



505 Fifth Avenue, Ste. 901  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
(515) 243-3576

## **ACLU-IA files Political Association case on behalf of Iowa Libertarian and Green Parties**

by R. Ben Stone, Executive Director  
9/16/2005

### **Iowa believed one of only two states to limit which political parties voters can list on their registration forms**

DES MOINES -- The American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa Foundation announced today that it has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Iowa Libertarian Party and the Iowa Green Party challenging Iowa's practice of limiting party affiliation on voter registration forms to political parties receiving at least two percent of the vote for governor or president in the most recent election.

"This is a case where size shouldn't matter," said Ben Stone, Executive Director of the ACLU-IA. "Arbitrary barriers to voter choice and political expression are contrary to democracy, and this case will hopefully make it possible for all Iowa voters to participate publicly in the party of their choosing," Stone said.

In filing the lawsuit, the ACLU-IAF seeks to reverse a 1990 federal ruling by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals dealing with a similar challenge it brought on behalf of the Iowa Socialist Party. Since then, the legal landscape has changed, according to the complaint filed in the lawsuit.

Computerization of records in the past decade has made tracking party membership much simpler. In addition, the filed complaint points to a revision of Iowa's voter registration law giving the public access to party registration data as a reason why affiliation with minor political parties should be allowed. "It's important to have a level playing field where all citizens have an equal opportunity to register and proclaim their party preferences," said Stone.

The petitioners further claim in the suit that Iowa and Kansas are the only two states that continue to effectively restrict party affiliation on voter registration forms to identified major parties.

Named in their official capacity in the lawsuit are the Iowa Secretary of State Chester J. Culver and the Iowa Voter Registration Commission. In addition to the Green and Libertarian parties, two individual party members are petitioners in the lawsuit: Daryl Northrop of Des Moines (Green Party) and Clyde Cleveland of Fairfield (Libertarian Party). The suit seeks injunctive and declaratory relief and was filed in the Federal District Court for the Southern District of Iowa on Thursday, September 15, 2005.

For more information, contact:

ACLU-IA Foundation:  
Ben Stone, ACLU-IA Ex. Dir.

Iowa Libertarian Party:  
James Clark  
319.665.4728

Iowa Green Party:  
Holly Hart  
319.331.9616