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For Immediate Release

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Old Established Political Parties Have Lost Their Preferential Ballot Position

For far too long the old established political parties have enjoyed preferential ballot placement. The two left-most columns have been reserved for the Democrats and Republicans. This year the Democrats and Republicans will be losing this discriminatory electoral advantage as a result of the failure of the old parties to maintain support with the public.

New Jersey law requires that to have a party column, a political party must "poll at any primary election for a general election of at least ten per centum (10%) of the votes cast in the State for members of the General Assembly at the next preceding general election."

This year, the Democrats and Republicans fell short. During the 2013 General Election, 3,726,973 votes for NJ General Assembly were cast. In the following primary, the unofficial results show that just fewer than 200,000 votes were cast in the Democratic primary, and only 152,000 votes were cast in the Republican primary. These low numbers mean that neither party met the required threshold to have their own column in the November 2014 General Election.

The result is that the Republican and Democrat parties will get treated exactly like all of the other candidates on the ballot. On August 11th at 3:00 PM, each county will be holding a drawing to determine ballot position. This year the establishment parties will not get a separate drawing for the first two columns. Instead the County Clerks must treat all candidates equally.

"While we are happy that this ballot disparity is coming to an end, there is still work to be done. No set of candidates should ever receive preferential treatment over other candidates based on past support," says NJLP Chair Patrick McKnight, "Giving an advantage to one set of candidates is not the way to run fair elections, nor the way a free society works."

While the tired old Democrat and Republican parties are shrinking, the New Jersey Libertarian Party has been growing. In the past three years the number of registered Libertarian Voters has grown 61% while the number of registered Republicans and Democrats as a percentage of total registered voters has been declining.

Notes

The full text of 19:5-1 is as follows:

19:5-1. Powers of and restrictions upon political parties; party columns on official ballot

A political party may nominate candidates for public office at primary elections provided for in this Title, elect committees for the party within the State, county or municipality, as the case may be, and in every other respect may exercise the rights and shall be subject to the restrictions herein provided for political parties; except that no political party which fails to poll at any primary election for a general election at least ten per centum (10%) of the votes cast in the State for members of the General Assembly at the next preceding general election, held for the election of all of the members of the General Assembly, shall be entitled to have a party column on the official ballot at the general election for which the primary election has been held. In such case the names of the candidates so nominated at the primary election shall be printed in the column or columns designated "Nomination by Petition" on the official ballot under the respective titles of office for which the nominations have been made, followed by the designation of the political party of which the candidates are members.

Vote totals from the 2013 General Election were obtained from <http://njelections.org>.

Vote totals from the Primary Election have not yet been certified. The unofficial congressional race results have been posted at <http://www.njelections.org>. They show that number of votes in the 2014 Democrat primary for Congress was 199,328. The number of votes in the 2014 Republican primary for Congress was reported as 152,686. The unofficial senate results were at one time posted at <http://njelections.org> but have since been removed.

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