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USA

Jill Stein Campaign Needs Support Now

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While socialists debate how to relate to the many thousands of progressives attracted to Bernie Sanders' campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, the most viable independent left alternative for 2016 needs support from socialists now. The Green Party and its leading presidential candidate, Jill Stein, are best positioned to secure state ballot lines across the country to provide a credible alternative to the candidates of the two major capitalist parties in 2016. What is needed now are (1) donations to the Stein campaign to help with ballot access drives now in 2015 and (2) help petitioning in the states where the Green Party does not yet have a ballot line secured for 2016.

Sanders supporters are going to need a Plan B when in all probability he loses the Democratic nomination. The way to make sure an alternative is ready in 2016 is to take action now in 2015.

Matching Funds

The Stein campaign is now raising funds in order to qualify for presidential primary matching funds. When qualified, all donations of between \$5 and \$250 from an individual will be matched dollar for dollar. In other words, an individual's total donations up to \$250 will be doubled by the matching funds system.

In order to qualify, the Stein campaign must raise at least \$5,000 in qualified contributions in at least 20 states. The Federal Election Commission's Presidential Election Campaign Fund will distribute up to a maximum of about \$25 million in matching funds to any one candidate, provided the campaign does not spend more than about \$50 million on its primary campaign. These spending limits are why Bernie Sanders is not using public funding for his primary campaign. He began his campaign with a goal of raising \$50 million by the end of 2015.

In 2012, Stein campaign met the matching funds qualifying threshold toward the end of the campaign. This time, the goal is to qualify a year ahead of the election. Donations up to \$250 will be matched until the Green primary season ends at the Green National Convention in Houston, Texas, August 4-7, 2016. As of Labor Day weekend, the Stein campaign was qualified in four states and more than half way to the qualifying threshold in another 10 states. Weekly state-by-state updates of the matching funds campaign are [here](#).

Ballot Access

The Stein campaign needs donations and matching funds now because now is the time to support state Green Party ballot access petitioning. The Green Party currently qualifies for the ballot in 22 states (including D.C.). See the map [here](#).

In previous presidential elections, the Greens have qualified the party on between 25 (Cobb 2004) and 44 (Nader 2000) state ballots. Stein was on 37 ballots in 2012, which covered 85% of the nation's voters. But in every year, the Green ballot access drive began in the Spring of the year of the election and consumed the campaign's resources through Labor Day. For the 2016 cycle, the Stein campaign and the Green Party have resolved to do as much of the ballot access drive as possible in 2015 and early 2016. The Stein campaign aspires to qualify in all 50 states and

D.C. and is supporting state party ballot access drives.

People who want to help with ballot access petition drives can volunteer with the Stein campaign, the Green Party's Ballot Access Committee, and/or their state Green Party.

Plan B for Sanders Supporters

Socialists committed to independent political action are not likely to persuade many progressives enthused by the Sanders' candidacy to drop Sanders for the Stein campaign before the Democratic primaries are held. But after the 13-state March 1 Super Tuesday primary dominated by southern states, in all likelihood Bernie Sanders' campaign will have reached the end of its rope. Sanders' supporters will then need a Plan B. If Jill Stein is on enough ballots at that time to be considered a credible alternative, the question for progressives will then be, Hillary or Jill?

If ballot access is a necessary condition for credibility, progressive positions on the issues are another condition. Stein should be attractive to Sanders supporters on the issues because she shares and goes beyond Sanders' progressive positions on economic policy and climate action. She also foregrounds and goes far beyond Sanders on racial justice, civil liberties, and anti-imperialism. See her platform summary [here](#).

Green Party Nomination Process

The national and state Green parties will remain impartial until the Green National Convention in August 2016 in order to ensure a fair nominating process that has legitimacy. Four other candidates are seeking the Green nomination. None of them have raised funds and hired staff. None of them are seeking to qualify for presidential primary matching funds or support state party ballot access drives with resources and volunteers. Stein has broad good will across the Green Party for running in 2012 the most effective Green presidential campaign since Nader in 2000. The other candidates will serve to raise perspectives that will help the party have a full debate on program and strategy going forward. You can read about all the Green candidates [here](#).

It is safe to say, however, that Stein is the presumptive nominee. No major issue or debate divides the candidates or the Green Party as the Greens were divided in 2004, when David Cobb upset Ralph Nader for the nomination. The party was divided in 2004 over a "Eurosoesafe states" strategy of accommodating the Democratic Kerry ticket in battleground states vs. the Ralph Nader/Peter Camejo ticket's commitment to political independence and vigorous campaigns in every state.

Having survived the post-2000 backlash by liberal Democrats against Nader and having learned hard lessons from the self-defeating and demoralizing safe states strategy in 2004, the Greens' commitment to independent political action is today stronger than it has ever been. Very few Greens have been attracted to Sanders' Democratic primary campaign. The Greens are focused on their own campaigns in 2015 and 2016.

