Rotten Districts
by Jon Schuessler

If you live in Missouri, there's a fifty-fifty chance that at least one of your legislators won the office by default. This is the legacy of what I call "rotten districts" – political areas on a map that are virtually owned by either the Democratic or Republican party. In a rotten district, the voters don't matter, because there's only one name for them to pick.

Some of these districts were specifically engineered to short-circuit the democratic process and provide a sure vote for one party every time. Others gradually became "impractical" for the opposition party to make an effort. Regardless of the reason, a rotten district represents both a failure of the *two*-party system and democracy.

So what can we do? First, you can find out if you're in a rotten district. Click here to find out. If you are, make an effort to get an independent candidate on the ballot.

It's not as hard as you think. Missouri is actually a fairly friendly state when it comes to ballot access. In every case, though, you'll have to get registered voters to sign a petition.

The number of signatures varies. You'll need signatures equal to 2% of the total votes cast in your district in the last election. In *nearly every* case, this will be only 150 to 300 signatures. In a few districts, it will be about 500 signatures. (Incidentally, by law it can *never* be more than 10,000 signatures, but this only comes into play for statewide offices like governor.)

You can visit the Missouri Secretary of State's website for an example of a petition form, instructions on circulating petitions and other useful information. Click here to visit the site (look at the section on Independent Candidates).

The other thing you can do, of course, is support the parties that haven't gotten so big that they take the voters for granted. The Libertarian Party and the Constitution Party (and soon the Volunteer Party) have ballot access and are eager for your feedback and help.