



March 31, 2021

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 292

Dear Chairman Ohrenschall and honorable members of the Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections:

As Chairman of the United States Transhumanist Party and Chief Executive of the Nevada Transhumanist Party, I strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 292, which would deprive all minor political parties in Nevada of the opportunity to fairly compete at the ballot box or to even viably attempt such competition.

The Transhumanist Party is an alliance of over 3300 members who advocate for transcending the flaws and limitations of the human condition through technology and for putting science, health, and technology at the forefront of American politics. We advocate initiatives and reforms that will improve the human condition for as many people as possible, with as much beneficial impact as possible – and without regard for scoring political points or defeating “the other side”. In the realm of electoral policy, we advocate for such measures as ranked-preference voting, electronic voting, proportional representation, all-inclusive debates, elimination of ballot-access requirements, and limitation of lobbying by politically connected special interests, while increasing the influence of advocacy by intelligent laypersons. We hold that all contemporary societal, political, and material problems can be solved if we look away from the political trench warfare of today and up toward a far brighter future.

The Transhumanist Party is resolutely opposed to Section 2 of SB292, which would double the number of required petition signatures from 1 percent to 2 percent of the voters who voted in Nevada in the last preceding general election. The 1-percent threshold would already be exorbitantly costly to parties with small or non-existent budgets, at a typical cost of \$4 or more per petition signature. A 2-percent threshold would be essentially unattainable. Even more onerous is the requirement in Section 2 that the petition signatures “must be apportioned equally among the petition districts” – which is essentially impossible to fulfill. If a minor party gathers one more signature, or perhaps two fewer signatures, from one petition district than from another, does that make the apportionment of signatures unequal and thus disqualify the entire petition? Moreover, if a minor political

party represents constituents who are predominantly located in one part of the State, is this party to be permanently barred from ballot access just because its constituents are not evenly spread throughout the petition districts? All residents of Nevada have legitimate political interests and a need for representation, no matter whether those interests are geographically localized or dispersed. Clearly, the requirement for equal apportionment is an artificial hurdle that is designed to be essentially impossible for minor parties to surmount. With such a requirement in place, it would become easy for a major political party to challenge and disqualify any number of petition signatures gathered by a minor political party after great expenditures of time, effort, and resources. Major parties could therefore suppress minor-party participation through tactics of attrition. To add to the burdens, Section 2 would reduce by about three weeks the time available to gather the doubly high, equally apportioned petition signatures. How impossible is it possible to make ballot access? And is that the question that good public policy should really be striving to answer? There is no compelling benefit to the people of the State of Nevada from being deprived of options to consider at the ballot box; indeed, limiting their choices only makes an illusion out of claims that our electoral system is democratic or representative.

The Nevada Transhumanist Party has been registered with the Secretary of State since August 31, 2015, and has maintained compliance with all requirements for a minor political party without ballot access. In early 2020 the Nevada Transhumanist Party was engaged in significant internal deliberations about attempting a petitioning effort to achieve ballot access; while the current threshold pursuant to NRS 293.1715 (1 percent of the total number of votes cast at the preceding general election for the offices of Representative in Congress) appeared to be quite daunting to a small, all-volunteer organization which refuses all special-interest funding on principle, we were nonetheless willing to give it an earnest attempt. Then COVID-19 arrived, and the resulting lockdown measures essentially prohibited petitioning for ballot access, *even as the petitioning requirement itself was not lifted*. This effectively prevented any minor political party from safely attempting to qualify for ballot access, and thus entrenched the ability of incumbent major political parties to operate without available alternatives. We thought the 1-percent signature requirement was onerous, but potentially attainable with immense effort. A 2-percent signature requirement, on the other hand, would be impossible for any political party except those with immense budgets funded by large donors. Whatever happened to limiting the influence of money in politics?

The Transhumanist Party also opposes the provisions of Sections 1 and 4 of SB292, which would establish straight-ticket party voting in Nevada. While the straight-ticket voting would technically apply to both major and minor political parties, the overwhelming benefit would accrue to major political parties, who are more likely to have candidates in the vast majority of races. Moreover, straight-ticket voting would discourage voters who are normally inclined toward one political party from even considering minor-party, independent, or nonpartisan candidates in individual races where those candidates might more strongly align with those voters' views. Every voter is an individual and does not

always adhere to the entire package of ideas in a major-party platform. This individuality and diversity of opinions should be respected, and each voter should accordingly be motivated and encouraged to research *all* of the individual candidates and issues and make an informed decision, rather than just delegating his or her nuanced preferences to a monolithic party line.

Straight-ticket voting is even disadvantageous for many candidates of major political parties, and I urge members of the Legislature to oppose it even if solely on the grounds of their personal self-interest. Consider this: if you are a Legislator from either major political party who nonetheless wishes to reach out to constituents from the other major political party – to build bridges and find common ground – straight-ticket voting will act to your detriment, because it will encourage voters who typically align with the other major political party to vote for that party’s candidate no matter what – even if you are a bridge-builder and the other candidate is an extremist who alienates much of his or her own constituency.

The Transhumanist Party also opposes Section 3 of SB292, because it would limit by more than three weeks the time available for a minor party to respond to a challenge of its qualification to place the names of candidates on the ballot. If, by some fantastical confluence of effort and luck, the minor party does manage to gather the newly required number of signatures, the amount of time available to defend them from the inevitable major-party challenge would be further narrowed to often render such a defense untenable.