Goals for Independent Left Politics in 2016

No one is under any illusion that Jill Stein can win the presidential election in 2016. The goals of her campaign are practical.

One goal is to give voice to progressive movements and positions in the 2016 presidential election. She hopes to shape the policy debate by denying the Democratic nominee the ability to take progressive votes for granted. She wants to help movement activists see that independent politics is a more powerful approach than dependent politics on Democratic allies. Without the threat of taking votes away, movement demands are ignored by the Democrats who think they have progressive votes securely in their pocket.

Because Stein will be on the ballot in the battleground states like Florida, Virginia, and Ohio, she will get a platform from which to speak when she is attacked by Democrats as a spoiler. That will give her the opportunity to respond that neither major party candidate has real solutions to the problems we face and to lay out her progressive alternatives.

The Stein campaign is also engaged in efforts to open up the presidential debates. In 2012, Stein and her Vice Presidential running mate, Cheri Honkala, were arrested for attempting to enter with credentials to view presidential debate site at Hofstra University. They were shackled to chairs for eight hours incommunicado from the media and their lawyers and staff with 16 security officers watching them. After the debate and media were over and gone, they were released. Stein is a plaintiff in two pending lawsuits by coalitions of election reformers seeking to open the presidential debates to third party candidates. One lawsuit is against the Federal Election Commission and the other lawsuit is against the Commission on Presidential Debates, a private organization controlled by the Democratic and Republican parties that has set the terms of the presidential debates since 1988.

Ballot Lines for Local Independent Political Action

Another goal of the Stein is to secure state ballot lines for the next election cycle. About 30 state ballot lines are within reach of the Stein presidential campaign. 19 states can secure ballot lines for the next election cycle with presidential votes of between 0.5% and 3%. 12 more states require 5%. One requires 10% and another 20%. The other 17 states and D.C. have requirements unrelated to the presidential vote.

Ballot lines are essential institutional infrastructure for an independent political insurgency. Without ballot status in many states, the obstacles to ballot access for local, state, and congressional candidates are very difficult if not completely insurmountable. The Greens want ballot lines so they can focus back to local elections and base building, which has always been the Greens' primary political strategy. About 130 Greens currently hold elected office and many more Greens are the stalwart organizers and activists in grassroots movements (as opposed to the funded, staff-run nonprofits that work in the Democratic Party orbit). Running for president and governor in many states has always been for the Greens mainly about securing ballot lines to enable local candidacies.

5% Vote in 2016 = \$10 Million Public Funding in 2020

5% of the vote nationally is another important threshold. If the Stein campaign reached it, the Green Party would qualify for general election public funding in 2020 that will be worth over \$10 million. The public funding for minor parties that qualify (5% to 25% in the previous election) is based on the ratio of the percentage received by the minor party to the average percentage received by the major parties. The minor party gets a grant that is that ratio's fraction of the major parties' grants. Until Congress passed and Obama signed a bill eliminating public funding for national conventions last year, 5% would have also qualified the Green Party for about \$2 million for organizing their 2020 national convention, which could have been used to support state Green parties to get organized to elect their delegations and hold their primaries, caucuses, platform hearings, candidate debates, and so forth.

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Because both major parties and their candidates have so much private money to run with these days, public funding for conventions is not needed by them, nor is public funding for presidential primary and general elections. Only independents like Jill Stein, Gary Johnson (Libertarian), and Buddy Roemer (Reform) used the presidential primary matching funds system in 2012. None of the Democratic or Republican candidates sought matching funds in 2012 and none have so far in 2015-16. Likewise, after Obama in 2008 became the first major party candidate to reject general election public funding, both major party candidates in 2012 refused to use it.

Now there are proposals in Congress to eliminate the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, which funds both the primary matching funds system and the grants to qualified candidates in the general election. These proposals come at a time when liberal campaign finance reform advocates have retreated from full public funding of all qualified candidates based on equal public grants, which was adopted by Maine in 1996 and Arizona in 1998. The reformers have since made their peace with privately financed elections as long as there is a public financing add on, especially since advocates for these partial public campaign finance reforms have received major funding from billionaires. So partial public funding based on matching funds or voucher systems is on the legislative agenda in state houses and Congress. This retreat by liberal reformers makes seeking to qualify the Green Party for the 2020 general election funding all the more a worthy goal. If a minor party like the Greens does not qualify for it in 2016, the Presidential Election Campaign Fund programs may not survive until 2020.

Is 5% a realistic goal? If the anti party establishment insurgencies of Sanders in the Democrats and Trump in the Republicans fall short and the "EurosoeDynasty Election" scenario between a Clinton and a Bush prevails, 5% may not be beyond reach for Stein. All we can do is be prepared to take advantage of that scenario, or many other plausible two-party choices that will disgust millions of voters. Being prepared means "now" donating to the Stein campaign and then petitioning for Green Party ballot access when the drive comes to a state near you.

September 9, 2015

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