Write-in loophole may be legal but flouts intent of Universal Primary Amendment

To the Editor:

Samantha Scott's article regarding "write-in candidates" did voters a service by bringing this practice to their attention. Few people know what a "write-in candidate" is. Even fewer understand how this practice disenfranchises voters.

Florida is one of 20 states that has Closed Primaries meaning in partisan races only voters registered in the party can choose their candidate for the General Election. That seems fair. However, is it still fair if only one party has candidates running for a partisan office? Should the other party and Independents have no voice in who will represent them? In 1998 over 60 percent of Florida voters passed the Universal Primary Amendment because they thought closing primaries, in this circumstance, was not fair. This amendment opened the primary to all voters if no other candidate was running because the winner of the primary would be the winner of the election.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the political parties to find a work-around that disenfranchised all but members of their party. They close the primary by fielding a "write-in candidate." This candidate is a member of the party in power and has no wish to hold office. The candidate's sole purpose is to close the primary subverting the intent of the Universal Primary Amendment. Hence, this practice has been dubbed the "Write-In Loophole." By using this ruse the parties win, the voters lose. Unlike other candidates a write-in does not have to pay a filing fee nor have an election assessment. They simply file their qualifying papers, and they are a candidate in the General Election. However, their name does not appear on the ballot. In the General Election voters have a choice between the winner of the closed partisan primary and BLANK LINE. The practice is perfectly legal, but is it right?

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