By: David Stokes

Prime Buzz over at the KC Star has a story from the AP about a proposal to eliminate the party symbols from our ballots in Missouri. When I first read the headline, I thought the idea was to remove the words "Republican" or "Democrat" or "Libertarian" from the ballot and expect people to remember who was affiliated with which party. After a full reading, though, it appears that the proposal only entails taking away the pictures of the elephant or donkey that commonly symbolize the major parties. (Question: What is the symbol of the Libertarian Party? I don't know, but it should be a cat with a lasso around it.)

Removing the party symbols would hardly be a disaster, but I still don't support it. Simply put, such symbols are an easy and simple way to provide people with voting cues, and this helps people cast a more informed vote. In this instance, the symbols may only be a very minor cue that only provide additional information to a few people, but it is still a cue — and one with negligible costs, at that. For a more detailed analysis of why party labels improve voter information, check out the op-ed I wrote last year about Franklin County’s charter proposal to move toward nonpartisan elections. The overall proposal for Franklin County was fine, but the idea to move to nonpartisan elections was bad enough to rescind my support for the entire proposal.

Thanks to that reliable elephant Combest for the link.
About the Author

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David Stokes was a policy analyst at the Show-Me Institute from 2007 to 2014 and was director of development from 2014 to 2016.

Read Online

https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/local-government/political-party-symbols-and-voter-cues#comment-0

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