**MAPLEWOOD DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN “OFFICE BLOCK” MAPLEWOOD BALLOT**

The Maplewood Democratic Committee, after meeting and voting on the matters here described, hereby requests that the Essex County New Jersey Democratic Party Chairman cause to be prepared an “office block” ballot for Maplewood voters for all primary elections hereafter held in Essex County. Said ballot should list all candidates for each office on a single line or in a single column, rather than the current practice of placing candidates preferred by the Essex County Democratic Party on the top line, known as the “county line.” This request is made to encourage candidate participation and because the present practice provides an unfair advantage to primary election candidates on the “county line.”

Below are some important reasons which the Maplewood Democratic Committee considered in voting to make the request set forth above:

1. No State in the United States other than New Jersey has a “county line”, or anything like it, which places primary election candidates preferred by party organizations on the top line, occupied only by such candidates.
2. All of the other 49 States use an “office block” design, in which all primary candidates for each particular office are grouped in the same line or in the same column, regardless of endorsement status.
3. In 2022, the Chairman granted Maplewood the right to place all primary candidates for Township Committee on the same line, and the present resolution is calling for an extension of this existing design.
4. Many primary elections are either uncontested or lightly contested, meaning that few candidates are participating in the electoral process. Encouraging greater candidate participation by placing all candidates on the same line can help grow the field of Democratic candidates who may serve their communities, serve in office and improve the party’s long-term prospects for years to come.
5. The “county line” design provides a considerable unfair advantage to those candidates who are placed on it because that line is at the top of the ballot where it appears more “important” and is easier for the voters to find.
6. The “county line” provides additional advantage because those at the head of this line are endorsed candidates for important offices, such as President, Senator, and Governor, and these prominent names lend familiarity and legitimacy to candidates further down the line. Candidates on the lower lines are grouped with less prominent names, if they are grouped at all.
7. In primary elections between 2012 and 2022, 45 congressional and senatorial candidates appeared on the ballot in more than one county and were on the “county line” in at least one county. These candidates had opponents who appeared on the “county line” in at least one other county. The average difference between being on the line and not being on it was 38 percentage points.
8. No incumbent New Jersey state legislator who has the “county line” in every county in his or her district has lost a primary election since 2009; in contrast, in the other 49 States, 1,145 State legislative incumbents lost primary elections over the same time period.
9. The loss rate for incumbent New Jersey legislators running off the line from 2003 to 2023 (52.6%) was nearly 38 times greater than the loss rate for incumbents running on the line (1.4%).
10. Candidates are aware of the power of the “county line” and many drop out of the primary if they do not receive the party’s endorsement. This leads to less candidate participation, and denies voters greater choices on the primary ballot.

Vote certified as accurate on this 11 day of March, 2024:

Ian Grodman

Chair, Maplewood Democratic Committee

Rebecca Scheer

Vice Chair, Maplewood Democratic Committee