

WILSON –PAKULA LAW

DEFINITION:

One component of New York State’s fusion voting system is a law adopted in 1947. It is authorization given by a political party in New York State to a candidate who wishes to run for office on a party ballot other than his/her own designated party. Permission comes in the form of a certificate signed by the party officials of the political party being petitioned.

HISTORY:

In the 1940’s both the Republican and Democratic parties in New York became concerned that members of other political parties, especially the American Labor Party (ALP) were running candidates in their party primary elections and winning the nominations. Accusations of the ALP’s increasing ties to the Communist formed a major impetus for the opposition.

The name comes from the two sponsors of the bill, state senator Irwin Pakula and the assemblyman Malcolm Wilson. Governor Thomas Dewey signed it in 1947.

The authorization made headlines when state Democratic Senator Malcolm Smith was caught bribing New York City officials to obtain a W-P certificate so he could run on the Republican ballot for mayor.

In April 2013 Governor Cuomo unveiled a set of proposals to curb public corruption in state government. One of the proposals was to do away with W-P requirement and allow candidates to get signatures to run on other party lines in a similar manner to obtaining their own party’s endorsement.

PROS (arguments favoring retention of W-P)	CONS (arguments favoring abolishment of W-P)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It keeps the influence/clout of smaller 3rd parties, e.g., Working Families, Independence & Conservative Parties.• Party leaders should have a say in screening the candidates who want their party’s endorsement.• If rescinded, major parties would invade minor parties.• Question of the procedures for approval if party members rather than party leaders were the ones to decide.• Rescinding only clouds the real problem: oversized role of money in politics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It would reduce corruption when one attempts to bribe party officials to become a candidate on their party line.• On occasion 3rd parties have offered their party line to the highest bidder.• Party members, not just leaders, would have a say in whether one could appear on their party line.• This law forces candidates to go to party bosses, making it a negotiating process often a “play to run” mentality.• It retains the fusion voting possibilities.

