

May 1, 2020

Indiana Election Commission
Mr. Paul Okeson, Chairman
elections@iec.in.gov

Dear Chairman Okeson and Members of the Indiana Election Commission:

Thank you for taking action in this time of crisis to help ensure the health and safety of Indiana voters and election workers. While we are grateful for all of the work which you have already done to reschedule Indiana's primary elections and protect fullest democratic participation by adjusting the duties prescribed by Indiana election laws, my fellow leaders in the Indiana Green Party and I remain concerned that the coronavirus outbreak is still having a negative effect on grassroots candidates who seek to qualify for the November 3, 2020 general election.

I believe that, in light of the current public health emergency and the Governor's orders effectively shutting down the state, the Election Commission should waive or modify regular requirements for independent and third party candidates in Indiana to collect in person signatures while seeking to qualify for the November 3, 2020 general election. Supporters statewide are asking Governor Holcomb to take action and I have been informed that you properly administer response.

Green Party candidates and our volunteers in Indiana who are currently trying to participate in the upcoming election have already lost roughly eight weeks of petitioning time, or more than two-fifths of the time allotted to us to collect signatures in person by Indiana law, and even after the public health emergency subsides, signature gathering is likely to be weakened in practice for a substantial period of time. Our party would likely achieve ballot access in Indiana this year if not for the pandemic. We successfully petitioned in 2019 to get six Green Party candidates on ballots for City Council races in cities across the state of Indiana.

A growing number of state governments across the U.S. are granting emergency relief during this election season. Some have fully waived for 2020 their petition of qualified voters requirements for ballot access.

Failing to waive this requirement would unfairly infringe upon the right of freely running to serve one's community in public office. The necessary in-person contacts are impossible to make and unlawful in these conditions. The state of emergency, restrictions on gatherings, and other limitations designed to save lives should not prevent voters from having a democratic choice at the ballot box this November.

I am hereby requesting emergency relief of petitioning requirements, either:

- Dramatically lowering signature requirements and extending the deadline to file the signature petitions

- Suspending for this election cycle Election Code requirement for hard copy petition signatures and accepting electronic signatures of petitions
- Granting automatic ballot access with regard to Green Party candidates
- Replacing petitioning with a reasonable filing fee

Collecting signatures by hand on paper nomination petitions is an outdated means of demonstrating voter support. Different states have already previously implemented online petitioning or have in response to the coronavirus pandemic authorized online signature collection for candidates this year.

I urge you to grant this relief, consistent with your previous allowances enacted this year to guarantee Indiana's electorate every opportunity to vote and to have confidence in the voting process. Should you need further detail or find that we can provide any other form support to your agency, please contact me at any time, or reach out to our larger Indiana Green Party network with any of the methods which we keep up at <https://www.greenpartyin.com/contact>.

Sincerely,

S. Michael Richardson

Michael Richardson,

Chairperson

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