

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

WASHINGTON STATE REPUBLICAN  
PARTY, BERTABELLE HUBKA, STEVE  
NEIGHBORS, MARCY COLLINS,  
MICHAEL YOUNG, DIANE TEBELIUS,  
MIKE GASTON,

Plaintiffs,

and

WASHINGTON STATE DEMOCRATIC  
CENTRAL COMMITTEE, PAUL  
BERENDT,

Plaintiff-Intervenors,

and

LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF  
WASHINGTON STATE, RUTH BENNETT,  
J. S. MILLS,

Plaintiff-Intervenors,

v.

WASHINGTON STATE GRANGE,

Defendant-Intervenor,

Case No. C05-0927-JCC

ORDER

1 and

2 STATE OF WASHINGTON, ROB  
3 MCKENNA, SAM REED,

4 Defendant-Intervenors.

5 This matter comes before the Court on Defendant-Intervenor State of Washington's  
6 ("Washington") motion for summary judgment (Dkt. No. 239), Plaintiff-Intervenor  
7 Washington State Democratic Central Committee's ("Democratic Party") motion for partial  
8 summary judgment (Dkt. No. 247), Defendant-Intervenor Washington State Grange's  
9 ("Grange") motion for summary judgment (Dkt. No. 249), Plaintiff Washington State  
10 Republican Party's ("Republican Party") motion for partial summary judgment (Dkt. No. 250),  
11 Washington's motion to strike certain witnesses (Dkt. No. 287), and the parties' multiple  
12 responses and replies, including those of Plaintiff-Intervenor Libertarian Party of Washington  
13 State ("Libertarian Party"). Having thoroughly considered the parties' briefing and the relevant  
14 record, the Court finds oral argument unnecessary and grants in part and denies in part  
15 Washington's and the Grange's motions for summary judgment (Dkt. Nos. 239, 249). The  
16 Court likewise grants in part and denies in part the Democratic and Republican Parties'  
17 motions for partial summary judgment (Dkt. Nos. 247, 250). The Court concludes that I-872 as  
18 implemented in partisan elections is constitutional because the ballot and accompanying  
19 information eliminate the possibility of widespread confusion among the reasonable, well-  
20 informed electorate. The Court further concludes that Washington's method of electing  
21 political-party precinct committee officers is unconstitutional because it allows non-party  
22 members to vote for officers of the political parties. The Court strikes the trial date and denies  
23 as moot the pending motion to strike certain witnesses.

24 I. BACKGROUND

25 From 1935 until 2003, candidates for state and local office in Washington State were  
26 nominated through a "blanket primary," whereby all candidates from all parties were placed on

1 a single ballot and voters could select a candidate from any party. *See Wash. State Grange v.*  
2 *Wash. State Republican Party*, 552 U.S. 442, 445 (2008). The candidate who won the plurality  
3 of votes within each major party became that party's nominee in the general election. *Id.* The  
4 Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, relying on the Supreme Court's landmark decision in  
5 *California Democratic Party v. Jones*, 530 U.S. 567 (2000), struck down Washington's  
6 blanket-primary system because that system violated the political parties' First Amendment  
7 right of free association by mandating that those parties allow nonmembers to participate in  
8 selecting their nominees. *Democratic Party of Wash. State v. Reed*, 343 F.3d 1198, 1207 (9th  
9 Cir. 2003).

10 In 2004, Washington voters approved Initiative 872 ("I-872"), which established a new  
11 primary system. *Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 446–47. Under this system, all elections for  
12 "partisan office" start with a primary in which every candidate filing a "declaration of  
13 candidacy" competes. *Id.* at 447. Each candidate declares his or her "party preference or  
14 independent status," which is designated on the primary ballot with the candidate's name. *See*  
15 *id.*; Wash. Rev. Code § 29A.24.031(3). A candidate may state a party preference for any party  
16 he or she desires, even if that political party would itself prefer otherwise. *See Wash. State*  
17 *Grange*, 552 U.S. at 447. Voters may select any candidate listed on the ballot, regardless of  
18 party preference, and the two candidates that receive the highest votes, also regardless of party  
19 preference, advance to the general election. *Id.* at 447–48; Wash. Rev. Code § 29A.52.112(2).  
20 In this manner, the general election becomes a runoff between the top-two vote getters in the  
21 primary.

22 On May 19, 2005, the Republican Party filed this action to have I-872 declared  
23 unconstitutional and to enjoin its implementation. (Dkt. No. 1.) That same day, the Democratic  
24 Party and Libertarian Party moved to intervene as plaintiffs. (Dkt. Nos. 2, 3.) The Republican  
25 Party alleged that the new election scheme (1) compels it to associate with any candidate who  
26 expressed a "preference" for the party, thereby diluting the party's message; (2) allows

1 candidates to “appropriate” the party’s name without permission; (3) allows party nominees to  
2 be determined by voters whose beliefs were antithetical to those of the party, in violation of  
3 *Jones*, 530 U.S. at 586; and (4) impermissibly denies major parties protections that it offers to  
4 minor parties, in violation of the Equal Protection Clause.<sup>1</sup> (Dkt. No. 1 at 5–7.) The  
5 Democratic Party made identical claims. (*See* Dkt. No. 31.) The Libertarian Party made similar  
6 First Amendment claims; additionally, it alleged that I-872 arbitrarily deprived minor parties  
7 access to the general election ballot.<sup>2</sup> (*See* Dkt. No. 28.)

8         The Court set an expedited briefing schedule and required that the parties stipulate to  
9 the legal issues that would be covered in the motions. (*See* Dkt. Nos. 40, 45.) On July 15, 2005,  
10 the Court<sup>3</sup> granted the political parties’ motions for summary judgment. (Dkt. No. 87.) The  
11 Court held that I-872 still served to “nominate” party candidates, despite Washington’s  
12 characterization of I-872 as a “winnowing” or a “qualifying” primary. (*Id.* at 25–26.) On the  
13 basis of that holding, the Court concluded that I-872 was unconstitutional on two grounds:  
14 First, like the blanket primary invalidated in *Jones*, the I-872 primary “force[d] political parties  
15 to associate with—to have their nominees, and hence their positions, determined by—those  
16 who, at best have refused to affiliate with the party, and, at worst, have expressly affiliated  
17 with a rival,” in violation of the freedom of association. (*Id.* at 28.) Second, the Court held that

---

18  
19         <sup>1</sup> Prior to the enactment of I-872, minor-party candidates, unlike major-party  
20 candidates, were selected through party nominating conventions. (*See* Dkt. No. 87 at 5.) The  
21 Republican Party premised its equal-protection argument on its understanding that these  
provisions survived the enactment of I-872.

