



March 30, 2020

Request for Relief of Ballot Access Requirements Due to COVID-19

Dear Governor Tom Wolf, Lt. Governor John Fetterman, Secretary of the Commonwealth Kathy Boockvar, Deputy Secretary for Elections and Commissions Jonathan M. Marks, Speaker of the House Rep. Mike Turzai, and State Government Committee chairs Rep. Garth Everett, Rep. Kevin Boyle, Sen. John Disanto, Sen. Anthony Williams:

The Green Party of Pennsylvania (GPPA) has run statewide candidates for many election cycles and has petitioned to obtain ballot access successfully in recent years including 2016 and 2018. In preparation for the 2020 elections, GPPA formed the “Green Wave” Committee to coordinate volunteers, campaigns, and ballot access efforts across the state.

We are therefore confident we would be successful again and qualify for ballot access for all Green Party candidates in 2020 -- were it not for the urgent, severe threat posed by COVID-19 this year that has made typical petitioning operations impossible.

Many public and private events began to be canceled prior to official government action. The CDC has recommended cancellation of public events and for people to practice social distancing for as long as it takes to slow the spread of the virus. In response, Governor Wolf has issued several executive orders to attempt to limit the spread of COVID-19, including a two week “stay-at-home” order which affects Allegheny and Philadelphia Counties, the two counties where the majority of declared 2020 Green Party candidates live and are campaigning.

By law, the Green Party of Pennsylvania is required to obtain a minimum of 5,000 petition signatures from registered voters to ensure the Presidential candidate is on the ballot. Due to potential voter registration and other validity problems, in practice Green Party members must collect about double that number to ensure ballot access. This signature requirement as a result is much higher than the requirement for Democratic and Republican Party candidates, requiring Green Party members to potentially interact with tens of thousands of voters in order to collect the needed number of signatures. To offset the higher requirements, Greens are allocated by law a much longer period of time to collect signatures. In 2020, petitioning for Green candidates was set by law between February 19, 2020, and August 3, 2020, the final date to file.

However, shortly after the February 19 starting date, public and private events which Green Party volunteers rely on to meet voters and collect signatures began canceling. In early March, state and federal guidance began encouraging more widespread event cancellation and social distancing, resulting in Governor Wolf issuing a series of executive orders, including closing “non-essential” businesses by March 19. As a result, Green Party volunteers have had very little time to successfully petition, and given that the Pennsylvania Primary Election has been moved to June 2 and many legislators are even considering switching to a mail-in vote to continue social distancing, clearly the expectation is for COVID-19 action to continue into the summer. Under

these circumstances, there is a strong possibility that the Green Party will be unable to petition in any realistic manner during the legally mandated petitioning period.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Governor and General Assembly order the Department of State to take account of these radically changed circumstances and **take immediate emergency action** to honor the right of our political party and its candidates for President, Vice President, and U.S. Senate **to appear on the General Election ballot**.

We ask that the petition signature requirement for the statewide ballot be waived or suspended for the current election cycle for the Green Party of Pennsylvania's statewide candidates. We would be supportive of other political bodies and independent candidates also being granted a waiver.

We also ask for similar relief for all Green Party candidates planning to petition to attain ballot status for state-level races in the General Assembly.

We are happy to discuss the issue further and may be contacted via secretary@gpofpa.org. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sheri Miller & Alan Smith

GPPA Co-chairs

Garret Wassermann

GPPA Green Wave Team Lead & Candidate for Representative in the General Assembly,
District 45

Beth Scroggin

GPPA Secretary & Ballot Access Coordinator