

# MEMORANDUM

April 12, 2013

**From:** Count My Vote Executive Committee (Gov. Mike Leavitt, Rich McKeown, Maura Carabello, Matt Sanderson, Kirk Jowers, David Hansen, LaVarr Webb, Michael Shea)

**To:** Republican and Democratic party leaders

**Subject:** Update and Statement of Principles

As you know, over the last several months our group, along with many other Utahns, has been discussing Utah's process for nominating political party candidates with the goal of increasing voter participation.

The current caucus/convention nominating process has many excellent qualities that we wish to retain. The system allows candidates who lack fame, wealth, and incumbency to compete for a party's nomination. We also appreciate the valuable grassroots nature of the process, with neighbors gathering to discuss political issues and candidates.

We believe, however, that substantive reforms are necessary to reverse the current trend of low voter participation and to ensure good governance and creation of good public policy.

We believe this matter to be of such high importance that we are in the process of filing the proper paperwork and putting together a large, statewide signature-gathering effort to place a proposal on the 2014 ballot allowing all voters to choose an alternative candidate nomination process. Given the results of survey research and focus groups, we are confident that such a proposal would be strongly supported by most Utah leaders, and would be overwhelmingly approved by voters.

As part of this process, we have engaged in productive and good-faith discussions with party leaders, and many party members. We are pleased that party leaders have been open-minded, creative, and desirous of increasing participation in the political process. We appreciate their willingness to discuss, negotiate, and seek solutions.

Some time ago, we developed three important principles that continue to guide our deliberations. We have concluded that if the political parties are able to make internal reforms to fulfill these principles, we will not need to move forward with the ballot measure.

Here are our expectations for fulfillment of these principles:

1. The nomination process must be inclusive, accessible, and allow participation in the caucus phase by all voters. A process that requires individuals to attend a particular meeting at a particular place at a particular time on a particular day excludes and discriminates against those who may be away serving their country or church, those who may be ill, those who may be required to work, or away on business. Such a system is not acceptable. Fulfilling this principle will require opening caucus participation over a longer period of time, and providing an accessible method for votes to be cast by those who cannot attend in person.
2. Primary election choices must be expanded so more voters have the opportunity to determine a party's ultimate nominees. This can be achieved by: (a) raising the convention vote threshold to avoid a primary election to between 70% and 80%; (b) certifying for the primary-election ballot any candidate who receives over 20% or 25% of the delegate vote on any ballot during the Convention; and (c) eliminating multiple ballots. These modest changes would provide more choices for the broader party membership in a primary election, which will, in turn, boost Utah's voter participation rate. While we encourage the parties to consider all of these proposals, raising the threshold to at least 70% is the minimum required to fulfill this principle.
3. Some degree of stability, consistency and permanence is necessary so that changing political winds do not result in frequent changes to the system. We recognize that nothing in politics is certain or lasts forever, but we expect party leaders to work to implement long-term internal or statutory solutions to provide stability and predictability.

Because of deadlines and the large amount of work involved in mounting a signature petition drive to place a proposal on the 2014 ballot, we will continue our ballot-measure preparations as we monitor the success of the parties in adopting these reforms over the next several weeks. We appreciate party members' and leaders' willingness to listen, analyze and work with us.

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