22         <sup>2</sup> Whereas the Republican and Democratic Party’s equal-protection arguments were  
23 premised on the assumption that minor parties could still nominate their candidates through  
24 nomination conventions, the Libertarian Party’s ballot-access argument was based on the  
25 reverse assumption—that I-872 did not distinguish between major and minor parties, so the  
only way for a candidate to advance to the general election was to be in the two highest vote  
getters. (*See* Dkt. No. 28.)

26         <sup>3</sup> Judge Thomas S. Zilly presided over the initial stages of this litigation.

1 by “allowing *any* candidate, including those who may oppose party principles and goals, to  
2 appear on the ballot with a party designation,” I-872 would “foster confusion and dilute the  
3 party’s ability to rally support behind its candidates.” (*Id.* at 30.) The Court concluded that the  
4 unconstitutional provisions of I-872 could not be severed from the remaining provisions and  
5 therefore struck down the initiative in its entirety. (*Id.* at 38–39.)

6 The Ninth Circuit affirmed. *Wash. State Republican Party v. Washington*, 460 F.3d  
7 1108, 1125 (9th Cir. 2006). The Ninth Circuit held that a candidate’s self-identification of  
8 party preference necessarily created an association between the candidate and the party. *Id.* at  
9 1119–20. By allowing candidates to create such an association against the party’s will, I-872  
10 constituted “a severe burden on political parties’ associational rights” that could not be  
11 justified as narrowly tailored to compelling state interests. *Id.* at 1121, 1123. Accordingly, the  
12 Ninth Circuit held that I-872 was unconstitutional on its face. *Id.* at 1124.

13 The Supreme Court, however, granted certiorari and reversed on the merits. *Wash.*  
14 *State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 459. The Supreme Court emphasized that the political parties’  
15 challenge, as it had appeared before the lower courts, was to I-872’s constitutionality on its  
16 face and hence could only succeed if Plaintiffs demonstrated that “the law [was]  
17 unconstitutional *in all of its applications*.” *Id.* at 449 (emphasis added); *see also id.* (“[A]  
18 plaintiff can only succeed in a facial challenge by establishing that no set of circumstances  
19 exists under which the Act would be valid . . . .” (quotation marks omitted)). Significantly, the  
20 Supreme Court concluded that “the I-872 primary does not, by its terms, choose parties’  
21 nominees. . . . Whether parties nominate their own candidates outside the state-run primary is  
22 simply irrelevant. In fact, parties may now nominate candidates by whatever mechanism they  
23 choose because I-872 repealed Washington’s prior regulations governing party nominations.”  
24 *Id.* at 453. If a political party chose to nominate a candidate through outside means, that  
25 nomination would not be so designated on the ballot, but “[t]he First Amendment does not give  
26 political parties a right to have their nominees designated as such on the ballot.” *Id.* at 453 n.7.

1 The Supreme Court further determined that each of the political parties' arguments  
2 relied on an assumption that voters would *misinterpret* a candidate's self-identified party  
3 preference as some form of endorsement by or association with the political party. *Id.* at 454.  
4 Having concluded that each of the political parties' arguments "rests on factual assumptions  
5 about voter confusion," the Supreme Court held that "each fails for the same reason: In the  
6 absence of evidence, we cannot assume that Washington's voters will be misled." *Id.* at 457.  
7 Holding that any potential confusion "will depend in significant part on the form of the ballot,"  
8 the Supreme Court explained that I-872 could be implemented in such a way as to make clear  
9 that a candidate's party-preference designation does not constitute an endorsement of or  
10 association with that political party. *Id.* at 455; *see also id.* at 456 ("[We must] ask whether the  
11 ballot could conceivably be printed in such a way as to eliminate the possibility of widespread  
12 voter confusion and with it the perceived threat to the First Amendment."); *id.* at 460 (Roberts,  
13 C.J., concurring) (emphasizing the importance of the form of the ballot with respect to possible  
14 voter confusion). Accordingly, the Supreme Court rejected the political parties' facial  
15 challenge to I-872. *Id.* at 457–59.

16 On remand, the Ninth Circuit vacated its opinion and remanded the case back to this  
17 Court with instructions to (1) "dismiss all facial associational rights claims challenging [I-  
18 872]"; (2) "dismiss all equal protection claims," because I-872 repealed the regulations  
19 differentiating between major and minor parties; and (3) "dismiss as waived all claims that [I-  
20 872] imposes illegal qualifications for federal office, sets illegal timing for federal elections or  
21 imposes discriminatory campaign finance rules because these claims were neither pled by the  
22 parties nor addressed in summary judgment by the district court." *Wash. State Republican*  
23 *Party v. Washington*, 545 F.3d 1125, 1126 (9th Cir. 2008). In contrast, the panel suggested that  
24 this Court "may allow the parties to further develop the record with respect to the claims that  
25 [I-872] unconstitutionally constrains access to the ballot." *Id.*

26 Thereafter, Defendants Washington and the Grange moved to dismiss this action in its

1 entirety (Dkt. Nos. 133, 134), and the Republican and Democratic Parties sought leave to  
2 amend their Complaints (Dkt. Nos. 137, 140). They sought to supplement the Complaints with  
3 additional factual allegations to support as-applied challenges to the implementation of I-872  
4 that Washington adopted after the Supreme Court's decision. (*See* Dkt. No. 137 at 8; Dkt. No.  
5 140 at 2.) The Court concluded that the political parties had already alleged as-applied  
6 challenges to I-872's primary scheme and that those claims remained unresolved. (Dkt. No.  
7 184 at 8.) The Court determined that the political parties could submit evidence to demonstrate  
8 that (1) the State's actual implementation of I-872 (including its interaction with the state's  
9 campaign disclosure laws) leads to voter confusion and (2) that this resulting confusion  
10 severely burdens the political parties' freedom of association. (*Id.* at 11.) The Court further  
11 concluded that Plaintiffs could demonstrate that the application of I-872 to certain elected  
12 offices (i.e., party precinct committee officers) specifically burdens the party's right to  
13 associate. (*Id.*)

