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Editorial: Those who voted sent a message

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Given the low turnout, it would be easy to bemoan Tuesday's election as an exercise in apathy. Yet those who cast ballots made some wise choices. They also sent some strong messages along the way.

Voters by a wide margin approved Proposition 14, the open primary measure that will give independents more of a voice in elections. Currently, the parties handpick the candidates who advance past the primary. Under an open primary, candidates from all parties will face off against each other and will have to appeal to a broad swath of voters. The top two vote-getters will then advance to the general election.

Supporters of Proposition 14, including The Bee's editorial board, hope it will give moderates and independent thinkers more – but not complete – clout. And clearly the California electorate shares that sentiment, based on Tuesday's results.

In the Republican primary, GOP voters endorsed Steve Cooley for attorney general, despite efforts by opponents to tarnish him as – *horrors!* – a moderate. They also endorsed Abel Maldonado for lieutenant governor, helping to rebut claims that there is no place in the GOP for Latinos.

It would be a mistake to claim the Republican party is moving in unison toward the middle. Tom Campbell's loss to Carly Fiorina for the U.S. Senate nomination is the most obvious illustration. But the GOP may be becoming a more inclusive party. Never before in California have two women – Fiorina and Meg Whitman, the gubernatorial nominee – headed the GOP's ticket.

If Proposition 14 survives expected legal tests, it will further alter the political dynamic in California and make primaries far more engaging to voters. Kudos to Maldonado, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and others who bucked their parties to support this initiative. It is the will of the voters. It should be given a chance to work.

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