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Have you heard about the Write-In Loophole?

To the Editor:

Do you think it would be fair to allow only members of one party to vote?

Most people don't. That's why Florida voters passed the Universal Primary Amendment in 1998. It requires primaries be open to all voters if the winner of the primary will face no opposition in the general election.

It didn't take long for political parties to find a way around the will of the people. It's called the Write-In Loophole. The party has one of its own members file as a write-in candidate. This closes that race in the primary, so people registered as members of the other party or as "no party affiliation" cannot vote.

The Write-in-Loophole makes a mockery of the general election. While technically, there are two candidates running, in fact the NAME of the write-in candidate doesn't appear on the ballot. Voters have a choice between the winner of the partisan primary and a BLANK LINE.

Both Republicans and Democrats have used this loophole to disenfranchise millions of Floridians. These "phantom candidates" spend \$0 on campaigning because they have no desire to win. They run to close the primary. In all, 114 races for Congress and the legislature were closed between 1998 and 2022.

The mission of the League of Women Voters is to empower voters, so when we see millions of Democrats, Republicans and Independents in Florida denied the right to vote for their elected officials, we speak out. It's time to end this loophole and make elections in Florida fair for all as the 1998 amendment intended.

Please tell your legislators in Tallahassee to stop these sham write-in candidates from denying Floridians their right to vote.

Charlene Griffin

Co-President League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County Area