



News Release

9th Circuit Court of Appeals reverses blanket primary decision

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Contact: Bobbie Egan 360.902.4173

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals today reversed a District Court opinion and declared Washington's popular blanket primary unconstitutional. This decision could do away with a primary system that's been used in our state for more than 60 years.

"We are disappointed. We believe this is not good news for Washington voters who clearly prefer the blanket primary," said Secretary of State Sam Reed. "We'll work with the Attorney General and the Washington State Grange to consider our appeal options, and will be working with the Governor and legislative leaders to explore our legislative options."

The constitutionality of the blanket primary was first challenged in *Washington State Democratic Party, et al., v. Sam Reed*. The lawsuit, filed in the summer of 2000 by the political parties, followed a U.S. Supreme Court decision that ruled California's blanket primary unconstitutional.

In late March of 2002, Federal District Court Judge Franklin Burgess declared Washington's blanket primary constitutional. The political parties appealed the decision to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Washington State's blanket primary system was adopted by initiative in 1935. It allows voters to choose any candidate on the primary ballot, regardless of party affiliation. Washington is now the only state in the nation that holds a blanket primary.

"The single most compelling reason for keeping the blanket primary is that it works in Washington, and has for 65 years," Reed said. The voters overwhelmingly endorsed this system and I personally believe it's a perfect fit for our state."

Today's decision will not impact tomorrow's primary election which is an odd-year, local election.

"We will be meeting with our attorneys and with others to determine our next course of action, whatever we do should be as close as possible to our blanket primary system," Reed concluded.

For more information on the blanket primary case, including a copy of the 9th Circuit Court decision, visit the Secretary of State's website at www.secstate.wa.gov.

To schedule media interviews with Secretary Reed call Bobbie Egan at 360.902.4173

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