



OBAR Oklahomans for Ballot Access Reform

a coalition of Oklahomans working for FAIR laws that give voters genuine choices



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For immediate release August 17th, 2007
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Initiative Petition to Give More Choices to Oklahoma Voters

Taking action to open Oklahoma's ballot to third parties, Oklahomans for Ballot Access Reform (OBAR) plans to circulate a petition that will put a question on the 2008 ballot.

"We are looking forward to giving more choices to Oklahoma voters, and with the help of our many supporters, we are confident it will be a success," said Matthew R. Jones, an Independent and OBAR Chairman.

Oklahoma was the ONLY state with just two choices for president in 2004. Voter choice suffered again in the 2006 general election, when HALF of state legislature races went unopposed. **This lack of voter choice is due in part to Oklahoma's ballot access laws, considered the most restrictive in the nation.**

To form a new political party, Oklahoma law currently requires signatures equal to 5% of the last presidential or gubernatorial vote, which meant over 73,000 signatures for 2006. This number is TEN TIMES the per capita requirement of many neighboring states.

"Oklahoma voters are ready for more choices. Oklahoma Democrats easily chose from among nine Democratic presidential candidates in 2004. Shouldn't voters in the general election also enjoy more than two choices?" asked Matthew R. Jones.

This initiative would return the number of signatures for recognition of political party back to 5,000; the number required in Oklahoma from 1924 until 1974. This would make Oklahoma the 30th state to require 5,000 or fewer signatures for a new political party or independent presidential candidate.

The initiative would also make the requirements more reasonable for a party to demonstrate support and stay on the ballot. Current law requires that a party's presidential or gubernatorial candidate receive 10% of the vote to maintain party status. The initiative would lower the vote requirement to 1% and apply it to all statewide races.

"The question of voter choice will now go directly to the citizens of Oklahoma," said Thom Holmes, Oklahoma Constitution Party Chairman.

OBAR hopes to collect over 90,000 signatures this fall and expects success in the petitioning process as well as at the ballot:

- Supporters have already pledged to collect OVER HALF of the needed signatures.
- An anonymous donor will donate \$25,000 once OBAR has raised \$50,000.
- OBAR is using many resources to mobilize fundraising: letters, email, phone calls, online donating, as well as our network of volunteers.
- Similar ballot questions passed in Florida and Massachusetts.

"Our timing is fortunate. Dissatisfaction with the major parties seems to grow everyday," said Jimmy Cook, OBAR Vice-Chairman and Libertarian Party of Oklahoma Chairman.

OBAR is a coalition of Libertarian, Green, and Constitution Party and the Oklahoma Coalition of Independents, unified with the simple goal of making laws fair for new

political parties. Working for many years, OBAR has helped introduce numerous bills into the legislature, all of which were denied even a committee vote.

“Who would want to go on record against the voters’ right to a democratic choice? So state politicians have simply chosen to ignore the problem,” said Clark Duffe, Oklahoma Coalition of Independents Chairman.

In the most recent ballot access lawsuit, the Libertarian Party of Oklahoma was refused an appeal hearing with the State Supreme Court this year; even though the state Constitution guarantees “free and equal” elections. Joni LeViness, OBAR secretary and Green Party member, said, “OBAR initially hoped for help from the legislature or courts, but now we believe the best way to open up the democratic process is taking the issue directly to the people.”

Support for ballot access reform stretches broadly across the political spectrum. The 2007 Oklahoma Republican Platform states: "We support less restrictive ballot access for all political parties and candidates." (III G. 6.) Organizations like Common Cause Oklahoma and the Progressive Alliance Foundation also support reform.

Richard Winger, editor of Ballot Access News, wrote about Oklahoma’s problem: “This is about VOTER rights...People have a right to vote for the candidate of their choice. It's isn't a free election otherwise. Even the former president of Iran has criticized the U.S. for our lack of freedom in our elections. It would help the U.S. image worldwide if Oklahoma would fix this dreadful blot.”

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