



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 21, 2015

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INDEPENDENT VOTERS PUSH FOR PARTIES TO OPEN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES: ARIZONA GOP REPLIES. DEMS MUTE.

Thousands of letters sent in recent weeks to the chairs of the Arizona Democratic and Republican parties urging that the 2016 Presidential preference election be opened to independents, has drawn a reply from the offices of the AZ Republican Party. "Can't, won't ... and go take a hike' was essentially their response," said Tim Castro of Independent Voters for Arizona.

Independents comprise the largest community of voters in Arizona having surpassed the number of registered Democrats and Republicans last March. Over 1,219,000 independents reside in the state and stand to be excluded from voting in the Presidential primary next year. Nearly 50% of Hispanic voters are independents.

Two groups—Independent Voters for Arizona and Open Primaries Arizona—have organized the effort to push for inclusion of independents. Over the course of three weeks, more than 3,500 letters have been sent to Alexis Tameron and Robert Graham, the respective chairs of the Democrat and Republican parties.

"We currently have independent voters in 38 towns and cities who are getting signatures on the letter to Chairman Graham and Chairwoman Tameron." said Castro. In addition, Open Primaries Arizona has teams going door to door and doing outreach on campuses in Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff.

On Tuesday, Nov. 17th, Tim Sifert, Director of Communications for the Arizona Republican Party, issued a reply.

"You should contact your Arizona legislators to lobby for a change in the law. That law says only party members have the right to choose their party nominee. In fact, it's actually the party's elected delegates to the national convention who choose the party's presidential nominee. It's a bit more complicated than that, but whoever put together your erroneous 'basic democracy' campaign has not done any of their homework on how the U.S President is elected. Again, thanks for contacting us."

On Friday, Harry Kresky, general counsel for IndependentVoting.org—the national organization of independents with which Independent Voters for Arizona is affiliated—delivered a reply back to state Republican Chairman Robert Graham pointing out that the U.S. Supreme Court has long established that political parties hold full authority to open their primaries—something no state legislature can override.

Currently in 30 states across the country, the Republican and/or Democratic parties have opened their primaries to independents. Last week, the Associated Press reported on the Oklahoma Democratic party opening all their primaries, including the Presidential Primary, to independents.

The letter writing campaign was underway and further spurred on when independents in Arizona complained of receiving a misleading mailer from the Republican Party indicated that recipients needed to "update" their registration in order participate in the Presidential primaries by joining the Republican Party.

"The presidential primaries are the most important elections taking place in the country next year," said Castro. "And no American should have to join a political party in order to have the right to vote in them."

The Democratic Party of Arizona has not responded to date.

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