

## **Green Party reaction to HB2181**

*GPOK Cooperative Council*

*Rachel Jackson, GPOK Facilitator*

The Green Party of Oklahoma has contributed time and resources to the effort to regain ballot access for the last 16 years. H.B. 2181 is the result of supreme patience and persistence, and enduring faith in democracy. Without access to the ballot, organizing as an alternative political party to enrich democracy in the state of Oklahoma is virtually impossible. Because the Green Party believes in decentralization of power in government structures, ensuring that voters have a wide scope of choices is critical. Many Oklahomans who are registered voters choose not to vote. As a result, voter participation in the state has been low in the last several elections. This is a major problem for a democracy. We think a central cause is the lack of representation on the ballot. Without candidates who represent the diversity of political perspectives present in Oklahoma's population, voters who represent these alternative positions are alienated from the polls and effectively disenfranchised. In order for all Oklahomans to enjoy the benefits of their voting rights, candidates who represent their interests must have the right to be included on the ballot. Voter rights and candidate rights are bound together. The changes to the current ballot access laws via HB2181 opens up the possibility for progress towards greater political representation and participation. We still have work to do to return the number of petition signatures required to the original number of 5,000 before the law was changed in 1974. However, after many years of organization and effort around this issue, HB2181 is a long-awaited, positive signal that the goal of ballot access for alternative parties in the state will be realized.

## **Libertarian Party reaction to HB2181**

*LPOK statement:*

Today marks an important milestone in Oklahoma history; a day in which the state Legislature and Governor not only acknowledged the harmful nature of Oklahoma's ballot access laws but also made an effort to ease that burden. The Libertarian Party of Oklahoma acknowledges that any movement toward ballot access reform in our state is to be celebrated to some extent. Speaker Hickman should be congratulated for his multiple years of effort and work in realizing this important first step in healing Oklahoma's broken political and electoral climate. However, we feel the bill that was eventually signed by Governor Fallin maintains the punitive nature of Oklahoma's current system and in that respect it is both disappointing and frustrating. We hope that the Legislature and Governor recognize that this is only a first step and will continue to pass meaningful reform in coming legislative sessions.

## **Justice Party reaction to HB2181**

*JPOK statement from chair Scott Campbell:*

The Oklahoma Justice Party would like to thank Governor Fallin for signing HB2181, as well as Speaker Hickman and others for shepherding the bill to her desk. While the bill doesn't go far enough in returning Oklahoma to its populist roots, it is recognition of the problem and a small step in the right direction.