

Record No. 12-1067

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT**

THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY,

Plaintiff – Appellant - Movant,

v.

**THE HONORABLE NEWT GINGRICH, THE HONORABLE JON
HUNTSMAN, JR., AND THE HONORABLE RICK SANTORUM,**

Intervenor - Plaintiffs,

v.

CHARLES JUDD, KIMBERLY BOWERS, and DON PALMER,
members of the Virginia State Board of Elections, in their official capacities,
Defendants - Appellants - Respondent.

**Appeal from the United States District Court
For the Eastern District of Virginia
Richmond Division**

**MOVANT’S EMERGENCY MOTION FOR INJUNCTION PENDING
APPEAL**

Hugh M. Fain, III (VSB No. 26494)
Email: hfain@spottsfain.com
M. F. Connell Mullins, Jr.
(VSB No. 47213)
Email: cmullins@spottsfain.com
Edward Everett Bagnell, Jr.
(VSB No. 74647)
Email: ebagnell@spottsfain.com
SPOTTS FAIN PC
411 East Franklin Street, Suite 600
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Telephone: (804) 697-2000
Facsimile: (804) 697-2100

Joseph M. Nixon
Email: jnixon@bmpllp.com
James E. (“Trey”) Trainor, III
BEIRNE, MAYNARD & PARSONS, L.L.P.
1300 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 2500
Houston, TX 77056
Telephone: (713) 623-0887
acsimile: (713) 960-1527
**ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF
THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY**

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FACTS AND NATURE OF THE CASE

Movant, the Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of the State of Texas, and Republican Candidate for the President of the United States, filed this lawsuit because he believes he was unconstitutionally restricted from having his name appear alongside others on the ballot for the Republican primary for the Commonwealth of Virginia. On January 13, 2012, the District Court entered an Order (Doc. #74) and issued a Memorandum Opinion (Doc. #73) finding section 24.2-545 of the Virginia Code, is “likely . . . unconstitutional” and that Movant is likely to succeed on his claim.

In its analysis of the four *Winter* factors required for the granting of injunctive relief, the District Court found in favor of Movant on each: 1) Movant is likely to succeed on its claim as Virginia’s residency requirement for petition circulators is “highly unlikely to withstand [Movant’s] First Amendment Challenge”; 2) the harm to Movant resulting from Virginia’s unconstitutional law “would obviously be irreparable”; 3) the “balance of the equities tip in favor of [Movant]”; and 4) the “public interest weighs heavily in favor of [Movant].” (Doc. #73 p. 14-21). The Court found the only adequate remedy available remedy is for Movant’s name to be placed on the Commonwealth’s Republican primary ballot.

The District Court determined, however, that “except for the doctrine of

laches, [Movant] would be entitled to the relief [he] seek[s] (Doc. #73 p. 22). The equitable doctrine of laches essentially punishes a litigant for failing to assert his rights in a timely manner which operates to prejudice a defendant. As discussed herein, the Court abused its discretion in determining Movant rested on his rights for such a period of time to allow the Commonwealth to trample on Movant's First Amendment rights.

Movant filed this lawsuit on December 27, 2011, the same date the names of candidates qualified to appear on the ballot were scheduled to be certified and just two business days¹ after Defendant Mullins made a preliminary determination and publicly announced Movant did not submit enough petition signatures to qualify to be placed on the ballot. Prior to this date, Movant reasonably expected to meet the requirements of Virginia's "likely . . . unconstitutional" election law, and Respondents could not have suffered any injury, as they could not have begun the process of finalizing their ballot orders.

Movant moves this Court, pursuant to Rule 8(a) of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, for an order granting injunctive relief. Movant would show this Court should issue an injunction ordering Movant's name to appear alongside others on the ballot for the Republican primary for the Commonwealth

¹ Defendant Mullins made a preliminary decision Movant did not submit enough petition signatures on December 23, 2011. The four days between Defendant Mullins' preliminary decision and Movant's filing of this lawsuit included Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the generally recognized national holiday of December 26th, on which the federal courthouse was closed.

of Virginia, or in the alternative, that this Court issue an injunction ordering the Respondents not to order, print, or mail ballots prior to the Court’s final consideration of this appeal.

REASONS FOR GRANTING RELIEF REQUESTED

In asserting the equitable defense of laches, Respondents must demonstrate they were prejudiced by Movant’s unreasonable delay in pursuing his rights or claims. *See White v. Daniel*, 909 F.2d 99, 102 (4th Cir. 1990). “Laches imposes on the defendant the ultimate burden of proving ‘(1) lack of diligence by the party against whom the defense is asserted, and (2) prejudice to the party asserting the defense.’” *White*, 909 F.2d 99, 102 (4th Cir. 1990) (quoting *Costello v. United States*, 365 U.S. 265, 282 (1961)). A district court’s laches determination is reviewed for an abuse of discretion. *See PBM Prods., LLC v. Mead Johnson & Co.*, 639 F.3d 111, 120 (4th Cir. 2011). A court “has abused its discretion if its decision is guided by erroneous legal principles or rests upon a clearly erroneous factual finding.” *Brown v. Nucor Corp.*, 576 F.3d 149, 161 (4th Cir. 2009).

A. Movant was diligent in pursuing his rights

The first element of laches—lack of diligence—exists where “the plaintiff delayed inexcusably or unreasonably in filing suit.” *White*, 909 F.2d at 102 (quoting *Nat’l Wildlife Federation c. Burford*, 835 F.2d 305, 318 (D.C. Cir.

1987); citing *Giddens v. Isbrandtsen Co.*, 355 F.2d 125, 128 (4th Cir. 1966); *Baylor Univ. Med. Ctr. v. Heckler*, 758 F.2d 1052, 1057 (5th Cir. 1985)).

Movant first suffered harm as a result of Respondent's actions and Virginia's unconstitutional election law on December 23, 2011 when Defendant Mullins made his preliminary decision that Movant did not submit a sufficient number of petition signatures to appear on Virginia's Republican primary ballot. Before Defendant Mullins made his preliminary decision, Movant's injury was merely speculative, and not justiciable, as Movant very well may have succeeded in his efforts to secure the requisite number of petition signatures. *See Public Citizen v. Miller*, 813 F. Supp. 821, 827 (N.D. Ga. 1993), *aff'd* 992 F.2d 1548 (11th Cir. 1993) (per curium) (finding a plaintiff's constitutional claims challenging a majority vote statute "were not clearly ripe for adjudication prior to the run-off election" because plaintiff might have succeeded in winning such election, thereby making the constitutional challenge moot) (citations omitted).

The District Court found Movant's injury began on August 13, 2011, the date on which he filed his candidacy for president, due to his inability to spread his message at that time. (Doc. #73 p. 10-11). The Court's logic potentially yields incongruous results. Under the District Court's view, any candidate could wait until the day the petition signatures are due in Virginia to declare themselves a candidate for president and then assert a challenge to the constitutionality of

section 24.2-545 of the Virginia Code which would not be barred by laches.

Another illogical result of the District Court's reasoning is that it would require Movant, or any candidate for the Presidency, to pre-emptively apply for injunctive relief while there remains a possibility that they may collect the requisite number of signatures to appear on the primary ballot. This is absurd. Candidates for the presidency are focused on running for president, not on fighting legal battles to pre-emptively hold state election laws unconstitutional.

When Movant filed his candidacy, he expected to be able to comply with section 24.2-545 of the Virginia State Code. Movant timely, and steadfastly, moved to protect his constitutional rights once his claim was ripe, and he cannot be charged with inexcusably or unreasonably delaying the filing of this suit.

Even assuming, *arguendo*, Movant's injuries began when he first filed his candidacy, he cannot be charged with a lack of diligence prior to submitting his petition signatures, as he reasonably expected to be able to acquire the number required by section 24.2-545(B) of the Virginia Code. *See Smith v. Bd. Of Election Comm'rs for the City of Chicago*, 587 F. Supp. 1136, 1142 (N.D. Ill. 1984) (holding three candidates could not be charged with a lack of diligence prior to submitting their signatures because they may well have expected to be able to comply with the applicable statute) (citing *Citation v. Cycle Co., Inc. v. Yorke*, 693 F.2d 691 (7th Cir. 1982)). After Movant failed to acquire the requisite number of

signatures, he immediately moved to protect his rights before any prejudice occurred to Respondents.