Senate Bill 292 would achieve the opposite of establishing a fair, level playing field for political candidates and parties. Unfortunately, Senate Bill 292, if enacted, will only serve to exacerbate today’s political trench warfare by solidifying the bifurcation of the contemporary American body politic into two blocs that have each become increasingly monolithic and radicalized internally, and increasingly hostile toward the other, with no room between them to pursue unconventional and innovative solutions that can bridge partisan divides. This anticipated effect of SB292 is likely not anyone’s intention; however, the two-party system in the United States has a built-in downward spiral of incivility, hostility, and division which has, over the past year, crossed the line from mere acrimony into deadly riots and insurrections from extreme exponents of *both* sides of the partisan gulf. Any Legislator interested in stable and sensible governance should seek to avert an intensification of this scenario, and there is a vital role for a vibrant minor-party ecosystem in helping to prevent it.

How does Senate Bill 292 exacerbate political polarization? It does so by making it effectively impossible for minor political parties to even attain ballot access – in the numerous ways described above. This bill would make it clear to voters that minor parties are not just long-shot participants but are effectively shut out of the process altogether. Thus, many people who would have otherwise given a minor party a chance would be shunted into one of the major political parties that is barely more aligned with their views

than the other major political party. This would reinforce the bifurcation of America into two distinct blocs which are engaged in an ever-intensifying struggle with one another, to the detriment of any actual progress on policy and any actual solutions to the many pressing problems facing our State, country, and world. Bifurcation of the American body politic creates an “us-versus-them” dynamic, where anyone who is not part of one’s own bloc is automatically considered to be “the enemy” and whose ideas are automatically disregarded. The record increase in independent and nonpartisan voters already shows many Americans to be disillusioned by the toxicity and acrimony that characterize the electoral tactics of the major parties and their most vocal adherents. Without minor parties for them to seek alternatives in, these Americans will either be reluctantly dragged into the deleterious fray they have always wished to avoid, or try to refrain from political participation altogether – in which case the fray will *still* find them, as extremists from the major parties have increasingly been demonizing conscientiously apolitical Americans as well.

The antidote to polarization is *hyper-pluralism*, which is precisely what a vibrant minor-party scene would facilitate. In a hyper-pluralistic body politic, there is no clear “enemy” for any constituent, because different smaller parties will align with one another on different issues; one’s adversary on one issue could be an ally on another, and so it is worthwhile to remain on at least respectful terms with everyone. It is for this reason that parliamentary democracies, which allow for proportional representation and numerous political parties competing on each ballot, are generally far less roiled by partisan strife than America’s uniquely contentious two-party system. But Nevada does not even need to adopt a parliamentary system to achieve a similar outcome; it just needs to allow minor political parties to *compete* on the ballots. Note that we are not even asking for the minor parties to *win* (which would still be difficult enough on its own), but merely to be allowed to *compete!* Even the possibility of competition motivates both incumbent officeholders and major-party candidates to be more responsive to the needs of their constituents. Furthermore, minor parties can be fruitful repositories of ideas for major-party politicians to draw upon; the Transhumanist Party would be delighted to have any of its platform reflected in legislation advanced by major-party lawmakers. Ideas from minor parties tend to sufficiently depart from the prevailing major-party packages that they avoid triggering contentious and mutually intransigent debates about “wedge” issues and so may actually lead to solutions that most major-party policymakers are willing to entertain. Incumbents and major-party candidates can even derive much valuable campaign intelligence from election results involving minor political parties. A strong showing for a minor party indicates a set of issues that voters are interested in and that the incumbent or major-party candidate would do well to address while in office or on the campaign trail.

By shutting minor parties out of viable political participation, Senate Bill 292 would only accomplish the *illusion* of stability for leading figures of a major political party. In reality, one cannot have a stable or tranquil political experience in a general environment marred by ideological polarization and all of its attendant ills. Depriving people of legitimate alternatives will only alienate them further and feed into the undercurrents of frustration

and perceived disenfranchisement that permeate American politics today. Minor political parties are a major safety valve of American politics and can act to effectively channel dissent and discontentment into constructive avenues of mutual improvement and enhanced justice. In the Federalist No. 10, James Madison, at the onset of the American Republic, noted that the advantage of a large representative republic is precisely in “the greater security afforded by a greater variety of parties, against the event of any one party being able to outnumber and oppress the rest”. The American Founders, who feared precisely the scenario of two dominant factions vying for power at the citizens’ and the Republic’s expense, saw the “greater variety of parties” as an important safeguard against such an outcome. The Transhumanist Party echoes the Founders’ wisdom and would urge the Legislature to consider reforms in the *opposite* direction from those proposed in SB292 – namely, the elimination of all ballot-access requirements and the ability of any candidate or political party to compete fairly for office on the same terms as any other. After all, if a minor-party candidate is unpersuasive to the voters and the major-party candidates remain more popular, what is there truly for a major party to fear from allowing participation for all? But in the absence of such truly progressive reforms, we urge that the Legislature at least refrain from taking steps that would further limit electoral competition. Please reject Senate Bill 292.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gennady Stolyarov II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a double underline under the name.

Mr. Gennady Stolyarov II, FSA, ACAS, MAAA, CPCU, ARe, ARC, API, AIS, AIE, AIAF
Chairman, [United States Transhumanist Party](#)
Chief Executive, [Nevada Transhumanist Party](#)

<https://transhumanist-party.org>