

# Governor



## PAUL DAMIAN WELLS

### Democrat

**OCCUPATION:**  
Student.

**OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND:**  
Electrical Engineer

**EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:**  
BSEE Purdue University 1984.  
MSECE Graduate Student Portland State University.

**PRIOR GOVERNMENTAL EXPERIENCE:** None.

#### I'm am not a Democrat.

I'm an independent voting rights advocate from Newberg, OR, and my statement that follows concerns open elections and the civil rights of Independent voters and candidates. If you are not an independent voter or if you simply don't care about these issues, skip my statement because it will be of no interest to you.

#### The Big Tent Approach

I have never voted party line. Instead, I have always tried to vote for the best candidate regardless of party affiliation. For years I have split my ticket in the general election. I have even voted for 3rd party candidates when the major party candidates were unacceptable. (I live in the first US Congressional District and twice had to choose between Furse and Witt in the last 4 years.)

When I started voting almost 20 years ago, there was a great deal of overlap between the Republican and Democratic parties. They called it a "Big Tent" approach to party politics. These days there just aren't any centrist candidates running for statewide or federal office anymore, and the overlap between the two major parties has completely evaporated. As a result, I have found myself voting not for the best candidate, but voting for deadlock.

#### Voting for deadlock

I vote Democrat for governor and president, and I vote Republican for US and Oregon House seats. In the past I voted Republican for Senate seats as well but I don't want them to win enough seats to override a veto. This insures the two sides will block each other. The Democrats can't enact any new spending programs and they are stuck fixing the programs we already have. Republicans, on the other hand, cannot enact socially regressive legislation or gut our environmental laws.

I don't like voting for deadlock. It isn't a good way to choose a government, but I don't know what else to do. The two major parties are ripping this country in two and either party in complete control would be disastrous in the long run. The election process was designed to prevent situations just like this. Either most voters have adopted extreme political views or something has gone terribly wrong with our elections. I don't believe voters have changed at all. Most of us still have centrist political views.

#### Election law based on a Separate but Equal Doctrine

In 1972, the Supreme Court handed down a decision in a case known as Jenness vs. Fortson that virtually eliminated the first amendment and free elections in this country. The court ruled that state governments could establish election procedures for major parties separate from those of other candidates as long as the procedures were substantially equal.

By registering as a Democrat, I qualified as a candidate for governor by paying \$100 and filling out a form. As a Democratic candidate for governor I am entitled to a full page in the primary voter's pamphlet for \$300, and I was able to qualify as a candidate in March. If I had chosen to run as an Independent candidate instead, state law allows me to pay the \$100 and fill out the form only after I collect nearly 15,000 signatures. Furthermore, I could not turn these signatures in until 15 days after the primary election. Roughly 3 months after the major party candidates for the same office declare as candidates.

There is nothing equal, open or fair about elections in Oregon. If you allow a political party or a coalition of parties to manipulate the election process, eventually there is no point in having an election. Without the pressure of alternative candidates, there is no reason for the major party candidates to moderate their political position to win votes. It is much easier to smear the other candidate and win by default.

If any third party or independent candidate runs a successful campaign despite the unfair election laws, the laws are rewritten. The American party qualified as a major party in 1992 and would have been eligible for a state conducted primary. It was a small party, but it would have grown with the state subsidies allotted to major parties. Unfortunately, Democrats and Republicans in the legislature quietly changed the election laws to deny major party status. That's how it works.

#### Refuse to sit at the back of the bus

I'm not advocating we outlaw Democrats and Republicans, but I am demanding free and open elections. State funding and involvement in the major political party primaries are violations of both the Oregon and US constitutions and should be abolished. Instead, the state should conduct a single nominating election for each office with the top two candidates facing a runoff in the general election.

This is the fourth time I have run for statewide office and the third time I have used the voter's pamphlet to protest Oregon's unfair elections. I don't like being thought of as the town fool, but I know nothing is going to change until someone stands up and refuses to sit down until the right to vote is respected. I need your vote on election day. Without the support of other voters, I'm standing here alone, and they will continue to ignore or evade this issue.

*(This information furnished by The Keel.)*

Paul Damian Wells has agreed to limit campaign expenditures for this Primary Election under ORS 260.180.