B. Respondents were not prejudiced by any delay by Movant

“The second element—prejudice to the defendant—is demonstrated by a disadvantage on the part of the defendant in asserting or establishing a claimed right or some other harm caused by detrimental reliance on the plaintiff’s conduct.” *White*, 909 F.2d at 102 (*Gull Airborne Instruments, Inc. v. Weinberger*, 694 F.2d 838, 844 (D.C. Cir. 1982); *see also McCarthy v. Briscoe*, 429 U.S. 1317, 1322 (U.S. 1976) (ordering a candidate’s name on the ballot after the District Court ruled in favor of the state on its affirmative defense of laches).²

Movant filed this suit on December 27, 2011, the same date the names of candidates qualified to appear on Virginia’s primary ballot were scheduled to be certified. This was just four days after Defendant Mullins made his preliminary determination Movant did not submit the required number of signatures. On January 9, 2012 (and again on January 10, 2012), the District Court ordered Respondents to send a directive to each of Virginia’s local electoral boards

² In *McCarthy*, the state argued that it was too late to add the candidate’s name to the statewide ballot and the District Court and Court of Appeals denied relief on the basis of laches. *See McCarthy v. Briscoe*, 418 F. Supp. 816, 818 (W.D. Tex. 1976) (subsequent history omitted); *McCarthy v. Briscoe*, 539 F.2d 1353, 1354-55 (5th Cir. 1976) (subsequent history omitted). However, Mr. Justice Powell wrote for the Supreme Court: “This Court will normally accept findings of a district court affirmed by a court of appeals, on factual consideration such as those underlying a determination of laches. But acceptance of findings of fact does not, in this case, require acceptance of the conclusion that violation of the applicants’ constitutional rights must go unremedied.” *Id.* at 1322. The Supreme Court then ordered the candidate’s name be added to the ballot. *McCarthy*, 429 U.S. at 1323.

requesting them to refrain from ordering any ballots until after the hearing. (Doc. #46, 54). As of January 13, 2012, the date of the hearing on Movant's Emergency Motion for Injunctive Relief, the ballots had not been printed. Accordingly, Movant's requested relief of being placed on the ballot would not have caused any prejudice to Respondents at that time.

The case law cited by the District Court for its finding the Respondents were prejudiced due to the Movant's delay in filing suit highlights the sliding scale of prejudice which must be found in relation to the amount of time a plaintiff delayed in bringing his case. (Doc. #73 p. 11 (citing *Marshall v. Meadows*, 921 F. Supp. 490, 1494 (E.D. Va. 1996)). The District Court's analysis of the amount of prejudice Respondents are required to prove was based on the District Court's erroneous determination that Movant sat on his rights for over four months (since August 13, 2011 when he declared his candidacy), instead of the actual delay of just four days (two of which were holidays). Using the proper delay analysis, the District Court's holding would stand for the proposition that Movant's two-business-day delay in filing suit, even though not a single ballot could have been printed at the time Movant filed, amounts to a sufficient level of prejudice which satisfies the laches requirements. This is a clear abuse of discretion.

Because of the date Movant filed suit, the District Court indicates it can only speculate as to whether Movant would have been able to secure the 10,000 petition

signatures required under Virginia law. The purpose of this requirement, which Movant also contends is unconstitutional, is to show legitimate strength amongst the electorate.

Movant is a nationally-recognized Republican candidate for the presidency. He secured and submitted over 6,000 petition signatures following Virginia's "likely . . . unconstitutional" election laws. As discussed thoroughly above, Movant did not sleep on his rights in seeking redress for Virginia's violations of his constitutional rights, and he should not be punished because of the Respondents' claim Movant is without remedy due to his inability to show the support of the electorate. Movant has demonstrated this support both on a national level and in Virginia, and this Court should order his name placed on Virginia's Republican primary ballot.

MOVANT MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

A court may issue a preliminary injunction if it determines: (1) the plaintiff is likely to succeed on the merits; (2) the plaintiff is likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief; (3) the balance of the equities tips in the plaintiff's favor, and (4) an injunction is in the public interest. *W. Va. Assoc. of Club Owners & Fraternal Servs., Inc. v. Musgrave*, 553 F.3d 292, 298 (4th Cir. 2009) (applying *Winter v. Natural Res. Def. Council*, 555 U.S. 7, 19 (2008)). The District Court found Movant demonstrated he is entitled to

the injunctive relief under each of the four *Winter* factors. (Doc. #73 p. 14-21).

As specifically noted in the District Court's Opinion, the 1) Movant is likely to succeed on its claim as Virginia's residency requirement for petition circulators is "highly unlikely to withstand [Movant's] First Amendment Challenge"; 2) the harm to Movant resulting from Virginia's unconstitutional law "would obviously be irreparable"; 3) the "balance of the equities tip in favor of [Movant]"; and 4) the "public interest weighs heavily in favor of [Movant]." (Doc. #73 p. 14-21).

CONCLUSION

The District Court properly determined section 24.2-545 of the Virginia Code is "highly unlikely" to withstand a First Amendment challenge. The District Court also correctly determined Movant met the four *Winter* factors for injunctive relief. However, the District Court abused its discretion in determining Movant's two-business-day delay in filing suit after he suffered an injury subjected his claim to the doctrine of laches. Respondents had not suffered any prejudice at the time Movant filed suit, and Virginia's failure to expeditiously remedy its constitutional violations cannot be charged to Movant. Virginia's election law, which resulted in only two from a large field of Republican candidates being placed on the primary ballot, both violates Movant's constitutional rights and prevents the citizens of the Commonwealth

from having a meaningful choice at the primary election. The District Court abused its discretion, and the law and equity heavily favor Movant's request for injunctive relief. This Court should grant an injunction ordering Movant's name placed on Virginia's Republican primary ballot, or in the alternative, issue an injunction ordering the Respondents not to order, print, or mail ballots prior to the Court's final consideration of this appeal.

January 15, 2012

Respectfully Submitted,

THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY

/s/

Hugh M. Fain, III (VSB No. 26494)

Email: hfain@spottsfain.com

M. F. Connell Mullins, Jr. (VSB No. 47213)

Email: cmullins@spottsfain.com

Edward Everett Bagnell, Jr. (VSB No. 74647)

Email: ebagnell@spottsfain.com

SPOTTS FAIN PC

411 East Franklin Street, Suite 600

Richmond, Virginia 23219

Telephone: (804) 697-2000

Facsimile: (804) 697-2100

Joseph M. Nixon (Pro hac vice application)

Email: jnixon@bmpllp.com

James E. ("Trey") Trainor, III (Pro hac vice to pending)

Martin D. Beirne (Pro hac vice application pending)

BEIRNE, MAYNARD & PARSONS, L.L.P.

1300 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 2500

Houston, TX 77056

Telephone: (713) 623-0887

Facsimile: (713) 960-1527

ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF

THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on January 15, 2012, I electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF System, which will send a notification of such filing (NEF) to the following counsel of record for Defendants and Intervenors:

E. Duncan Getchell, Jr.
Wesley G. Russell
Office of the Attorney General
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Telephone: (804) 786-2436
dgetchell@oag.state.va.us
wrussell@oag.state.va.us
*Counsel for Charles Judd, Kimberly Bowers
and Don Palmer, members of the Virginia
State Board of Elections, in their official
capacity*

Joseph N. Lief
Virginia International Raceway
1245 Pinetree Road
Alton, Virginia 24520
Telephone: (434) 822-7700
*Counsel for Charles Judd, Kimberly Bowers
and Don Palmer, members of the Virginia
State Board of Elections, in their official
capacity*

Charles M. Sims (VSB No. 35845)
LeClairRyan, A Professional Corporation
Riverfront Plaza, East Tower
951 East Byrd Street, Eighth Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Telephone: (804) 343-5091
Facsimile: (804) 783-7655
Charles.sims@leclairryan.com
*Counsel for Patrick Mullins,
Chairman of the Republican Party of Virginia*

Stefan C. Passantino
Benjamin P. Keane
McKenna Long & Aldridge, LLP
1900 K St. NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone: (202) 496-7500
Facsimile: (202) 496-7756
Counsel for Newt Gingrich

J. Christian Adams (VSB No. 42543)
Election Law Center, PLLC
300 N. Washington St., Suite 405
Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone: (703) 963-8611
Facsimile: (703) 740-1773
adams@electionlawcenter.com
*Counsel for Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Jr.
and Rick Santorum*

Cleta Mitchell
Foley & Lardner LLP
3000 K Street, N.W., Suite 600
Washington, DC 20007-5109
Telephone: (202) 672-5300
Facsimile: (202) 672-5399
Counsel for Rick Santorum

Craig Engle
Arnet Fox LLP
1050 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036-5339
Telephone: (202) 857-6000
Facsimile: (202) 857-6395
Counsel for Jon Huntsman, Jr.

