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On Behalf Of: Oregon Progressive Party
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: HB2004

HB 2004, unless clarified, could dissolve 5 of Oregon's 7 minor parties.

Some minor parties in Oregon qualify as minor parties by satisfying the requirements of ORS 248.008(4):

(b)(A) Following each general election, at any time during the period beginning on the date of the next primary election and ending on the 90th day before the next general election, a number of electors equal to at least one-tenth of one percent of the total votes cast in the state or electoral district for all candidates for Governor at the most recent election at which a candidate for Governor was elected to a full term must be registered as members of the party; and

(B) At least once in a four-year period, a candidate or candidates of the party must poll at least one percent of the total votes cast in the electoral district for all candidates for:

(i) Presidential elector at the last general election at which candidates for President and Vice President of the United States were listed on the ballot; or

(ii) Any single state office to be voted upon in the state at large for which nominations by political parties are permitted by law at the most recent election at which a candidate for the office was elected to a full term.

If the minor party's candidate does not earn the 1% of the vote, then ORS 248.008(5) provides:

(5) An affiliation of electors that fails to maintain status as a minor political party ceases to be a minor political party on the 90th day before the date of the next general election.

HB 2004 does not define which "vote" counts toward satisfying the 1% requirement. Is it the first round of votes? Is it the final round of votes, after the votes of lesser candidates have been "transferred" to other candidates? If the latter, then 3, 4, or 5 of Oregon's minor parties will soon be dissolved by HB 2004.

The minor parties which are currently required to earn the 1% statewide vote are the Constitution Party, the Progressive Party, and the No Labels Party. The current threshold for avoiding the 1% requirement is 7,453 registered members of the minor party. The Pacific Green Party currently has 7,841 members and thus avoids the 1% requirement by 388 members. The Working Families Party currently avoids the 1% requirement by 886 members. As the automatic motor voter registration system

continues to significantly increase the overall number of Oregon registered voters (automatically registering them as "nonaffiliated," unless they specify otherwise in writing), the 7,453 threshold will continue to increase and could exceed the membership levels of those other minor parties, thus requiring that each of them earn 1% of the vote in a statewide race. Unless clarified, HB 2004 could well dissolve all 5 of those minor parties.