

Independent Perspective #1906 on Primary Elections with Todd Vaarwerk

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:06 Speaker 1

I am your host, Tracy LeBlanc, Chief Community Engagement Officer at Western New York Independent Living.

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Election season is an important topic for discussion every year, but while conversations often focus heavily on the general election in November, the local primary elections don't receive as much notice.

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Joining us today to talk about the importance of primary elections and what we should pay attention to is WNYIL's Chief Policy Officer, Todd Vaarwerk.

00:00:33 Speaker 1

Welcome to the show, Todd.

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Always happy to be here.

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Todd, let's start our discussion on what a primary election is and who can vote in one.

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Okay, so when you look at your ballot when you vote,

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there are parties listed on your ballot-- Democrat, Republican, Independent.

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Once we had a party, the Rent is Too Damn High, right?

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Every party has to select who is going to run on that line in the general election.

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So, the contest to decide who gets the Democratic Party's nomination or who gets the Republican Party's nomination is normally called a primary election.

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Great.

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Why are primary elections so important?

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Well, primary elections, if you're a member of that party, is really important to you because you should be selecting who represents you.

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For everybody else, primary elections are important because these are the people that are going to be running for office and to continue to run for office, right, or higher levels of office as they move in their political careers, so knowing about them

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is an important thing to following people running in a political way to get to higher office.

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Great.

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If you were talking to a consumer about why they should get out to vote in a primary, what would you say?

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Well, the first question I'd ask is, are you a member of the party in question, right?

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Because on any primary election day, there are some parties that don't have primaries, right, or don't have primaries in some races. But if you are a member of that party,

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the thing I would say to you is you definitely want to vote in the primary to get and keep the attention of your party leaders because you become one of the faithful.

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And if you are advocating for issues that are important to you as a member of party faithful, then the party is going to take it seriously when you bring something to their attention.

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You can have a much more powerful impact in your community if they know that you vote in primary elections versus just voting in general elections.

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How can someone get more information on the primary elections and who is running in their area?

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I always go to League of Women Voters for that stuff.

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They have a pretty good lead on the kind of primaries that are available and who's running in them.

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But if you can't do that, Votepedia is a good online resource to use.

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They're normally pretty accurate.

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Right.

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And you can always call local Board of Elections to ask who's been certified to run in the primary election and they'll tell you.

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And how do you find out where you go to vote?

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Oh, that is always the County Board of Elections.

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If you need to find out where your polling place is, you call the County Board of Elections or you can go to the website for the County Board of Elections and enter in your address and they'll tell that'll tell you where your polling place is.

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And if people have difficulty voting, who should they call?

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Well, there's a question about that.

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Why are they having difficulty voting, right?

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If we're talking about people with disabilities that might be regular viewers of Independent Perspective, I definitely would encourage them to call WNYIL and get on to my line on primary day and election day.

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We keep track of that stuff.

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If you're having a problem, you can call me and we'll come out and help you.

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And we also want to make sure that everybody knows that even in primary elections, they can use the accessible ballot marking devices in each location.

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Remember, in Erie County, currently, that's called an auto mark.

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You're going to feed in a ballot, and it's going to give you a readout where you can select candidates.

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In other counties, you might be using a Dominion machine where you get a screen to vote on and a little controller to select your candidates, and then it prints out a ballot for you.

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Remember, that's available at the primary elections as well as the general elections.

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Great.

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That's all we have time for this week.

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Thank you for joining us, Todd.

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Appreciate it.

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And thank you for tuning in to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:04:58 Speaker 1

I have been your host, Tracy LeBlanc.