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978-1-107-06883-4 - Nonpartisan Primary Election Reform: Mitigating Mischief

R. Michael Alvarez and J. Andrew Sinclair

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## Nonpartisan Primary Election Reform

### *Mitigating Mischief*

Over the years, observers of American politics have noted the deleterious effects of party polarization in both the national and state legislatures. Reformers have tried to address this problem by changing primary election laws. A theory underlies these legal changes: the reformers tend to believe that “more open” primary laws will produce more centrist, moderate, or pragmatic candidates. The “top-two” primary, implemented in California, represents the future of these antiparty efforts. *Nonpartisan Primary Election Reform* examines California’s first use of the top-two primary system in 2012. R. Michael Alvarez and J. Andrew Sinclair evaluate the primary from a variety of perspectives and using several different methodologies. Although the first use of this primary system in California did not immediately reshape the state’s politics, it also did not have many of the negative consequences that some observers had feared. This study provides the foundation for future studies of state primary systems.

**R. Michael Alvarez** is an expert in the study of electoral behavior and election administration, as well as of political methodology and survey research. In addition to publishing scores of articles in academic journals, he recently published *Evaluating Elections: A Handbook of Methods and Standards* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). A Fellow of the Society for Political Methodology, he currently coedits the society’s journal, *Political Analysis*.

**J. Andrew Sinclair** completed his PhD at the California Institute of Technology in 2013 and wrote his dissertation on American primary elections. His academic research focuses on voter behavior, political institutions, and democratic accountability. He teaches in research methods and public policy at the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

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