



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION  
Washington, DC 20463

May 17, 2002

CERTIFIED MAIL  
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

ADVISORY OPINION 2002-06

Michael S. Wyman, Treasurer  
Green Party of California  
PO Box 2828  
Sacramento, CA 95812

Dear Mr. Wyman:

This refers to your letter dated April 16, 2002, with enclosures, requesting an advisory opinion concerning the status of the Green Party of California (“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 various documents including a copy of the Party bylaws (the “Bylaws”). This governing document details various aspects of the organization of the Party such as the manner in which the Party, using several different subgroups, including its State coordinating committee, engages in various activities; for example, endorsing Party candidates for statewide office. The Bylaws further explain the procedures for holding the Party’s various meetings such as its general assembly at which the Party chooses the members of its coordinating committee. You state that the Party successfully placed candidates for Federal office on the ballot in the 2000 elections. These candidates were Ralph Nader for U.S. President and Winona LaDuke for Vice President and Medea Susan Benjamin for U.S. Senate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Party also has a Federal committee, the Green Party of California PAC, which filed its statement of organization with the Commission on June 20, 2000. The Web site address for the Party is [www.cagreens.org](http://www.cagreens.org).

Your request states that the Party is officially affiliated with the Green Party of the United States (“the National Party”).<sup>2</sup> On May 2, 2002, the Commission received a letter from Dean Myerson, political coordinator for the Green Party of the United States, confirming the status of the Party as the sole affiliate of the National Party in the State of California.

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).<sup>3</sup>

As stated in the Act and Commission regulations, the first element of the requirements for State committee status is that the bylaws of a political party establish that the party entity is responsible for the day-to-day operation of such political party at the State level.<sup>4</sup> As noted above, the Party's governing document sets out an identifiable organizational structure for the Party with varying responsibilities. *See* Bylaws, articles 5 to 8. As they delineate activity commensurate with the day-to-day functions and operations of a political party on a State level, the Bylaws 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. The documentation received also confirms the status of the Party as the State affiliate of the National Party. *See* Advisory Opinions 2002-03,

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<sup>2</sup> In Advisory Opinion 2001-13, the Commission concluded that the Green Party of the United States is a national committee of a political party. *See* 2 U.S.C. 431(14).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> The Commission has considered either the bylaws of State party organizations or other governing documents in making these determinations. *Advisory Opinions* 2000-39 and 2000-35. 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 evidence, either a State affiliate agreement or correspondence from the national party that attested to the relationship and role the State affiliate plays “commensurate with the day-to-day operation of [a political party] on a State level,” *see* *Advisory Opinions* 1999-26 and 1992-30. The Commission has also found State party committee status with respect to organizations affiliated with national political parties that had not achieved national committee status or organizations that had no affiliation with any national organization. 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* 2001-02, 2000-39, 2000-35, and 2000-27.

2001-06, and 2001-02. 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, both Mr. Nader and Ms. Benjamin, according to disclosure reports filed with the Commission, received or expended in excess of \$5,000 in their 2000 campaigns.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, these individuals satisfy the Act's definition of "candidate." 2 U.S.C. 431(2). Since Mr. Nader and Ms. Benjamin appeared on the 2000 ballot in California as a candidates of the Party, the Commission concludes that the Party satisfies the definition of "political party" under the Act. It thus meets the second element for establishing State committee status.

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

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)

David M. Mason  
Chairman

Enclosures (AOs 2002-03, 2001-13, 2001-06, 2001-02, 2000-39, 2000-35, 2000-27, 1999-26, and 1992-30)

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<sup>5</sup> Your request includes a letter from Ms. Benjamin supporting State committee status for the Party.