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National Open Ballot Project

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Five Ways Fusion Voting Is Good for Democracy

1. Fusion increases voter participation
2. Fusion solves the "spoiler" and "wasted vote" problems
3. Fusion ballots provide more information for voters
4. Fusion increases accountability
5. Fusion helps break legislative logjams and lead to more issue-based politics

1. Fusion increases voter participation. In elections today, participation is high among some groups, but overall turnout is near record lows. Polls show that the idea of a third party is especially attractive to groups with low turnout rates. By allowing meaningful votes for third parties, ballot freedom will bring these disaffected voters to the polls.

2. Fusion solves the "spoiler" and "wasted vote" problems, by allowing voters to choose third parties without "spoiling" (helping elect their least preferred candidate) or wasting their vote. People are free to vote for a third party and for a candidate who can actually win.

3. Fusion ballots provide more information for voters. A ballot that shows which other parties have endorsed a major-party candidate helps voters make informed choices. Consider a major-party candidate who also runs with the nomination of the Fair Trade or Right to Life parties. Voters now know where they stand on a critical issue – something major party labels alone don't convey. This is especially helpful in "down-ballot" races, where voters may have little information about the candidates.

4. Fusion increases accountability. Voters get to pick a candidate and a party, so the results don't just say who won, they say why. That sends a message to elected officials, and leads to a more responsive, accountable politics.

5. Fusion helps break legislative logjams and lead to more issue-based politics. In New York State, where fusion is still used, some of the biggest legislative breakthroughs have come on issues championed by a minor party. Two examples: The Conservative Party helped push tax cuts through the Democratic Assembly, and the Working Families Party helped push a minimum wage increase through the Republican State Senate. By basing appeal on specific issues, third parties can build a base of support that breaks partisan divides, and reward elected officials who deliver results.