



OHIO COMMON GROUND RESEARCH CENTER
News Release

FOR RELEASE: Thursday, July 9, 2026

OCG White Paper No. 001

MEDIA CONTACT: Mark Pukita, Organizing Founder · info@ohiocommonground.com · 614-499-0599 voice/text

Four in Five of Ohio's 2026 Legislative Primaries Offered Voters No Choice, New Nonpartisan Analysis Finds

Across five election cycles, most Ohio House and Senate primaries had a single candidate — a pattern the study documents in both parties.

DUBLIN, Ohio — July 9, 2026 — The Ohio Common Ground Research Center today released *The Uncontested Majority*, a nonpartisan analysis of competition in Ohio's 2026 primary elections for the General Assembly. The study finds that 181 of the 223 major-party primary contests for the Ohio House and Senate — about 81 percent — featured only a single candidate, meaning the nominee was determined by who chose to file rather than by voters choosing among alternatives.

The pattern was nearly identical for both parties. Republican primary voters faced an uncontested legislative race 82.7 percent of the time, and Democratic primary voters 79.6 percent of the time. Because the two rates are so close, the report describes the absence of competition as a structural feature of Ohio's legislative elections rather than a characteristic of either party.

Viewed by district rather than by party ballot, 75 of the 116 districts on the 2026 ballot — nearly two in three — had no contested primary in either party. In those districts, no voter taking a major-party ballot was offered a choice of candidates at the primary stage. Measured by ballots, about 72 percent of the candidate votes cast in these primaries were cast in races with only one name on the ballot.

The report also places 2026 alongside the four prior cycles. From 2018 through 2026, the share of Ohio House primaries with a single candidate stayed within a high band — from 71 percent in 2018 to 82 percent in 2020 — with no trend toward more competition. 2018 was the most competitive of the five cycles, yet even then a majority of races were uncontested. The study finds that nearly all of the movement from cycle to cycle came from Republican primaries, while Democratic primaries stayed comparatively flat.

"A primary is the stage where a party's voters choose their nominee. When four out of five of those contests have only one candidate, most voters never get that choice — the outcome is effectively settled at the filing deadline," said Mark Pukita, Founding Organizer of Ohio Common Ground and its Research Center. "Our aim is not to tell Ohioans what to make of that. It is to give them an accurate, fully sourced picture of how often they were actually offered a choice."

Consistent with the Research Center’s editorial standards, the report is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It does not endorse, oppose, or rate any candidate, official, or party, and it takes no position on redistricting, ballot access, or election law. It documents how often contested primaries occurred and identifies several open questions — including how primary competition relates to general-election competitiveness — as directions for further research.

The findings are computed from the official county-by-county canvasses published by the Ohio Secretary of State for the 2018 through 2026 primaries. The report includes its full methodology, definitions, data limitations, and sources. *The Uncontested Majority* (OCG White Paper No. 001) is available at: ohiocommonground.com/white-papers.

#

About Ohio Common Ground

Ohio Common Ground is a nonpartisan civic organization whose work centers on giving Ohio voters accurate information and a stronger voice in their government, under the principle that *politicians must earn your vote*. The Ohio Common Ground Research Center produces trusted, transparent, and fully sourced research to help Ohioans make informed civic decisions and hold government accountable. The Research Center’s work is editorially independent of the organization’s organizing and advocacy activities. Learn more at ohiocommonground.com.

Suggested citation: *Ohio Common Ground Research Center. The Uncontested Majority: Competition—or Its Absence—in Ohio’s 2026 State Legislative Primaries. OCG White Paper No. 001, Research Library ID RL-2026-001. Dublin, Ohio: Ohio Common Ground, 2026.*