



AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING ELECTION LAWS RELATED TO MINOR PARTIES; PROVIDING REQUIREMENTS FOR A MINOR PARTY TO QUALIFY THAT POLITICAL PARTY BY PETITION TO NOMINATE ITS CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE BY PRIMARY ELECTION; PROVIDING THAT ANY ELECTOR MAY SUBMIT A MINOR PARTY PETITION; PROVIDING DEADLINES FOR AN ELECTOR TO REMOVE THE ELECTOR'S NAME FROM A MINOR PARTY PETITION; PROVIDING PROCEDURES TO VERIFY ELECTORS' SIGNATURES ON A MINOR PARTY PETITION; REVISING PROCEDURES TO CERTIFY A MINOR PARTY PETITION; PROVIDING RETENTION REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH MINOR PARTY PETITIONS; PROVIDING THAT MONEY SPENT TO OPPOSE A MINOR PARTY'S PETITION TO QUALIFY TO HOLD A PRIMARY MUST BE DISCLOSED AND REPORTED IN THE SAME MANNER AS MONEY SPENT TO SUPPORT SUCH AN EFFORT; PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; AMENDING SECTIONS 13-10-601, 13-10-605, 13-37-601, 13-37-603, 13-37-604, AND 13-37-605, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN APPLICABILITY DATE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**Section 1. Submission and form of minor party petition.** (1) (a) Any elector may present a petition to the secretary of state to request that a political party that does not qualify to hold a primary election under 13-10-601(1) may qualify to nominate its candidates by primary election.

(b) The petition must be in the form prescribed by the secretary of state.

(2) The petition must be signed by a number of registered voters equal to 5% or more of the total votes cast for the successful candidate for governor at the last general election or 5,000 electors, whichever is less. The number must include the registered voters in at least one-third of the legislative districts equal to 5% or more of the total votes cast for the successful candidate for governor at the last general election in those districts or 150 electors in those districts, whichever is less.

(3) Signed sheets or sections of petitions with original signatures and the affidavits of circulation as provided in [section 2] must be submitted to the official responsible for registration of electors in the county in which the signatures were obtained no sooner than 9 months and no later than 4 weeks before the final date for filing the petition with the secretary of state as provided in [section 4(2)].

(4) (a) An elector may withdraw the elector's signature from a petition under [this part] until the final submission of petition sheets as provided in subsection (3).

(b) The county election administrator may consider an elector's request for an elector's name to be withdrawn only after verification that the elector requesting to be withdrawn from the petition is the same elector who signed the petition.

**Section 2. Verification of signatures.** An affidavit, in substantially the following form, must be attached to each sheet or section submitted to the county official:

I, (name of person who is the signature gatherer), swear that I/we gathered the signatures on the petition to which this affidavit is attached on the stated dates, that I believe the signatures on the petition are genuine, are the signatures of the persons whose names they purport to be, and are the signatures of Montana electors who are registered at the address or have the telephone number following the person's signature, and that I/we told the signers the contents of the petition before signing they signed the petition.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date on which the first signature was gathered)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of petition signature gatherer)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address of petition signature gatherer)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

Seal

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Person authorized to take oaths)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Title or notarial information)



**Section 3. Verification of signatures by county -- fraudulent or duplicate signatures.** (1) The county official shall check the names of all signers to verify they are registered electors. In addition, the official shall check all signatures on each sheet or section and compare them with the signatures of the electors as they appear in the records of the office. A signature may not be counted unless the elector has signed in substantially the same manner as it appears in the records of the office. If the elector is registered with a first and middle name, the use of an initial instead of either the first or middle name, but not both names, need not disqualify the signature. The signature may be counted so long as the signature, taken as a whole, bears sufficient similarity to the signature on the registration form as to provide reasonable certainty of its authenticity.

(2) Upon discovery of fraudulent signatures or duplicate signatures of an elector on any one issue, the election administrator may submit the name of the elector or the signature gatherer, or both, to the county attorney to be investigated under the provisions of [section 7] and 13-35-207.

**Section 4. County official to forward verified sheets.** (1) The county official verifying the number of registered electors signing the petition shall forward it to the secretary of state by certified mail with a certificate in substantially the following form attached:

To the Honorable \_\_\_\_\_, Secretary of State of the state of Montana:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ (title) of the County of \_\_\_\_\_, certify that I have examined the attached sheets of the petition to qualify the \_\_\_\_\_ political party to nominate its candidates by primary election in the manner prescribed by law; and I believe that \_\_\_\_ (number) signatures in (Legislative Representative District No. \_\_\_\_ ) (repeat for each district included in sheet or section) are valid; and I further certify that the affidavit of the signature gatherer of the petition is attached.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

Seal \_\_\_\_\_ (Title)

(2) The county official verifying the number of registered electors signing the petition shall ensure that it is received by the secretary of state at least 95 days before the date of the primary.