I further certify that some of the participants in the case are not registered CM/ECF users.

I will email and mail a copy of the foregoing document by First-Class Mail to the following non-CM/ECF participant:

Lee Elton Goodman
LeClairRyan, A Professional Corporation
1701 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Suite 1045
Washington, DC 20006
lee.goodman@leclairryan.com
*Counsel for Pat Mullins,
in his official capacity as
Chairman of the Republican Party of Virginia*

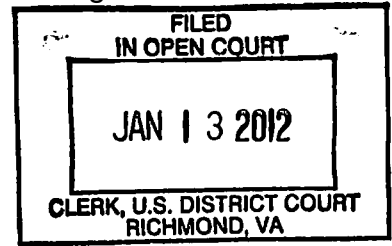
/s/
Edward Everett Bagnell, Jr. (VSB No. 74647)
Email: ebagnell@spottsfain.com
Attorney for The Honorable Rick Perry
SPOTTSFAIN PC
411 East Franklin Street, Suite 600
P.O. Box 1555
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1555
Telephone: (804) 697-2000
Facsimile: (804) 697-2100

Appendix A
(Doc. #74)

Appendix B
(Doc. #73)

Appendix C
(Doc. #46)

Appendix D
(Doc. #54)



IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division

THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY,

Plaintiff,

and

THE HONORABLE NEWT GINGRICH, THE
HONORABLE JON HUNTSMAN, JR., and
THE HONORABLE RICK SANTORUM,

Intervenors,

v.

Civil Action No. 3:11-CV-856-JAG

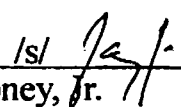
CHARLES JUDD,
Member of the Virginia State Board of Elections,
in his official capacity, *et al.*,

Defendants.

ORDER

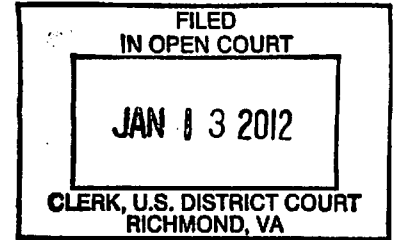
This matter is before the Court on the Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction filed by the plaintiff, the Honorable Rick Perry. (Dkt. No. 7.) For the reasons stated from the bench and in the accompanying Memorandum Opinion, the motion is DENIED. The Court's Order of January 10, 2012 (Dkt. No. 54), is dissolved.

It is so ORDERED.



John A. Gibney, Jr.
United States District Judge

Date: January 13, 2012
Richmond, VA



IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division

THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY,

Plaintiff,

and

THE HONORABLE NEWT GINGRICH, THE
HONORABLE JON HUNTSMAN, JR., and
THE HONORABLE RICK SANTORUM,

Intervenors,

v.

Civil Action No. 3:11-CV-856-JAG

CHARLES JUDD,
Member of the Virginia State Board of Elections,
in his official capacity, *et al.*,

Defendants.

MEMORANDUM OPINION

This matter is before the Court on the plaintiff and intervenor-plaintiffs' (collectively, the "plaintiffs") motion for a preliminary injunction. The plaintiffs are candidates seeking the Republican nomination for President of the United States. Under Virginia law, they failed to obtain the required number of petition signatures to place their names on the ballot for the Republican primary election. Now, they ask the Court for a preliminary injunction ordering that they be listed on the ballot. The plaintiffs argue that Virginia's rules limiting who can circulate candidate petitions and requiring 10,000 signatures violate the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.

The equitable doctrine of laches bars the plaintiffs' request for a preliminary injunction. They knew the rules in Virginia many months ago; the limitations on circulators affected them as

soon as they began to circulate petitions. The plaintiffs could have challenged the Virginia law at that time. Instead, they waited until after the time to gather petitions had ended and they had lost the political battle to be on the ballot; then, on the eve of the printing of absentee ballots, they decided to challenge Virginia's laws. In essence, they played the game, lost, and then complained that the rules were unfair.

Ordinarily, the decision on laches would preclude further analysis of the case. The Court recognizes, however, that the parties may well seek appellate review of this matter. In order to allow a complete review on appeal, the Court will also analyze the merits of the plaintiffs' claims.

I. Parties and Proceedings

The original plaintiff in this case is Rick Perry ("Perry"), a Republican candidate for the presidency. Three other Republican candidates have intervened as plaintiffs—Newt Gingrich ("Gingrich"), Rick Santorum ("Santorum"), and Jon Huntsman, Jr. ("Huntsman").

The defendants are Charles Judd, Kimberly Bowers, and Don Palmer, the members of the Virginia State Board of Elections (collectively, the "Board"). Pat Mullins ("Mullins"), Chairman of the Republican Party of Virginia, is also a defendant.

Perry filed this lawsuit challenging the petition requirements on December 27, 2011. Gingrich, Santorum, and Huntsman intervened on January 4, 2012. The Court ordered expedited briefing, and, on January 13, 2012, held an evidentiary hearing on the motion for preliminary relief.

The plaintiffs raise claims arising under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. They attack Virginia's rule that only people eligible to register to vote may circulate petitions for signatures to place a candidate on the ballot. The plaintiffs contend that

the limitation on who may seek signatures restricts their rights of free speech and association, because fewer people can advocate them as candidates.

The plaintiffs also challenge Virginia's statute requiring statewide candidates to obtain 10,000 signatures, including 400 from each congressional district, to secure a place on the ballot. They claim the number of signatures is too burdensome and, therefore, unconstitutional. Finally, the plaintiffs argue that Virginia's election procedures violate the Voting Rights Act.¹

II. Law Governing Preliminary Injunctive Relief

The requirements for preliminary injunctive relief are well established. Such relief is appropriate when the plaintiffs establish that (1) they are likely to succeed on the merits; (2) they are likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief; (3) the balance of equities tips in the plaintiffs' favor; and (4) an injunction is in the public interest. *Winter v. Natural Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 129 S. Ct. 365, 374 (2008); *Real Truth About Obama, Inc. v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 575 F.3d 342, 346-47 (4th Cir. 2009), *vacated on other grounds*, 130 S. Ct. 2371 (2010). As the Fourth Circuit explained in *Real Truth About Obama*, *Winter* requires that the plaintiffs make a clear showing that they will likely succeed on the merits at trial. *Real Truth About Obama, Inc.*, 575 F.3d at 346.

The traditional purpose of a preliminary injunction is to prohibit an action. Preliminary injunctions are meant to "protect the status quo and to prevent irreparable harm during the pendency of a lawsuit ultimately to preserve the court's ability to render a meaningful judgment on the merits." *In re Microsoft Corp. Antitrust Litig.*, 333 F.3d 517, 525 (4th Cir. 2003). Mandatory injunctive relief, however, alters the status quo by commanding or requiring a party

¹ The Court will focus on the facts relating to, and the legal sufficiency of, the residency and voter eligibility requirements and requisite number of signatures, as the plaintiffs seek a preliminary injunction based on their constitutional claims only. The plaintiffs do not seek preliminary relief on their claim under the Voting Rights Act.

to perform a positive act. In this case, the plaintiffs request that the Court require the Board to add their names to the primary ballot, which is a positive act that alters the status quo. The Fourth Circuit has viewed mandatory relief with caution, explaining that it “should be granted only in those circumstances when the exigencies of the situation demand such relief.” *Id.* at 526 (citing *Wetzel v. Edwards*, 635 F.2d 283, 286 (4th Cir. 1980)). “[A] mandatory preliminary injunction must be necessary both to protect against irreparable harm in a deteriorating circumstance created by the defendant and to preserve the court’s ability to enter ultimate relief on the merits of the same kind.” *Id.*

Laches is an equitable doctrine that precludes relief when a plaintiff has delayed bringing suit to the detriment of the defendant. The doctrine applies with particular force in the context of preliminary injunctions against governmental action, where litigants try to block imminent steps by the government. “Equity demands that those who would challenge the legal sufficiency of administrative decisions concerning time sensitive public . . . projects do so with haste and dispatch.” *Quince Orchard Valley Citizens Ass’n v. Hodel*, 872 F.2d 75, 80 (4th Cir. 1989); see *Equity in Athletics, Inc. v. Dep’t of Educ.*, 504 F. Supp. 2d 88, 100-01 (W.D. Va. 2007) (delay in bringing suit is a factor to be considered in granting preliminary relief); *Marshall v. Meadows*, 921 F. Supp. 1490, 1494 (E.D. Va. 1996) (“The Fourth Circuit is especially mindful of laches in the context of an impending vote.”).

