



Senate Committee on Judiciary (JDC)
Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard

February 13, 2026, 9:00 a.m., Conference Room 016
SB2480 — Relating to Elections

TESTIMONY

Amy Monk, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members:

**The League of Women Voters of Hawaii provides comments for BILL NUMBER
SB2480.**

The League of Women Voters of the United States promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive. We encourage electoral methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible and are expressive of voter choices.

SB2480 would allow all candidates from all parties to run in the primary and the top two candidates regardless of political party would compete in the General Election. California and Washington both use this system; Alaska uses a top four, ranked choice system.

There are some advantages to this system:

SB2480 would allow crossover voting. Straight party Primary voting would be eliminated, so voters can vote for candidates in all races. SB2480 would expand voter choices, voters would select the candidate and not the Party.

SB2480 would allow the best candidates to win the Primary election. If the best candidates are in the same Party, this would allow both to advance to the General election.

Hawaii's political parties currently select their presidential candidate in caucus. This means several hundred to a few thousand party members will select the presidential candidates for the entire electorate. A top-two system would allow all Hawaii voters to express their choice for Presidential candidate and there would be no additional cost since the presidential primary would be added to the Primary ballot.

League requests that the measure take effect upon passage. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



The Libertarian Party of Hawaii submits this testimony **IN OPPOSITION TO SB2480**.

This measure would implement a top-two primary system for Hawaii elections: All candidates appear on a single primary ballot, voters select any candidate regardless of party. However, only the top two vote-getters advance to the general election regardless of party affiliation.

In Hawaii's political reality, where one party has maintained supermajority control of the Legislature for generations, **this change would not support fair competition or expand voter choice**. It would do the opposite.

Most legislative and many statewide races are effectively decided in the Democratic primary. The general election serves as little more than a formality. In the majority of districts, the top two finishers in the primary would almost certainly be Democrats or other candidates aligned with the dominant establishment.

Libertarians and other non-dominant voices would routinely be eliminated in the primary round. General elections would frequently become intra-party contests (Democrat v. Democrat), with no ballot access for dissenting perspectives on issues like limited government, individual rights, lower taxes, or reduced regulation.

This entrenches the status quo and suppresses minority viewpoints rather than empowering them. California's experience with top-two primaries demonstrates this outcome in one-party-dominant areas: third parties and independents are systematically excluded from the general election, incumbents face less accountability, and voter turnout does not meaningfully improve.

The Libertarian Party of Hawaii supports genuine electoral competition that respects individual liberty and voluntary association. We believe voters should have the broadest possible choice on the November ballot. These races should not be dictated by a filtered, narrowed field decided by primary dynamics in our one-party state.

Hawaii already has an open primary system. If the Legislature seeks meaningful reform, it should focus on lowering barriers to ballot access (e.g., reducing signature thresholds and filing fees for independents and third parties) and exploring systems that guarantee qualified candidates a place in the general election.

For these reasons, the Libertarian Party of Hawaii urges this Committee to **vote NO on SB2480**. Mahalo for considering this testimony.

Abbra Green | LPHI Secretary | LibertarianHawaii.com | (808)824-LPHI

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:32:10 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Testifying for Green Party of Hawai'i	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery , as Co Chair of the Green Party of Hawai'i we **STRONGLY OPPOSE** SB2480. This is not the way forward for our elections. It only allows the top two "Sponsored "candidates to progress to the General election in the fall. This is a **LOSE LOSE** for the people who want more choices.

The top two primaries have been tried in both Washington State and California with no tangible results towards more democratic representation. The top two spenders and party insiders receive the endorsements and become our coerced choices in the general election. It is a regressive reform attempt at a straightforward problem.

Ranked Choice Voting is used internally within both the Democratic and Republican Parties, and yet they will not allow the very reliable process to be used by the general public.

The reason for opposition for Ranked Choice Voting is:

- 1) It will decrease the power of the status quo
- 2) It will reduce the number of elections by half, therefore cutting the ability to raise funds by half.

We should be bringing forth a **STRONG** Ranked Choice Voting Bill which would save taxpayer money by having a single General RCV Election.

Top Two, is a killer of democracy, please oppose this greed based based ideology. The Green Party of Hawai'i asks that you oppose SB2480 . Thank you for your consideration.

