

OUR VIEW: It's time for real change in politics

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Move over Democrats, Republicans and tea partiers, the Bull Moose Party is on the rise.

Well, probably not, but thanks to Washington's unconventional "top-two" primary system, parties like the BMP are becoming all the more common and replacing the donkey and elephant on the ballots. Around 30 candidates on the state's Aug. 17 primary ballot have bucked the nation's two traditional power parties and, instead, are identifying themselves with small, or even invented parties like the BMP, "Lower Taxes Party" and the "Neither Party."

The trend is just the latest example of the growing discord between the electorate and Democrats and Republicans in power. Voters are tired of the corruption, scandals, spending, bailouts, wars and mishandling of disasters.

"In general, I think the parties have too much power, and I don't think we need them anymore," said Bob Jeffers-Schroder of Seattle, a one-time Republican running as "Independent - No Party" against Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash. "I think they do more harm than good."

Despite the current anti-incumbent atmosphere nationwide, these candidates will have an uphill battle to reach office. Incumbents in the United States House of Representatives usually are re-elected at rates higher than 90 percent, and those same incumbents also have the backing of their parties, which means money - and money wins elections.

The latest polls show only 12 percent of likely voters give Congress' performance good or excellent ratings. That leaves 88 percent who don't think so highly of the Legislature's job performance. Polls don't tell the whole story, though. As famed political scientist Richard Fenno Jr. (author of the 1978 book "Home Style") theorizes, people generally disapprove of the Congress as a whole, but support the representative from their own Congressional district.

Still, it's refreshing to see a potential change to our two-party political system that has gone stale under the current partisan atmosphere. Win or lose, these challengers might succeed in getting important issues to the forefront that have been brushed aside by the Democrats and Republicans in power at local, state and federal levels.

While the chance of success for these candidates is low, their mere presence is hopefully enough to make politicians take notice. The message is clear - status quo is no longer acceptable.

- **Devin Rokyta** for the editorial board