III. The Virginia Statutory Scheme

The Virginia Code grants to the Board the authority to make rules and regulations and provide information consistent with election laws. See Va. Code § 24.2-103(A). Under Va. Code § 24.2-545, the Board has the responsibility to create the form for receiving primary petition signatures. The form prescribed by the Board requires petitions to be collected after July

1, 2011. Significantly for this case, the petition must be circulated by a registered voter or someone eligible to vote in Virginia, who signs the petition in the presence of a notary.²

The candidate must file petitions with the Board signed by at least 10,000 qualified voters, including at least 400 qualified voters from each congressional district in Virginia, who attest that they intend to participate in the primary. *See* Va. Code § 24.2-545(B). All presidential candidates seeking the nomination of a national party must also complete a Consent/Declaration Form, formally certifying their desire to run in Virginia.

Thereafter, the Board turns the petitions over to the party conducting a primary.³ The party then certifies to the Board which candidates have qualified to appear on the presidential primary ballot. Finally, the Board conducts a drawing to determine the order in which the names appear on the ballot.

IV. Statement of the Material Facts

All parties have filed extensive memoranda supporting their respective positions. The Court heard oral argument and conducted an evidentiary hearing on the preliminary injunction motion. The parties have also agreed that the Court should consider the affidavits and exhibits filed with the Court. Based on the evidence presented, the Court has determined that the following narrative represents the material facts of this case for the purpose of resolving the motion.

The plaintiffs are candidates for the office of President of the United States. Each plaintiff satisfies the requirements of the Constitution to be President of the United States.

² This requirement entails three separate limitations. First, circulators must be of age to vote. Second, they must be Virginia residents. Third, they must not be disqualified from registration by such things as felony convictions.

³ Since no candidates have challenged President Obama, there will be no Democratic primary.

Perry declared himself a candidate for president on August 13, 2011. He filed his Statement of Candidacy with the Federal Election Commission on August 15, 2011. Perry signed and affirmed, in the presence of a notary as required by Va. Code § 24.2-545, his Declaration of Candidacy for the Commonwealth of Virginia on October 13, 2011. On December 22, 2011, Perry submitted to the Board petitions containing fewer than 10,000 signatures.⁴ On December 23, 2011, Republican Party Chairman Mullins made a preliminary determination and publicly announced that Perry had not submitted enough petition signatures.

Gingrich declared his candidacy for the presidency on May 11, 2011. He filed his Statement of Candidacy with the Federal Election Commission on May 16, 2011, and submitted his Declaration of Candidacy for the Commonwealth of Virginia on December 22, 2011. On December 22, 2011, Gingrich also submitted his petition signatures. Gingrich claims that he submitted 11,050 signatures. The Board states that less than 10,000 of the submitted signatures were valid, but does not know the precise number of signatures submitted. On December 23, 2011, Mullins publically announced that Gingrich had not qualified to appear on the ballot.

Huntsman declared his candidacy for the presidency on June 21, 2011. He filed his Statement of Candidacy with the Federal Election Commission on June 28, 2011. Unlike Perry and Gingrich, Huntsman did not submit a Declaration of Candidacy in Virginia because he did not have the statutorily-required 10,000 signatures, and he therefore did not submit any petitions to the Board.

Santorum declared his candidacy for the presidency on June 6, 2011. He filed his Statement of Candidacy with the Federal Election Commission on June 6, 2011. The parties dispute whether Santorum submitted his Declaration of Candidacy. Santorum says that he

⁴ Perry contends he submitted more than 6,000 signatures. The Board agrees that Perry submitted less than 10,000 signatures, but does not know the precise number he submitted.

submitted more than 8,000 signatures, but he claims the Board refused to accept his signatures because they did not meet the 10,000 threshold. The Board contends that Santorum did not submit any signatures. The un rebutted testimony, however, showed that Santorum tendered the petitions, but the Board turned them down.

Unlike the plaintiffs, two other Republican candidates, Mitt Romney and Ron Paul, complied with Virginia's rules and will appear on the ballot.

The plaintiffs offered evidence that, if they could have used non-residents to gather signatures, they would have met the 10,000 signature threshold. Each candidate had out-of-state people ready, willing, and able to come to Virginia to secure signatures. For instance, Joe Allbaugh, the national campaign chair for Perry, testified that Perry had thousands of out-of-state volunteers lined up to circulate petitions in Virginia. Blake Harris, the ballot access coordinator for the Huntsman campaign, testified that buses of college students in Washington, D.C. were available as petition circulators. Finally, Mark Tate, the Virginia ballot access coordinator for Santorum for President, listed five individuals who collected signatures in Virginia that were unable to be counted because of the residency restriction. On the other hand, Jerry Kilgore, the campaign manager for Perry in Virginia, testified that he collected over 13,000 valid signatures on a "shoe string" budget using friends and family members during the 1997 election for Attorney General of Virginia.

The Court takes notice that, as of December 31, 2011, Virginia had 5,134,825 registered voters. In Virginia's last statewide election,⁵ 1,985,103 voters cast ballots.

In each Virginia locality, a local electoral board runs the election, following guidelines set up by the Virginia State Board of Elections. For each election, the State Board establishes a

⁵ The 2009 gubernatorial election.

schedule of events designed to allow elections to proceed smoothly and in a timely manner. Under the schedule for the 2012 Republican primary, candidates could circulate petitions to obtain the 10,000 voters' signatures beginning on July 1, 2011. On December 7, 2011, party chairmen were to inform the Board whether the party would conduct a primary election. By December 22, the candidates were to submit their signature petitions and a declaration of candidacy, which the Board turned over to the party chairs. By December 27, the chairs were to certify the names of candidates qualified to appear on the presidential primary ballot. On December 28, the Board determined by lot the order the names would appear on the ballot.

No later than January 9, 2012, the local boards were to order paper absentee ballots from printing companies. The local boards have been instructed to mail out the absentee ballots on or before January 21, 2012. The primary is to occur on March 6, and the Board will announce the official results on March 20, 2012.⁶

On December 23, Mullins announced that Perry did not have enough petition signatures. Four days later, Perry filed the instant suit, seeking placement on the Virginia ballot.

V. Discussion

The Court finds that the plaintiffs are not entitled to a preliminary injunction, for the reasons stated below.

A. Laches

The parties have fully briefed the issue of whether laches bars the requested relief in this case. Undoubtedly, the only adequate remedy in this case is to include any harmed individuals on the ballot for the Virginia Republican primary election. But the plaintiffs have waited too long to request such relief.

⁶ Other deadlines deal with registration to vote, return of absentee ballots, and voting before the election in-person in the local registrar's office. These matters are not at issue in this case.

Laches is an affirmative defense to claims for equitable relief. *White v. Daniel*, 909 F.2d 99, 102 (4th Cir. 1990), *cert. denied*, 501 U.S. 1260 (1991); *see Environmental Defense Fund, Inc. v. Alexander*, 614 F.2d 474, 478 (5th Cir. 1980), *cert. denied*, 449 U.S. 919 (1980). In essence, the doctrine “penalizes a litigant for negligent or willful failure to assert his rights.” *Valmor Prods. Co. v. Standard Prods. Corp.*, 464 F.2d 200, 204 (1st Cir. 1972); *Stoddard v. Quinn*, 593 F. Supp. 300, 308-09 (D. Me. 1984). Laches can serve as a defense to First Amendment claims. *See, e.g., Nader 2000 Primary Comm., Inc. v. Hechler*, 112 F. Supp. 2d 575, 579 (S.D. W. Va. 2000) (noting that “the loss of First Amendment rights, for even minimal periods of time, unquestionably constitutes irreparable injury.” (quoting *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347, 353 (1976))); *Gay Men’s Health Crisis v. Sullivan*, 733 F. Supp. 619, 631 (S.D.N.Y. 1989) (suggesting that, in appropriate circumstances, laches could bar First Amendment claims).

