

FREE RANGE VOTERS

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INDEPENDENTS NAMED TO ARIZONA ELECTIONS PROCEDURES REVIEW COMMITTEE

Arizona Secretary of State, Ken Bennett, has named two independents, Ted Downing and Janelle Wood, to his Election Procedures Review Committee. Ted Downing is a former two term Arizona legislator. In 2010, Ted ran as an independent candidate for the State Senate. Janelle Wood is a former independent candidate for Governor of Arizona (2010) and a strong advocate for independent voter rights.

The appointment of Downing and Wood mark the first time the Election Procedure Review Committee has sought to include independents on the body which consists of election officials of all 15 counties, the major political parties, and other key stakeholders.

Independents registrations are growing at a rate of almost 5% per year as Republican and Democratic registrations decline proportionately. For the first time this year, they outnumbered Democrats, making them the second largest segment of the voter registrations, representing almost a third of the voters.

The Secretary of State is required by law to prescribe rules to ensure that Arizona's election laws are implemented correctly, impartially, uniformly and efficiently. Each year, the Committee reviews and suggests changes to the Secretary of State's Election Procedures Manual - the rules governing elections.

Ted Downing, who wrote and sponsored the law assuring Arizona voters the right to a paper ballot and a hand count audit of voting machines, points out grave inequities in the Party dominated election process. "For example," states Downing. "Only Party members may be selected to be in charge of a polling place. Parties get free access to the voter rolls. Independents must pay. And, by law, independents must always be listed last on the ballot, as partisan candidates have their names rotated on the ballot to avoid a 'first position' advantage."

"But independents," continued Downing "have begun to exercise their emerging power by making certain that the election procedures and rules do not favor partisan candidates."

Jackie Salit, President of Independentvoting.org, a national association of independents with organization in 40 states, congratulated Janelle Wood and Ted Downing, encouraging independents to roll up their sleeves and seek out appointments to positions that will help them create a level playing field in their State's election processes for independent voters and candidates.

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