

Forming a New Political Party in Iowa

A political party, defined by *Iowa Code* section 43.2 is as follows:

The term "political party" shall mean a party that, at the last preceding general election, cast for its candidate for president of the United States or for governor, as the case may be, at least two percent of the total vote cast for all candidates for that office at that election. It shall be the responsibility of the state commissioner to determine whether any organization claiming to be a political party qualifies as such under the foregoing definition. A political organization that is not a "political party" within the meaning of this section may nominate candidates and have the names of such candidates placed upon the official ballot by proceeding under chapters 44 and 45.

The process for a political organization to achieve the status of a political party begins with the nomination of a candidate for the office of governor or president of the United States to appear on the General Election ballot. The next presidential election will be in 2008; the office of governor will be on the ballot in 2010.

Iowa law calls all political organizations that have not met the legal requirements (see above) to become political parties, "nonparty political organizations. These political organizations may nominate candidates for any partisan office on the general election ballot. Each nomination document is considered on its own merits; a nonparty political organization does not need to apply in advance to nominate candidates.

Nominations by political organizations can be made either by circulating nomination petitions (**Chapter 45**) or by holding a caucus or convention (**Chapter 44**). Forms and instructions for each process are available on the Secretary of State website: www.sos.state.ia.us or from the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State. The filing period for the 2008 General Election is July 28 through August 15, 2008.

Nominations by convention. Chapter 44 nominations for candidates for statewide offices are made by convention or caucus of at least 250 eligible electors of the organization, including at least one eligible elector from each of 25 of Iowa's 99 counties.

Nominations by petition. Chapter 45 nominations are made by petition. This process may be used by candidates who are not affiliated with any political organization and by the candidates of nonparty political organizations. A candidate for president, governor or U.S. Senator must submit at least 1,500 signatures. Every candidate must file an affidavit stating the candidate's residence, declaring that the candidate will qualify for the office if elected, and stating that the candidate understands some important requirements of state law. Iowa has no filing fee for any office on the ballot.

The name of each candidate that is certified to appear on the ballot will be accompanied by the name of either a political party, a non-party political organization, or the words "Nominated by Petition" (for candidates who are not affiliated with any named organization). If an organization's candidate for governor or president receives the required two per cent of the vote at the General Election, the organization may apply for political party status in Iowa.