

Letters denounce Democrats' effort to bar SEP candidate from Illinois ballot

6 July 2004

The following letters were sent to Mark Shelden, the County Clerk in Champaign, Illinois, to protest the efforts of the state and local Democratic Party to exclude the Socialist Equality Party and its state legislative candidate, Thomas Mackaman, from the ballot in the November elections. [See "Letters from around the world denounce Democrats' effort to bar SEP candidate from Illinois ballot" and "Democrats move to keep SEP candidate off Illinois ballot" and "Stop the Democratic Party's attack on third-party campaigns! Place SEP candidate Tom Mackaman on the ballot in Illinois!"] .]

The effort to exclude the SEP from the ballot is part of a nationwide effort by the Democrats to stifle any campaign that opposes the bipartisan policies of militarism and the attack on the democratic rights and living standards of working people. We urge all those who oppose the war and who are angered by the pro-war politics and antidemocratic methods of Kerry and the Democrats to add their voices of protest against the attempt to exclude antiwar candidates from the November election. Send emails of protest to Champaign County Clerk Mark Shelden's office at: mail@champaigncountyclerk.com

Please send copies to the World Socialist Web Site at editor@wsws.org

Dear Mr. Shelden:

I wish to register my anger and outrage at the attempt by members of the Democratic Party of Illinois to deny the candidate of the Socialist Equality Party a place on the November ballot. As someone who believes in democracy and the unrestricted right of political parties to ballot access, this effort is shameful and deserves to be scorned by all those who express similar beliefs.

It is bad enough that, in a country that consistently portrays itself as the paragon of "freedom," it is especially difficult for "third" parties—most notably parties seeking to give voice to the interests of working people—to participate in what is the cornerstone of "freedom": the electoral process. Thus, it is especially disgusting that one of the two established political parties would engage in a systematic campaign to deny ballot access to others.

It is clear, should you be inclined to question it, that this is a conscious, systematic campaign. As anyone who has been following the course of the 2004 presidential election is aware, state Democratic parties across the country have been engaged in efforts to sabotage ballot-access drives, to deny independent and "third"-party candidates places on the ballot, and to further restrict who can appear on that ballot.

The legal challenge by the state Democratic Party to Ralph Nader's independent campaign in Arizona is not an isolated incident. Neither is the recent action of Democratic Party activists in Oregon, who packed a nominating convention in order to deny him access to that state's ballot. In fact, it is becoming clear that these anti-democratic actions are being encouraged by the Democratic National Committee, the body responsible for the daily activities of the party.

The *New York Times* of June 30 quoted a spokesperson of the DNC, who bluntly stated that "we support these efforts" to restrict access to the ballot for independents and "third" parties.

I have seen these efforts myself, here in Michigan. The party to which I belong was engaged in a difficult ballot-access drive. On a number of occasions, members of the Michigan Democratic Party—including local and state elected officials—sought to challenge and obstruct our right to collect signatures. On one occasion, a representative for a Democratic county clerk threatened to "unenroll" our members from the voter rolls, which would have invalidated the petitions they circulated.

These actions fly in the face of the very name by which these people identify themselves. They represent the heights of autocratic, even dictatorial, functioning. There is certainly no way they can be seen as anything consistent with the principles of democracy. Indeed, one of the main reasons why people abstain from voting is because other political parties are denied equal access to the electoral process (in violation of the XIV Amendment of the Constitution, in my opinion), and thus they feel there is no reason to make the effort to go to the polls, since neither party represents their viewpoint or interests.

Even though I have a number of differences with the political platform of the Socialist Equality Party, I will unconditionally defend their right to present their viewpoint and platform to the voters of this country. To this end, I wish to add my voice to those who have already registered their objection to these patently anti-democratic actions.

I patiently look forward to your decision on this matter, and I appreciate your attention to this matter.