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauilo



SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
SB2480 Relating to Elections
February 13, 2026, at 9:00 AM, State Capitol CR 016 and Videoconference

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

The most qualified individual from each party determined by the people should have the opportunity to compete with the best candidates from other parties. This ensures a fair and meaningful electoral process. The top 2 candidates may be from the same party and therefore, not be a fair representation of the people.

The current election laws have worked well for the people. Our state should follow current election laws and avoid new procedures that can undermine the integrity of the voting process. There are valid concerns with fraud associated with mail-in ballots, outdated voter rolls, and failing to ensure a proper chain of custody for ballots.

If voter turnout is already considered low, implementing this new process could further decrease participation and potentially disenfranchise many voters. The integrity and transparency in our election system is crucial, and introducing a new procedure that does not enhance the security of our votes is not the solution.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you vote NO on SB2480. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Detwiler, President

Hawaiian Islands Republican Women



LATE

**Senate Committee on Judiciary
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Strongly Supports SB2480
Friday, February 13th, 9 AM in Conference Room 016 & Videoconference**

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee,

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action supports SB2480.

SB2480 reforms Hawai'i's primary election process by allowing all voters to participate in primaries without regard to party preference and advancing the top two vote-getters to the general election. This approach expands voter choice and ensures that candidates who advance have border support among the electorate.

Hawai'i has a large and growing number of nonpartisan voters who are currently limited in their ability to participate meaningfully in primary elections. SB 2480 helps address this imbalance by reducing barriers to participation and making elections more inclusive and representative.

Encouraging border voter engagement and reducing partisan gatekeeping strengthens democratic legitimacy and public trust in the electoral process. SB2480 advances these good governance principles by prioritizing voter participation and fair competition.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge support for SB2480

Thank you for your support and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick'.

Anne Frederick, Executive Director
Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action



Protect Democracy

Move Forward

www.indivisiblehawaii.org

info@indivisiblehawaii.org

To: Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard , and Members of the Committee

Hearing Date/Time: 02-13-26 9:00 AM

Place: Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Re: Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT of SB2480

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Indivisible Hawai'i, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2480.

This bill changes Hawai'i's primary elections by allowing voters to vote for any candidate in a primary or special primary election, regardless of party preference, and advancing the top two vote-winners to the general election.

This approach expands voter choice, ensures that general election candidates reflect broader support, thus allowing our elections to be more inclusive, competitive, and representative.

We urge you to pass SB2480 and hope you will. Mahalo nui loa!

Sincerely,

Marlene Thom

Indivisible Hawai'i Good Government and Secure Elections Team

The mission of the 14-chapter Indivisible Hawai'i Statewide Network (IHSN) is to protect Hawai'i and democracy by defending civil rights, communities and values, most importantly, Hawai'i's Constitutionally protected spirit of Aloha. In October 2025, IHSN with other partners turned out over 22,000 residents on all major islands to say No Dictators! and to stand up for democracy. This call-to-action was part of Indivisible national's mobilization of more than 7 million across the country as the voice of the people, committed to election integrity and to evolving as a place of equity, opportunity and peace.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 12:11:07 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Debra Bringman	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

While I appreciate the goal of expanding voter choice through an open primary, I believe Hawai'i would benefit from a hybrid approach that balances openness with fair representation. Under this model, the top two vote-getters statewide would advance to the general election, *and* the highest-performing candidate from each political party would also advance if their party is not already represented. This ensures voters can freely choose any candidate in the primary while still guaranteeing that every major political group is represented on the general-election ballot. It protects the will of the majority without silencing minority voices.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:36:28 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Aynessazian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tanya Yamanaka Aynessazian, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB2480.

At its core, SB2480 is about fairness, voter empowerment, and strengthening our democracy. This bill allows *all qualified voters* to participate meaningfully in primary elections by voting for *any candidate for any office*, regardless of party affiliation, and advances the *top two vote-getters* to the general election based solely on voter support.

As a voter, I believe elections should reflect the will of the people—not the constraints of party registration. Too often, closed or semi-closed primaries leave large numbers of voters without a voice in deciding which candidates advance. SB2480 fixes that by ensuring every voter can participate fully in the most critical stage of the election process.

This reform also encourages candidates to speak to *all voters*, not just a narrow partisan base. By advancing the top two candidates regardless of party preference, SB2480 rewards broad community support and helps ensure that general election candidates reflect the diversity of views within our electorate.

SB2480 does not eliminate political parties or limit free choice—it simply centers elections on voters rather than party structures. It is a practical, transparent, and voter-focused improvement to our election system.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **pass SB2480** and take an important step toward a more inclusive, participatory, and representative democracy in Hawai‘i.

