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Oklahoma Independents Want More Candidates on the Ballot

The Oklahoma Coalition of Independents (OKIES) wants all Oklahomans to know about the three days when they can file to run for office at the state Capitol: June 2nd to 4th

OKIES hopes to bring more accountability to incumbents' actions and by encouraging Oklahomans to run for political office, whatever their party affiliation.

The democratic process in Oklahoma is suffering. Over half of state legislative races went unopposed in 2006. So the names of most incumbents never even showed up on a ballot, yet they still "represent" the people of their district.

Clark Duffe, OKIES Chairman, said, "Campaigning for office is a great way to get out your message and affect your community." All that is required is having been registered with the same party affiliation for six months in your district and a \$200 filing fee for most offices. [Qualifications to run](#) and a list of [offices to be filled](#) are available from the Oklahoma State Election Board.

James M. Branum, Secretary of the Oklahoma Green Party, said, "Since Oklahoma's ballot access laws kept me from being on the ballot as a Green, I ran as an Independent for state house in 2006. It was a empowering experience. I got to speak at several candidate forums and connect with my neighbors on the campaign trail, and in the end even got to see some of my ideas be adopted by the candidate who beat me. I recommend all registered Independents to consider running, because otherwise our voice won't be heard."

Richard Prawdzienski, past Independent candidate for State House 39, addressed concerns about the possibility of someone winning against a candidate of an established party. "If a 19-year-old freshman at the University of Oklahoma can be elected mayor in Muskogee, imagine what anyone can do."

Jacqueline Salit, founder and political director of the national organization, Committee for a Unified Independent Party, commented, "With 70% of Americans saying that the country is on the wrong track, the problem is not just that our policies have gone wrong. It's that our political process isn't working. That's a big reason why so many people are becoming independents and why independents feel that we've got to change the way our political system works. It's really a rebellion against the "divine right" of the major parties. Running for office with a message about the need for independent reform is a way to bring that challenge to a next step."

The Oklahoma Coalition of Independents (OKIES) seeks to expand voter choice by reducing the number of unopposed races for elected office in Oklahoma. OKIES also supports structural reforms that will engage more potential voters in the political process, such as ballot access reform and redistricting reform.

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