With regards,

Martin Schreader

Chairperson, Detroit Socialist Party; Editor, *Appeal to Reason* newspaper

3 July 2004

Dear Mr. Sheldon:

I am writing to you to oppose the undemocratic attempts by local Democratic Party officials to keep the candidate for the Socialist Equality Party, Thomas Mackaman, off of the ballot for Illinois State Representative in the 103rd District.

When on June 28, Geraldine Parr, the treasurer for the Campaign County Democratic Party, challenged the validity of over 1,000 signatures on the petitions submitted by Mr. Mackaman's campaign, she was taking a step in what has become a bipartisan march against the democratic rights of the American people and the human rights of the people of the whole planet.

This sneaky and shifty-eyed bustling behind closed doors, away from the face of the people, is only different in goal and severity from the actions of the bullies and sadists of Abu Ghraib.

It is, in other words, an act of political cowardice. A party that is confident in its ideas and depends on the art of persuading people by example and argument of their validity is not afraid of electoral competition.

But a party that bum-rushes its opponents before they have had a chance to present their views to the electorate, that engages in underhanded,

behind-the-scenes maneuvers has predicted its own demise in the democratic arena.

I ask that you promptly reject these base antics and advocate for the right of the SEP to present its views to the voters of Champaign-Urbana area.

Sincerely,
AI, teacher
Brooklyn, New York
4 July 2004
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Dear Sir:

America does not need “guided democracy”—show yourself worthy of the best traditions of the land of Jefferson and Lincoln and let the Socialist Equality Party on to the ballot paper!

John Scott
Adelaide, Australia
3 July 2004
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I’ve been reading about the efforts of the Chair of the Democratic Party in Champaign County to keep third party candidates (particularly Tom Mackaman of the SEP) off the ballot in Illinois, using dubious charges of technical inadequacies in voter petitions as justification. This attempt to forestall democracy must not be allowed. I demand that you keep the SEP candidate on the ballot!

Jeffrey Vanek
Houston, Texas
3 July 2004
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Dear Mr. Shelden:

I am a resident of North Carolina, an English graduate student, and an unaffiliated reader of the *World Socialist Web Site*. It has recently come to my attention from recent editorial statements on the web site that Democratic Party officials in Champaign County, Illinois, have contested Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidate Thomas Mackaman’s running for a seat in the 103rd District of the Illinois House of Representatives, and that the Champaign County Election Board has acquiesced to these disputable objections. Although I reside outside your jurisdiction, I hope this shall not invalidate the principled concerns I wish to bring to the important office you hold as Champaign County Clerk.

As a dedicated and free-thinking American citizen, I believe that the aforesaid action by the Democratic Party is a general violation of the rights of third parties in the United States and a particular violation of the rights of those 2,032 people who signed the petition to place Mr. Mackaman on the ballot in the first place. The behavior is unpardonable precisely because one of the two major parties of big business is clearly *manipulating* and *forcing* potential SEP voters to either select a candidate who does not represent their interests or to abstain from the upcoming November elections altogether. I do not believe these are democratic alternatives nor do I believe this is what America stands for. The signatures are a declaration of a loss of faith in the Democratic and Republican parties. This is a thoroughly serious affair which cannot and should not be ignored, but acknowledged and respected in a manner befitting civil society.

No party under a democratic system of government should have the privilege of abusing its influence to the extent that it dictates the actions of a free citizenry. For such departs from government of the people, by the people, and for the people, mutating instead into something more heinous, repugnant, and tyrannical: government above, against, and over the people. Nothing could be more antithetical to the ideals and political freedoms of our civic culture, contradictory as the social realities of America may be. The opening page of your Champaign County Clerk website (<http://www.champaigncountyclerk.com>) states the following:

Participating in democracy and elections are some of the best ways to improve our communities. As these words suggest, elections are not only about votes. Elections are an objective expression of real social concerns, issues, and needs. If a people cannot elect its representatives without hindrance, then how can democracy flourish and the popular will be satisfied? In short, I see no defensible reason for denying Mr. Mackaman and his supporters the liberties to which they are entitled.

