

TEXAS VS LOUISIANA

The nonpartisan blanket primary system used in Louisiana often seems attractive to voters from outside the state. The system differs from the closed primary by allowing independent and third-party voters to participate in the primary election because voters do not need to register a political party affiliation. In addition, the nonpartisan blanket primary differs from the traditional open primary in that voters do not have to choose a specific political party's primary in which to participate. Instead, a registered voter simply arrives at the polling place on Election Day and receives a ballot with all of the candidates from all of the political parties with all offices to be chosen listed. Here, voters can maximize cross-party voting by, for example, choosing a Republican for president, a Democrat for U.S. senator, a Libertarian for U.S. House of Representatives, and so forth. This ability to cross-party vote by office, which is impossible in other types of primaries because the ballot contains only candidates from a specific political party, is attractive to many voters. Since all registered voters may participate in the primary, proponents maintain that the system should produce more centrist or moderate candidates. This ability to produce such candidates was important in the California campaign to adopt the nonpartisan blanket primary.ⁱ After all, by restricting the ballot to registered party supporters, the closed primary essentially limits participation to conservative or right-of-center voters in the Republican primary and liberal or left-of-center voters in the Democratic primary. Independent voters are forced to choose a side or stay at home.

Does the nonpartisan blanket primary in Louisiana produce centrist or moderate candidates that reflect the views of the entire electorate rather than those of a smaller number of partisan voters? Fortunately, evidence is readily available in the form of elections results from Louisiana. In fact, results from Louisiana's elections for governor suggest that Louisiana's primary system does not necessarily produce centrist or moderate officeholders. For example, in 1991, the centrist incumbent governor Buddy Roemer, a one-time Democrat who became a Republican, received 27 percent of the vote to finish third in a twelve-candidate field. Roemer's third-place finish meant he was eliminated. In second place, with 32 percent of the vote, was David Duke.ⁱⁱ Duke, a former member of the state legislature and once grand wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, was clearly more extremist than Roemer. Edwin Edwards, a former state governor who had been indicted and tried several times for a variety of violations of federal racketeering laws, finished in first place with 34 percent of the vote. Edwards and Duke moved on to the general election in November. Edwards defeated Duke with 61 percent of the vote.

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTER
Read the following before marking your ballot.

1. Use **ONLY** a pencil containing black lead to mark your ballot.
2. Completely fill in oval to the right of each of your selections. Any other type of marking may void your ballot.

CORRECTLY MARKED BALLOT:
John Doe

INCORRECTLY MARKED BALLOT:
X O X

3. DO NOT vote for more than the number to be elected for each office.
4. If you incorrectly mark this ballot, erase the incorrect mark completely and make a new mark.

ABSENTEE BALLOT

October 24, 2015

East Baton Rouge Parish

17-001A

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Official Ballot
Prepared and Certified by

[Signature]

Tom Schedler
Secretary of State
STATE OF LOUISIANA

Governor (Vote for ONE)	Lieutenant Governor (Vote for ONE)	Treasurer (Vote for ONE)
Scott A. Angelle Republican 1	Elbert Lee Guillory Republican 10	John Kennedy Republican 21
Beryl Billiot No Party 2	Melvin L. "Kip" Holden Democrat 11	Jennifer Treadway Republican 22
"Jay" Dardenne Republican 3	"Billy" Nungesser Republican 12	Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry (Vote for ONE)
Cary Deaton Democrat 4	John Young Republican 13	
John Bel Edwards Democrat 5	Secretary of State (Vote for ONE)	"Charlie" Greer Democrat 23
Jeremy "JW" Odom No Party 6	"Tom" Schedler Republican 14	Adrian "Ace" Juttner Green 24
Eric Paul Orgeron Other 7	"Chris" Tyson Republican 15	Jamie LaBranche Republican 25
S. L. Simpson Democrat 8	Attorney General (Vote for ONE)	Michael G. "Mike" Strain Republican 26
David Vitter Republican 9	Geraldine "Geri" Broussard Baldoney Democrat 16	Commissioner of Insurance (Vote for ONE)
	James D. "Buddy" Caldwell Republican 17	
	Isaac "Ike" Jackson Democrat 18	"Jim" Donelon Republican 27
	"Jeff" Landry Republican 19	Donald Hodge, Jr. Democrat 28
	"Marty" Maley Republican 20	Charlotte C. McDaniel McGehee Democrat 29
		Matt Parker Republican 30

TURN BALLOT OVER

VOTE BOTH SIDES OF BALLOT →

Another example is the 1987 gubernatorial election. In that race, Edwin Edwards received 28 percent of the primary vote, and Buddy Roemer, then a Democrat, received 33 percent. While Roemer went on to become governor, third place in the primary went to Robert Livingston, the only Republican candidate, who received 18 percent of the vote.ⁱⁱⁱ The fourth-place finish of W. J. "Billy" Tauzin, at the time a conservative Democrat and now a moderate Republican, is interesting because Tauzin was arguably more centrist than either Edwards or Livingston. The evidence suggests that centrist candidates are often crowded out in Louisiana's primary system by more extreme candidates. Simply put, centrist and moderate candidates, if sufficient in number, can split the middle vote, which has the effect of allowing more extreme candidates to get just enough votes to move on to the general election.