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February 16, 2015

Media Contact: Garland Favorito

Telephone: (404) 664-4044

Email: garlandf@msn.com

<http://www.voterga.org>

Rynders Requests Unfair Ballot Access Evidence, Receives It

ATLANTA GA –House Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Rynders of Albany, requested in his recent interview with Atlanta Progressive News evidence about what is wrong with Georgia’s ballot access laws and how it impacts the will of the people. The day after his interview was published he received the evidence in a [letter](#) from VoterGa.

Rep. Rynders was interviewed about HB58, a bill that is now lying dormant in his committee. It proposes to reduce petitioning requirements for independent candidates so that they can run for office on an equal basis with Democrats and Republicans. Currently independents must collect thousands of petitions that Democrats and Republicans do not collect when running for office.

Rynders was quoted as stating: “there is no compelling evidence that what we have doesn’t work” however, the VoterGA letter cites current facts indicating that is not true. Here are a few examples of the evidence cited by VoterGA its letter to Rynders:

1. Georgia has **most restrictive petitioning requirements in the country** according to Ballot Access News
2. The 5% U.S. House petition requirement that Rynders called “rather reasonable” is **10 times more restrictive than the national average of all other states combined**
3. Although all other states have had independent U.S House candidates since 2000, **Georgia has never had an independent U.S. House candidate since 1964** when the ballot access laws were changed
4. As a result of Georgia’s overly restrictive ballot access laws, **nearly 70% of all state legislature races have only one candidate**
5. Unfair ballot access was tied as the **top election of Georgians** participating in Secretary Kemp’s Election Advisory Council (EAC) town hall meetings in 2013

The VoterGA.Org home page cites 50 reasons why Georgia should remove its candidate petitioning requirements. Florida successfully removed their candidate petitioning a decade ago and all candidates now pay the same fee to get their name the ballot for a given office. Georgia proposed to do likewise with HB494, a bill submitted by Rep. “Rusty” Kidd during the 2011-2012 Legislative Session. However, that bill was not given a hearing by Speaker David Ralston and then Committee Chair Mark Hamilton.

The current HB58 proposes to reduce the requirements but not eliminate them. It appears that Rynders and Speaker David Ralston are unwilling to give the new bill a hearing. Ironically, HB58 is essentially identical to a bill introduced by Ralston in the 2005 session, HB927. Despite claiming to be for improved ballot access, Ralston and his leadership team have blocked every legislative attempt to improve the ballot access laws since he became Speaker of the House.

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