14 The political parties have amended their complaints, alleging that I-872 is  
15 unconstitutional as applied in Washington because it creates voter confusion that  
16 unconstitutionally infringes on their First Amendment associational freedoms. The political  
17 parties also allege that Washington's implementation of the election for the parties' precinct  
18 committee officers in light of I-872 violates their associational rights. Washington, the Grange,  
19 and the political parties have at this crucial juncture marshaled their evidence—offering in  
20 particular the form of ballot used in Washington—and they ask the Court to finally resolve this  
21 long-running saga over the form of political elections in Washington.<sup>4</sup>

---

22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
<sup>4</sup> Washington, the Grange, and the political parties all seek summary judgment on all  
the issues presented. Although the filing of cross-motions for summary judgment does not  
vitate the Court's responsibility to determine whether disputed issues of material facts are  
present, *see Fair Hous. Council of Riverside Cnty. v. Riverside Two*, 249 F.3d 1132, 1136 (9th  
Cir. 2001), the universal request for summary judgment strongly indicates that this case is ripe  
for resolution. The political parties do not dispute the manner in which Washington has

1 II. DISCUSSION

2 **A. Absence of Voter Confusion**

3 As applied, Washington's implementation of I-872 "eliminate[s] the possibility of  
4 widespread voter confusion and with it the perceived threat to the First Amendment." *See*  
5 *Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 456. The Supreme Court held that the political parties'  
6 assertion that voters will misinterpret the party-preference designation is "sheer speculation"  
7 that depends on the erroneous belief that voters can be misled by party labels. *Id.* at 454. The  
8 Supreme Court elaborated that its cases "reflect a greater faith in the ability of individual  
9 voters to inform themselves about campaign issues" and that there is "no basis to presume that  
10 a *well-informed electorate* will interpret a candidate's party-preference designation to mean  
11 that the candidate is the party's chosen nominee or representative or that the party associates  
12 with or approves of the candidate." *Id.* (emphasis added).

13 The Supreme Court was unable to review whether I-872 in operation would confuse the  
14 reasonable, well-informed electorate because Washington had not yet developed the ballot and  
15 accompanying informational material that voters would receive during the election cycle and  
16 on Election Day. Now that Washington has deployed I-872, this Court can thoroughly evaluate  
17 it. Washington's ballot contains a prominent, unambiguous, explicit statement that a  
18 candidate's party preference does not imply a nomination, endorsement, or association with the  
19 political party. The ballot repeatedly states that candidates merely "prefer" the designated  
20 parties. Ballot inserts and the Voters' Pamphlet further explain the new system. Washington  
21 employed a widespread education campaign via various media outlets to inform voters about  
22 the new system. And Washington voters themselves, not simply their elected representatives,  
23

24  
25 implemented I-872; they challenge the constitutionality of that implementation. Moreover, no  
26 one has requested a jury trial. The Court concludes that the record is sufficiently developed to  
resolve this dispute without a bench trial.



1 approved I-872. These factors demonstrate to the Court that Washington’s implementation of  
2 I-872 eliminates the possibility of widespread confusion among the reasonable, well-informed  
3 electorate.

4 Most persuasive, the ballot Washington uses to implement I-872 is uniformly consistent  
5 with the Supreme Court’s conception of a constitutional ballot. The Supreme Court  
6 emphatically maintained that “whether voters will be confused by the party-preference  
7 designations will depend in significant part on the form of the ballot.” *Id.* at 455; *see also id.* at  
8 460 (Robert, C.J., concurring) (“What makes this case different . . . is the place where the  
9 candidates express their party preferences: on the ballot. And what makes the ballot ‘special’ is  
10 precisely the effect it has on voter impressions. . . . If the ballot is designed in such a manner  
11 that no reasonable voter would believe that the candidates listed there are nominees or  
12 members of, or otherwise associated with, the parties the candidates claimed to ‘prefer,’ the I-  
13 872 primary system would likely pass constitutional muster.” (citations omitted)). When  
14 considering “whether the ballot could conceivably be printed in such a way as to eliminate the  
15 possibility of widespread voter confusion,” the Supreme Court concluded that such a ballot “is  
16 not difficult to conceive.” *Id.* at 456.

17 The Supreme Court explained that a constitutional ballot “could include prominent  
18 disclaimers explaining that party preference reflects only the self-designation of the candidate  
19 and not an official endorsement by the party.” *Id.* at 456. The Washington ballot does precisely  
20 that. Each ballot contains the following prominent and clear explanation:

21 READ: Each candidate for partisan office may state a political party that he or  
22 she prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is  
23 nominated or endorsed by the party, or that the party approves of or associates  
with that candidate.

24 (Dkt. No. 242 at 4.) The Washington Secretary of State requires that that this language appear  
25 on primary- and general-election ballots. Wash. Admin. Code § 434-230-015(4)(a). This clear  
26 explanation included on the ballot may alone be sufficient to withstand the political parties’

1 constitutional concerns about the possibility of confusion among the well-informed electorate.

2 But Washington does more. The Supreme Court stated that Washington could provide  
3 “explanatory materials mailed to voters along with their ballots.” *Id.* at 456. Washington so  
4 complies. Voters’ Pamphlets must include “an explanation that each candidate for partisan  
5 office may state a political party that he or she prefers, and that a candidate’s preference does  
6 not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party or that the party approves of  
7 or associates with that candidate. The pamphlet must also explain that a candidate can choose  
8 to not state a political party preference.” Wash. Admin. Code § 434-381-200. A statement  
9 nearly identical to the ballot disclaimer also appears along with each mailed ballot for the  
10 primary and general election.<sup>5</sup> *Id.* § 434-250-040(1)(j)–(k) (“Washington has a new primary.  
11 You do not have to pick a party. In each race, you may vote for any candidate listed. The two  
12 candidates who receive the most votes in the August primary will advance to the November  
13 general election. Each candidate for partisan office may state a political party that he or she  
14 prefers. A candidate’s preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed  
15 by the party, or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate.”). In addition to  
16 including the same information in the Voters’ Pamphlet mailed to every voter in the state,  
17 many Voters’ Pamphlets provide further explanation of how the new system operates. (Dkt.  
18 No. 245 at 9 (“Our new Top 2 Primary on August 19 will give you maximum choice, allowing  
19 you the independence and freedom to ‘vote for the person, not the party.’ . . . Our new voter-  
20 approved primary no longer nominates a finalist from each major party, but rather sends the  
21 two most popular candidates forward for each office. It’s a winnowing election to narrow the  
22 field. Your candidates have listed the party they prefer, but that doesn’t mean the party  
23 endorses or affiliates with them.”).) The cover of the 2008 Voters’ Pamphlet also included an

---

24  
25 <sup>5</sup> Notably, approximately 90 percent of the Washington electorate votes via mail. *Wash.*  
26 *State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 456 n.8.

