

REFERENCE TITLE: new political parties; party name

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-seventh Legislature
Second Regular Session
2026

SB 1609

Introduced by
Senator Shope

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTIONS 16-462, 16-502, 16-801 AND 16-802, ARIZONA REVISED
STATUTES; RELATING TO POLITICAL PARTIES.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Section 16-462, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
3 read:

4 16-462. Form of paper ballot

5 The ballots for a primary election shall be printed with a different
6 color designation for each political party that is included on the ballot.
7 Unless otherwise provided by law, the ballot shall be printed, "official
8 ballot of the _____ party, primary election (date), _____
9 precinct, county (or city or town) of _____, state of Arizona". **THE**
10 **NAME USED TO IDENTIFY EACH POLITICAL PARTY ON THE PRIMARY BALLOT SHALL BE**
11 **PRESCRIBED BY SECTIONS 16-801 AND 16-802.** Below the heading shall be
12 placed the title of each office to be voted for, and an instruction to the
13 voter as to how many are to be voted for for the particular office, thus:
14 "vote for not more than _____" (insert the number to be elected),
15 under which shall be placed alphabetically and alternated, as provided by
16 law, the names of all the party's candidates to be voted for in each
17 precinct of the county or precinct or ward of the city or town for whom
18 nomination papers have been filed for such office, leaving as many blank
19 lines as there are offices under that title to be filled, followed by a
20 place for the voter to make a mark to indicate the voter's choice either
21 to the right or the left of the candidate's name, and of the blank line.
22 Double or more columns may be arranged on the ballot. In other respects
23 the ballot shall conform as nearly as possible to the ballot prescribed
24 for general elections.

25 Sec. 2. Section 16-502, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
26 read:

27 16-502. Form and contents of ballot

28 A. Ballots shall be printed with black ink on white paper of
29 sufficient thickness to prevent the printing thereon from being
30 discernible from the back, and the same type shall be used for the names
31 of all candidates. The ballots shall be headed "official ballot" in
32 bold-faced plain letters, with a heavy rule above and below the heading.
33 Immediately below shall be placed the words "type of election, (date of
34 election)" and the name of the county and state in which the election is
35 held. The name or number of the precinct in which the election is held
36 shall be placed on the ballot in a uniform location for all ballots. No
37 other matter shall be placed or printed at the head of any ballot.
38 Instructions to the voter on marking the ballot may be printed below the
39 heading as follows:

40 1. Put a mark according to the instructions next to the
41 name of each candidate for each office for whom you wish to
42 vote.

43 2. If you wish to vote for a person whose name is not
44 printed on the ballot, write such name in the blank space

1 provided on the ballot and put a mark according to the
2 instructions next to the name so written.

3 3. Put a mark according to the instructions next to the
4 word "yes" or "for" for each proposition or question you wish
5 to be adopted. Put a mark according to the instructions next
6 to the word "no" or "against" for each proposition or question
7 you wish not to be adopted.

8 B. Immediately below the ballot instructions shall be placed the
9 following:

10 Section One
11 Partisan Ballot

12 C. Immediately below the heading for section one there shall be
13 placed in columns the names of the candidates of the several political
14 parties. Next to each candidate's name there shall be printed in
15 bold-faced letters the name of the political party, WHICH SHALL BE
16 PRESCRIBED BY SECTIONS 16-801 AND 16-802. At the head of each column
17 shall be printed the names of the offices to be filled with the name of
18 each office being of uniform type size. At the head of each column shall
19 be printed in the following order the names of candidates for:

20 1. Presidential electors, which shall be in a list and next to the
21 list shall be printed in bold type the surname of the presidential
22 candidate, and the surname of the vice presidential candidate who is
23 seeking election jointly with the presidential candidate shall be listed
24 directly below the name of the presidential candidate. The indicator for
25 the selection of the presidential and vice presidential candidates shall
26 be directly next to the surname of the presidential candidate, and one
27 mark directly next to a presidential candidate's surname shall be counted
28 as a vote for each elector in the list next to the presidential and vice
29 presidential candidates.

- 30 2. United States senator.
- 31 3. Representatives in Congress.
- 32 4. The several state offices.
- 33 5. The several county and precinct offices.

34 D. The names of candidates for the offices of state senator and
35 state representative along with the district number shall be placed within
36 the heading of each column to the right of the office name for state
37 offices and immediately below the candidates for the office of governor.
38 The number of the supervisorial district of which a candidate is a nominee
39 shall be printed within the heading of each column to the right of the
40 name of the office.

