

Federal Elections Commission (FEC) Equal Time Used Only for Democrats and Republicans, Independents and Third Parties Shut Out

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With political jockeying at an all time high for the upcoming presidential election, some have wondered where the "equal-time" clause has gone for FEC (Federal Elections Commission) registered candidates.

Originally, the equal time clause was created to provide all legal candidates for office equal access to television exposure. This was later limited to provide this privilege to only the two major parties.

Congress and the FCC have, when legislating, specifically used section 315 (the equal-time clause) to promote the dominance of two parties in an open multi party system. This has helped keep Democrats and Republicans in office, and has pushed independents and third parties to the side.

To add to the problem, radio and television broadcasting stations are also given the option of deciding what type of issue-oriented advertising they will show on their networks. In the 1969, case of *Red Lion v. the FCC*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that "the right of the viewer was paramount." Subsequently, the FCC has ruled that, "if broadcasters did not want a group's money or ideas, they do not have to accept it."

This decision allows radio and television broadcasters to selectively choose which subjects that they allow on their stations, effectively limiting the rights of independent and third party candidates.

The FCC rules have never been applied to cable channels, though several legal experts said cable often abides by an equal-time guideline in the hopes of avoiding a legal case that would set a precedent.

Now with the advent of cable news, there is 24 hour coverage of Democrat and Republican candidates for President, and seldom to none for independents and third parties. The growth of cable news broadcasting has drastically shifted the media attention in the favor of the major two parties.

Without any significant media coverage, the already daunting task of running for President of the United States as an independent, becomes even more daunting.

Congress has enacted legislation that makes it tougher to be included in the nationally televised debates, by declaring a 15 percent polling requirement in at least five national polls.

The United States constitution calls for an open political system with many parties, and not a two party hegemony.

America needs to show its openness towards new ideas and political alternatives in order to strengthen our political system. When competing ideas and persons are given the opportunity to run against each other, Americans can freely decide which ideas they feel are better, and not have it decided for them by limited choice to just Democrats and Republicans.

The framers of our constitution did not even intend for political parties due to the fear of a two party system that would dominate. Our first President, George Washington, was an independent and had no party affiliation.

Even one of our nation's forefathers, and second United States President, John Adams wrote, "there is nothing which I dread so much as the division of the Republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in

opposition to each other. This in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our constitution."

*** This release has been created by i1connect, an independent news agency.***

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