**Section 5. Certification of minor party petition.** (1) When a petition containing a sufficient number

of verified signatures has been filed and verified with the secretary of state as provided in this part, the secretary of state shall immediately certify that the completed petition qualifies the party to hold a primary election.

(2) If a filed petition does not meet the requirements of this part, the secretary of state shall certify that the political party does not qualify to nominate its candidates for public office by primary election.

(3) If a petition is filed under this part, the secretary of state shall certify the petition under subsection (1) or (2) at least 88 days before the date of the primary.

**Section 6. Retention of copies by county official.** The county official certifying the sheets or sections of a petition shall keep a copy of the sheets or sections certified in the official files of the official's office. The copies may be destroyed 3 months after the date the petition was certified unless a court action is pending on the sufficiency of the petition. If a court action is brought within 3 months after the date the petition is certified, the county official may destroy the files only after final disposition of the court action.

**Section 7. Violations -- penalties.** A person who knowingly makes a false entry on a petition or affidavit under this part or who knowingly signs a petition to qualify the same political party for the same primary election more than once is guilty of unsworn falsification or tampering with public records or information, as appropriate, and is punishable as provided in 45-7-203 or 45-7-208, as applicable.

**Section 8. Rulemaking.** The secretary of state shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this part.

**Section 9.** Section 13-10-601, MCA, is amended to read:

**"13-10-601. Parties eligible for primary election -- petitions by minor parties.** (1) Each political party that had a candidate for a statewide office in either of the last two general elections who received a total vote that was 5% or more of the total votes cast for the most recent successful candidate for governor shall nominate its candidates for public office, except for presidential electors, by a primary election as provided in this chapter.

(2) ~~(a)–A After certification of a petition by the secretary of state under [section 5(1)], a political party that does not qualify to hold a primary election under subsection (1) may qualify to nominate its candidates by primary election by presenting a petition, in a form prescribed by the secretary of state, requesting the primary election shall nominate its candidates for public office by primary election. However, this section may not be construed to prohibit an election administrator from not preparing a primary election ballot pursuant to 13-10-209.~~

~~(b)–The petition must be signed by a number of registered voters equal to 5% or more of the total votes cast for the successful candidate for governor at the last general election or 5,000 electors, whichever is less. The number must include the registered voters in more than one-third of the legislative districts equal to 5% or more of the total votes cast for the successful candidate for governor at the last general election in those districts or 150 electors in those districts, whichever is less.~~

~~(c)–At least 1 week before the deadline provided in subsection (2)(d), the petition and the affidavits of circulation required by 13-27-302 must be presented to the election administrator of the county in which the signatures were gathered to be verified under the procedures provided in 13-27-303 through 13-27-306.~~

~~(d)–The election administrator shall forward the verified petition to the secretary of state at least 85 days before the date of the primary."~~

**Section 10.** Section 13-10-605, MCA, is amended to read:

**"13-10-605. Qualifying minor political parties -- reports required.** (1) A person who spends or receives money ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor political party for primary elections using the petitions described in ~~13-10-601(2)~~ [section 1] shall comply with the provisions of Title 13, chapter 37, part 6.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "support or oppose" has the meaning as provided in 13-37-601."

**Section 11.** Section 13-37-601, MCA, is amended to read:

**"13-37-601. Definitions.** For the purposes of this part, the following definitions apply:

(1) (a) "Contribution" means:

(i) the receipt by a reporting entity of an advance, gift, loan, conveyance, deposit, payment, or

distribution of money ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition;

(ii) an expenditure that is made in coordination with a minor party qualification committee formed by the minor party that is reportable by the minor party qualification committee as a contribution;

(iii) the receipt of funds transferred from another reporting entity for use ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition; or

(iv) the payment by a person other than a reporting entity of compensation for the personal services of another person that are rendered to the reporting entity ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition.

(b) The term does not mean services provided without compensation by individuals volunteering a portion or all of their time on behalf of the reporting entity.

(2) (a) "Expenditure" means a purchase, payment, distribution, loan, advance, promise, pledge, or gift of money made by a reporting entity ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition.

(b) The term does not mean:

(i) services, food, or lodging provided in a manner that they are not contributions under subsection (1);

(ii) the cost of any bona fide news story, commentary, blog, or editorial distributed through the facilities of any broadcasting station, newspaper, magazine, or other periodical publication of general circulation; or

(iii) the cost of any communication by a membership organization or corporation to its members or stockholders or employees.

