



GREEN PARTY CONDEMNS HOUSE BILL 6000, CALLS FOR ALL CHICAGO ALDERMEN TO DISAVOW AND REJECT "MACHINE PROTECTION ACT"

March 1, 2010

More information: Patrick Kelly, 773-203-9631, patrickkelly@gmail.com

On February 23, Democrats advanced House Bill 6000, which would limit potential challengers in future aldermanic elections in Chicago. The bill significantly raises signature requirements in every ward, and also gives well-financed, entrenched aldermen a new way to get opponents thrown off the ballot.

HB6000, which passed the House Elections and Campaign Reform Committee on a 5-4 party line vote, would raise the petitioning requirement in Chicago aldermanic races from 2% of the votes cast in a given ward in the previous election to a flat 500 signatures. This would mean an increase in every ward, and an over 400% increase in some wards.

The bill also prohibits a voter from signing more than one petition, which could mean that excess signatures can be used by a candidate to invalidate the signatures their opponent has collected. A well-financed incumbent could flood a ward with workers the first day of petitioning, and effectively block other opponents from being able to collect valid signature to launch a challenge.

"Chicagoans are fed up. We've watched public assets privatized in mostly closed-door deals; schools closed and services cut while the mayor controls massive TIF slush funds; and constant scandal involving bribes and kickbacks," said Phil Huckelberry, Illinois Green Party Chair, and a resident of the Logan Square neighborhood. "Voters are ready to throw Daley's cronies out of office. So here comes Mike Madigan to the rescue."

"The intent here is to ensure that nobody gets on the ballot that the mayor doesn't want on the ballot. End of story," said Alberto Bocanegra, Cook County Green Party Chair and resident of the Pilsen neighborhood. "House Bill 6000 is nothing more than a Machine Protection Act."

"We challenge the aldermen of Chicago to speak out against this bill, and the General Assembly to say no to doing any more favors for Richard Daley," said Tom Tresser, Green Party candidate for Cook County Board President and resident of the Old Town neighborhood. Tresser's opponent this November, Toni Preckwinkle, is the incumbent 4th Ward Alderman. "The Mayor has already appointed 17 aldermen to their current positions and will appoint two more shortly (to replace Flores and Carrothers). The City Council is already a rubber stamp for Daley and this proposed legislation will make it even harder to challenge his puppets."

As written, there are likely legal issues with HB6000. The signature requirements for some wards would exceed 5%, which would violate the constitutionality test in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Jenness v. Fortson*. And in 2009, a similar law in Rhode Island that prohibited voters from signing multiple petitions was stricken down in U.S. District Court. (That case, *Fontes v City of Central Falls*, is being appealed.)

THE LAW WOULD BE PARTICULARLY ONEROUS AS IT APPLIES TO WARDS IN MINORITY NEIGHBORHOODS, ESPECIALLY LATINO WARDS. IN THE TWO LOWEST VOTER-TURNOUT WARDS OF THE CITY, THE 12TH AND 22ND ON THE NEAR SOUTHWEST SIDE, SIGNATURE REQUIREMENTS WOULD MORE THAN QUADRUPLE. SINCE THE EFFECTIVE RESULT OF THE LAW WOULD MAKE IT PARTICULARLY HARD FOR MINORITIES TO RUN FOR OFFICE, IT MAY ALSO RUN AFOUL OF THE 14TH AMENDMENT AND VOTING RIGHTS ACT.

"LATINOS IN CHICAGO ARE SICK OF BEING BOSSSED AROUND BY THE MAYOR AND HIS LACKEYS," SAID BOCANEGRA, WHO RAN FOR 12TH WARD ALDERMAN IN 2007 AND IS CONSIDERED A PARTICULAR TARGET OF THIS LEGISLATION. "PEOPLE WANT THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THEM, NOT TO THE MACHINE. IT'S NO BIG SURPRISE TO SEE THE DEMOCRATS MAKING YET ANOTHER POWER PLAY TO MAINTAIN CONTROL FOR THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY."

- 30 -

The Green Party of Illinois holds to four main beliefs: Ecological Wisdom, Social Justice, Grassroots Democracy, and Nonviolence. Our candidates do not accept campaign contributions from big business or PACs. For more information, please see our web site at <http://www.ilgp.org/about>.

Illinois Green Party P.O. Box 471278, Chicago, IL 60647 phone:312-252-3066 fax:866-666-9540 email:info@ilgp.org