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**For immediate release**

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## Oklahoma Independents Call for More Voter Choice

Oklahoma was the only state with just two choices for president in 2004, the first time this has happened to any citizen since 1976. Voter choice again suffered in the 2006 general election, where half of state legislature races went unopposed. This lack of voter choice is due in part to Oklahoma ballot access laws, considered the most restrictive in the nation.

To form a new political party, Oklahoma law currently requires signatures equal to 5% of the last presidential or gubernatorial vote. The table below shows how this makes Oklahoma far more restrictive than other states in our region.

**Signature Requirements for 2005-06 Election Cycle**

Ranking	State	Petitioning requirement for full party ballot access	Petitioning Requirement per million residents
<b>1</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>73,188</b>	<b>20,629</b>
2	Texas	45,253	1,980
3	Kansas	16,477	6,003
4-tie	Missouri	10,000	1,724
4-tie	Arkansas	10,000	3,598
6	New Mexico	3,781	1,961
7-tie	Colorado	1,000*	214*
7-tie	Louisiana	1,000*	221*

\* Colorado and Louisiana require 1,000 to register under the new party's affiliation for ballot access.

\*\* Requirements taken from [www.OkVoterChoice.org](http://www.OkVoterChoice.org) and [Ballot Access News, www.ballot-access.org](http://Ballot Access News, www.ballot-access.org)

Ballot Access Reform Bills (HB 1359 and SB 28) have recently been introduced. This reform would return the number of signatures for recognition of political party back to 5,000; the number required in Oklahoma from 1924 until 1974.

Richard Winger, editor of Ballot Access News, recently wrote, "This is about VOTER rights... People have a right to vote for the candidate of their choice. It's isn't a free election otherwise. Even the former president of Iran has criticized the U.S. for our lack of freedom in our elections. It would help the U.S. image worldwide if Oklahoma would fix this dreadful blot."

Addressing the concern that many parties would fill the ballot, Winger reminded us that during the fifty years "Oklahoma required 5,000 signatures for parties to get on the ballot, Oklahoma never had more than 4 parties on the ballot, including the Democratic & Republican Parties." Also, Oklahoma voters had no trouble choosing from nine Democratic presidential candidates in 2004.

Commenting on the recent state Senate power sharing agreement, Senate Co-President Pro Tempore Glenn Coffee said leaders "put aside partisanship" because "Republicans and Democrats alike realize that we must work together to make sure the people's business gets done."

OKIES coordinator David Splinter said, "We hope the Senate will truly put partisanship aside, and allow more voter choice by passing ballot access reform."

The Oklahoma Coalition of Independents (OKIES) supports greater voter choice and policies that give voters a stronger say in government.

**www.OKIES.info**