



Contact: Katherine Revello, Communications Director
communications@lpri.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: The Libertarian Party of Rhode Island Condemns the Format of Rhode Island College's Gubernatorial Forum

The Libertarian Party of Rhode Island (LPRI) condemns the formatting of the October 13 gubernatorial forum, cosponsored by The Providence Journal, The Public's Radio and Rhode Island College.

The decision to put independent gubernatorial candidates, including Libertarian candidate Elijah Gizzarelli, on a separate stage from the Democratic and Republican candidates for governor robs them of the opportunity to debate Ashley Kalus and Dan McKee. The Libertarian Party is the third-largest political party in the United States and its candidates deserve the opportunity to fully participate in debates alongside Democrats and Republicans. Gizzarelli worked for and received ballot access alongside Kalus and McKee and should be afforded the same opportunities in the run-up to the election.

Further, the format will not allow Gizzarelli and his fellow independent candidates to respond to claims and accusations made by Kalus and McKee in real-time. Kalus and McKee will be able to do this, which puts Gizzarelli and other independent candidates at an unfair disadvantage.

By relegating independent candidates to a second stage, the two-debate format perpetuates the perception that independent candidates are a less valid option than major party candidates. Further, it runs the risk of limiting the audience to which independent candidates can spread their ideas.

"The press often labels themselves as the 'Fourth Estate' or the fourth branch of government. If they truly lived up to this moniker, there would be no question about allowing all qualified candidates to participate in debates. Instead of fulfilling their responsibility to inform voters of all of their options, the press curates your choices based on their own perceptions and bias." said LPRI Chair William Hunt.

"Do RI voters really want extra time to watch the major candidates throw mud at one another? Or, would they rather see those candidates forced to respond to the important issues that the three independent candidates are running on? This is yet another barrier to entry for any independent candidate looking to provide diversity of political opinion and offer voters more than just an illusion of choice." Hunt continued.

The Democratic primary debate held at Johnson and Wales University on September 6 managed to fit five candidates on one stage. There is no reason tonight's gubernatorial forum could not do the same.

Anyone wishing to know more about Gizzarelli or his campaign can visit www.eli4ri.com. For questions, contact LPRI Communications Director Katherine Revello at communications@lpri.us.

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