Thank you.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:09:13 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Smart	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose SB2480.

The best individual in each party should be allowed to compete with the best of the other parties.

Do not change our election laws. It would be good if our state would follow Election laws and not allow the fraud that occurs with mail in ballots, bad voter rolls, and lack of chain of custody.

If you think there is low voter turn-out now, it would be worse under this process. It would disenfranchise many voters. We need confidence in our election process. This new procedure does nothing to secure our votes.

Do not pass SB2480.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:37:26 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Younghee Overly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you for hearing this measure.

Younghee Overly, a member of Indivisible Hawaii

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:47:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marguerite Koster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am a resident of Kaka'ako and wish to submit my strong support for SB2480, which allows voters in a primary or special primary election to vote for any candidate for any office without regard to the voter or candidate's political party preference.

Mahalo,

Marguerite Koster

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:58:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:04:19 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Bellamy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill which allows voters in a primary or special primary election to vote for any candidate for any office without regard to the voter or candidate's political party preference. Advances the top two candidates in a primary or special primary election, regardless of political party, to the general election.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:09:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith White	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Important for election integrity.

Judith White, Kapaa

member, Kauai Indivisible

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:31:49 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesse Hutchison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you!

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:33:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ron Brown	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This type of primary is proving very dangerous in California; in the race for governor there are so many democratic candidates and just a few republican (indeed MAGA) candidates that it is possible that the democratic vote will be split among the democratic candidates so that none gets more votes than the top two MAGA candidates one of whom will then become the next governor. This may be unlikely in Hawaii because the democratic party is so very large, but it is still a danger. Indeed the fact that the democratic party is so dominant means that the effect visualized by the bill is automatically achieved without it. One might say then that the bill is dangerous and unnecessary.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:49:55 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Justice, M.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a citizen of the state of Hawaii and a member of Indivisible Hawaii, I support this bill which would allow voters to vote for candidates regardless of party in the primary election.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 10:14:16 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jody Weidemann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is not about Party politics. It is about getting the best people to govern. We should all have a say in who those people are. Support votes for candidates regardless of party

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 11:09:37 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tim Huycke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2480.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 7:15:24 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2480. I like the idea of a real open primary, so people can vote for the candidate they like rather than be beholden to one party from the outset. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:10:25 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James E Raymond	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Thank you -- I am a member of Indivisible Windward.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:16:25 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Kai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I SUPPORT SB2480.

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:43:26 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noelle Lindenmann	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting testimony today in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

Ranked choice voting is our future, if we can make it. Ranked choice offers more choices and more inclusion into the democratic process for all.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Noelle Lindenmann, Kailua-Kona

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:44:24 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of SB2480, which would reform Hawai'i's primary elections by establishing a Top-Two Open Primary system. This bill expands voter choice by allowing every registered voter—regardless of party preference—to vote for any candidate in a primary or special primary election, with the top two vote-getters advancing to the general election.

Currently, Hawai'i's primary system is often described as "open," but this misrepresents the real limitation. While it is true that any voter can choose to participate in any party's primary, they must do so by selecting that party's ballot—and in doing so, they forfeit the ability to vote for candidates in any other party's primary. A voter may want to support a progressive Democrat for one office and a moderate Republican for another, but our current system forces them to choose one party's entire slate. Your voice is limited by the party ballot you select, not by the full universe of candidates competing to represent you.

SB2480 eliminates this artificial constraint. Under this bill, every voter receives a single ballot containing every candidate from every party. You are no longer forced to pick a party in order to participate. You are free to vote for the candidates you believe in, regardless of their party label. This is not merely more convenient; it is fundamentally more democratic. It treats voters as whole people with complex views, not as party loyalists who must toe a single line.

The benefits extend to the general election as well. By advancing the top two vote-getters regardless of party, we ensure that November ballots feature the two candidates with the broadest support across the entire electorate. In safe districts where one party dominates, the competitive race shifts from the primary—where turnout is lowest and the electorate is least representative—to the general election, where every voter gets a say. This creates real competition, forces candidates to build coalitions beyond their base, and produces elected officials who more accurately reflect the will of all their constituents.

Top-two open primaries have been successfully implemented in Washington and California, where they have increased voter participation, reduced partisan polarization, and produced more responsive governance. Hawai'i should follow their lead.

