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## **Ballot access reform bill passes Senate committee**

**Oklahoma City (April 1, 2009)** -- A Senate committee on April 1 passed a modified version of state House Bill 1072, which would make it easier to form a recognized political party in Oklahoma.

The Senate Rules Committee voted 12-2 in favor of a version of the bill that would require new political powers to gather signatures equal to 3 percent of the voter turnout in the last gubernatorial election. For 2010, that would mean about 28,000 signatures.

At 3 percent, Oklahoma would still fall short of the national average of about 1 percent. OBAR has been asking lawmakers to revert the law to its pre-1974 threshold of 5,000 signatures.

Current law requires signatures equal to 5 percent of the previous gubernatorial or presidential election turnout, or 73,000 signatures for a candidate to run in 2010 under the new party's name. OBAR has been asking lawmakers since 2004 to return the signature threshold to 5,000, which was the requirement from 1924 to 1974.

The House version of HB 1072, which passed 86-5 on March 11, would have tied the signature threshold to only the gubernatorial election. The change would have amounted to a difference of nearly 30,000 signatures for the 2010 election.

Oklahoma stood alone nationally in offering voters just two choices for president in both 2004 and 2008. All other states in Oklahoma's region - Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico - listed multiple candidates for president. Texas, meanwhile, listed only three candidates on their ballot, but several candidates still enjoyed a write-in option. Oklahoma does not allow write-ins.

OBAR is a coalition of the Libertarian Party of Oklahoma, the Green Party of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Constitution Party, the Oklahoma Socialist Party and the Oklahoma Coalition of Independents. Supporting or endorsing organizations include Free and Equal, FairVote: The Center for Voting and Democracy, The Coalition for Free and Open Elections, and Instant Runoff Oklahoma.making laws fair for new political parties.