

THE PENNSYLVANIA BALLOT ACCESS COALITION ANNOUNCES
"THE POLITICAL PARTY EQUALITY ACT"

SWARTHMORE PA — To help celebrate Election Day, the Pennsylvania Ballot Access Coalition announced today a new initiative that would dramatically reduce the cost of administering elections in Pennsylvania, and finally fix and greatly simplify the complex laws controlling how candidates get onto the November ballot. The new approach would reform Pennsylvania's ballot access laws by following the constitutional mandate that "All elections shall be free and equal."

Dubbed "**The Political Party Equality Act**," its passage would establish uniform and reasonable ballot access requirements for all political parties as well as for candidates not affiliated with any party. These measures include:

- **Eliminate taxpayer funding of primary elections in Pennsylvania.** All political parties would choose their own candidates according to their own party rules and at their own expense. The candidates so chosen would automatically appear on the November ballot.
- **Equalize the definition of a political party.** Consolidate all types of political bodies currently defined in the Pennsylvania Election Code into a single category, "Qualified Political Party." In order to be considered a Qualified Political Party, two criteria would need to be met:
 1. Their current party rules must be on file with the Department of State.
 2. One twentieth of one percent (0.05%) of all voters must be registered to vote as a member of that party. Given current registrations, the list of Qualified Political Parties in Pennsylvania under the proposed Act would only include the Democrat, Green, Libertarian, and Republican Parties.
- **Simplify ballot access for independents.** Candidates who are not affiliated with a Qualified Political Party would need to collect the number of signatures as currently outlined by law in 25 CS 2872.1 rather than using the current complex formula. The window for collecting those signatures would not change, and all signatures would be validated by the county or state agency that receives them, not by private organizations or individuals.

"The Political Party Equality Act would benefit Pennsylvanians in many ways," according to Ken Krawchuk, a Libertarian member of the Pennsylvania Ballot Access Coalition. "Ending taxpayer-funded primaries would save the taxpayers the immense expense of administering elections at almost ten thousand local polling places year after year after year. We so-called 'third parties' have always paid for our own candidate selection process. It's time to level the playing field by having the two old parties pay their own way too."

Regarding independents, Krawchuk added, "Current law handicaps ballot access for independents enormously by requiring them to collect an unreasonable

number of signatures. That handicap can be removed by replacing the existing complex requirements with the same requirements that have historically been in place for the two old parties. This would encourage new participants in the political process and provide voters with additional choices at the ballot box. And requiring the Department of State to validate signatures would eliminate the threat of a financially-ruinous court challenge, such as what happened to Libertarian presidential candidate Governor Gary Johnson, Green U.S. Senate candidate Carl Romanelli, and independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader."

Bob Small, a Green Party member agreed, "Every election, there's a common complaint of a lack of candidate choice. Current ballot access law has the effect of keeping alternative party and independent candidates off the ballot. This can be fixed by using the same requirements that have always been in place for the Democrats and Republicans. This would help get fresh faces on the November ballot."

"The PPE Act would combine the three contrived political party categories presently defined by the election code into one 'Qualified Political Party' category," emphasized Troy Bowman, a Constitution Party member.

"Under current legislation," explained Chris Robinson, a Green Party member from Philadelphia, "small political parties must successfully compete in statewide elections every two years. Otherwise, they are drummed out of the political process. The Political Party Equality Act will allow smaller parties to focus their energy on local and county elections, as long as their total membership falls within the required margin. Let's make all politics into local politics again."

The Pennsylvania Ballot Access Coalition is an association of representatives from Pennsylvania's largest political "third parties" and independent campaigns, including the Libertarian Party, the Green Party, the Constitution Party, the America First Party, the Reform Party, the Prohibition Party, the Socialist Party, the Unified Independent Party, the New American Independent Party, and the Ralph Nader campaign, among several others. More information about the Pennsylvania Ballot Access Coalition can be found at PoliticalPartyEquality.org.