With the above in mind, I appeal to your wisdom in the interest of the democratic rights of third parties in the United States and the masses of American working people and youth who constitute the majority of the voting public, and kindly ask you to overturn the Democratic Party objection and permit Mr. Mackaman of the SEP to campaign as an independent antiwar socialist candidate. Unless intelligent and prudent measures are taken, democracy and the signatures of those 2,032 individuals who petitioned for his ballot status will be in vain. Thank you for your time and consideration in this urgent and historically significant matter.

Sincerely yours,
Alzo David-West
3 July 2004
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To Whom It May Concern,

I have recently become aware of the fact that the officials who run the Champaign County section of the Democratic Party have launched a completely undemocratic campaign to keep Tom Mackaman, the congressional candidate for the Socialist Equality Party in your district, off the ballot in November. As someone who values the principles upon which a truly democratic society are founded, I cannot urge you enough to oppose the attempts of the local Democratic Party operatives to prevent the voters from having the opportunity to choose from a greatest number of perspectives, including the socialist message advanced by Mr. Mackaman. Above and beyond the fact that the intent of the leaders of the Champaign Branch of the Democratic Party in opposing the appearance of the Socialist Equality Party on the ballot is clearly to prevent the citizens of your district from having access to a diverse set of opinions—in this particular case the egalitarian and antiwar message espoused by Mr. Mackaman and the other members of his party—it also should be mentioned that their “case” has no basis in fact or the law whatsoever.

As someone committed to the defense of the democratic principles which underlie the most uplifting and progressive aspects of this country’s political and social history, I am compelled to urge you to reject the campaign of the Champaign County Democratic Party officials to deny Mr. Mackaman his rightful place on the ballot. The Socialist Equality Party has—by closely following the established law in your district—earned the right to appear on the ballot, and to prevent it from doing so would be a violation of the democratic rights of all those who might want to participate in these elections.

Sincerely,
Ari Weinstein
3 July 2004
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Dear Mr. Shelden:

As a citizen and Illinois native, I’m writing to urge you to place Tom Mackaman on the November ballot. He has earned the right to run and it is certainly your duty to see that he has the opportunity.

Thank you,
Jim Vieth
Reno, Nevada
2 July 2004
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Champaign County Clerk Mark Shelden,

I am writing to protest the undemocratic exclusion from the ballot of the

Socialist Equality Party candidate for Illinois state representative, Tom Mackaman. In these times of political crisis and political disenfranchisement of working people, we need every voice possible to defend our interests in the political arena, particularly concerning the illegal aggression against Iraq. We have no voice! Why are you trying to prevent us from being heard? This is democracy? LET HIM ON THE BALLOT!

Kevin McGuire

3 July 2004

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Mr. Shelden,

A simple question—on what possible legal, moral, or ethical grounds is the candidate for the Socialist Equality Party to be excluded from being placed on the ballot? I appeal to whatever integrity you have within you to do all within your power to combat this travesty, this usurpation of democracy, this entire shameful episode! Do something for all of us who hate this war and this occupation being conducted in our names, and do something for yourself!

Joe Hargrave

4 July 2004

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Dear Mr Shelden,

I wish to lodge my support for the registration of the SEP candidate for state representative, Tom Mackaman, on the ballot in Illinois. The Champaign County Election Board should reject the effort of the Democratic Party to keep this candidate off the ballot. Democracy begins at home!

Yours sincerely,

Joe McIntyre

Hamburg University

Germany

5 July 2004

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I am appalled at the efforts to keep the Socialist Equality Party off the ballot in Illinois.

We have just finished a day of self-celebration, back-patting, chest-thumping and flag-waving, proclaiming the USA the world's first and foremost defender of freedom and democracy. Now it would be nice to show by our actions that we are not merely spouting "foolish words and idle boast."

Sure, having only two parties gives more "stability." There would be even more "stability" if we had only one party. They did this in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The US is becoming a de facto one-party nation, the party just operates under two names.

I hope you will come down on the side of democracy and allow the SEP candidacy to be presented to the voters.

Thank you for your attention.

Leslie Dwyer

5 July 2004

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To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact