

Oklahomans for Ballot Access Reform

A coalition of Oklahomans working for fair laws that give voters genuine choices

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NEWS RELEASE
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GOV. FALLIN SIGNS HISTORIC BILL

OKLAHOMA CITY – On Tuesday, Gov. Fallin approved the first change to Oklahoma’s political party ballot-access law in over four decades. HB2181, authored by Speaker Hickman, is a move towards ballot-access *relief* for the state’s unrecognized political parties.

HB2181 lowers the petition signature requirement to qualify a political party for the ballot. Since 1974, progressive parties have needed signatures of registered voters equal to 5% of the votes cast for governor or president in the last general election. Beginning Nov. 1, the number drops to 3% of the last vote for governor, only (excluding presidential vote).

To get on the ballot in 2016, petitioners need 24,745 under the new law. (Experienced petitioners aim for roughly double the required number to compensate for invalid signatures.) This is progress for citizens who’ve been shutout of the democratic process dating back to the Nixon administration; however, the change doesn’t relieve the state of its “worst ballot-access law” national title.

“Comparing mandatory petitions to qualify a new party or to have a new party appear on the ballot with the party name, Oklahoma is tied with Alabama now,” said Richard Winger, publisher of [BALLOT ACCESS NEWS](#). “There is also a Rhode Island 5% party petition, a Minnesota 5% party petition, and a California 10% party petition. But none of these are mandatory. There are alternate, much easier methods for a new party to get on the ballot with its party label next to the names of its candidates.”

Winger is considered the leading expert on minor-party ballot access in the country. As he explained, Oklahoma is now tied with Alabama for highest signature requirement to get on the ballot with a party label, other than Democrat or Republican. Petitioning for party status is optional in states with higher requirements.

In OBAR’s [2015 BALLOT-ACCESS BRIEF](#), we listed our top priorities for ballot-access relief. HB2181 addresses only the first one:

- Reducing or eliminating the petition signature requirement to form a new party
- Extending the length of time a new party is recognized
- Reducing the number of votes required to retain party recognition
- Reducing or eliminating the petition signature requirement to place an Independent Presidential candidate on the ballot
- Adding a write-in option to state election ballots
- Repealing the straight-party voting option on state election ballots
- Removing the names of Presidential Electors from the ballot

Attached to this release are statements from three progressive parties: Green Party of Oklahoma, Libertarian Party of Oklahoma, and the Justice Party of Oklahoma. Please share far and wide!

For more information, please visit WWW.OKVOTERCHOICE.ORG.