1 explanation of the top-two system and of the candidates' statements of personal party  
2 preference. (*Id.* at 8.)

3 The Supreme Court also held that "the State could decide to educate the public about  
4 the new primary ballots through advertising." *Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 456.  
5 Washington again complies. Washington conducted an extensive voter education campaign  
6 designed to explain the new election system to voters. The 2008 education campaign included,  
7 among other things, a detailed Web site and a series of public-service announcements run on  
8 television and radio stations during the primary- and general-election seasons. (Dkt. No. 246 at  
9 8–22.) Transcripts from these advertisements reinforced the point: "A candidate's party  
10 preference doesn't mean the party endorses or approves of that candidate." (*Id.* at 20.)

11 Finally, the Supreme Court explained that ballots "might note preference in the form of  
12 a candidate statement that emphasizes the candidate's personal determination rather than the  
13 party's acceptance of the candidate." *Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 456. Although the ballot  
14 does not include a separate statement such as "I, John Doe, prefer the Democratic Party," the  
15 ballot explicitly states under each candidate name that the candidate "prefers" a particular party  
16 (e.g., "(Prefers Republican Party)"). (Dkt. No. 242 at 4.) The statement does not say that the  
17 political party approves of the candidate or even that the party endorses the candidate; it states  
18 only a personal preference.<sup>6</sup> Nor does the statement include a simple abbreviation like "D" or  
19 "R" coupled with the absence of a statement of preference. It is obvious from the ballot format  
20 that the party-preference statement is merely that—a preference—that does not imply one way  
21 or another whether the political parties endorse, approve, or affiliate with that candidate. The  
22 Supreme Court held that it was "satisfied that there are a variety of ways in which the State

---

23  
24 <sup>6</sup> Tellingly, in the party precinct-committee-officer races where voters select a political  
25 party's representative, listed below the candidate's name is a clear statement of party  
26 affiliation, and it omits the passive parentheses (e.g., "Republican Party Candidate"). (Dkt. No.  
243 at 4).

1 could implement I-872 that would eliminate any real threat of voter confusion.” *Wash. State*  
2 *Grange*, 552 U.S. at 456. Washington has implemented I-872 uniformly consistent with several  
3 of the “ways” the Supreme Court envisioned would be consistent with the Constitution, and  
4 this Court therefore concludes that I-872 complies with the Constitution.

5         The standard by which the Court must evaluate the possibility of widespread confusion  
6 is from the perspective of a reasonable, well-informed electorate. *See Wash. State Grange*, 552  
7 U.S. at 456. Yet the political parties offer evidence of what they contend shows actual voter  
8 confusion that is both irrelevant and unpersuasive. For example, the parties offer evidence of  
9 newspaper articles and other materials showing that some voters and news media speak loosely  
10 about the relationship between political parties, the candidates, and the election process. (*See*  
11 *Dkt. No. 257 at 6–8; Dkt. No. 260 at 3–6; Dkt. No. 272 at 9.*) That is, some speakers, perhaps  
12 using shorthand, indicate that a candidate who lists a particular party preference on the ballot is  
13 in fact that party’s nominee. Washington cannot control what the newspapers print, lest it run  
14 afoul of yet another provision of the First Amendment, freedom of the press. Nor can  
15 Washington be held responsible for the words used by private parties that might foster some  
16 negligible confusion. And to the extent that state officials have occasionally used similarly  
17 loose language, those isolated incidents do not show the type of widespread voter confusion  
18 the Supreme Court contemplated in its review.

19         The political parties additionally argue that not all voters read the ballot instructions or  
20 the instructional material included with the ballot. That may be true, but a voter who ignores or  
21 refuses to read basic ballot instructions is no longer a reasonable voter, and surely not a well-  
22 informed one. The Court cannot and will not consider the constitutionality of I-872 from the  
23 viewpoint of such an unreasonable, uninformed voter.

24         The Court also declines the political parties’ invitation to review the possibility for  
25 voter confusion under traditional trademark analysis. (*See Dkt. No. 257 at 18–20.*) Quite  
26 simply, trademark law does not lie in the First Amendment associational rights implicated in

1 this matter. Trademark law is designed to protect the proprietary rights of private parties from  
2 improper commercial uses. This case does not involve the propriety rights of the political  
3 parties or Washington's commercial use of any trademark.<sup>7</sup> The comparison is inapposite.

4 The political parties also argue that I-872 has harmed them because some of their  
5 official nominees have not advanced past the primary election to the general election. (Dkt.  
6 No. 257 at 11–14.) The Democratic Party complains, for example, that in one particular race its  
7 official nominee lost the primary election because “the Democratic Party was forced by the  
8 State’s implementation of the Top Two [system] to have three other ‘Democratic candidates’  
9 on the [primary] ballot” alongside the Democratic Party’s chosen nominee. (Dkt. No. 257 at  
10 13.) The argument misses the point: “Whether parties nominate their own candidates outside  
11 the state-run primary is simply irrelevant. In fact, parties may now nominate candidates by  
12 whatever mechanism they choose because I-872 repealed Washington’s prior regulations  
13 governing party nominations.” *Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 453. The primary ballot did  
14 not include “three other Democratic candidates.” It included four candidates who stated a  
15 preference for the Democratic Party, one of whom the Democratic Party officially endorsed.  
16 “The First Amendment does not give political parties a right to have their nominees designated  
17 as such on the ballot,” *id.* at 453 n.7, and the political parties are not entitled as a matter of law  
18 to have their nominated candidates appear on the general-election ballot. I-872 did not prevent  
19 the Democratic Party’s nominee from advancing to the general election; the voters did. The  
20 political parties may not admire Washington’s new election system in which their designated  
21 candidates do not always advance to the general election, but that disappointment does not  
22 raise constitutional concerns.

