

## Green Party Jill Stein and Ajamu Baraka on Ballot for 90% of US Voters

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*The Green Party campaign for presidential candidate Jill Stein and vice presidential candidate Ajamu Baraka has completed its 2016 ballot access drive. The campaign gathered over 250,000 signatures in the 28 states where they were required to petition.*

Stein/Baraka will be on the ballot in 45 states, including Washington D.C., and they will be official write-in candidates in three more states. Ballots cast for official write-in candidates are counted, whereas unofficial write-in ballots are not. Ninety percent of voters will see the Stein/Baraka ticket on the ballot, and they are eligible to win 424 electoral votes, 154 more than the 270 required to win. I spoke to Rick Lass, ballot access coordinator for the Stein/Baraka campaign

Ann Garrison: Rick Lass, I believe the Stein/Baraka ticket has qualified for the ballot in more states than the Green Party ever has, including even Ralph Nader in 2000. Is that correct?

Rick Lass: That's right, we're on in 45 states, and just a reminder to listeners, the Green Party counts D.C. as a state. So you could either say 44 states plus D.C. or 45 states, which is how we say it because we count D.C.

AG: Greens and Libertarians argue that any candidates who have surmounted enough state ballot access barriers to win should be included in the debates. And, 75 percent of voters have said that they would like to hear Greens and Libertarians in the presidential and vice presidential debates. Has this private corporation, the so-called "Commission on Presidential Debates" controlled by the Democratic and Republican National Committees, shown any sign of listening to the voters about this?

RL: Unfortunately, they have not, and as you point out, this Commission on Presidential Debates is controlled by the Democratic and Republican Parties. And the fact is year after year, more people are registering either in a third party, so called, or as independent voters because they don't believe the Democratic and Republican parties are the way to move forward.

And unfortunately, after 1992, the debates got turned over to this private corporation run by prominent Democrats and Republicans. So in spite of the fact that more and more voters don't have faith in the Democrats and Republicans, the Democrats and Republicans still control the media.

AG: And the debates.

RL: And the debates, which are really a media circus, unfortunately.

AG: Right. OK, it's often said that any party outside the Democratic and Republican duopoly has to spend most of the money they're able to raise on ballot access. How much did the Stein/Baraka campaign have to spend on the ballot access drives?

RL: Unfortunately, we had to spend between \$500,00 and \$600,000 just to get on the ballot in 28 states in this election cycle. So a huge amount of money and an even huger amount of energy went into the ballot access drives. Now, on the bright side, we had a tremendous number of volunteers working alongside the paid petitioners who were out talking to voters early about Jill Stein, and we were able to get on the ballot, as I mentioned, in more states than we've ever been on the ballot before. But we'd rather have that money right now to be doing advertising, to be paying people to get the word out about the importance of this campaign, and instead, we had to put it into getting on the ballot.

AG: OK, and will the number of states who already have Green Party ballot access be greater in 2020 than they were in 2016 because of your success this year?

RL: Well, I hope so. That remains to be seen. Most states have a minimum vote threshold, so if Jill Stein gets one percent or three percent or five percent of the vote in a given state, then yes, we will have ballot access in that state moving into 2020, but again, that remains to be seen. The big issue for voters around the country now is, if you want to see the Green Party on the ballot in 2018 and in 2020, vote Green this year. Don't be persuaded by the "oh, she can't win" argument or "oh, she's just a spoiler" argument. If we're going to build a long term alternative to the two-party system and to the politics of lesser evil-ism, we need to start voting Green right now, so that in 2020, we have an extra half a million dollars to spend on getting out the vote, and on party building, instead of having to waste it just getting on the ballot.

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