06/13/2025

For Immediate Release:

Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals Reaffirms Right to Freedom of Association for Political Parties

The Catoosa County Republican Party applauds the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals for reaffirming a fundamental truth: political parties, as private organizations, possess a Constitutionally protected First Amendment right to freedom of association. This means the government cannot force a party to support candidates who openly reject the party's core principles and values.

This landmark decision vindicates the Catoosa GOP's 2024 decision to exclude four candidates who, after signing an oath affirming their commitment to Republican principles, failed to represent true Republican ideals. The Court's opinion makes clear:

"[A] political party's right to freedom of association encompasses the right to exclude candidate[s] in the party primary in order to protect itself from those with adverse political principles." Duke v. Cleland, 954 F.2d at 1532. The Catoosa GOP sought to uphold its values by excluding candidates who did not reflect its ideological foundation. Yet, due to actions by the Board of Elections, the party's right to determine its own membership was unjustly blocked, infringing on its constitutional freedom "to identify those who constitute the party based on political beliefs." Duke v. Massey, 87 F.3d at 1234.

The Court also recognized that while state law may sometimes impose limits, these laws cannot erase a party's constitutional right to freedom of association—"central to its freedom of association," and not granted by the state. (Wash. State Grange v. Wash. State Republican Party, 552 U.S. 442, 445 (2008)).

At a time when political identity is under constant attack, this decision is a powerful defense of our most cherished freedoms—the right to speak, to associate, and to stand firmly for what we believe. The United States remains a beacon of liberty precisely because of protections enshrined in the First Amendment. This is a victory not only for the Catoosa GOP but for every American who values freedom, integrity, and principled leadership.

We will continue to fight to ensure that our party—and our nation—remains true to the ideals that have made America exceptional.