41 E. The lists of the candidates of the several parties shall be
42 arranged with the names of the parties in descending order according to
43 the votes cast for governor for that county in the most recent general
44 election for the office of governor, commencing with the left-hand column.
45 In the case of political parties that did not have candidates on the

1 ballot in the last general election, such parties shall be listed in
2 alphabetical order below the parties that did have candidates on the
3 ballot in the last general election. The names of all candidates
4 nominated under section 16-341 shall be placed in a single column below
5 that of the recognized parties. Next to the name of each candidate, in
6 parentheses, shall be printed a three-letter abbreviation that is taken
7 from the three words prescribed in the candidate's certificate of
8 nomination.

9 F. Immediately below the designation of the office to be voted for
10 shall appear the words: "Vote for not more than _____" (insert the
11 number to be elected).

12 G. In each column at the right or left of the name of each
13 candidate and on the same line there shall be a place for the voter to put
14 a mark. Below the name of the last named candidate for each office there
15 shall be as many blank lines as there are offices of the same title to be
16 filled, with a place for the voter to put a mark. On the blank line the
17 voter may write the name of any person for whom the voter desires to vote
18 whose name is not printed, and next to the name so written the voter shall
19 designate his choice by a mark as in the case of printed names.

20 H. When there are two or more candidates of the same political
21 party for the same office, or more than one candidate for a judicial
22 office, the names of all such candidates shall be so alternated on the
23 ballots used in each election district that the name of each candidate
24 shall appear substantially an equal number of times in each possible
25 location. If there are fewer or the same number of candidates seeking
26 office than the number to be elected, the rotation of names is not
27 required and the names shall be placed in alphabetical order.

28 I. Immediately below section one of the ballot shall be placed the
29 following:

30 Section Two
31 Nonpartisan Ballot

32 J. Immediately below the heading for section two shall be placed
33 the names of the candidates for justices of the supreme court, judges of
34 the court of appeals, judges of the superior court standing for retention
35 or rejection pursuant to article VI, section 38, Constitution of Arizona,
36 judges of the superior court standing for election pursuant to article VI,
37 section 12, Constitution of Arizona, school district officials and other
38 nonpartisan officials in a column or in columns without partisan or other
39 designation except the title of office in an order determined by the
40 officer in charge of the election.

41 K. Immediately below the offices listed in subsection J of this
42 section, the ballot shall contain a separate heading of any nonpartisan
43 office for a vacant unexpired term and shall include the expiration date
44 of the term of the vacated office.

1 L. All proposed constitutional amendments and other propositions or
2 questions to be submitted to the voters shall be printed immediately below
3 the names of candidates for nonpartisan positions in such order as the
4 secretary of state, or if a city or town election, the city or town clerk,
5 designates. Placement of county and local charter amendments,
6 propositions or questions shall be determined by the officer in charge of
7 the election. Except as provided by section 19-125, each proposition or
8 question shall be followed by the words "yes" and "no" or "for _____" and
9 "against _____" as the nature of the proposition or question requires,
10 and at the right or left of and next to each of such words shall be a
11 place for the voter to put a mark according to the instructions that is
12 similar in size to those places appearing opposite the names of the
13 candidates, in which the voter may indicate his vote for or against such
14 proposition or question by a mark as defined in section 16-400.

15 M. Instead of printing the official and descriptive titles or the
16 full text of each measure or question on the official ballot, the officer
17 in charge of elections may print phrases on the official ballot that
18 contain all of the following:

19 1. The number of the measure in reverse type and at least twelve
20 point type.

21 2. The designation of the measure as prescribed by section 19-125,
22 subsection C or as a question, proposition or charter amendment, followed
23 by the words "relating to..." and inserting the subject.

24 3. Either the statement prescribed by section 19-125, subsection D
25 that describes the effects of a "yes" vote and a "no" vote or, for other
26 measures, the text of the question or proposition.

27 4. The words "yes" and "no" or "for" and "against", as may be
28 appropriate and a place for the voter to put a mark.

29 N. For any ballot printed pursuant to subsection M of this section,
30 the instructions on the official ballot shall direct the voter to the full
31 text of the official and descriptive titles and the questions and
32 propositions as printed on the sample ballot and posted in the polling
33 place.

34 Sec. 3. Section 16-801, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
35 read:

36 16-801. Representation of new party on ballot at primary and
37 general elections

38 A. A new political party may become eligible for recognition and
39 shall be represented by an official party ballot at the next ensuing
40 regular primary election and accorded a column on the official ballot at
41 the succeeding general election on filing with the secretary of state a
42 petition signed by a number of qualified electors equal to not less than
43 one and one-third ~~per cent~~ PERCENT of the total votes cast for governor at
44 the last preceding general election at which a governor was elected. From
45 this number, at least five different counties shall be included as the

1 county of registration among the required total of qualified electors and
2 at least ten ~~per cent~~ PERCENT of the required total of qualified electors
3 shall be registered in counties with populations of less than five hundred
4 thousand persons. The petition shall:

5 1. Be verified by the affidavit of ten qualified electors of the
6 state, asking that the signers thereof be recognized as a new political
7 party. The status as qualified electors of the signers of the affidavit
8 shall be certified by the county recorder of the county in which they
9 reside.

10 2. Be in substantially the form prescribed by section 16-315.

11 3. Be captioned "petition for political party recognition".

12 4. INCLUDE THE PROPOSED POLITICAL PARTY NAME, WHICH SHALL BE
13 DISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE NAME OF ALL EXISTING RECOGNIZED POLITICAL PARTIES
14 IN THIS STATE AND WHICH MAY NOT CONTAIN THE WORD OR PHRASE "UNAFFILIATED",
15 "PARTY NOT DESIGNATED", "NO PARTY", "NO PREFERENCE", "INDEPENDENT" OR
16 "DECLINE TO STATE" OR ANY VARIATION OF THOSE WORDS OR PHRASES.

17 B. Notwithstanding any other law, on recognition as a political
18 party that is represented by an official party ballot at the primary
19 election and accorded a ballot column at the succeeding general election,
20 a new political party is entitled to representation as a political party
21 on the official ballot through the next two regularly scheduled general
22 elections for federal office immediately following recognition of the
23 political party. After these two regularly scheduled general elections
24 for federal office, the political party is ineligible for further
25 representation on the ballot unless it qualifies for continued
26 representation on the ballot as prescribed in section 16-804 or it files a
27 new petition for recognition as a new political party pursuant to this
28 section and section 16-803.

29 C. FOR ALL ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PURPOSES, THE SECRETARY OF STATE
30 AND ALL OTHER ELECTION OFFICIALS SHALL RECOGNIZE A POLITICAL PARTY BY THE
31 NAME LISTED ON THE PETITION FOR POLITICAL PARTY RECOGNITION UNLESS THE
32 POLITICAL PARTY SUBSEQUENTLY FILES A LEGALLY SUFFICIENT NEW PETITION FOR
33 POLITICAL PARTY RECOGNITION PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION OR SECTION 16-802.

34 Sec. 4. Section 16-802, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
35 read:

36 16-802. Representation of new party on ballot for county or
37 municipal election

38 A new political party shall become eligible for recognition, shall
39 be represented by an official party ballot at the next ensuing primary
40 election of a county, city or town and shall be placed on the official
41 ballot at the succeeding regular election on filing with the officer in
42 charge of elections of the county or the city or town clerk, as the case
43 may be, a petition THAT IS signed by a number of qualified electors equal
44 to not less than two percent of the votes cast for county attorney in the
45 case of a county petition or for mayor in the case of a city or town

1 petition AND THAT OTHERWISE COMPLIES WITH SECTION 16-801. The county
2 recorder or the city or town clerk, as applicable, shall review the
3 petitions in the same manner prescribed by section 16-803, including the
4 selection of a random sample of twenty percent of the total signatures
5 eligible for verification, which shall be individually verified and
6 certified, and shall perform a calculation and projection of the total
7 number of valid signatures and make a determination whether the party
8 shall be recognized as prescribed by section 16-803, subsection I.

9 Sec. 5. Intent and purpose

10 The legislature intends by this act to reduce voter confusion,
11 prevent erroneous political party affiliation and support the orderly
12 administration of elections.

13 Sec. 6. Retroactivity; notice; compliance

14 A. This act applies retroactively to from and after December 31,
15 2024. Within five days after the effective date of this act, the
16 secretary of state shall provide notice of this act to all political
17 parties that are recognized pursuant to section 16-801 or 16-802, Arizona
18 Revised Statutes, as amended by this act.

19 B. Any political party that is not in compliance with this act
20 shall come into compliance within ten days after the effective date of
21 this act.

22 Sec. 7. Emergency

23 This act is an emergency measure that is necessary to preserve the
24 public peace, health or safety and is operative immediately as provided by
25 law.