Laches requires the proof of two elements: (1) lack of diligence by the party against whom the defense is asserted, and (2) prejudice to the party asserting the defense. *Marshall*, 921 F. Supp. at 1493-94; *see Costello v. United States*, 365 U.S. 265, 282 (1961); *White*, 909 F.2d at 102. As stated by the Fourth Circuit in *White*, the first element of laches is lack of diligence, when “the plaintiff delayed inexcusably or unreasonably in filing suit.” *White*, 909 F.2d at 102 (citing *Nat’l Wildlife Fed’n v. Burford*, 835 F.2d 305, 318 (D.C. Cir. 1987)); *see also Baylor Univ. Med. Ctr. v. Heckler*, 758 F.2d 1052, 1057 (5th Cir. 1985) (laches found where “delay is not excusable”); *Giddens v. Isbrandtsen Co.*, 355 F.2d 125, 128 (4th Cir. 1966) (laches found where “inexcusable or inadequately excused delay”). An inexcusable delay can only occur after the plaintiff discovers or should have discovered the facts giving rise to his cause of action. *See Knox v. Milwaukee Cnty Bd. of Elections Comm’rs*, 581 F. Supp. 399, 402 (E.D. Wis. 1984); *Ward v. Ackroyd*, 344 F. Supp. 1202, 1212 (D. Md. 1972).

The second element is prejudice to the defendant. *See White*, 909 F.2d at 102. The defendant must prove that he has suffered a disadvantage or some other harm caused by reliance on the plaintiff's conduct. *Id.* (citing *Gull Airborne Instruments, Inc. v. Weinberger*, 694 F.2d 838, 844 (D.C. Cir. 1982)). Prejudice can be inferred simply from the plaintiff's delay, or from evidence of specific harm. *Id.* The greater the delay, the less the prejudice required to show laches. *Id.*

In this case, the plaintiffs were permitted to collect the requisite signatures for ballot access between July 1, 2011 and December 22, 2011. On December 22nd and 23rd, the plaintiffs were denied positions on the Virginia Republican primary ballot for failure to comply with the signature requirements of Va. Code § 24.2-545(B). On December 27, 2011, this suit commenced. Central to the plaintiffs' argument against laches is their contention that an injury-in-fact did not arise until December 22nd and 23rd, when they were denied a place on the ballot. They argue that they "timely sought relief at a time actual injury occurred" and "[t]o have brought this suit before they were declined a position on the ballot would have only presented the court with a hypothetical issue and subjected the claim to a ripeness defense." (Br. of Intervenors 4.) The Court disagrees.

Here, the plaintiffs claim a loss of their First Amendment rights of free speech and association. Any injury arose when the Commonwealth limited the categories of people who could spread their message, by banning petition circulators from out-of-state. The first day the plaintiffs were unable to communicate their message effectively was the first day they could circulate petitions. As of that date, they could have brought in an army of out-of-state circulators to persuade people to sign petitions and, ultimately, vote for them. Huntsman, Gingrich, and Santorum declared their candidacies before July 1, 2011; thus, the first day they could have used

out-of-state circulators was July 1. Perry declared his candidacy on August 13, 2011, and suffered injury from that date forward. Yet, the candidates waited almost half a year before seeking judicial relief. As to the first element of laches, therefore, the Court finds that the plaintiffs displayed an unreasonable and inexcusable lack of diligence.

This lack of diligence has significantly harmed the defendants. The Board established a reasonable, necessary, and comprehensive schedule of tasks leading to the primary election. Among those tasks is the printing of absentee ballots. To comply with federal law, absentee ballots must be distributed on or before January 21, 2012.⁷ To meet this deadline, the Board set a timetable for the localities to design ballots, order them from printers, proofread mock-ups, receive them, and mail them out. By January 13, 2011, the date of the preliminary injunction hearing, the local boards should have received absentee ballots, and begun the process of mailing them out. The filing of this suit, however, has changed the Board's careful scheduling into a chaotic attempt to get absentee ballots out on time. This alone amounts to damage that satisfies the laches requirements. *See Marshall*, 921 F. Supp. at 1494 ("The time element is most important Under the delay/prejudice ratio, prejudice need not be so severe where, as here, delay is conscious and substantial."). Don Palmer, the Secretary of the State Board of Elections, testified without contradiction that printing ballots is complex and requires a number of technical steps to imbed information into the ballots themselves and to program computers to count them. He also testified that, as of this date, absentee ballots cannot be prepared before they must be available.

But there is another, more fundamental injury caused by the plaintiffs' delay. Virginia insists that candidates secure 10,000 signatures of registered voters. *See Va. Code* § 24.2-

⁷ *See Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*, 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-1(a)(8)(A).

545(B). This requirement serves the valid purpose of limiting ballot access to candidates with a modicum of support and a viable chance in the election. Fringe candidates and crackpots have the potential to complicate needlessly both the ballot and the counting of votes. The 10,000 signature requirement is plainly constitutional (as discussed below), and the number of signatures required is not asserted as a ground for preliminary relief.

None of the plaintiffs have secured 10,000 valid signatures. They ask the Court to order their inclusion on the ballot without having secured the requisite number to show they are viable candidates. The Commonwealth has the right to demand a show of legitimate strength among the electorate. Had the plaintiffs brought suit in a timely fashion, the Court could have allowed the use of non-resident circulators, and the plaintiffs might have been able to muster the required show of support. As it stands now, however, the Court can only speculate whether they would have been placed on the ballot. It is too late for the Court to allow them to gather more signatures—the absentee ballots must go out now.

Accordingly, the Court finds that the plaintiffs have slept on their rights to the detriment of the defendants. The motion for a preliminary injunction is barred by laches.

* * *

As noted above, the decision on laches resolves the motion. To allow the parties a complete review on any appeal, however, the Court will address the other issues raised by the parties.

B. Standing

Article III standing is a fundamental jurisdictional requirement that defines and limits a court's power to resolve cases and controversies. *Miller v. Brown*, 462 F.3d 312, 316-21 (4th Cir. 2006); *Emery v. Roanoke City Sch. Bd.*, 432 F.3d 294, 298 (4th Cir. 2005). Standing

requires that a litigant have a personal stake in the outcome of a controversy as a result of having suffered some actual or threatened injury. *Kay v. Austin*, 621 F.2d 809, 811 (6th Cir. 1980) (citing *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228, 239 n.18 (1979)); see *Warth v. Selden*, 422 U.S. 490, 498-501 (1975). Accordingly, a litigant must demonstrate: (1) a distinct and palpable injury, (2) a fairly traceable causal connection between the claimed injury and the challenged conduct, and (3) a substantial likelihood that the injury is redressable by the relief requested. *Bennett v. Spear*, 520 U.S. 154, 162 (1997); *Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 560-61 (1992); *Duke Power Co. v. Carolina Env'tl. Study Grp., Inc.*, 438 U.S. 59, 72, 75 n.20 (1978).

The defendants claim that the plaintiffs lack standing because they do not have 10,000 signatures, and therefore may not appear on the ballot. This disingenuous argument confuses a decision on the merits with standing. Here, the plaintiffs contend that they do not have 10,000 signatures because of the Commonwealth's unconstitutional rules. They allege two distinct elements of injury: the inability to speak through non-Virginians, and the consequent failure to secure enough signatures to get on the ballot. These contentions satisfy the Article III standing requirement.

**C. Likelihood of Success on the Merits—
Argument Under State Law that the Statute Is Permissive**

The plaintiffs contend that they really do not need to comply with the requirement to submit 10,000 signatures to the Board, claiming that the filing of petitions is permissive, based on the use of the word “may” in the statute: “Any person seeking the nomination of the national political party for the office of the President of the United States . . . may file with the State Board petitions signed by at least 10,000 qualified voters” Va. Code § 24.2-545(B) (emphasis added). This argument is without merit. Clearly, the statute means that a candidate “may” want to run for election in Virginia’s primary. If he does so, he needs to comply with the

requirements of the statute, all of which are stated as things that “shall” be done. There is no question that they are mandatory. For decades, Virginia has enforced them as mandatory.