Democracy is strongest when voters are empowered to vote for the candidates they truly want, not just the ones their chosen party allows them to choose. SB2480 delivers that power to every Hawai'i voter. I urge you to pass this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:21:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew Perez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Andrew Perez, support SB2480 and for the dismantling of political partisanship for a style of more supportive for the people and open towards non-binary candidates.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 12:41:35 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glen Kagamida	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONG OPPOSE!!!

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:40:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committee Members,

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

Mahalo for your attention.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:07:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Wassell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I've always believed that one should be able to vote for candidates regardless of party.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:15:05 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bruce Mirken	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I lived in California when a similar measure was adopted there. It's a terrible idea and does not do what proponents claim. It waters down the ability of parties to define their values and leads to a truncated set of choices in the general election. Please reject this horribly misguided proposal.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:23:41 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Bonk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:41:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Van Horne	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:54:14 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan Duffy	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Oppose. While this is being presented as a reform to increase participation, this proposal carries significant structural risks—particularly in a state that already functions as a dominant one-party system.

If the Legislature’s goal is to increase participation or improve representation, there are alternative reforms—such as improving voter access, expanding civic education, or exploring ranked-choice systems—that do not risk eliminating parties from the general election ballot altogether.

In a state where political competition is already limited, this proposal would likely entrench the dominant party further rather than create meaningful electoral balance.

For these reasons, **I am opposed** and respectfully urge the Committee to defer or reject this measure.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 9:02:07 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roger Hamada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying in strong support of SB2480.

I am a resident of Kapolei and am pleased that Senator Gabbard helped introduce this bill. As a consistent voter over many elections, I have been frustrated and puzzled over why we voters have been forced to limit our choices in primaries to only one party. This constrains me from voting freely across races for candidates whom I feel will best represent me and the people who are voting.

I hope you will rectify this obstacle to our expressing our true electoral choices by making SB2480 a law.

Thank you for accepting my testimony.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:26:59 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Zehr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I respectfully oppose SB2480. I appreciate the intent behind this proposal. Expanding voter choice and encouraging broader participation are worthy goals. However, replacing Hawaii’s current primary system with a blanket top-two structure raises serious concerns about political diversity, voter clarity, and fair representation.

First, this bill would substantially weaken the ability of smaller parties and independent movements to compete in general elections. Under a top-two system, it is entirely possible, and likely in many districts, that two candidates from the same major party would advance to the general election. This would effectively disenfranchise voters who support minority viewpoints and reduce ideological diversity at the most important stage of the election cycle.

Second, political parties are voluntary associations built around shared principles. Forcing parties to open their nomination process to all voters, regardless of affiliation, undermines freedom of association and blurs party accountability. Voters deserve clarity about what a party label represents, and parties deserve the ability to select their own nominees without external interference.

Third, evidence from other states suggests that top-two systems do not reliably increase moderation, turnout, or public trust. Instead, they often shift decisive electoral outcomes to low-turnout primary elections while reducing meaningful choices in November.

Hawaii benefits from a system that allows multiple parties and nonpartisan candidates to appear on the general election ballot, providing voters with a broad range of options. SB2480 risks narrowing that field and concentrating power rather than expanding democratic participation.

If reform is pursued, it should focus on enhancing ballot access, improving transparency, and strengthening voter confidence, without diminishing political pluralism or associational rights.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to defer SB2480.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:42:07 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
kimdonghyeon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

Mahalo,

kimdonghyeon

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:02:08 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Petricci	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Robert Petricci

In support of SB2480

Aloha, I much prefer to vote in an open primary so my vote is not restricted to one party. Please support this change.

Mahalo

Robert Petricci

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:31:36 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Candice Lanette	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We should be free to vote for the candidate that we feel best represents us regardless of political affiliation/party we have registered as.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 11:11:12 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gaye Chan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

An ability to vote for candidates regardless of party expands voter choice, and ensures that general election candidates reflect broader support.

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:45:43 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Dickson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

{Insert additional comments here}

Mahalo,

Kate Dickson, Waikiki, HI 968

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
ON
S.B. 2480 RELATING TO ELECTIONS
13 February, 2026
09:00 A.M.
Conference Room 016

by
Scott W. Smart
Chairman Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am testifying OPPOSED to SB 2480.

I am the National Committeeman for the State of Hawaii to the Republican National Committee, but am testifying today on my own behalf.

