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Libertarian Party Condemns GOP Intimidation Campaign Against Ballot-Qualified Iowa Candidates

Features, Press Release



National party vows to use “all available methods and resources” to defend Iowa Libertarians from threats, bribes, and bogus challenges by high-priced Republican operatives

WASHINGTON, D.C. The national Libertarian Party today condemned an escalating campaign of intimidation by Republican operatives aimed at forcing ballot-qualified Libertarian candidates

in Iowa off the 2026 ballot. According to the party and documentation provided by its candidates, that campaign has included offered inducements, threats of legal warfare, and a barrage of calls and texts pressuring candidates to drop out.

The pressure follows a grassroots success that Iowa Republicans plainly did not anticipate. Earlier this spring, Libertarian Party of Iowa Chair Stephanie Berlin issued a public call asking Iowans to download, circulate, and return candidate nominating petitions. The response was overwhelming. Volunteers across the state collected a record number of signatures, and on June 2 the party filed a full slate of four candidates for Governor, U.S. Senate, and two U.S. House districts, including Marco Battaglia in Iowa's 3rd Congressional District.

"Iowans of every background rolled up their sleeves and put these candidates on the ballot the right way, one signature at a time," said **Stephanie Berlin, Chair of the Libertarian Party of Iowa**. "Now that we have earned our place fair and square, the Republican machine is trying to rip it away with bullying, bribes, and lawyers. It will not work. We are not going anywhere, and Iowa voters deserve a real choice."

Within days of the filing, the documented pressure began.

According to the candidates' own accounts and contemporaneous text messages, Republican operatives, including figures tied to U.S. Rep. Zach Nunn's campaign and a Republican consulting firm, approached multiple Libertarian candidates and urged them to withdraw. The party says the candidates were variously offered inducements to quit, including the promise of personal face time in Washington, D.C. with a sitting member of the Trump administration, and were warned that refusing to withdraw would trigger "multiple challenges," "additional legal action," and Federal Election Commission complaints over their campaign filings.

The party says one Libertarian candidate also received calls and text messages from an individual purporting to be, and presenting himself as, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., urging him to abandon his race and endorse the Republican incumbent. The party says the number used appears to be that of a known associate of Secretary Kennedy. The Libertarian Party of Iowa is preserving the messages and call records as part of its documentation.

"Iowa Republicans know they can't win on ideas, so they are resorting to their favorite tactic: suppressing voter choice," said **Evan McMahan, Chair of the national Libertarian Party**. "When a third party gathers a record number of signatures and earns its place on the ballot, the answer is to debate them, not to bully them, bribe them, or sue them off the ballot."

The GOP has already moved from threats to filing. Republican objectors have lodged a formal challenge with Iowa's State Objections Panel seeking to remove Battaglia from the ballot, not over any forged signature or instance of voter fraud, but on the technicality that his petitions identify him by **Marco Battaglia**, and not his given name. Battaglia is the name under which he has publicly campaigned, been covered by Iowa media, and been recognized by Iowa election

officials across multiple election cycles. Battaglia has appeared on Iowa's general election ballot in four previous elections. The objectors have produced no evidence that a single petition signer was confused about who they were supporting.

It is a familiar playbook. In 2024, Republican challenges knocked Battaglia and two other Iowa Libertarian congressional candidates off the ballot over a paperwork dispute, forcing them into write-in campaigns. This cycle, the party took the harder, signature-gathering route precisely to avoid such challenges, and is now being targeted anyway.

The candidates, for their part, have refused to fold. Battaglia responded to the pressure by making clear that the votes that mattered most to him had already been cast, that his family had voted not to withdraw, and that he already has legal counsel and needs no "help" from the operatives demanding his exit.

The national party is backing them to the hilt.

"The national Libertarian Party will use all available methods and resources to defend Libertarian candidates in Iowa from these thuggish attacks by high-priced GOP operatives," McMahon said. "These candidates earned their place on the ballot through the sweat of Iowa volunteers. We will not stand by while Republican insiders try to threaten, bribe, and litigate them into silence."

The national Libertarian Party is reviewing all available legal and political options to protect its Iowa party and candidates and is prepared to respond to each challenge filed against them.



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