

The Final Round¹

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This House prefers open primaries.

A Note about the Notes

These are my notes from the final round at AITE. They are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what they said or wish they had said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow chart, with each contention “flowed” across the page as the teams argued back and forth. It’s closer to the way I take notes during the debate.

The Final Round

The final round at Greenwich was between the Greenwich team of Amrutha Nandakumar and Ziyi Yan on Government and the Blind Brook team of Ryan Rubin and Jackson Weinstein on Opposition. The debate was won by the Government team from Greenwich.

1) Prime Minister Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the motion
- c) Definition: “open primary” a primary where any voter can vote in any party and decide the day of the election
- d) Framework: net benefit to all Americans, especially with respect to values like democracy
- e) G1²: Open Primaries (“OP”³) result in more political engagement
 - i) Party registration is public information
 - (1) People may not want the publicity, or are affected by media/bias
 - (2) People may be concerned about what neighbors and friends will think
 - (3) They are reluctant to register, don’t get to vote
 - ii) Primary is effectively the general election in a strongly partisan area
 - (1) CP effectively lock out voters
 - iii) Primaries are funded by taxes on all
 - (1) Taxation without representation
 - iv) Together these show OP leads to more engagement

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² “G1” indicates the Government first contention, “O2” the Opposition second contention and so forth.

³ Introduces “OP” as an abbreviation for “open primary” for use in the rest of the notes.

POI: Aren't you still forced to choose between two parties?

- (1) Yes, but you lose out in the primary, especially in areas where one is dominant
- f) G2: Closed primaries (“CP”) worsen extremism
 - i) Registered party members tend to have strong beliefs
 - (1) Only their votes count in CP
 - (2) Extreme candidates prevail
- g) G3: Open primaries improve the quality of candidates
 - i) OP wider electorate requires wider appeal
 - (1) Elected officials must support broadly popular programs to retain support in next primary
 - (2) Enacted policy benefits more voters

POI: As most voters are unaffiliated, don't they still need wide appeal to win the general election?

- (a) OP draw more unaffiliated voters in
 - h) Overall impact is greater benefits, especially where we have red and blue states
- 2) Leader of the Opposition Constructive**

- a) Intro
- b) We agree with a framework of net benefits
- c) Def: We define “This House” as the US Federal Gov’t and focus the debate on the Presidential election
- d) Counterplan: Replace primaries with an open, general election (“OGE”)
 - i) OGE will use ranked choice voting (“RCV”)
 - ii) Candidates petition to get on ballot, say 100,000 signatures for most states, fewer for smaller states
- e) O1: OP result in “raiding”, voting in the other party’s primary for the worst candidate
 - i) E.g., Madison Cawthorn selected per NYTimes
 - ii) This ruins the integrity of the party system
- f) O2: OGE/RCV will have higher turnout
 - i) One election with all the candidates will draw in voters
 - ii) Primary turnout is always lower than the general election
 - iii) More minority groups enfranchised

POI: How will more moderate candidates gain traction in these?

- (1) They don't get traction now. In Opp plan they just need signatures
- iv) Limits the spoiler effect of 3rd party votes
 - (1) Why vote for independents now?
 - (2) Majority of voters are independents
- g) O4⁴: RCV is more democratic
 - i) Voters have more choice, every vote counts, none wasted
 - ii) Primaries are cause partisanship
 - iii) Some state primaries are more important than others in Presidential election process

⁴ Why the jump to a fourth Opp contention? That is what the LO said. If they clearly signposted a third contention I missed it—a case of what you say and what I hear possibly being two different things. In the MGC O3 is identified as “OGE/RCV leads to more independents” but Opp never mentions it again.