The plaintiffs’ argument renders the remainder of the section so much surplus language. Common sense and principles of statutory construction counsel against rendering a statute meaningless. As the Virginia Supreme Court has stated, “[A] statute should never be construed in a way that leads to absurd results.” *Meeks v. Commonwealth*, 274 Va. 798, 802, 651 S.E.2d 637, 639 (2007) (citing *Washington v. Commonwealth*, 272 Va. 449, 455, 634 S.E.2d 310, 313 (2006)). The Court recognizes that Va. Code § 24.2-545(B) does not mean that each and every person running for President of the United States is required to submit petitions to the Board; it does mean that those who choose not to submit petitions to the Board cannot appear on the ballot in the Virginia primary.

D. Likelihood of Success on the Merits—Residency Requirement

The authorities make clear that circulating petitions for candidates is a form of protected speech, and that the Commonwealth has a heavy burden to justify the restriction on speech by showing not only that the limitation achieves a compelling state interest, but also that the limitation is no broader in scope than necessary to achieve that purpose. *Buckley v. Am. Constitutional Law Found.*, 525 U.S. 182 (1999); *Lux v. Judd*, 651 F. 3d 396 (4th Cir. 2011). In the context of the First Amendment, the Court must “be vigilant . . . to guard against undue hindrances to political conversations and the exchange of ideas.” *Buckley*, 525 U.S. at 192 (quoting *Meyer v. Grant*, 486 U.S. 414, 421 (1988)). The Supreme Court’s decision in *Buckley* is instructive and guides the Court’s analysis in the instant matter. In *Buckley*, the Supreme Court struck down a Colorado regulation that required circulators for petitions of ballot

initiatives be registered voters, holding that the requirement “cuts down the number of message carriers in the ballot-access arena without compelling cause.” *Id.* at 197.

The Court recognizes that *Buckley* did not address the precise issue before the Court: whether the residency requirement should be upheld. The Supreme Court expressly did not address the residency requirement of the Colorado statute. *See id.* at 645 (“assuming that a residence requirement would be upheld as a needful integrity-policing measure—a question we, like the Tenth Circuit, have no occasion to decide” (internal citation omitted)). Since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Buckley*, however, the weight of decisions from courts of appeals have held residency requirements to be unconstitutional.

In *Lux v. Judd*, the Fourth Circuit addressed a similar residency requirement under Virginia law. 651 F. 3d 396 (4th Cir. 2011). *Lux* involved a would-be congressional candidate. Virginia law requires such candidates to secure signatures on petitions, and, similar to the instant case, the petition circulators must be residents of the district in which the candidate wants to run. This Court upheld the residency requirement in granting a motion to dismiss. The Fourth Circuit reversed, and remanded the case for this Court to review in light of *Buckley* and *Meyer*. Specifically, the Fourth Circuit held that, considering *Buckley and Meyer*, a challenge to a residency requirement states a plausible claim. The Court of Appeals directed this Court to assess independently the state interests served by the residency requirement and then determine whether the requirement unduly restricts the candidate’s First Amendment rights. Without expressly saying so, the Fourth Circuit has essentially indicated that this Court should apply strict scrutiny to the residency requirement. Given the outcome of *Buckley*, the state rule is highly unlikely to withstand the First Amendment challenge.

Directly on point is *Nader v. Brewer*, in which the Ninth Circuit struck down an Arizona law that required petition circulators to be residents of the state. 531 F.3d 1028 (9th Cir. 2008). The court extended *Buckley* to voter eligibility and residency requirements. The Ninth Circuit found that, despite the “millions of potential Arizona circulators, the residency requirement nevertheless excludes from eligibility all persons who support a candidate but who, like Nader himself, live outside the state of Arizona.” *Id.* at 1036. The Ninth Circuit held that the restriction “create[d] a severe burden on Nader and his out-of-state supporters’ speech, voting and associational rights.” *Id.*; see also, e.g., *Yes on Term Limits v. Savage*, 550 F.3d 1023 (10th Cir. 2008) (striking down a statute banning the use of non-resident petition circulators in Oklahoma’s initiative and referendum process); *Chandler v. City of Arvada*, 292 F.3d 1236 (10th Cir. 2002) (striking down a regulation prohibiting nonresidents from circulating initiative, referendum, or recall petitions); *Krislov v. Rednour*, 226 F.3d 851 (7th Cir. 2000) (striking down a statute requiring circulators of nominating petitions to be registered voters in the political subdivision in which the candidate is seeking office). *But see Initiative & Referendum Inst. v. Jaeger*, 241 F.3d 614 (8th Cir. 2001) (upholding state residency requirement for ballot initiative petition circulators).⁸ The Court agrees with the rationale in *Brewer*. As in *Brewer*, the restriction before the Court is less restrictive than those before the Supreme Court in *Buckley*. Yet, the rationale is the same: the provision limits the number of voices who can convey the candidates’ messages, thereby reducing “the size of the audience [the candidates] can reach.” *Buckley*, 525 U.S. at 194-95.

⁸ As Chief Justice Roberts observed in an appeal of the *Lux* decision to him sitting as a circuit justice, a split of authority exists in the circuits about residency requirements. In light of *Buckley* and *Meyer*, the Court believes that the split will be resolved against the validity of such requirements.

The First Amendment places a premium on political speech, especially speech about elections for public office. The drafters fashioned the First Amendment “to assure unfettered interchange of ideas for the bringing about of political and social changes desired by the people.” *Krislov v. Rednour*, 226 F.3d 851, 858 (7th Cir. 2000) (quoting *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476, 484 (1957)). By imposing a state residency requirement on petition circulators, the Commonwealth reduces the quantity of such speech available to its residents, and directly infringes upon the First Amendment rights of candidates, voters, petition circulators, and political parties. Of course, the boundaries of the First Amendment are not endless: if the Board can prove that it has a compelling state interest for the residency requirement, and that the requirement is narrowly tailored to serve that compelling state interest, then the regulation will stand. *See Republican Party of Minn. v. White*, 536 U.S. 765, 774-75 (2002).

To withstand strict scrutiny, the Commonwealth must establish that the challenged statutes are narrowly tailored to promote a compelling state interest. The Board has offered no evidence that allowing non-residents to circulate petitions increases the instances of fraud. Moreover, the Court is not persuaded that such an argument is valid, as multiple courts have rejected the idea that non-residents are inherently less honest. *See, e.g., Brewer*, 531 F.3d at 1037; *Yes on Term Limits*, 550 F.3d at 1029.

The Board contends that the residency requirement is necessary to protect the Commonwealth’s ability to subpoena petition circulators. *Brewer* and *Yes on Term Limits*, among other decisions, have stated that such an interest is not narrowly tailored, as states could require circulators to submit to the state’s subpoena power before becoming a circulator. The Board has done nothing to demonstrate how such a requirement would fail, beyond stating that “direct subpoena authority is more effective than an undertaking to be subject to out-of-state

jurisdiction.” Moreover, the Court is skeptical that subpoena power over out-of-state circulators is a compelling state interest—the critical signature on the petition is not that of the circulator, but that of the voter. Registered voters, by definition, are Virginia residents and subject to whatever examination the authorities deem necessary.

For these reasons, the Court believes that the residency requirements for petition circulators will likely be declared unconstitutional, and that the plaintiffs will ultimately prevail.⁹

E. Likelihood of Success on the Merits—10,000 Signature Requirement

In Count II of their Complaint, the plaintiffs argue that the 10,000 signature requirement of Virginia Code § 24.2-545 is unconstitutional as unreasonably burdensome. They do not argue this position in their brief in support of the motion for a preliminary injunction, and with good reason: they are not likely to prevail on this issue.