---

23  
24 <sup>7</sup> Although it does not wholly resolve the matter, the Court previously concluded that,  
25 as presented, “the State’s expression of candidates’ party preference on the ballot and in the  
26 voter pamphlets may not form the basis of a federal or state trademark violation.” (Dkt. No.  
184 at 17.)

1           The political parties also offer as evidence a study purporting to show that voters  
2 presented with the new ballots were confused about candidates' political-party association, or  
3 lack thereof. (Dkt. No. 265-1 at 10–48.) It is not entirely clear whether the Court should  
4 consider such a study—particularly given the study's limited parameters that did not include  
5 all of the educational information provided to voters—when the Court is presented with a legal  
6 question of whether the implementation of I-872 would create the possibility for widespread  
7 confusion among a reasonable, well-informed electorate. *See Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at  
8 461–62 (Roberts, C.J., concurring) (“Nothing in my analysis requires the parties to produce  
9 studies regarding voter perceptions on this score, but I would wait to see what the ballot says  
10 before deciding whether it is unconstitutional.”). For example, the federal courts consider in  
11 their Establishment Clause jurisprudence whether a reasonable observer—mindful of the  
12 history, purpose, and context of a government monument or practice—would perceive a  
13 government endorsement of religion without resort to social or cognitive experiments. *See*,  
14 *e.g.*, *Van Orden v. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677 (2005); *Barnes-Wallace v. City of San Diego*, 607 F.3d  
15 1167, 1175 (9th Cir. 2010) (“The United States Supreme Court adopts the perspective of a  
16 reasonable observer when determining Establishment Clause questions.”). The Court sees no  
17 reason why a different approach should apply here.

18           It seems particularly unwise to resort to these experiments in this context because a  
19 battle of experts would likely emerge revealing no clear answer from competing social  
20 experiments. Furthermore, the political parties have not shown how widespread voter  
21 confusion among a reasonable, well-informed electorate may be systematically and reliably  
22 measured or what its measured results may require. For example, what is the constitutional  
23 result if studies show that voters in one particular county fully understand the top-two system  
24 while voters in another county do not? What is the constitutional result if government officials  
25 in a county that purportedly does not understand the electoral system embark on an aggressive  
26 educational campaign immediately thereafter? Must the county then affirmatively show the

1 federal courts through a subsequent study that its citizens are wise enough to join their  
2 neighbors who use the top-two system? How would varying county standards apply to  
3 statewide offices? These questions remain unanswered. Social science experiments and studies  
4 are exceptional tools for improved understanding of society, and the Court does not intend to  
5 diminish their general value. But their applicability to the nuances of constitutional review in a  
6 case such as this do not, as of yet, appear particularly practical.<sup>8</sup>

7 In any event, the political parties have not shown under the offered study that  
8 Washington's implementation of I-872 has created the possibility of widespread voter  
9 confusion among a reasonable, well-informed electorate. The study is neither limited to  
10 Washington voters nor inclusive of the entire state's electorate. The "new voters" the study  
11 evaluated were students at one university, which likely included residents from outside  
12 Washington. (*See* Dkt. No. 265 at 3.) The study does not establish what percentage of  
13 participants tested are likely to vote in an election. The study drew its "active voters" from e-  
14 mails provided by the Republican and Democratic Parties. (*Id.*) And the Court is unaware if  
15 representatives from all Washington counties participated.

16 Nowhere does the study evaluate whether the selected individuals represent the  
17 \_\_\_\_\_

18 <sup>8</sup> The Court need not rely on Washington's expert to conclude that the presence of  
19 general confusion about matters of politics and elections is common. (*See* Dkt. No. 279 at 8.) If  
20 any political party—or voter for that matter—must only show the presence of some confusion  
21 in order to successfully challenge the constitutionality of an electoral system, then any method  
22 of conducting partisan elections would be vulnerable to constitutional attack. *See Storer v.*  
23 *Brown*, 415 U.S. 724, 730 (1974) (“[T]here must be a substantial regulation of elections if they  
24 are to be fair and honest and if some sort of order, rather than chaos, is to accompany the  
25 democratic process.”). In a state whose population is fast approaching seven million residents,  
26 the political parties are bound to find voters who are confused about the electoral process. But  
the political parties have not shown that Washington's implementation of I-872, as opposed to  
a basic misunderstanding of the electoral system, creates any widespread confusion. And with  
each passing election, the number of uninformed voters should gradually decline. Moreover, it  
is unreasonable to conclude that Washington citizens may never change their electoral system  
simply because some voters have grown accustomed to and understand the current system.

1 reasonable, well-informed voter from Washington. To the point, the study did not provide its  
2 participants with the explanatory materials mailed to voters along with their ballots, and the  
3 study makes no reference to whether its participants were exposed to Washington’s education  
4 campaign conducted through various media outlets. Moreover, the study participants did not  
5 receive a ballot consistent with the one Washington actually uses. Washington administrative  
6 code requires that the important disclaimer regarding the lack of party association appear  
7 “immediately *above* the first partisan congressional, state or county office.” Wash. Admin.  
8 Code § 434-230-015(4)(a) (emphasis added). Yet the ballots used in the study placed the notice  
9 on the bottom-left corner, *below* the first partisan race. (Dkt. No. 265-1 at 32–33.) Moreover,  
10 Washington law requires that the notice say, “READ.” Wash. Admin. Code § 434-230-  
11 015(4)(a). But the notice in the study said, “VOTERS-PLEASE READ,” which participants  
12 may have interpreted as a passive request rather than a mandatory instruction. The Court does  
13 not know how those changes may have affected the study’s results, and the Court is  
14 unconvinced that the study accurately reflects the well-informed electorate—an electorate in  
15 whom the Supreme Court has noticeable confidence.<sup>9</sup> *See Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 455  
16 (“Our cases reflect a greater faith in the ability of individual voters to inform themselves about  
17 campaign issues.”).

