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### **Citizens for a Free Nebraska Petition Effort Withdrawn And To Be Restarted In July**

ELKHORN, Neb. – Citing reasons of their late start in the petition cycle, the learning curve involved in organizing a statewide effort, and the difficulty of meeting the requirements of the petitions process in Nebraska, organizers of Citizens for a Free Nebraska (CFN) have recently reached a decision to withdraw their petitions from this cycle and to restart their efforts in July.

Jason Fuller, an organizer of CFN explained that, “CFN has collected a substantial number of signatures and gained significant support from citizens and officials throughout the state since we began circulating our petitions in November of 2007. But unfortunately, we’ve recently reached the conclusion that our organization will not be able to physically collect enough signatures by this year’s deadline in July to meet the requirements of Nebraska’s petition process and to put our proposed laws up to a vote of the citizens on the November 2008 ballot. For that reason, CFN has decided to withdraw our petitions from this cycle. However, we are intently resolved to continue our efforts until effective, lasting changes are made to correct Nebraska’s unconstitutional annexation laws and to give the citizens of all cities and villages in Nebraska the right to vote to retain their independence when being threatened with hostile takeover; the same right to vote that exists in every other state in the entire Union.”

He added, “While it is true that we won’t be able to meet the 80,000 signature requirement by next month’s deadline, we at CFN don’t consider this to be a ‘defeat’ for us by any means. As we inform the citizens of the issues and speak with officials across the state, CFN continues to grow and gain support every day. Our opposition may be powerful, but so still are the citizens of Nebraska, and we are confident that our efforts to restore the principles of our Constitution will ultimately prevail. We are excited about the progress that we’ve made and continue to make, and will continue to explore every avenue possible in order to accomplish our goals, including another petition effort that will begin again immediately in July.”

State petition requirements specify that the initiative petition process can begin in July of an even numbered year and the signatures must be submitted by July two years later, and that the vote on the measures would take place at the general election that November. So, once CFN begins its next petition effort this July, it will have until July of 2010 to collect the necessary amount of signatures to put the proposed laws onto the November 2010 ballot. CFN organizers say that they would much prefer a shorter time frame so that their laws could be voted on as soon as possible, but they acknowledge that a two-year time period would provide them with more than enough time to meet the signature requirement. In the meantime, CFN says that it will continue to hold town hall meetings and try to raise awareness of the issues and implications for all Nebraskans.

The laws that CFN is proposing can be found on the organization's website: [www.freenebraska.net](http://www.freenebraska.net). If the effort is successful, the petitions would place two laws on the statewide ballot for voters to decide whether or not they will be enacted: one would prohibit the takeover of any city or village in Nebraska without a majority vote of its citizens and the other would allow the citizens of any city or village that has been annexed to petition to detach and reestablish as an independent city within five years.

The first proposed law, which would give the citizens the right to vote before their city or village can be taken over, is a simple and fundamental concept, says Fuller. "All other arguments aside, our fundamental rights as citizens of Nebraska and as citizens of the United States, the rights that have already been fought and died for by countless many before us, are being perverted and undermined today, right here in the heartland. As Citizens for a Free Nebraska, we intend to do everything in our power to wake up the citizens and to give them back their voice. After all, what is the fear in allowing the people to vote? Who fears that, in the United States of America, the principles of our own Constitution would be put into action? The answer is obvious: those who fear the voice of the citizens are those who never truly represented them to begin with."

He added, "The issue is actually very simple at heart. The State of Nebraska is the only state in the entire country that allows one municipality to take over another without a vote of the citizens – that's because it is unconstitutional. As responsible citizens, not only do we have the ability, but it is our duty, obligation, and privilege to set things right again for the good of our fellow citizens, our cities, our counties, and our state."

Although the proposed laws will not be voted on until 2010, Fuller says that the citizens of the former City of Elkhorn will still have the ability to reclaim their independence if the petition effort is successful. “The five year threshold that we’ve written in our proposed ‘detachment and reestablishment’ law will still grant the citizens of Elkhorn enough of a ‘window’ to win back their independence, even with our new petition effort ending in 2010. In the proposed law, we have written that the five year threshold will be ‘tolled pending a final court decision in any action to contest such annexation,’ which would give the citizens of Elkhorn until 2012, as the final court decision occurred in 2007.”

He then added that the proposed “detachment and reestablishment” law would be important for others as well and that the law is actually of statewide importance. “I want to make it very clear that the ‘detachment and reestablishment’ law is not just about winning back the City of Elkhorn’s independence. The ability to detach and reestablish as an independent city is also intended to protect our friends and neighbors as well. It’s very important to understand that a lot can happen between now and 2010, and with the annexation of the City of Bennington on the horizon, the ‘detachment and reestablishment’ law will be the only viable way to get them back out, should they be taken before we are able to get our laws enacted. And, the same immediate importance applies to other cities like Gretna, Waterloo, Valley, or any other city or village in Nebraska that might be taken over without a vote of its citizens. And, we have also made sure to include language that would prohibit the forced annexation of a city or village by a municipal county without a vote of the citizens, which is a very big concern for all citizens statewide.”

CFN invites all citizens of Nebraska who wish to know more about the specific local and statewide implications of their efforts to attend one of their upcoming town hall meetings, ask questions, and visit their website, [www.freenebraska.net](http://www.freenebraska.net). The next town hall meeting will be held in Fort Calhoun at the high school on Tuesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. More are being scheduled. For more information, visit [www.freenebraska.net](http://www.freenebraska.net) or email [info@freenebraska.net](mailto:info@freenebraska.net).

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