States have an important interest in “requiring some preliminary showing of a significant modicum of support” before printing a candidate’s name on the ballot, so as to “avoid[] confusion, deception, and even frustration of the democratic process at the general election.” *Prestia v. O’Connor*, 178 F.3d 86, 88 (2d Cir. N.Y. 1999) (citing *Jenness v. Fortson*, 403 U.S. 431, 442 (1971)); see *Cal. Democratic Party v. Jones*, 530 U.S. 567, 572 (2000). Moreover, the states “have important interests in protecting the integrity of their political processes from frivolous or fraudulent candidacies, in ensuring that their election processes are efficient, in avoiding voter confusion caused by an overcrowded ballot, and in avoiding the expense and burden of run-off elections.” *Clements v. Fashing*, 457 U.S. 957, 965 (1982). The pertinent question becomes, therefore, whether, given the totality of the circumstances, a reasonably

⁹ Given the Court’s finding that Perry is likely to succeed in establishing that the residency requirement is unconstitutional, the Court finds that the more restrictive component of the provision, that petition circulators be eligible voters, is likely to fall as well.

diligent candidate could be expected to meet the signature requirement or whether the statute is excessively burdensome. *See Storer v. Brown*, 415 U.S. 724, 738-40 (1974); *Fishman v. Schaffer*, 418 F. Supp. 613, 615 n.4 (D. Conn. 1976).

Numeric requirements for ballot access have consistently been upheld, including ones much more onerous. *See, e.g., Storer*, 415 U.S. at 726-27 (5% of vote cast in previous general election); *Am. Party of Tex. v. White*, 415 U.S. 767, 783 (1974) (22,000 signatures); *Jenness*, 403 U.S. at 438-39 (5% of eligible voters); *Rainbow Coal. of Okla. v. Okla. State Election Bd.*, 844 F.2d 740, 741 (10th Cir. 1988) (5% of votes cast); *Hall v. Simcox*, 766 F.2d 1171 (7th Cir. 1985) (2% requirement upheld); *Libertarian Party of Florida v. Florida*, 710 F.2d 790 (11th Cir. 1983) (3% requirement upheld); *Rosen v. Smith*, No. 92 Civ. 5880, 1992 WL 209290 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 18, 1992) (10,000 signatures requirement upheld for U.S. Senate primary); *see also Libertarian Party of Ill. v. Rednour*, 108 F.3d 768, 775 (7th Cir. 1997) (relying on *Jenness* and upholding 5% signature requirement); *Hewes v. Abrams*, 718 F. Supp. 163, 167 (S.D.N.Y. 1989) (“Under *Jenness* a standardized 5% signature requirement would be constitutional . . .”), *aff’d*, 884 F.2d 74, 75 (2d Cir. 1989) (“affirming substantially for the reasons stated by” the district court);

Virginia’s requirement of 10,000 signatures is a minimal number. It represents 0.2% of the Commonwealth’s registered voters. It is only 0.5% of the voters who turned out in the last statewide election. No one can seriously argue that the rule is unduly burdensome. Six candidates made the same ballot four years ago under the same rules. *See Virginia State Board of Elections, Official Results: 2008 February Republican Presidential Primary*, http://sss.sbe.virginia.gov/cms/documents/ElectionResults/Feb12_RepublicanPrimary.pdf. The 10,000 signature requirement serves the state’s legitimate interest in ensuring a fair and orderly

election.¹⁰ See *Anderson*, 460 U.S. at 788 (“[A]s a practical matter, there must be substantial regulation of elections if they are to be fair and honest and if some sort of order, rather than chaos, is to accompany the democratic processes”).

The Court finds that the plaintiffs are not likely to prevail on their challenge to the 10,000 signature requirement. The Court, therefore, cannot fashion relief that does not include compliance with the 10,000 signature requirement.

F. Irreparable Harm in the Absence of Preliminary Injunctive Relief

Pursuant to *Real Truth About Obama*, in addition to establishing that they will likely succeed on the merits, the plaintiffs must also establish that they will suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief. The plaintiffs have met this standard. The “loss of First Amendment freedoms, for even minimal periods of time, unquestionably constitutes irreparable injury.” *Newsom v. Ablemarle Cnty. Sch. Bd.*, 354 F.3d 249, 261 (4th Cir. 2003) (citations omitted). The plaintiffs are presidential candidates, and in the absence of preliminary relief, they will have no chance to secure the delegates from Virginia at the Republican convention. The harm to them would obviously be irreparable.

G. Balance of the Equities

¹⁰ The plaintiffs urge the Court to apply strict scrutiny in analyzing the constitutionality of the 10,000 signature requirement. They claim the signature requirements are sufficiently burdensome to require a heightened standard. See *Clements*, 457 U.S. at 964 (noting the appropriate inquiry is “whether the challenged restriction unfairly or unnecessarily burdens the availability of political opportunity.” (internal citation omitted)); see *Anderson v. Celebrezze*, 460 U.S. 780, 789 (1983). The Court disagrees. Because the requirement of 10,000 signatures is not unduly burdensome, the defendants need only proffer a rational basis in order for the regulation to survive a constitutional attack. *Rosen v. Smith*, No. 92 Civ. 5880, 1992 WL 209290, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 18, 1992) (citing *Unity Party v. Wallace*, 707 F.2d 59, 63 (2d Cir. 1983)); see *Tarpley v. Salerno*, 803 F.2d 57, 60-61 (2d Cir. 1986). In this case, a rational basis is found in Virginia’s legitimate interest in ensuring a fair and orderly election as well as the state’s interest in keeping frivolous candidates off the ballot. *Rosen*, 1992 WL 209290, at *3. In any event, even under the strict scrutiny standard the Court would find the signature requirement valid.

A mandatory preliminary injunction requires another party to perform a positive act; in this case, the plaintiffs request the Court to order the placement of their names on the Republican primary ballot. The Court recognizes that this type of relief alters the status quo and should be treated with caution. *In re Microsoft Corp. Antitrust Litig.*, 333 F.3d 517, 525 (4th Cir. 2003). The Court also recognizes the imminence of the primary, potential for voter confusion, increased expense, and a potential disruption of the electoral process if preliminary relief were to be granted.

Further, the Court appreciates the seriousness of a federal court intervening in the state electoral process. As this case shows, federalism is often espoused in principle, but abandoned in convenience. Nonetheless, as Perry's lawyers have correctly argued, federalism concerns do not obviate the need to comply with the Constitution, and the Court must decide this matter.

An injunction enjoining the Commonwealth from enforcing a regulation that the Court has determined is likely to be found unconstitutional cannot qualify as harm. *See, e.g., Newsom*, 354 F.3d at 361. The Court therefore finds that the balance of equities tips in favor of the plaintiffs.

H. Whether an Injunction Is in the Public Interest

The public interest weighs heavily in favor of the plaintiffs. The "right to vote freely for the candidate of one's choice is of the essence of a democratic society." *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533, 555 (1964). Although the public can and should rely on the Board for a smooth, machine-like operation of the electoral process, the public interest more closely lies with the voter's ability to cast a ballot for the candidate of her choice. This factor also weighs in favor of granting preliminary relief.

* * *

To summarize, the Court finds that, except for the doctrine of laches, the plaintiffs would be entitled to the relief they seek. Had the case been timely filed, the Court would have ordered the defendants not to enforce the residency requirement for petition circulators, and the plaintiffs could have tried, with the expanded pool of campaign workers, to get the 10,000 signatures.

VI. Conclusion

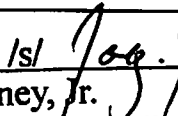
In sum, the Court finds that the plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction must be denied. The plaintiffs have waited too long to file, and the doctrine of laches bars their claim. The Commonwealth is far along in the electoral process. The primary election is so close that the plaintiffs cannot gather the requisite signatures to get on the ballot. To place the plaintiffs on the ballot would deprive Virginia of its rights not only to conduct the primary in an orderly way but also to insist that a candidate show broad support.

Had the plaintiffs filed a timely suit, the Court would likely have granted preliminary relief. They are likely to prevail on the constitutionality of the residency requirement, and, had they filed earlier, they would have been able to obtain the requisite 10,000 signatures. The Court would find that the plaintiffs satisfy the other requirements for preliminary relief.

For the reasons stated above, the motion for a preliminary injunction is denied.¹¹

The Court will enter an appropriate order.

