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Libertarian Party of Oklahoma Continues Call for Ballot Access Reform at Convention

Oklahoma Libertarians continued their call for ballot access reform at their state convention in Stroud on Saturday, February 16th. After the recent ballot access initiative petition received 14,000 signatures (not enough to qualify) in the midst of an assault on the initiative process, Libertarians hope the legislature will now pass introduced reform bills.

Convention speakers included representatives from two groups involved in the initiative petition process: Paul Jacob, president of the pro-initiative group Citizens in Charge and a senior fellow at the Sam Adams Alliance, and Jason Carini of Yes on Term Limits.

Angelia O'Dell, the new Chair of the Libertarian Party of Oklahoma, said, "Oklahoma has the most restrictive ballot access laws in the country, leaving us as the only state in 2004 with just two choices for president. We were the only state denied the right to vote for the Libertarian presidential candidate. The result was that nearly 10,000 Oklahomans went to the polls to vote, but left the choice for president blank. We call that a vote for NOTA – None of the Above. Who knows how many more Oklahomans just stayed home, rather than vote for the lesser of two evils?"

O'Dell continued, "It is time Oklahomans have real voter choice, and that means allowing parties to form with a reasonable requirement. In 2006, the Libertarian Party of Oklahoma would have needed TEN TIMES the number of per capita signatures as some surrounding states, like Texas, New Mexico, and Missouri. Let's recognize the current 1974 ballot law for what it is – a way to keep out competition and restrict voter choice, and return to the previous requirement of 5,000 signatures."

Explaining the solution, O'Dell said, "There are two bills in the Oklahoma legislature that could remedy this blot on our state: Senate Bill 28 or House Bill 1359. This is the fourth time ballot access reform bills have been introduced, and all of them were denied a committee hearing. Legislators should respect the wishes of the 14,000 Oklahomans who signed the recent ballot access petition. These reform bills should finally receive a committee hearing and a real debate. Without competitive elections how can citizens hold their elected officials accountable?"

The Libertarian Party of Oklahoma is a member of Oklahomans for Ballot Access Reform (OBAR, www.OkVoterChoice.org), a coalition including the Green Party of Oklahoma, the Constitution Party of Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma Coalition of Independents, which is working for fair ballot access laws. Last month, OBAR turned in 14,000 signatures for State Question 740, an initiative petition modeled after the current legislation.

Paul Jacob spoke on his indictment for supporting a group petitioning to limit growth in government spending. "This indictment is not about the law, but about politics - ugly, anti-democratic politics. The highest legal office in the state of Oklahoma seems bent on silencing citizens through harassment and intimidation, threats and coercion. The goal is to silence me, and to frighten you, from petitioning your government. It will not stand."

Jacob continued, "Oklahomans overwhelmingly support the initiative petition process. They will not like discovering Drew Edmondson's attack on myself and others is really an attack on the initiative process itself. Libertarians have faced laws restricting their access to the ballot and therefore are even more sympathetic to protecting the right to petition. Right now in the Legislature, there are bills to improve the petition process, as well as to restrict it further." For more on Paul Jacob, visit www.FreePaulJacob.com

Jason Carini, of Yes On Term Limits, explained the connection between term limits and holding government accountable. "When men and women are in office year after year, term after term, decade after decade, they begin to lose sense of what it means to be a citizen. It is unhealthy for our state to be controlled by either party through the monopoly of incumbency."

Carini continued, "A small and limited government - that's what our Founding Fathers envisioned our country to be. Instead of doing what's right and best for the citizens of the state, our elected officials do what is expedient for their own political career. Term limits is one method of helping to curb the gross abuse of power and bring power back into the hands of the people." The group's website is www.YesOnTermLimits.org

The Libertarian Party of Oklahoma was founded in 1972. Libertarians advocates limited government in both fiscal and private issues, and consider themselves "Fiscally Conservative and Socially Tolerant."

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