



Q: How much does it cost to get your name on the ballot in Illinois?

DEPENDS. WHO DO YOU KNOW?

In Illinois, third party candidates have to spend at least four times as much as major party candidates in order to give citizens the option of voting for them in the general election. This year, Democrats and Republicans spent about \$20,000 each to get their names on the November ballot. The Libertarian Party spent about \$85,000 to do the same, counting volunteer hours. This is just one of the many ways Illinois' election law favors established parties and disenfranchises voters.

In addition to a much higher signature requirements, third party candidates' petitions are always challenged by the major parties and their lawyers. This forces third parties to undertake a grueling line-by-line review process that can take up to a month to complete.

This year, the Republican Party gave Republican DuPage County Board Member [Brien Sheahan](#) more than \$6,000 to challenge the Libertarian Party's ballot petitions. In addition to questioning the validity of individual signatures, Sheahan accused signature collectors themselves of forging signatures, lying about their identity, lying to voters, and other abuses of the electoral system. Not only were these allegations completely false, they were leveled without a single shred of evidence. That's because Illinois election law allows petition challenges to be filed without supporting evidence. In essence, anyone can accuse you of any abuse, and it's up to you to prove them wrong. Hardly "innocent until proven guilty."

Republican spokesperson Wes Bleed told

Brien Sheahan is a DuPage County Board Member who fought to limit voter choice in Illinois. He and the Republican Party used Illinois' convoluted election law to obstruct ballot access and force the Libertarian Party into a costly and unnecessary legal battle. Fortunately, the Libertarian Party defeated his challenge. If you feel that all candidates should have equal access to the ballot, [contact](#) board member Sheahan to tell him what you think of his recent activities.

ABC7 that "the Illinois Republican Party has always worked to ensure that candidates have a legal and legitimate right to be on the ballot and that the integrity of the process is upheld." Translation: "we will do everything the law allows us to in order to limit voters' choices in November. That's because we love 'competition,' so long as it isn't with competition against US!" Grand Old Party indeed.

Everyone in Illinois should be concerned about ballot access, even if they don't plan to vote for Libertarian candidates in November. Having more candidates on the ballot makes it easier to hold your politicians accountable. It also encourages debate, forcing candidates to go beyond campaign rhetoric and engage real policy solutions. But major parties in Illinois will do anything to prevent third parties from gaining a foothold because they know it will mean they will have to work harder to earn your votes.

We are very sorry that the Constitution Party candidates will not be on November's ballot. We were looking forward to beating them at the polls, and we will miss their challenge as the election goes forward. If elected, every Libertarian Party candidate will work hard to ensure that the Constitution Party, and any other serious contenders, will be able to challenge them in November of 2015.