Date: January 13, 2012
Richmond, VA

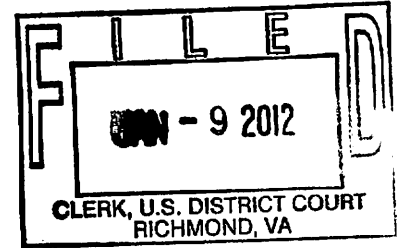


John A. Gibney, Jr.
United States District Judge

¹¹ Given the Court's ruling, the motion for a temporary restraining order is moot and will be denied.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division



THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY,

Plaintiff,

and

THE HONORABLE NEWT GINGRICH, THE
HONORABLE JON HUNTSMAN, JR., and
THE HONORABLE RICK SANTORUM,

Intervenors,

v.

Civil Action No. 3:11-CV-856-JAG

CHARLES JUDD,
Member of the Virginia State Board of Elections,
in his official capacity, *et al.*,

Defendants.

ORDER

The Court held a conference call on this matter on January 9, 2012. As stated in the conference call, Charles Judd, Kimberly Bowers, and Don Palmer, who are defendants in this matter in their official capacities as members of the Virginia State Board of Elections, are hereby ordered to send a directive to each of Virginia's local electoral boards. Mr. Judd, Ms. Bowers, and Mr. Palmer are ordered to direct the local electoral boards to refrain from mailing out any absentee ballots until after the hearing on the pending Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction on January 13, 2012. Mr. Judd, Ms. Bowers, and Mr. Palmer are further ordered to direct the local electoral boards, to the extent possible, to refrain from ordering any ballots until after the hearing. The decision on the Emergency Motion

for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction will be entered on January 13, 2012.

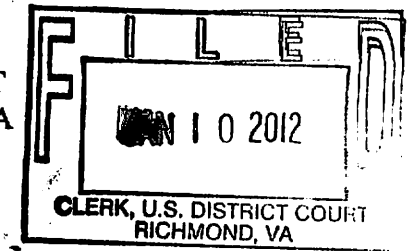
It is so ORDERED.

/s/ JAG
John A. Gibney, Jr.
United States District Judge

Date: January 9, 2012
Richmond, VA

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

Richmond Division



THE HONORABLE RICK PERRY,

Plaintiff,

and

THE HONORABLE NEWT GINGRICH, THE
HONORABLE JON HUNTSMAN, JR., and
THE HONORABLE RICK SANTORUM,

Intervenors,

v.

Civil Action No. 3:11-CV-856-JAG

CHARLES JUDD,
Member of the Virginia State Board of Elections,
in his official capacity, *et al.*,

Defendants.

ORDER

The Court held a conference call on this matter on January 9, 2012. All parties were represented by counsel during the call. At the conclusion of the call, the Court entered an Order directing the members of the Virginia State Board of Elections to take certain steps. In order to issue the Order as promptly as possible, the Court abbreviated the Order. The defendants indicated a desire to appeal the Court's Order, and the Court therefore memorializes in this supplemental Order the reasons for granting the motion and the terms of the Order.

During the conference call, counsel for the Members of the Virginia Board of Elections advised the Court that steps were under way to prepare and print absentee ballots for the Republican Presidential Primary Election to be held on March 6, 2012. The ballots are prepared under the general supervision of the State Board of Elections, but local electoral boards are

responsible for ordering the ballots from printers and having the ballots printed. No later than 45 days before the election, the local boards will send absentee ballots to voters who requested them.

In determining whether to issue preliminary relief, the Court must consider the four factors stated in *Winter v. Natural Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 129 S. Ct. 365, 374 (2008), and *Real Truth About Obama, Inc. v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 575 F.3d 342, 346-47 (4th Cir. 2009), *vacated on other grounds*, 130 S. Ct. 2371 (2010). Interim relief is appropriate when the plaintiffs establish that (1) they are likely to succeed on the merits; (2) they are likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief; (3) the balance of equities tips in the plaintiffs' favor; and (4) an injunction is in the public interest.

The Court finds that there is a strong likelihood that the Court will find the residency requirement for petition circulators to be unconstitutional. The authorities make clear that circulating petitions for candidates is a form of protected speech, and that the Commonwealth has a heavy burden to justify the restriction on speech by showing not only that the limitation achieves a valid state interest but also that the limitation is no broader in scope than necessary to achieve that purpose. *Buckley v. Am Constitutional Law Foundation*, 525 U.S. 182 (1999); *Lux v. Judd*, 651 F. 3d 396 (4th Cir. 2011). As in all strict scrutiny cases, the state has a difficult task to demonstrate the propriety of its limitation on protected speech. For this reason, the Court believes that the plaintiffs have a substantial likelihood of succeeding on the merits, at least on the issue of the validity of the residency requirement.

If absentee ballots are printed, and particularly if they are mailed, it will impair the Court's ability to enter an order granting relief to the plaintiffs. They are presidential candidates

and will have no chance to secure the delegates from Virginia at the Republican convention. The harm to them would obviously be irreparable.

The Court does not, at this time, make a preliminary judgment about the balance of the equities. The public interest, however, weighs heavily in favor of the plaintiffs. If ballots are printed and mailed, some voters will be denied a chance to vote for the candidate of their choice. If the Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs and a second ballot is sent out, voters will be confused about which ballot to use, and for which candidates they may vote.

The defendants point out that they will be hampered in getting the ballots out if they have to wait until after the hearing set on January 13, 2012, before printing ballots. The Court recognizes that the tasks of the electoral officials will be incrementally more difficult, but those tasks will not be impossible to accomplish. Under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986, as amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973ff to 1973ff-6, local electoral officials must mail absentee ballots to overseas voters who request them no later than 45 days before the election, which is January 21, 2012. The Court believes that the eight days between January 13 and 21 allow ample time to prepare and mail absentee ballots. The incremental inconvenience to the electoral officials is heavily outweighed by the public interest in the voting rights of citizens.

The Court's Order also allows the defendants ample time to comply with the Consent Decree in *United States of America v. Cunningham*, Case No. 3:08cv709. That Decree directs the State Board of Elections to canvas the local boards "[b]eginning the 50th day" before the election, which is January 16, 2012. Nothing in the Court's Order in this case prevents a canvas from occurring. On the 45th day before the election—January 21, 2012—the State Board of Elections should determine whether local boards have mailed out absentee ballots. Again,

nothing in the Court's Order prevents this from occurring. Moreover, as noted above, the Court finds that, even with the brief delay occasioned by this case, the local boards can meet the January 21 deadline imposed by UOCAVA and *United States v. Cunningham*.

In making these judgments, the Court has taken into account that the delay will run until no later than January 13, 2012—four days from the date of the Court's first Order. Had the delay been longer, the Court very well could have reached a different conclusion. Further, this temporary order should not be interpreted as an indication of how the Court will rule on the motion for a preliminary injunction on January 13, 2012. The parties have not completed briefing for the January 13 hearing, and the Court will be asked to consider a number of difficult issues related not only to the validity of Virginia's election laws and practices but also to the proper remedy for any Constitutional violation.

According to counsel for the defendants, local electoral boards order their own ballots from printing companies. Of course, the local boards are not parties to this suit, and are not subject to the Court's jurisdiction. The Court, therefore, has ordered the members of the State Board of Elections to send instructions to the local boards not to distribute ballots until after January 13, 2012. The Court has also ordered the defendants to instruct the local boards not to order ballots, if they have not already done so. The Court recognizes that local officials may choose to order and distribute ballots, regardless of the Board's directives. Nevertheless, the Court believes that local electoral boards generally follow the directions of the State Board of Elections. *See* Va. Code § 24.2-103 (directing the State Board to "supervise and coordinate" the work of local electoral boards by "issu[ing] instructions").

Accordingly, defendants Charles Judd, Kimberly Bowers, and Don Palmer are hereby ordered to send a directive or instruction to each of Virginia's local electoral boards. Mr. Judd,

Ms. Bowers, and Mr. Palmer are ordered to direct the local electoral boards to refrain from mailing out any absentee ballots until after the hearing on the pending Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction, to be held on January 13, 2012. The defendants are further ordered to direct the local electoral boards, if they have not done so already, to refrain from ordering any ballots to be printed until after the hearing.

This Order expires at 11:59 p.m. on January 13, 2012, or upon the Court's rendering of a decision on the Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction on January 13, 2012, whichever first occurs.

It is so ORDERED.

<p><i>/s/</i> _____ John A. Gibney, Jr. United States District Judge</p>
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Date: January 10, 2012
Richmond, VA