

Good Afternoon,

My name is Mike Winter. Some of you may not have heard of me, and I actually get that a lot. I ran for Mayor of Mpls in 2021 and ran with Hugh Mctavish last year for lieutenant Governor with the Independence Alliance party. Still doesn't ring a bell? Welcome to the world of third parties. I never envisioned myself as a politician and quite honestly I'm a regular Minnesotan that wanted to make my community better. Today, I would like to talk about the negative impact that bill SF1827 would have on Minnesotans. This bill would effectively silence the voices of those who do not identify with major parties.

While 10% may seem like a fair requirement, it would become among the HIGHEST barriers in the country and create significant consequences. This is because major party status comes with benefits that help level the playing field, creating easier access to the ballot, increased funding, and greater control over the rules governing debates and forums. A 10% threshold would make it almost impossible for other parties to achieve major party status.

By voting for bill SF1827 you will have a negative impact on smaller parties' ability to raise funds and compete financially. Under this bill, they would no longer be able to receive public funding for their campaigns and YOU WILL BE CREATING a significant disadvantage, as public funding can be an important source of revenue for parties. Without this funding, third parties will struggle to compete with the better-funded Republicans and Democrats and only the privileged and wealthy will continue to run. Minnesota's partial campaign finance helps level the financial playing field and the general fund generally is only available to Democrats and Republicans. Candidates must still earn their way to this general fund and this bill virtually eliminates that option. This will make it even harder for third party candidates to get their message out to voters.

Limiting voter choice will not strengthen democracy. Voters should have the opportunity to vote for candidates they truly believe in, NOT JUST the prepackaged options provided for them by the two major parties. A diverse range of political views is essential to a healthy democracy.

In conclusion, this bill is bad for all Minnesotans. By setting the bar for major party status among the highest in the nation, raising the signature threshold, eliminating public funding and access, and restricting participation in debates and forums, this bill would effectively silence the voices of those who don't identify with the two major parties. This is unfair and undemocratic, and I urge the senate elections committee to reject this bill, and instead support the same policies that our neighboring states do to promote a more open, and inclusive political process for all citizens.

Thank you.

Regards,

Mike Winter

At Large member of the Independence Alliance Executive Council