Government-run primary elections were established in the early 20th century due to concerns that state political parties did not allow meaningful input from citizens in determining who could run under the name of the established political parties. Since their creation and widespread adoption, there have been continued tensions between voters/citizens and the established parties over who should be allowed to seek office under the name or branding of the established parties.

In a similar fashion, there have been battles over the power of voters/citizens to create other parties in addition to the main parties in order to run candidates for office without relying on the main parties. States have taken a variety of approaches in dealing with these concerns. Hawaii has enacted a primary election process that allows voters to align with a party (and participate in its primary) at the time of ballot marking. This allows voters to move between parties for various reasons.

Regardless of the way primary elections are conducted in Hawaii, parties are assured of having a candidate in the general election, and Hawaii includes the possibility of a "no political party" candidate.

The bill, if enacted would result in a serious degradation of our general election. By creating a "jungle primary", the bill would ensure that there is no meaningful participation of all parties in a general election. At most there would be two party candidates but there is also a likely chance of both candidates representing only a single party.

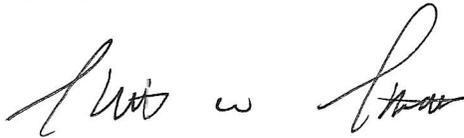
In 2024, participation in the general election was 522,000 voters (60.7%) while for the primary election was 271,000 (32.3%), so about one-half the turn out of a general election. So in effect, a small minority of voters (let alone citizens) would determine who would be allowed on the general election ballot.

Because of the limited participation in primary elections, a strong incentive is provided for strategic voting by special interests through things such as running "splitter" candidates to dilute the vote in specific parties.

I often hear one party loudly proclaiming the need to protect "our democracy". Limiting the general election to one or two parties does not protect our democracy, it weakens it. Do not move this bill.

Technical comment: It is unclear to me how this primary system would work for Office of Hawaiian Affairs at-large Trustee elections.

DO NOT PASS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott W. Smart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a distinct 'W'.

Scott W. Smart
94-210 Kakaili Pl
Mililani, HI 96789
(808) 627-1220

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:22:48 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Kamida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2480 personally and as a member of Indivisible Hawaii.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice, and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

Mahalo,

Elizabeth Kamida

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:51:00 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roberta Hickey-Gómez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice. Advancing the top two candidates to the general election helps make our elections more inclusive, competitive, and representative.

This measure is consistent with Hawai'i's ongoing efforts to strengthen democratic participation and better reflect the will of the electorate.

I respectfully urge passage of SB2480.

Mahalo,

Roberta Hickey-Gómez
Pūowaina Resident

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:05:51 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ezgi Green	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Senator Rhoads, Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of SB 2480, which would establish an open primary system in Hawai'i.

Our current primary system limits voter participation and weakens democratic representation. By requiring voters to choose a single party ballot, we exclude those who want to vote for the best candidate regardless of party affiliation. In many districts across our state, the primary election effectively determines the winner, meaning a small subset of party-aligned voters decides who governs all of us.

SB 2480 would change this by allowing all voters to vote for any candidate in the primary, with the top two vote-getters advancing to the general election. This reform would:

Increase voter participation. Every voter would have a meaningful say in who appears on the general election ballot, regardless of party registration or preference.

Strengthen competition. Candidates would need to appeal to a broader base of voters, not just party loyalists, encouraging more moderate and responsive representation.

Better reflect our communities. In districts where one party dominates, voters would have real choices in November instead of outcomes decided in low-turnout primaries.

Hawai'i's voters deserve a system that includes everyone and encourages leaders to represent all constituents, not just their party base. SB 2480 would make our elections more open, competitive, and representative.

I respectfully urge you to pass SB 2480.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Ezgi Green
Waiialua

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:49:17 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bonnie Margolis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB2480!

You should be able to vote for the candidate you like best regardless of their party affiliation.

Voters should not be restricted to only voting within their party.

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:55:15 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcela Montalto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Sen. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Sen. Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

LATE

HEARING:

Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 9:00 AM
Conference Room 016 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT - SB 2480, RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-time resident of Wailuku, Maui. I write to you today in **support of SB 2480**, Relating to Elections, which allows voters in a primary or special primary election to vote for any candidate for any office without regard to the voter or candidate's political party preference. Advances the top two candidates in a primary or special primary election, regardless of political party, to the general election.

