

Libertarian Party Advisory

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Release Date:
October 16, 1998

Seven Libertarian Party candidates knocked off the ballot in Illinois

WASHINGTON, DC — Seven Libertarian Party candidates have been knocked off the ballot in Illinois by that state's Board of Elections — a decision that party leaders called a case of "old-fashioned, Chicago-style political corruption."

On October 13, the Illinois State Board of Elections ruled 8-0 that LP gubernatorial candidate Jim Tobin and six other statewide candidates had not submitted the 25,000 valid signatures required to get on the November 3 ballot.

In reaching that decision, the board — made up entirely of Republicans and Democrats — ignored the recommendation of its own Hearing Officer and General Counsel, both of whom had ruled that the Libertarian Party had qualified.

"The decision by the State Board of Elections was a cynical, backroom ploy by Republicans and Democrats to use their political power to keep their competition off the ballot, and to keep millions of Illinois voters from having a genuine choice on Election Day," charged LP National Director Steve Dasbach.

"It's a classic case of old-fashioned, Chicago-style political corruption — except now it's bipartisan corruption," he said.

Also knocked off the ballot were Libertarian Lt. Governor candidate Charles Silas, U.S. Senate candidate Rhys Read, Secretary of State candidate Robin J. Miller, Treasurer candidate Kevin M. Kozlowski, Attorney General candidate Gary Lee, and Comptroller candidate Woodrow Windischman.

The decision by the Board of Elections came after the Libertarian Party had spent thousands of hours and tens of thousands of dollars to prove that at least 25,000 of the 60,638 signatures it had originally filed were, in fact, valid.

After more than a month of work — and the volunteer efforts of more than 100 LP members from around the country — the party had 26,610 verified signatures on hand, and was confident of prevailing, said Steve Givot, the Illinois Libertarian who coordinated the effort to stay on the ballot.

Every one of those 26,610 names had been cross-checked against the registered voter list, and the signature and address had been verified, he said.

However, the Board of Elections disallowed 4,285 of those verified signatures, arguing that the petition-gatherers who collected those signatures were guilty of a "pattern of fraud" because many of their other signatures could not be verified, or were forgeries, or contained errors.

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But Givot said the only "pattern of fraud" was by the Republicans and Democrats who made up the Board of Elections.

"In striking these 4,285 signatures, the Board of Elections ignored the recommendation of its own Hearing Officer and its own General Counsel. Without bothering to read the transcript of a hearing held over the course of two weeks, and without reading the written arguments of either side, the board acted oblivious to the record of the proceedings," he said.

The ruling was also a slap in the face of the Illinois voters who signed the petitions, said Givot.

"In striking these signatures, the State Board of Elections disenfranchised 4,285 registered Illinois voters — telling them that their clearly expressed desire to have the candidates of the Libertarian Party on the November 3 ballot would be denied through no fault of their own," he said.

The ballot drama had started on August 10, when the state Republican Party charged that 95% of the 60,638 signatures that Tobin and the other Libertarian candidates filed to get on the ballot were invalid because of "unregistered voters, forgeries, and other petition irregularities."

The challenge had apparently been filed, said Givot, because the GOP was worried that Tobin, a well-known anti-tax activist in Illinois, could cost Republican Governor George Ryan the gubernatorial race. And it was this Republican challenge that eventually led to the Board of Elections' decision on October 13.

Although ballots that include Tobin's name — and the names of the other Libertarian candidates — have already been printed, the state government will reportedly "lock out" that option on voting machines, and put blank labels over their names on paper ballots.

The Libertarian Party will probably not appeal the Board of Elections' decision, Dasbach said, because the party's attorney "does not believe that an appeal is likely to succeed and could establish a bad precedent."

On the positive side, the ruling affected only statewide candidates, so there will still be 16 Libertarian Party candidates on the ballot in Illinois, including several candidates for State Representative, six candidates for the U.S. House, and a slate of candidates running for county office in Ford County.

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