



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20463

December 18, 2000

CERTIFIED MAIL
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

ADVISORY OPINION 2000-39

Trey Smith, Treasurer
Pacific Green Party of Oregon
333 State St.
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Mr. Smith:

This refers to your letter dated November 2, 2000, requesting an advisory opinion concerning the status of the Pacific Green Party of Oregon ("the Party") as a State committee of a political party under the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended ("the Act"), and Commission regulations.

Your request includes the Party Bylaws (the "Bylaws ") and the Party Constitution (the "Constitution") which together detail various aspects of the organization of the Party. These documents prescribe the manner in which the Party, using several different subgroups such as its Executive Committee, engages in various activities such as selecting Party officers.¹ The Bylaws further detail the procedures for the holding of regular State Party conventions, the endorsement of Party candidates and the creation of local party chapters. You state that the Party has successfully placed several candidates for Federal office on the ballot for the 2000 elections. These candidates are Ralph Nader for U.S. President, Winona LaDuke for Vice President, and Tre Arrow for U.S. Representative from the 3rd Congressional District.

¹ The Federal political committee registered by the Party is the Pacific Green Party Federal Committee, which first filed with the Commission in 2000.

You also state that the Party is formally affiliated with the Association of State Green Parties, which is one of the two national Green Party organizations.² The request includes a letter from the Secretary of the Association of State Green Parties recognizing the State Party as a member of the national organization and as the recognized Green Party in the State of Oregon.

Under the Act and Commission regulations, the term "State committee" means the organization which, by virtue of the bylaws of a political party, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of such political party at the State level, as determined by the Commission. 2 U.S.C. §431(15); 11 CFR 100.14. The definition of State committee also requires the existence of a political party. The term "political party" is defined under 2 U.S.C. §431(16) and 11 CFR 100.15 as an association, committee, or organization which nominates a candidate for election to any Federal office whose name appears on the election ballot as the candidate of such association, committee, or organization. An individual becomes a candidate for purposes of the Act if he or she receives contributions aggregating in excess of \$5,000, or makes expenditures in excess of \$5,000. 2 U.S.C. §431(2).³

The first element of the Act and regulations' requirements for State committee status is that the bylaws of a political party establish that the Pacific Green Party of Oregon is responsible for the day-to-day operation of such political party at the State level.⁴ As noted above, the Party's rules set out an identifiable organizational structure for the Party with varying responsibilities. Bylaws, articles V, VI, VIII, XVII; Constitution, articles IV, V, and VI. As they delineate activity commensurate with the day-to-day functions and operations of a political party on a State level, the rules meet the requirements of 2 U.S.C. §431(15) and 11 CFR 100.14, and they are consistent with the State party rules reviewed in previous situations where the Commission has affirmed the State committee status of a political organization. *See* Advisory Opinions 2000-35, 2000-

² The other Green Party national organization is the Greens/Green Party USA. In Advisory Opinion 1996-35, the Commission determined that Greens/Green Party USA did not qualify as the national committee of a political party.

³ Federal candidates must designate a principal campaign committee within 15 days after qualifying as a candidate, and the committee also becomes subject to various registration, recordkeeping, and reporting requirements. 2 U.S.C. §§432(e)(1), 433, and 434(a); 11 CFR 101.1, 102.1, and 104.1.

⁴ The Commission has considered either the bylaws of State party organizations or other governing documents in making these determinations. Advisory Opinions 2000-35, 2000-21, 2000-14, 1999-26, 1998-27, 1998-24, 1998-2, and 1997-29. In reviewing State party affiliates of entities that qualified as national committees of political parties under 2 U.S.C. §431(14), the Commission has looked to the existence of a State affiliate agreement which "delineates activities commensurate with the day-to-day operation of [a political party] on a State level," and then concluded that "[t]o the extent the relationship between [a political party] and an affiliate is based on this agreement and the affiliate displays evidence of activity by obtaining ballot access for both its Presidential and other Federal candidates, . . . [that] particular affiliate is a State Committee of the [political party]." Advisory Opinion 1998-24. The Commission has also granted State party committee status to organizations that were affiliated with national political parties which had not achieved national committee status. State committee status in these opinions was based on the existence of State bylaws detailing activities commensurate with the day-to-day operation of a party on the State level, and the placement of at least one Federal candidate on the ballot. Advisory Opinions 1998-27, 1998-23, 1997-29, and 1997-7.

21, 2000-14, 1999-26, and 1998-27.⁵ Therefore, the Commission concludes that the Party meets the first element.

The second element for qualifying as a State committee of a political party, and an essential element for qualifying as a political party, is that the party organization actually obtains ballot access for one or more Federal candidates, as defined in the Act. Of the Federal candidates identified in your request, Mr. Nader is the only one who, according to disclosure reports filed with the Commission, received or expended in excess of \$5,000 in his 2000 campaign. Accordingly, Mr. Nader satisfies the Act's definition of candidate. 2 U.S.C. §431(2).

Mr. Nader's name appeared on the 2000 ballot in the State of Oregon as the Presidential candidate of the Pacific Green Party.⁶ Therefore, the Commission concludes that the Party satisfies the definition of "political party" under the Act and thus meets the second element for establishing State committee status.⁷

In view of the fact that both elements discussed in this opinion have been satisfied, the Commission concludes that the State Committee of the Pacific Green Party of Oregon State qualifies as the State committee of a political party under the Act and Commission regulations.

⁵ The fact that the Party is not affiliated with a recognized national committee does not prevent its recognition as a State committee of a political party. *See* Advisory Opinions 2000-21, 2000-14 and 1976-95. The Commission has recognized the State committee status of other party committees affiliated with national organizations that did not qualify as national committees of a political party. The most recent example is the granting of State committee status to the Green Party of Washington State in Advisory Opinion 2000-35.

⁶ The official website maintained by the Secretary of State of Oregon confirms that Mr. Nader was on the 2000 U.S. Presidential ballot specifically as the candidate of the Pacific Green Party. Mr. Nader received the support of both national Green Party organizations. He was nominated for president at the convention of the Association of State Green Parties held June 23, 2000 in Denver, Colorado. *See* Advisory Opinion 2000-18.

⁷ As noted above, when determining state committee status the Commission made clear that a State political party could qualify as a State committee without an affiliation with any national political party organization and indicated that a State party's candidate must be a candidate under 2 U.S.C. §431(2) in order for that party to satisfy the second requirement. Advisory Opinions 2000-35, 2000-14, 1998-27 and 1998-23; see also Advisory Opinion 1976-95. The Commission has also granted State committee status to a State affiliate of a qualified national party committee where its only Federal candidates, as defined under the Act, were the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates of the national party. Advisory Opinions 1999-26 and 1997-3. Although the Association of State Green Party Parties has not qualified as a national committee of a political party, this does not change the fact that Mr. Nader's name appeared on the 2000 ballot in the State of Oregon as the Presidential candidate of the Pacific Green Party and that he had qualified as a candidate for purposes of the Act.

This response constitutes an advisory opinion concerning the application of the Act, or regulations prescribed by the Commission, to the specific transaction or activity set forth in your request. *See* 2 U.S.C. §437f.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Darryl R. Wold
Chairman

Enclosures (AOs 2000-35, 2000-21, 2000-18, 2000-14, 1999-26, 1998-27, 1998-24, 1998-23, 1998-2, 1997-29, 1997-3, 1997-7, 1996-35 and 1976-95).