I subscribe to Democracy Docket, a Substack by noted voting-rights attorney Marc Elias. This is a dark time in American history, when authoritarian and anti-democratic forces are trying to undermine our elections. We must implement evidence-based, pro-democratic reforms to strengthen voter engagement and offer more voter choice. Senate Bill 2480 is one of those pro-democratic reforms. Here in Hawaii, where the Democratic Party is so strong, being confined by political party preference in primary or special primary elections restricts choice.

The success of top two primary voting is well-documented as a measure that will help ensure that the will of the people is reflected and that a fringe element is not empowered to rise to prominence due to the manipulation of the primary process.

I request that you support an engaged democracy by voting in **support of SB 2480**.

Mahalo for protecting our elections,

Christine L. Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:12:02 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support

Larry Smith

Nuuanu

member-Indivisible

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 1:57:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaylee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB2480, which would establish a top-two primary system in Hawai‘i and allow all voters to participate equally in primary elections regardless of party affiliation. This measure represents an important modernization of our electoral process and ensures that every voter has a meaningful voice in determining which candidates advance to the general election.

Under the current system, many voters feel constrained by party structures that limit participation or reduce competition. SB2480 strengthens voter choice by allowing all candidates to appear on a single primary ballot and advancing the two candidates who receive the most votes, regardless of party. This approach prioritizes voter will over party machinery and encourages broader engagement across the electorate. In districts where one party dominates, voters would still have a competitive general election rather than a foregone conclusion.

A top-two system also incentivizes candidates to appeal to a wider cross-section of constituents rather than focusing solely on partisan bases. This can encourage more pragmatic, solutions-oriented campaigns and reduce political polarization. Hawai‘i’s electorate is diverse and independent-minded, and our election system should reflect that reality.

SB2480 promotes fairness, inclusivity, and greater accountability in our democratic process. I respectfully urge the Committee to pass this measure and move it forward.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 2:49:33 PM
Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kealii Pang, Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of S.B. 2480. This bill enhances voter participation and choice by permitting voters to select multiple candidates in primary and special primary elections where more than two candidates appear. This approach ensures that voters can fully express their preferences in competitive races, increases fairness in candidate selection, and supports a more representative electoral process.

By implementing this measure, we empower voters and strengthen our democratic system. I respectfully urge the committee to pass S.B. 2480.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
Kealii Pang, Ph.D.

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 3:28:04 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joell Edwards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joell Edwards, a resident of Wainiha. I am also the Chair of the Kaua'i County Democratic Party but I am testifying in my personal capacity in strong support of SB2480.

SB2480 expands voter choice by allowing all voters to participate in primary elections, regardless of party preference, and advances the top two vote-getters to the general election. This makes our elections more inclusive, competitive, and reflective of broader community support.

In rural communities like mine, increasing access and participation is essential. When more people can engage in the primary process, our democracy is stronger and more representative.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 5:32:41 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Travis Tsuda	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings,

Writing in support of this bill. Two party system and closed primaries only further alienate the democratic process for so many independents. More choice. More representation is important. Please consider supporting this

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 6:55:46 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
john savino	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support S B 2480

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:08:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lily Troy MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support SB 2480

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 10:40:17 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Teruya	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2480.

Allowing all voters to participate in primary elections expands voter choice and advancing the top two to the general elections makes our elections more inclusive, competitive and representative.

Finally!

LATE

SB-2480

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:25:10 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nikos Leverenz	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and JDC Committee:

I strongly support the establishment of a "top two" primary in Hawaii. This is a simple yet far-reaching bill that will improve the voter choices in November. It's generally the case at present that in most statewide contests and legislative districts the final disposition of a contest takes place during the August primary.

It's unfortunate that one of the major political parties in Hawaii has protracted difficulty in garnering the support of a significant portion of the electorate in most legislative districts.

A top two primary will help each major political party be more responsive to the felt needs of voters. If a district is predominantly Democratic, there will be two Democrats facing off in the general election. This will prompt greater discussion of relevant issues instead of a choice between partisan identities.

This reform was enacted in California in 2010 via a ballot referendum, negotiated by a state senator whose vote was necessary to pass a budget, which then required a 2/3 majority in each chamber. Since then, California and Washington, another state with a top two primary, often led the nation in primary turnouts. Those two states still have somewhat viable Republicans, although it's been two decades since the GOP has won statewide office in California (Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner in 2006).

In 2018, California Senator Dianne Feinstein won a spirited general election contest against former state Senate President Kevin de Leon.

In the case of Hawaii, let's make general elections great again.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.