

Nebraska's Third Parties Are Nowhere In Sight For 2010

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska voters tired of the growing acrimony between the Democratic and Republican parties likely won't be able to turn to any third-party candidates this election year.

The Libertarian, Green and Nebraska political parties were declared defunct in Nebraska early last year, because none of their candidates for president or Congress garnered 5 percent of the vote in November 2008, as required by state law for a political party to remain certified.

Since then, none of the parties has taken steps to gather the nearly 6,000 signatures from across the

state needed to be reinstated, according to Assistant Secretary of State Neil Erickson.

Any party wanting to put a candidate on this year's November ballot has until Aug. 1 to gather the signatures — about 2,000 in each of Nebraska's three congressional districts, Erickson said. Feb. 1 was the deadline for a third party to have gotten a candidate onto the primary ballot, he said.

In January 2009, the more than 10,000 voters affiliated with the three parties were notified by mail that their registration status was changed to non-partisan.

"I think that's unconstitutional, because people should have the right to have a political party they believe in," said Wausa rancher Paul Rosberg, who founded the Nebraska Party. "It's unreasonable to think any (third party) could get 5 percent of the vote in every election."

Formed in 2001 to breathe new life into the state's political landscape, the Nebraska Party now appears to be a loss, Rosberg acknowledged.

His party was offered as an alternative for "the average person" who felt he wasn't being represented by either the Republican or Democratic parties.

The party never moved much beyond the Rosberg family in proffering candidates for Nebraska races. Rosberg himself ran for governor in 2002, while one of Rosberg's 12 children, Joseph, ran for secretary of state and Rosberg's wife, Kelly, ran for state auditor.

Paul Rosberg drew just 4 percent of the vote, with Republican Mike Johanns winning the gubernatorial election. But Joseph Rosberg got about 6 percent of the vote for secretary of state, and Kelly got about 7 percent of the vote in the auditor's race — enough to keep the party alive.



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