



More and More Independents in Oklahoma

For Immediate Release: March 8th, 2008

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With three months before Oklahomans file to run for office, the Oklahoma Coalition of Independents (OKIES) encourages more citizens to run and celebrates the increasing number of Oklahoma Independents.

"With **over half of state legislative races unopposed in the 2006 general election**, we hope more Oklahoma voters will have a choice this November. But that all depends on the number of Oklahomans, regardless of party, who step up to the task." said Clark Duffe, OKIES chairman. The filing dates to run are June 2nd to 4th. The only [requirement](#) is that an individual be registered by the beginning of 2008 in the district and party for which they will run for office, as well as paying a small filing fee.

Independent registrations continue to grow, with **9,715 more Oklahomans Independents than two years ago**. This represents a large increase, considering there were only 13,564 more total registrations. Oklahoman Independents now number [219,230](#), or 11% of total registrations. (Note: Republicans grew by 12,308 and Democrats lost 8,459 voters)

In Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties practically all the growth in voter registration is due to Independents. In Oklahoma County there were **2,418 more Independents** than two years ago, while only 140 more Republicans and 316 fewer Democrats. In Tulsa County there were **386 more Independents**, while only 2 more Republicans and 1,230 fewer Democrats.

Many more Independent voters will likely register this year. "With McCain and Obama as the possible candidates in November, many new unaffiliated voters will likely register and turn out at the polls. These two candidates attract strong Independent support. Just look at the number of Independent and crossover votes they get in open primary states. It is important to field local candidates who will appeal to these new voters as well." commented Duffe.

Oklahoma has a semi-closed primary system, meaning the only people who can vote are members of a party and, if invited by the party, Independents. Although minor parties have allowed Independents to vote in their primaries in the past, the major parties keep their primaries closed to Independents.

"Voluntarily opening their primaries to Independents would be a significant gesture by the Oklahoma Democratic or Republican parties. It would communicate that they are reaching out to a broader group of citizens." said Duffe.

The trend of more Independents is also occurring at the national level. "26.5% of Voters are Not Registered Dems or Reps," says the headline of the March issue of Ballot Access News.

"Although minor party registration has declined to 1.63%, **independents have grown to 24.82%**" in the 30 states in which people register by party, writes Richard Winger, editor of Ballot Access News. "One would have expected the independent share to decline, as people switched to major parties to vote in their presidential primaries."

In Oklahoma, registered Independents stood at only 2% in 1980, but climbed past 8% in 2000 (see table below). "If this rate of growth continues, **by 2030 we could have nearly 20% of Oklahomans registering Independent**, closing the gap with the national rate. However, if the major parties reach out to Independents more effectively, this growth may slow."

The Oklahoma Coalition of Independents (OKIES) supports greater voter choice and policies that give voters a stronger say in government.

www.OKIES.info

Number of Oklahoma Registrations				
STATEWIDE	Independent	Republican	Democrat	Total
% Registered	11%	39%	51%	
% of 2 yr. change	72%	91%	-62%	
# change (2 yr)	9,715	12,308	-8,459	13,564
Total 2008 (Jan.)	219,230	790,713	1,012,594	2,022,537
Total 2006 (Jan.)	209,515	778,405	1,021,053	2,008,973
OK COUNTY				
Independent	Republican	Democrat	Total	
% Registered	13%	45%	43%	
% of 2 yr. change	108%	6%	-14%	
# change (2 yr)	2,418	140	-316	2,242
Total 2008 (Jan.)	50,183	168,848	161,356	380,387
Total 2006 (Jan.)	47,765	168,708	161,672	378,145
TULSA COUNTY				
Independent	Republican	Democrat	Total	
% Registered	12%	50%	39%	
% of 2 yr. change	46%	0%	-146%	
# change (2 yr)	386	2	-1,230	-842
Total 2008 (Jan.)	38,803	165,814	128,237	332,854
Total 2006 (Jan.)	38,417	165,812	129,467	333,696

Voter Registration as Independent in Oklahoma

Year	Percent
1969	1.0 %
1979	1.8 %
1988	2.7 %
2000	8.3%
2006	10.4%

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