



PRESS RELEASE

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FORWARD PARTY SUPPORTS LAWSUIT CHALLENGING TEXAS BALLOT ACCESS BARRIERS FOR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

AUSTIN, TX — June 16, 2026 — Texas is making it nearly impossible for independent candidates to appear on the ballot. Today, the Forward Party is supporting the Texas independent candidate for Lieutenant Governor Mike Collier in his lawsuit challenging Texas’s unconstitutional ballot access requirements for independent statewide candidates.

Filed in cooperation with the Center for Competitive Democracy, the lawsuit challenges a system that requires an independent candidate to collect more than 81,000 valid voter signatures — while prohibiting candidates from beginning that process until after the partisan primary runoff elections have concluded. Because Texas’s 2026 primary runoffs were held on May 26 and independent petitions are due June 25, Collier and other independent candidates have just 30 days to gather the signatures required to appear on the ballot.

Texas law also sharply limits who may sign those petitions. Any voter who participates in a party primary or runoff for an office is disqualified from signing an independent candidate’s petition for that same office. A compressed timeline and restricted pool of eligible signers make ballot access extraordinarily expensive and logistically difficult. These factors all contribute to creating barriers that serve no public purpose other than locking independent candidates and the voters who want to support them out of the process.

The disparity between partisan candidates and independents is stark. A Republican or Democrat candidate for lieutenant governor can qualify for the primary ballot by paying a \$3,750 filing fee or collecting 5,000 signatures. Independent candidates have no option to pay a filing fee in lieu of signature collection and instead must collect more than sixteen times as many signatures as partisan candidates.

“This is exactly the kind of political gatekeeping that has left so many Americans feeling shut out of our democracy,” said Forward Party CEO Lindsey Drath. “Texas voters deserve more choices, not fewer. This lawsuit is not about helping one candidate or hurting another party. It is about whether the rules of our democracy should serve voters or protect the two-party status quo.”

The lawsuit is supported by a broad coalition of bipartisan co-plaintiffs, including former U.S. Congressman and former Dallas Mayor Steve Bartlett; former Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley;

former Texas State Senator Kel Seliger; and about a dozen more former elected officials and leaders from Forward Party Texas and the national Forward Party.

It comes after Texas's 2025 mid-decade redistricting effort, another example of politicians using their power to limit competition before voters ever cast a ballot. Whether through gerrymandered districts that reduce accountability or ballot access laws that keep independent candidates off the ballot, the result is the same: fewer meaningful choices for voters and a political system that protects incumbents and party insiders.

Forward Party leaders emphasized that Independent voters are one of the fastest-growing forces in American politics, yet in state after state, election rules continue to be written by and for the two major parties.

"If you want a better product, you build a better system. Texas' ballot access laws do the opposite. They use legal technicalities to protect the political establishment, limit voter choice, and shut out new ideas, said Brandon David, Texas Forward Party State Chair. "Texans deserve a system that encourages competition, rewards innovation, and prepares future generations for the opportunities ahead—not one designed to preserve the status quo."

"The voters of Texas should decide who earns their support. Instead, ballot access laws are engineered to narrow their choices before the election even begins," said Drath. "A healthy democracy welcomes competition. It does not hide behind technical barriers, partisan primaries, or manipulated district lines to keep voters from hearing from independent voices."

The Forward Party supports reforms that give voters more voice, more choice, and more power in the political process. That includes fair ballot access, open and competitive elections, independent redistricting, and systems that reward problem-solving over partisan warfare.

The Forward Party will continue to support efforts in Texas and across the country to remove unfair barriers to political competition and build a democracy that works for voters first.

The Forward Party is bringing moderates, conservatives, and progressives together to heal our political divisions, find our shared ground, and create a brighter future for America. Forward Party candidates are accountable to the voters, and they will focus on solutions, not partisan fighting, in order to serve their constituents better. <https://www.forwardparty.com>