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IndependentVoting.org Celebrates Certification of Senate Bill 69 Referendum Petitions. Referred Law 19 to appear on November 2016 ballot.

IndependentVoting.org, a national association of independents with organization in 40 states which drove a mobilization of independents in South Dakota and joined national voting rights advocates to challenge Senate Bill 69, celebrated the certification of referendum petitions this week by South Dakota's Secretary of State. Senate Bill 69-now known as Referred Law 19-will appear on the November 2016 ballot.

"Legislatures are being held accountable in new ways," said IndependentVoting.org President Jackie Salit. "In South Dakota, the politicians passed an anti-democratic measure and the people responded with Referred Law 19. This comes right on the heels of the Supreme Court decision upholding the right of Arizona voters to bypass their legislature and set up an independent redistricting commission. The message here is simple but powerful. The legislatures must act in the people's interests, not party interests."

IndependentVoting.org began contacting its members and allied organizations nationally after the passage of Senate Bill 69, mobilizing them to overturn it. They polled over 1240 South Dakota independents, encouraged them to sign and circulate referendum petitions and queried them on political reform issues. Over 85% of pollees felt that Democrats and Republicans should be allowed to sign petitions for independents. When asked if South Dakota should have a system that is fairer to independents, 83% responded "yes."

"We celebrate this victory and opportunity to continue our efforts toward a fair and inclusive democratic election process in South Dakota," said Kim Wright, founder of South Dakota Voice of Independents, the local IndependentVoting.org affiliate which helped contact independents to sign and distribute SB 69 referendum petitions.

IndependentVoting.org general counsel Harry Kresky, who also serves as vice-chair of "COFOE" (Coalition for Free and Open Elections), sought the organization's involvement. COFOE includes such national organizations as: FairVote, the Constitution Party, Green Party of the US, Libertarian Party, Reform Party USA, and Socialist Party USA. COFOE issued a resolution in response reading:

Everyone should have the right to sign a petition for an independent candidate. Party affiliation is not the same issue for independents as it is for partisans. SB 69 makes it difficult for Independent candidates to reach the signature requirement by reducing the number of voters who are qualified to sign to just those unaffiliated with a party. And in so doing it reduces voter choice in the general election and prevents a Democrat or Republican who is dissatisfied with their party's candidate from helping to mount a challenge.

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