

New Bipartisan Ballot Access Bill Can Save Georgia Millions

ATLANTA, GA – A new bipartisan House [bill](#) introduced Friday would lower the number of petition signatures required for all third party and independent candidates from 5% of votes cast in the previous election to 200. Current Georgia ballot access laws allow Democrat and Republican candidates to appear on the ballot **without** any petitioning requirements at all, while third party and independent candidates must gather **thousands of signatures** from qualified voters before their name is added.

The [HB191](#) bill could begin saving taxpayers the millions of dollars former Secretaries of State have spent defending election laws that have been ruled **unconstitutional**. In just one four year losing legal battle, [Green Party et al v. Kemp](#), the state spent upwards of a million dollars for Plaintiff and Defendant legal services and court costs. If the bipartisan bill passes, it would almost assuredly resolve another [pending federal lawsuit](#) filed by the Libertarian Party against former Secretary of State (SOS) Brian Kemp. The bill is sponsored by Dar'shun Kendrick, David Stover and other House members.

Georgia is ranked as having the most restrictive ballot access laws in America by [Ballot Access News](#), the foremost authority in the country. For example:

1. **Georgia has never had an independent U.S. House candidate since 1964** when the ballot access laws were changed although all other states have had a candidate since 2000;
2. **82% of all state legislature races had only one candidate** in the 2018 General Election, the highest uncontested rate in the country;
3. The law for a U.S. House candidate to get signatures totaling 5% of previous votes cast is **10 times more restrictive** than the .5% national average;
4. The law for a political body to get 20% of votes cast to gain local ballot access is **10 times more restrictive** than the national average of 2%.

After HB191 is read for the second time on Monday it will likely be assigned to the Governmental Affairs Committee and reside in the Elections Subcommittee chaired by Rep. Alan Powell. All previous ballot access bills have failed to get a hearing and died in committees after being introduced but HB191 may have a couple of advantages. Newly elected SOS Brad Raffensperger has stated publicly that he would support a reduction in petitioning requirements. In 2010, Rep. Powell, who since switched parties, introduced his own similar bipartisan bill, [HB1257](#). The bipartisan nature of HB191 offers a glimmer of hope that recent divisiveness in Georgia politics can be partially overcome.

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