall of 1998, I went through the most challenging, realistic military training of my eight years on Active Duty, in the mountains of western Maine. We celebrated the completion of our training with an amazing lobster dinner somewhere outside of Portland. The beauty of your state made such an impression on me that, one year later, I decided to bring my new bride to a cottage in Higgins Beach (just south of Portland), to celebrate our honeymoon. Almost twenty-two years later, we are still together, and we still talk about the amazing beauty of the fall foliage in Maine!