

Return of Truth Matters NP

This is the first issue of Truth Matters NP since August 2020. The primary reason for my absence was my decision to run a write-in campaign for the New Providence Borough Council. As I stated many times in my candidate statements, there were six, I was running because the other candidates were running unopposed. I did not want last year's Council election to pass without any mention of a position. I had hoped my opponents would respond to some of my proposals, there were many. They did not. It turned out there were over 400 write-in votes and I received the most. It appeared the idea caught on to write people in because there were dozens of write-in selections. Fortunately, I beat out Elmer Fudd, Donald Duck, Willie Nelson and Al Morgan. That is fantastic given my campaign was essentially a one-person effort with very little expenditure of funds.

Another reason for the break in publishing the newsletter has been my involvement with the Sierra Club at the local and state level. I am now the Conservation Chair for the Loantaka Group. This Group represents all of Morris County, most of Union County, Millburn, Livingston, Roseland, Bernardsville and Basking Ridge. I am also a member of the Sierra Club NJ Chapter Executive Board.

I stated following the campaign that I was not going away. I would continue to bring up issues and proposals for you, the citizens and our government leaders to consider. We are rapidly moving toward a new primary election period in New Jersey. This edition of the newsletter is devoted to two important issues in New Jersey, candidate selection and ballot issues.

Allen Swanson



The Primary Problem

When I say the primary problem, I don't mean the most important problem, I literally mean **The Primary Election Problem** in New Jersey. Frankly, the primary election system in NJ is broken. It discourages voting, encourages corruption, assures the powerful remain in power and is down-right undemocratic.

The above is a lot to bite off and requires some detailed explanations. Let's begin with how candidates for elected office are selected in NJ. Here are some criteria you must meet to have a chance:

- You need to be a Democrat. This applies to most areas of NJ. There are exceptions. In those cases, you need to be a Republican. There is no other party or independent movements that under the current election system in NJ have a chance.
- You need to know some people. To be recognized by the party bosses you need to get the proper introduction as a loyalist. Don't bother if you are going to propose some of the reforms I am going to mention.
- You need to make a commitment to those in power
- You need the endorsement of the County leadership (bosses).
- You must secure a position on the County Line on the primary ballot.
- You need to refrain from "rocking any boats." That means don't propose things that may offend those in power. This extends even to local offices when you are running from an alternative party or even one of the big two and you want to propose reforms.

Once you meet the above criteria. You may get a chance to run on the coveted "Line." I will describe the "Line," in a separate article. I continue using the Democratic Party as my example.

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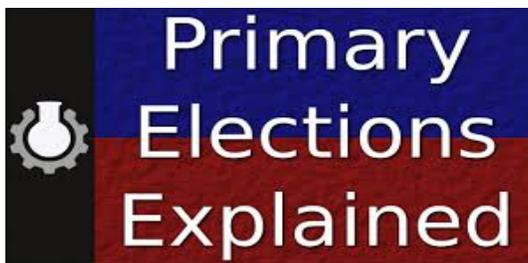


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The next step is to get the local Democratic Municipal Committee leader to select you as the candidate to be endorsed in your municipality. If you are running for anything above Mayor of a town, it is likely the chair of the County Democratic Committee will inform the local Chair who they are required to endorse. This endorsement will likely take place without any discussion or debate among other candidates running within the Democratic Party.

Once you are selected as the candidate you will receive the blessing of the party and appear on the "Line." Sometimes referred to as the "County Line," or the "Party Line." This is essential because if you are on the line in your municipality, the likelihood that you will be elected in the primary is almost assured and you will move on to a November place in the general election.

If you happen to live in a district with a large Democratic majority, such as Union County, the primary winner is almost guaranteed to win in the November general election. So, to summarize, if you live in a Democratic district, the party bosses choose which candidates will get the coveted "County Line" position on the ballot. That almost guarantees a primary win, followed by an almost certain victory in the general election.



What is "The Line?" What's wrong with it?

By Allen Swanson

The "Line" or "County Line," or "Party Line," is the term for the New Jersey ballot format used in primary elections. The first important fact about our ballot is that it is the only one of its kind in the USA.