18 Finally, the Court rejects the contention that Washington’s financial disclosure laws  
19 create the possibility for widespread confusion among the reasonable, well-informed  
20 electorate. Washington law requires that “[f]or partisan office, if a candidate has expressed a  
21 party or independent preference on the declaration of candidacy, that party or independent  
22 designation shall be clearly identified in electioneering communications, independent  
23

---

24  
25 <sup>9</sup> The Court applies the same principles to the political parties’ reliance on the “Elway  
26 Research,” which did not present to its participants the ballot Washington implemented. (*See*  
Dkt. No. 260 at 6.)



1 expenditures, or political advertising.” Wash. Rev. Code § 42.17.510(1). As the Public  
2 Disclosure Commission details, the law requires that a candidate disclose his or her stated  
3 party *preference*: “All forms of advertising must clearly state a candidate’s party preference if  
4 the candidate is seeking partisan office.”<sup>10</sup> *See* Public Disclosure Commission’s 2008 “Political  
5 Advertising” Brochure, [http://www.pdc.wa.gov/archive/guide/brochures/pdf/2008/  
6 2008.Bro.Adv.pdf](http://www.pdc.wa.gov/archive/guide/brochures/pdf/2008/2008.Bro.Adv.pdf). Under the Court’s freedom-of-association analysis, these disclosure  
7 requirements, which speak of a candidate’s party “preference,” do not create the type of voter  
8 confusion that would result in an unconstitutional burden on the political parties’ First  
9 Amendment rights.<sup>11</sup>

10 Accordingly, the Court concludes that Washington’s implementation of I-872 does not  
11 create the possibility of widespread confusion among the reasonable, well-informed electorate.

---

12  
13  
14 <sup>10</sup> The political parties contend that the Public Disclosure Commission confuses voters  
15 by occasionally referring to political “affiliation.” (*See* Dkt. No. 260 at 16.) But the  
16 Commission’s rules make clear that any reference to “affiliation” means merely the candidate’s  
17 stated party preference. Wash. Admin. Code § 390-05-274 (“‘Party affiliation’ as that term is  
18 used in chapter 42.17 RCW and Title 390 WAC means the candidate’s party preference as  
19 expressed on his or her declaration of candidacy. A candidate’s preference does not imply that  
the candidate is nominated or endorsed by that party, or that the party approves of or associates  
with that candidate. . . . A reference to ‘political party affiliation,’ ‘political party,’ or ‘party’  
on disclosure forms adopted by the commission and in Title 390 WAC refers to the candidate’s  
self-identified party preference.”).

20 <sup>11</sup> The Court also rejects the Republican Party’s one-paragraph contention that  
21 Washington’s campaign-finance laws unconstitutionally interfere with its ability to  
22 communicate with its members. (*See* Dkt. No. 260 at 19–20.) The Republican Party alleges  
23 that because political parties nominate candidates outside the state’s primary system,  
24 Washington’s campaign-finance laws no longer serve a compelling governmental interest. (*See*  
25 *id.*) But the elimination of the state-funded nomination process neither eliminated the  
26 pervasiveness of money in politics nor the government’s paramount interest in curtailing  
corruption or the appearance of corruption of elected officials. Moreover, the Republican Party  
does not sufficiently respond to Washington’s assertion that this legal issue currently stands  
before the state court. *See State ex rel. Wash. State Public Disclosure Comm’n v. Wash. State  
Republican Party*, King County Superior Court No. 08-2-34030-9.

1 Therefore, Washington does not need to assert a compelling governmental interest in pursuing  
 2 I-872. Its previously asserted interest “in providing voters with relevant information about the  
 3 candidates on the ballot is easily sufficient to sustain I-872.” *Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at  
 4 458; *see also Anderson v. Celebrezze*, 460 U.S. 780, 796 (1983) (“There can be no question  
 5 about the legitimacy of the State’s interest in fostering informed and educated expressions of  
 6 the popular will in a general election.”).

7 **B. Associational Burdens in Electing Precinct Committee Officers**

8 Although Washington’s implementation of I-872 is constitutional with respect to  
 9 partisan elected offices, Washington’s current process for electing the major political parties’  
 10 Precinct Committee Officers (“PCO”) does not pass constitutional muster.<sup>12</sup>

11 All Washington voters receive the same primary ballot regardless of the presence or  
 12

---

13 <sup>12</sup> Washington and the Grange contend that the Court should refrain from reaching the  
 14 PCO-election issue because “Washington’s law governing PCO elections is not part of I-872.”  
 15 (*See* Dkt. No. 239 at 20.) To the contrary, sufficient evidence demonstrates that Washington’s  
 16 implementation of I-872 affected PCO elections. *See* 08-15 Wash. Reg. 52 (July 11, 2008)  
 17 (“These rules implement Initiative 872 (top two primary) for partisan public office, and  
 18 implement the elections for precinct committee officers and president and vice-president in the  
 19 context of Initiative 872.”); (Dkt. No. 269-4 at 19 (Rule-Making Order explaining, “This  
 20 change in primary election systems necessitates changes in the administrative rules relating to  
 21 the format of ballots, and administration of political party precinct committee officer  
 22 elections.”).) Moreover, Washington and the Grange concede that because the new system no  
 23 longer serves to determine the nominees of a political party, Washington necessarily  
 24 eliminated the 10 percent threshold for election of precinct committee officers. (Dkt. No. 255  
 25 at 3); *see also* Wash. Rev. Code § 29A.80.051 (“[T]o be declared elected, a [PCO] candidate  
 26 must receive at least ten percent of the number of votes cast for the candidate of the  
 candidate’s party receiving the greatest number of votes in the precinct.”). I-872 undoubtedly  
 had an impact on PCO elections. Additionally, requiring that the political parties file yet  
 another complaint to reach the merits of this issue would serve no useful purpose, as  
 Washington and the Grange have had ample notice of the allegation and opportunity to  
 respond. *See In re Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) Prods. Liab. Litig.*, 460 F.3d 1217, 1228, 1248  
 (9th Cir. 2006) (“We have often said that the public policy favoring disposition of cases on  
 their merits strongly counsels against dismissal. . . . It is too late in the day and entirely  
 contrary to the spirit of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for decisions on the merits to be  
 avoided on the basis of such mere technicalities.”).