- h) G1: Engagement will be higher under the Opp counterplan
 - i) No party matters
 - ii) Independents have a say
- i) G2: As noted in our POI, voters are no longer forced to choose a party
- j) G3: Counterplan pushes candidate towards the center too

3) Member of Government Constructive

- a) Intro
- b) Outline: top of case/Opp case/Gov case
- c) Def: OGE falls under “open” as parties don’t matter
 - i) We think this is abusive
- d) O1: Raiding is rare, which is why it is newsworthy
 - i) Opp impact here is very low
 - ii) Raiding also usually fails according to the packet
 - iii) Voting one’s dislikes is a valid option
- e) O2: Opp gives no reason turnout will be greater
 - i) Independents can vote for anyone under Gov or Opp
 - ii) No impact on # of parties
 - (1) Candidates need backing: workers, volunteers, money, etc.
- f) O3⁵: As with O2, no reason for more independent candidates
 - i) Still need party support, not given to moderates
 - (1) E.g., Lisa Murkowski in Alaska lost party backing
 - ii) Impact is independent will divide parties further
 - (1) Without good party support, they won’t win
- g) O4: This is about timing of primaries, not whether to have them
 - i) Real issue is makeup of the Electoral College
 - ii) The motion isn’t limited to Presidential elections, but applies to all the State and local elections too
- h) G1: At best Opp leads to same degree of engagement
 - i) OP better as independents choose a party to vote
 - (1) This can change party orientation
 - ii) OGE/RCV may force moderates to appeal to parties
 - POI: Why do independents need Republicans or Democrats?***
 - (1) They have no impact on gov’t unless they work with a party
 - (2) This is fundamental to the way US gov’t works
 - (3) Politicians may believe they have influence, but not on policy
- i) G2: Still end up with 2 top candidates under both systems
 - i) Moderates get squeezed out under RCV
 - (1) E.g., Murkowski
 - (2) Middle has no clear program to support
- j) G3: OGE/RCV impact on candidates not clear
 - i) Process is complex, provides more ways to win

4) Member of the Opposition Constructive

- a) Outline: Opp then Gov
- b) Choice is clear: OP vs OGE/RCV
 - i) Candidates can ignore parties if they choose

⁵ Gov picked up O3, I did not. It happens.

- c) O1: Raiding is rare only because OP are rare
 - i) Most primaries are closed
 - ii) Raiding leads to more radical candidates, even when it doesn't work
- d) O2: Opp has one election versus many
 - i) Primary turnout is always lower
 - ii) More candidates in OGE: Libertarians, Greens, etc.

POI: Doesn't this mean a more divided discourse on policies?

 - (1) More variety, more voices
 - (2) Versus everyone aligning with the center, Republicans or Democrats
 - (3) Policy implementation will require more compromise
 - (4) Officials know they can get re-elected w/o party, so no need to caucus with a party
- e) O4: Elected officials will more accurately represent public opinion
- f) G1: Independents are not joining parties now
 - i) They'd rather vote for an independent candidate than join a party
- g) G2: OGE/RCV provides no incentive for a two-party system
 - i) Re-election possible without party

POI: How do they run a campaign without support?

 - (1) Just means Republican/Democrat candidate will have more funding
- h) G3: Under RCV candidates must appeal to moderates
 - i) 1st choice votes are less important than 2nd, 3rd, etc.

5) Leader of Opposition Rebuttal

- a) Imagine you are an independent voter in New York
 - i) Republican votes are wasted in Blue states
 - ii) System isn't fair to independents
- b) Which side promotes more change?
 - i) Gov does not provide for any
 - ii) With RCV you can vote for all the candidates
 - (1) Better than a two-party system
 - (2) Permits greater variety
 - (3) Still allows Republicans and Democrats
- c) OP leads to more raiding
 - i) Lack of examples due to lack of OP
 - ii) Implement OP, more raiding will occur
- d) Which side increases turnout
 - i) OP will barely increase turnout
 - ii) OGE/RCV everyone will have incentive to vote
 - (1) Independents will participate
 - (2) Always a candidate for you to vote for

6) Prime Minister Rebuttal

- a) Thanks to everyone for making this possible
- b) Def: Opp def is abusive, and essentially advocates for open elections
- c) Which side is more effective?
 - i) Opp won't make parties go away
 - (1) How will independents stand out in what is a big "jungle" primary
 - (2) How will voters judge impact of 1st, 2nd, ..., last choice

- (3) Erodes but does not remove parties
- ii) OP will still have representative candidates
 - (1) Elected officials need to caucus to enact policy
- d) Will your vote matter?
 - i) Under RCV your 1st choice vote is wasted on the 8th or 9th most popular candidate
 - ii) OP retains primary, draws in independents
 - iii) OGE/RCV causes more divisions
 - iv) OP candidates need a broad appeal
 - v) 20% of primaries are open, few examples of raiding
- e) Which side best represents the voters?