~~(3) "In furtherance of" means referring to or depicting a minor political party in a manner that is susceptible to no reasonable interpretation other than as a call for the political party to qualify to hold a primary election.~~

~~(4)~~(3) "Minor party" means a political party that does not qualify to hold a primary election under 13-10-601(1).

~~(5)~~(4) "Minor party petition" means a petition described by ~~13-10-601(2)~~ [section 1].

~~(6)~~(5) "Minor party qualification committee" means a combination of two or more individuals or a

person other than an individual organized ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor political party for primary elections using a minor party petition.

~~(7)(6)~~ (a) "Reporting entity" means the following entities that receive at least \$500 in aggregate contributions in a calendar year or make at least \$500 in aggregate expenditures in a calendar year:

- (i) except as provided by subsection ~~(7)(b)~~ (6)(b), an individual; or
- (ii) a minor party qualification committee.

(b) The term does not mean an individual if the individual's contributions and expenditures are otherwise reportable by a minor party qualification committee. This exception includes but is not limited to an individual who is a signature gatherer if the signature gathering company, partnership, or other business organization that directly hires, supervises, and pays the individual is otherwise required to report as a minor party qualification committee under this part.

(7) "Support or oppose" means referring to or depicting a minor party in a manner that is susceptible of no reasonable interpretation other than to advocate for or against a minor party's qualification to hold a primary election."

**Section 12.** Section 13-37-603, MCA, is amended to read:

**"13-37-603. Reporting entity -- reports required -- exception.** (1) A reporting entity shall keep detailed records of all contributions received and expenditures made by or on behalf of the reporting entity. If the reporting entity is a minor party qualification committee, the treasurer appointed pursuant to 13-37-602 shall keep the records on behalf of the minor party qualification committee.

(2) A reporting entity may not knowingly report a contribution in the name of any person other than the person by whom it was actually furnished.

(3) A reporting entity shall file periodic reports containing the information required by 13-37-605 pursuant to the dates required by 13-37-604.

(4) Records kept pursuant to this section must be preserved by the reporting entity for 4 years from the date prescribed in ~~13-10-604(2)(e)~~ [section 4(2)] on which the signatures were presented or otherwise would have been presented to the election administrator.

(5) The commissioner may inspect records or accounts that must be kept pursuant to this part, as

long as the inspection is made during reasonable office hours.

(6) If a reporting entity is otherwise required to file a report under Title 13, chapter 37, part 2, concerning the same matters required to be reported under this part, the reporting entity may not be required to file a duplicate report or duplicate information but shall file the information in one report."

**Section 13.** Section 13-37-604, MCA, is amended to read:

**"13-37-604. Reporting dates.** (1) A reporting entity shall file reports quarterly, due on the 15th day of January, April, July, and October, beginning in the quarter in which the individual or minor party qualification committee becomes a reporting entity and ending when the reporting entity files a closing report as provided by subsection (4).

(2) The initial report must include contributions and expenditures prior to the time a person became a reporting entity until the 5th day before the date of filing of the initial report, even if the minor party petition subsequently fails to garner sufficient signatures to qualify the minor party for primary elections.

(3) (a) Subsequent periodic reports must cover the period of time from the closing of the previous report to 5 days before the date of filing of the next report.

(b) Reports required under subsection (1) must be filed quarterly until the reporting entity files a closing report, even if no contributions have been received or no expenditures have been made during the reporting period.

(4) (a) A reporting entity shall file a closing report whenever all debts and obligations relating to the ~~effort in furtherance of qualifying to support or oppose the qualification of~~ a minor political party for primary elections are satisfied and further contributions or expenditures will not be received or made that relate to qualifying the minor political party for primary elections using the minor party petition.

(b) A closing report may be combined with the reporting entity's final quarterly report. However, the combined report must cover the period of time from the closing of the previous report until the date of filing of the combined quarterly and closing report.

(c) If the reporting entity does not file the closing report with the final quarterly report, the closing report must cover the period of the time from the closing of the last quarterly report until the date of the closing report.



(5) A reporting entity may file a combined opening and closing report if it otherwise comports with the requirements of this section."

