

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES July 15, 2004

End the Two-Party Monopoly!

Mr. Speaker, political operatives across the country are using state ballot access laws to deny voters the opportunity to support independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader. For example, one New York election lawyer publicly stated that partisan election lawyers should take advantage of New York's complex and costly ballot access procedures to keep Mr. Nader off the New York ballot. Meanwhile, a state party chairman in Arizona has hired a team of lawyers for the sole purpose of keeping Mr. Nader off the Arizona ballot.

The effort to keep Mr. Nader off the ballot shows how ballot access laws preserve the two-party monopoly over the political system by effectively disenfranchising supporters of third parties and independent candidates. While the campaign against Mr. Nader is an extreme case, supporters of the two-party monopoly regularly use ballot access laws to keep third party and independent candidates off ballots. Even candidates able to comply with onerous ballot access rules must devote so many resources to simply getting on the ballot that their ability to communicate ideas to the general public is severely limited. Perhaps the ballot access laws are one reason why voter turnout has been declining over the past few decades. After all, almost 42% of eligible voters have either not registered to vote or have registered as something other than Democrat or Republican.

The United States Constitution gives Congress the authority to regulate the time, place, and manner of federal elections. Thus, ballot access is one of the few areas where Congress has explicit constitutional authority to establish national standards. In order to open up the political process, I have introduced the Voter Freedom Act (HR 1941). HR 1941 established uniform standards for ballot access so third party and independent candidates can at last compete on a level playing field.

The blatant attempt by a major party to keep Ralph Nader off state ballots demonstrates how restrictive ballot access laws are used to preserve a political monopoly, limit voter choices, and deny the rights of millions of Americans who support third parties and independent candidates an opportunity to effectively participate in the political process. I call upon my colleagues to

remedy this situation by supporting my Voter Freedom Act.