1 absence of a voter's party affiliation, because "the primary does not serve to determine the  
2 nominees of a political party but serves to winnow the number of candidates to a final list of  
3 two for the general election." *See Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 453 (quotation marks  
4 omitted). Nonetheless, PCOs are elected on the same ballot used in the top-two primary. The  
5 parties agree that PCOs are officers of the major political parties, forming the grassroots level  
6 of political-party organization. Although PCOs may perform limited public functions, they are  
7 not public officials: "Precinct Committee officers organize their local precinct for their party  
8 . . . ." (Dkt. No. 250 at 3.). Unlike candidates in the partisan primary who have the option of  
9 listing a party *preference*, candidates seeking election as party PCOs must be members of the  
10 political party. *See Wash. Rev. Code* § 29A.80.041. Importantly, voters in the partisan "party  
11 preference" races are selecting individuals to serve as members of a government office; voters  
12 in the PCO races, on the other hand, are selecting individuals to serve as members of the  
13 political parties. This distinction is critical.

14       In *Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee*, 489 U.S. 214, 230–31  
15 (1989), the Supreme Court held that California's restrictions on how parties should be  
16 organized and how they select their leaders unconstitutionally burdened political parties'  
17 freedom of association. The Supreme Court recognized the strength of a party's interest in  
18 selecting its own leaders and noted the important role party leaders play in shaping the party's  
19 message. *Id.* at 230, 231 n.21. Applying *Eu* to Arizona's PCO-election scheme, the Ninth  
20 Circuit held that "allowing nonmembers to vote for party precinct committeemen violates the  
21 Libertarian Party's associational rights. Precinct committeemen are important party leaders  
22 who[, like Washington PCOs,] choose replacement candidates for candidates who die or resign  
23 before an election." *Ariz. Libertarian Party, Inc. v. Bayless*, 351 F.3d 1277, 1281 (9th Cir.  
24 2003). Here, the political parties contend that because all Washington voters receive the same  
25 primary ballot, which includes PCO elections, Washington similarly allows nonmembers to  
26 vote for party PCOs.

1 Without more, it seems that *Bayless* plainly holds that Washington’s system for electing  
2 PCOs is unconstitutional. But it is not so simple. In *Bayless*, Arizona conducted a “semiclosed  
3 primary system” in which “voters who are unaffiliated, registered as independents, or registered as  
4 members of parties that are not on the primary ballot may vote in the party primary of their  
5 choice.” *Id.* at 1280. Because Arizona law authorized independent voters and voters registered as  
6 affiliating with other political parties to vote for political-party PCOs, Arizona’s system was  
7 unconstitutional. In Washington, however, PCO candidates appear in a separate location from the  
8 partisan “party preference” candidates. More importantly, Washington requires that the ballots  
9 state the following: “Precinct committee officer is a position in each major political party. For this  
10 office only: *If you consider yourself a democrat or republican, you may vote for a candidate of that*  
11 *party.*”<sup>13</sup> Wash. Admin. Code § 434-230-100(5)(c) (emphasis added). Accordingly, Washington  
12 and the Grange argue that because voters must consider themselves members of either party,  
13 Washington law, unlike Arizona law, does not authorize unaffiliated voters or members of third  
14 parties to participate in the election of a party’s PCO; only voters who have affiliated with or are  
15 members of a particular party may vote in the PCO election of that party, and only that party.<sup>14</sup>

---

17 <sup>13</sup> Although the administrative code uses lowercase typeface, the ballots use uppercase  
18 typeface for “Democrat” and “Republican.” (See Dkt. Nos. 242 at 5, 243 at 4, 7.)

19 <sup>14</sup> In essence, with respect to the PCO elections, Washington has created a blend  
20 between an “open primary” and a “closed primary.” In an open primary, “the voter can choose  
21 the ballot of either party but then is limited to the candidates on that party’s ballot.” See  
22 *Democratic Party of Wash. v. Reed*, 343 F.3d 1198, 1203 (9th Cir. 2003). Many states operate  
23 open primaries, but the Supreme Court has not ruled on whether open primaries comply with  
24 the Constitution. See *Jones*, 530 U.S. at 577 n.8 (“This case does not require us to determine  
25 the constitutionality of open primaries.”). In a closed primary, “only voters who register as  
26 members of a party may vote in primaries to select that party’s candidates.” See *Reed*, 343 F.3d  
at 1203; see also *Jones*, 530 U.S. at 577 (“Under [a closed-primary] system, even when it is  
made quite easy for a voter to change his party affiliation the day of the primary, and thus, in  
some sense, to ‘cross over,’ at least he must formally *become a member of the party*; and once  
he does so, he is limited to voting for candidates of that party.”). Here, of course, the voter  
must “consider” him or herself a Republican or a Democrat before so voting.

1           The Court agrees with the political parties that the personal “consideration” of party  
2 association is insufficient to withstand constitutional scrutiny. In *Tashjian v. Republican Party of*  
3 *Connecticut*, 479 U.S. 208, 212 (1986), the Republican Party of Connecticut, recognizing the  
4 demographic importance of independent voters, adopted an organizational rule that permitted  
5 independent (or unregistered) voters to participate in Republican Party primaries. Yet Connecticut  
6 enforced a law that required voters in a political primary to register as members of a particular  
7 party. *Id.* at 210–11. The Supreme Court held that Connecticut’s law violated the Republican  
8 Party’s right to freely associate in part because “the freedom to join together in furtherance of  
9 common political beliefs necessarily presupposes the freedom to identify the people who constitute  
10 the association.” *Id.* at 214 (quotation marks omitted).

11           Here, Washington’s PCO election similarly infringes on the political parties’ freedom to  
12 identify the people who constitute their associations. *See Boy Scouts of Am. v. Dale*, 530 U.S. 640,  
13 648 (2000) (“[F]reedom of association plainly presupposes a freedom not to associate.”  
14 (quoting *Roberts v. U.S. Jaycees*, 468 U.S. 609, 622 (1984))). The Republican and Democratic  
15 parties are not satisfied that the voters’ in-the-moment self-consideration of party association is  
16 sufficient to identify its true party members.<sup>15</sup> The system allows the electorate to participate in  
17 the selection of the political parties’ officers even though the parties may not prefer to  
18 associate with voters who consider themselves members in a fleeting moment in a voting  
19 booth. At worst, a voter who has for years expressly affiliated with a rival party may attempt to  
20 sabotage the other parties’ election by silently declaring for a fraction of a minute cross-party  
21 affiliation. The system allows non-party members to vote for officers of the political parties,  
22 and the First Amendment does not permit Washington to impose that type of membership

---

23  
24           <sup>15</sup> It is merely a distinction without meaning that in *Tashjian* Connecticut attempted to  
25 limit the political parties’ voter membership whereas Washington’s system arguably expands  
26 party membership. The central holding is that the political parties, not the government, are free  
to define the scope of their membership.