**Section 14.** Section 13-37-605, MCA, is amended to read:

**"13-37-605. Content of reports.** (1) The periodic reports required by 13-37-603 must contain information concerning contributions received or expenditures made by or on behalf of the reporting entity. The reports must contain the following information:

- (a) for contributions received:
  - (i) the amount of cash on hand at the beginning of the reporting period;
  - (ii) the full name, mailing address, occupation, and employer, if any, of each person who has made aggregate contributions of \$35 or more;
  - (iii) for each person identified under subsection (1)(a)(ii), the aggregate amount of contributions made by that person within the reporting period and the total amount of contributions made by that person for all reporting periods;
  - (iv) the total sum of individual contributions made by the reporting entity and not reported under subsections (1)(a)(ii) and (1)(a)(iii);
  - (v) the name and address of each person from which the reporting entity received any transfer of funds for the purpose of ~~furthering supporting or opposing~~ an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition, together with the amount and dates of all transfers;
  - (vi) each loan of funds designated for use or used ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition from any person during the reporting period, together with the full names, mailing addresses, occupations, and employers, if any, of the lender and endorsers, if any, and the date and amount of each loan;
  - (vii) the amount and nature of debts and obligations owed to a reporting entity relating to the reporting entity's effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition, in the form prescribed by the commissioner;
  - (viii) an itemized account of proceeds that total less than \$35 from a person from mass collections made at fundraising events;

(ix) each contribution not otherwise listed under subsections (1)(a)(ii) through (1)(a)(viii) during the reporting period;

(x) the total sum of all contributions received by or for the reporting entity during the reporting period; and

(xi) other information that may be required by the commissioner to fully disclose the sources of funds used ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition;

(b) for expenditures made:

(i) the full name, mailing address, occupation, and principal place of business, if any, of each person to whom expenditures have been made by the reporting entity during the reporting period, including the amount, date, and purpose of each expenditure and the total amount of expenditures made to each person;

(ii) the full name, mailing address, occupation, and principal place of business, if any, of each person to whom an expenditure for personal services, salaries, and reimbursed expenses has been made, including the amount, date, and purpose of that expenditure and the total amount of expenditures made to each person;

(iii) the total sum of expenditures made by the reporting entity during the reporting period;

(iv) the name and address of each person to which the reporting entity made any transfer of funds ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition, together with the amount and dates of all transfers;

(v) the name of any person to whom a loan was made during the reporting period using funds designated for the purpose of ~~furthering supporting or opposing~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition, including the full name, mailing address, occupation, and principal place of business, if any, of that person and the full names, mailing addresses, occupations, and principal places of business, if any, of the endorsers, if any, and the date and amount of each loan;

(vi) the amount and nature of debts and obligations owed by the reporting entity relating to the reporting entity's effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a minor party petition in a form prescribed by the commissioner; and

(vii) other information that may be required by the commissioner to fully disclose the disposition of funds used ~~in furtherance of~~ to support or oppose an effort to qualify a minor party for primary elections using a

minor party petition.

(2) Reports of expenditures made to a consultant or other person that performs services for or on behalf of a reporting entity must be itemized and described in sufficient detail to disclose the specific services performed by the entity to which payment or reimbursement was made.

(3) Reports required by 13-37-603 must be verified as true, complete, and correct by the oath or affirmation of the individual filing the report."

**Section 15. Codification instruction.** [Sections 1 through 8] are intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 13, chapter 10, part 6, and the provisions of Title 13, chapter 10, part 6, apply to [sections 1 through 8].

**Section 16. Applicability.** [This act] applies to petitions described by [section 1] filed with the secretary of state on or after the [effective date of this act].

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,  
SB 350, originated in the Senate.

---

Secretary of the Senate

---

President of the Senate

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

---

Speaker of the House

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

SENATE BILL NO. 350

INTRODUCED BY G. HERTZ

BY REQUEST OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING ELECTION LAWS RELATED TO MINOR PARTIES; PROVIDING REQUIREMENTS FOR A MINOR PARTY TO QUALIFY THAT POLITICAL PARTY BY PETITION TO NOMINATE ITS CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE BY PRIMARY ELECTION; PROVIDING THAT ANY ELECTOR MAY SUBMIT A MINOR PARTY PETITION; PROVIDING DEADLINES FOR AN ELECTOR TO REMOVE THE ELECTOR'S NAME FROM A MINOR PARTY PETITION; PROVIDING PROCEDURES TO VERIFY ELECTORS' SIGNATURES ON A MINOR PARTY PETITION; REVISING PROCEDURES TO CERTIFY A MINOR PARTY PETITION; PROVIDING RETENTION REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH MINOR PARTY PETITIONS; PROVIDING THAT MONEY SPENT TO OPPOSE A MINOR PARTY'S PETITION TO QUALIFY TO HOLD A PRIMARY MUST BE DISCLOSED AND REPORTED IN THE SAME MANNER AS MONEY SPENT TO SUPPORT SUCH AN EFFORT; PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; AMENDING SECTIONS 13-10-601, 13-10-605, 13-37-601, 13-37-603, 13-37-604, AND 13-37-605, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN APPLICABILITY DATE.