

# Press statement of Ohio SEP candidate David Lawrence

David Lawrence  
16 June 2004

*The following press statement was issued by David Lawrence, Socialist Equality Party candidate for US Congress in Ohio's First Congressional District (Cincinnati). Lawrence released the statement on June 14, after attorneys filed a federal lawsuit on his behalf to overturn the state's prohibitively early filing deadline for independent candidates seeking ballot status.*

The March 1 filing deadline for independent congressional candidates in Ohio is an attack on the democratic rights of the more than 2,600 voters who signed nominating petitions to place my name on the November ballot. It is an affront to all those who believe that an election should be the venue for genuine political discourse, not a stage-managed affair held by two big business parties whose positions on the most basic issues are virtually indistinguishable.

With the support of attorney Robert B. Newman, we are embarking on this lawsuit in order to guarantee that working people have the right to vote for a party that advances an alternative to the policies of war overseas and austerity at home advanced by the Democrats and Republicans.

The courts have found against Ohio in previous challenges to its early filing deadline. A 1983 Supreme Court ruling in the *Anderson vs. Celebrezze* case forced Ohio to extend the deadline for independent presidential candidates from March 20 to August 19. The Court declared that the previous deadline had placed an "unconstitutional burden" on the candidates and their supporters.

In a 5-4 vote, the majority ruled: "A burden that falls unequally on independent candidates or on new or small political parties impinges, by its very nature, on associational choices protected by the First Amendment, and discriminates against those candidates

and voters whose political preferences lie outside the existing political parties."

In flagrant disregard of this ruling, the Ohio legislature has retained the undemocratic early filing deadline for independent congressional candidates in order to safeguard the political monopoly of the two parties. It seeks to deny third parties a place on the ballot in order to stifle political discussion and ensure that political opponents of the war, the destruction of jobs and social inequality are not heard.

Under the present rules, our campaign would have had to begin petitioning in mid-winter, before the Democrats and Republicans had even selected their candidates. We believe voters should be allowed, without bureaucratic hurdles, the opportunity to hear from a wide range of candidates. All candidates should be allowed access to equal media coverage and entry into debates.

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According to *Ballot Access News*, 25 percent of all voters are not registered as Democrats or Republicans. A large percentage of those who are eligible to vote simply choose to forego the voting process because of frustration with and alienation from a system that refuses to address their real concerns. Another substantial portion of the electorate is simply not registered.

The systematic attempt across the United States to restrict ballot access should be seen in the context of the unprecedented assault on democratic rights, including the theft of the 2000 elections, the passage of the USA Patriot Act, the mass roundup of Arab immigrants, and the establishment of a concentration camp at Guantanamo Bay.

I have entered this race to advance a program based

on the interests of the working class. My campaign will raise issues that will not be raised by either Republican Congressman Steve Chabot or Democrat Greg Harris. My candidacy has already evoked an important response from thousands of working people who want an end to the war, and are concerned about deepening social inequality, attacks on jobs, the destruction of education and police brutality.

I call on those who support democratic rights to demand that the March 1st deadline be removed from the books and that my name be placed on the November ballot. I ask all those who are seeking a genuine alternative to the two-party monopoly of big business to support my candidacy.



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