What makes the NJ ballot unique is that it is the only ballot arranged by columns which are organized and defined by party position rather than political office. Every other state uses ballots where your selection is between those who are running for a specific office. Each column or box includes all the candidates running for that office. In a primary, that would mean every person running for a spot as the Democratic nominee for an office would appear on a single column or box. You are then presented with the opportunity to vote for who you believe is the best candidate.

In New Jersey the offices are organized in rows. Each column includes candidates for the office on that row. Each column usually has a label. In Union County NJ, one of those columns is referred to as the "Regular Democratic Organization." That column is the one supported by the Union County Democratic Committee (UCDC). This column almost always includes the frontrunning top of the ticket candidate endorsed by the UCDC. Below are all the other candidates endorsed by the UCDC. This creates a situation where voters are encouraged to "vote the line." Problem is, voting the line means you are voting for candidates selected by a small group of individuals, often only the leader of the county committee. Most voters do not spend a lot of time researching the candidates and do just as you would expect. They "vote the line."

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Truth Matters NP is edited by Allen Swanson and Brian Haas. All articles are written by Allen Swanson unless otherwise indicated. Questions, comments or suggestions should be directed to truthmattersnp@gmail.com. More information may be found at <https://lookingleftnj.com>

What is “The Line?” What’s wrong with it?

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Voting the line means that any candidate not selected to be on “The Line,” has a very small chance to be selected by most of the voters. This is due to the lack of researching of candidates mentioned and the fact that the “Line” is usually in the most prominent position on the ballot with the other candidates requiring a search across the columns. Another significant factor is that being on the line assures that your candidacy will be supported by the leadership that selected you. This means media exposure, campaign funds, endorsements by candidates for higher offices, opportunity to advance in the party and more.

What happens to you if you are not a candidate selected by the county committee leadership? First, in Union County you are no longer considered a “Regular Democrat.” You are prohibited from using that term for yourself. You must, as some do, refer to yourself as “People First Democrats,” (Fanwood) or “Democrats United for Progress.” To date no one has selected “Irregular Democrats.” Kidding aside, this system exists totally to ensure that the powerful remain in power. The problem is, it works. Because it works, many good public-minded people choosing to run for office are swept aside by the system. They realize the likelihood of winning is low unless they “toe the line” and express their loyalty to the party machine. This makes it extremely hard to make the changes needed to create a more democratic primary voting system in New Jersey. That does not mean there are not people who are trying to educate voters and party activists to work for that change. It will take time and there will be resistance, but the change needs to come.

More information:

There are groups who are working to make the changes needed in the ballot and candidate selection system in New Jersey. Below are just a few:

Better Ballot NJ A new organization launched in December 2020 through the Good Government Coalition of NJ. Their website contains information and actions. It includes two videos that provide a quick and clear description of the problem with NJ ballots. <https://www.ggcnj.org/betterballotsnj/>

Fair Ballot Project. New Jersey’s ballots are designed to influence voters to choose candidates selected by party bosses. The Fair Ballot Project works on behalf of New Jersey voters asking our state legislators to support fair ballot design. New Jerseyans deserve to have fairly elected leaders working for us, not career politicians who care about appeasing party bosses in order to keep their seats safe. From website <https://fairballotproject.org>

NJ Policy Perspective

New Jersey Policy Perspective (NJPP) is a nonpartisan think tank that drives policy change to advance economic, social, and racial justice through evidence-based, independent research, analysis, and strategic communications. From website. <https://www.njpp.org>

Toeing the line: New Jersey Primary Ballots Enable Party Insiders to Pick Winners

BY **JULIA SASS RUBIN**

Published June 29, 2020

<https://www.njpp.org/publications/report/toeing-the-line-new-jersey-primary-ballots-enable-party-insiders-to-pick-winners/>

Does the County Line Matter, An Analysis of New Jersey’s 2020 Primary Election Results?

BY **JULIA SASS RUBIN**

Published on Aug 13, 2020

<https://www.njpp.org/publications/report/does-the-county-line-matter-an-analysis-of-new-jerseys-2020-primary-election-results/>