1 when the parties have not so consented.

2       The political parties have suggested several alternative methods that would satisfy them  
3 that particular voters are indeed members of their respective parties. For example, the political  
4 parties have suggested that it would identify as members of its party voters who take a party oath.<sup>16</sup>  
5 (Dkt. No. 250 at 7–8.) The current system does not facilitate an oath. (*See* Dkt. No. 245 at 12  
6 (Information Washington provides its voters explains eligibility in PCO elections: “You do not  
7 have to formally join the Democratic or Republican Party, you do not have to sign a party oath,  
8 and voting in this election will not put your name on any party lists.”).) The political parties  
9 note that they would be satisfied of party membership if voters accepted a separate ballot with only  
10 a specific party’s candidates. (Dkt. No. 250 at 6.) The current system does not facilitate separate  
11 ballots for PCO elections. The political parties further suggest that they might be satisfied of party  
12 membership if a voter checked a box indicating affiliation with the particular party. (*Id.* at 9.)  
13 Again, the current system does not facilitate a check box. Regardless of what would satisfy the  
14 Republican and Democratic Parties, those parties have made it abundantly clear that they do not  
15 accept as members of their respective parties voters who must ask, at the prompting of the ballot,  
16 only whether they “consider” themselves party members. *See Democratic Party of Wash.*, 343 F.3d  
17 at 1204 (“The Washington scheme denies party adherents the opportunity to nominate their party’s  
18 candidate free of the risk of being swamped by voters whose preference is for the other party. . . .  
19 Even a single election in which the party nominee is selected by nonparty members could be  
20 enough to destroy the party.” (quotation marks omitted)); *see also Jones*, 530 U.S. at 574  
21 (“Unsurprisingly, our cases vigorously affirm the special place the First Amendment reserves  
22 for, and the special protection it accords, the process by which a political party selects a  
23 standard bearer who best represents the party’s ideologies and preferences.” (punctuation

---

24  
25       <sup>16</sup>The Democratic Party agrees with the Republican Party’s positions, having joined the  
26 Republican Party’s motion for partial summary judgment. (Dkt No. 247 at 1.)

1 omitted)). The system does not allow the political parties to identify their members in a manner  
2 they so choose, and it therefore severely burdens the political parties' associational rights.

3 Because Washington's PCO elections severely burden the political parties'  
4 associational rights, the Court may uphold the form of those elections only if Washington  
5 shows that its election method is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling governmental interest.  
6 *See Wash. State Grange*, 552 U.S. at 446. Washington has not provided any such justification  
7 that would survive this high standard. *See id.* Accordingly, the Court grants in part the political  
8 parties' partial motions for summary judgment.

9 Finally, the Court rejects the political parties' request that the Court enter an injunction  
10 ordering that Washington implement its PCO elections in a particular manner. *See generally*  
11 *Stanley v. Univ. of S. Cal.*, 13 F.3d 1313, 1320 (9th Cir. 1994) ("A mandatory injunction goes  
12 well beyond simply maintaining the status quo *pendente lite* and is particularly disfavored.  
13 When a mandatory preliminary injunction is requested, the district court should deny such  
14 relief unless the facts and law clearly favor the moving party." (punctuation and citations  
15 omitted)). As noted earlier, the political parties offer multiple approaches that would satisfy  
16 them that only party members select their PCOs. Washington may also decide to implement  
17 PCO elections in a manner not yet conceived but ultimately satisfactory to the political parties.  
18 Washington may even implement PCO elections in a way that severely burdens the political  
19 parties' associational rights but does so in a manner narrowly tailored to serve a compelling  
20 governmental interest. Or Washington may decide to stop conducting public elections of  
21 PCOs. Given the wide range of options, the Court declines to order an injunction imposing a  
22 particular form of election.

### 23 III. CONCLUSION

24 Put simply, Washington's implementation of I-872 with respect to partisan offices is  
25 constitutional because the ballot and accompanying information concisely and clearly explain  
26 that a candidate's political-party preference does not imply that the candidate is nominated or

1 endorsed by the party or that the party approves of or associates with that candidate. These  
2 instructions—along with voters’ ability to understand campaign issues and the fact that the  
3 voters themselves approved the new election system through the initiative process—eliminate  
4 the possibility of widespread voter confusion and with it the threat to the First Amendment.  
5 The reasonable, well-informed electorate understands that the primary does not determine the  
6 nominees of the political parties but instead serves to winnow the number of candidates to a  
7 final list of two for the general election.

8 On the other hand, Washington’s method of electing precinct committee officers is  
9 unconstitutional because it severely burdens the political parties’ ability to identify and  
10 associate with members of their respective parties. Precinct committee officers are grassroots  
11 representatives of the political parties, yet all voters, regardless of party affiliation, receive the  
12 same candidate ballot and have an opportunity to elect those officers. The political parties have  
13 a right to object to Washington’s method of determining party affiliation for these officers, and  
14 Washington has not shown that its interests in using this system outweigh the First  
15 Amendment’s special associational protections.

16 Accordingly, the Court GRANTS IN PART and DENIES IN PART Washington’s and  
17 the Grange’s motions for summary judgment (Dkt. Nos. 239, 249). The Court likewise  
18 GRANTS IN PART and DENIES IN PART the Democratic and Republican Parties’ motions  
19 for partial summary judgment (Dkt. Nos. 247, 250). The Court STRIKES the trial date. The  
20 Court DENIES AS MOOT Washington’s motion to strike certain witnesses (Dkt. No. 287).

21 DATED this 11th day of January 2011.

22  
23  
24  
25  
26  


John C. Coughenour  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE