

Stop the Democratic Party's attack on third-party campaigns! Place SEP candidate Tom Mackaman on the ballot in Illinois!

Socialist Equality Party
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The Socialist Equality Party calls on all our supporters and on all those who defend democratic rights, in the United States and throughout the world, to flood the county clerk's office in Champaign County, Illinois with protests against the attempt to keep the SEP candidate for state representative, Tom Mackaman, off the November ballot. The SEP calls for joint action with other third parties seeking to defeat anti-democratic challenges by the Democratic and Republican parties.

Democratic Party officials in Illinois have filed an objection to the petitions submitted by Mackaman and his supporters, which contain 2,032 signatures, far more than the 1,344 required for ballot status as an independent candidate. The SEP candidate is challenging Democratic incumbent Naomi Jakobsson and her Republican opponent for a seat in the 103rd District of the Illinois House of Representatives, in the Champaign-Urbana area in the east-central part of the state.

Mackaman and representatives of the SEP will challenge the Democratic Party's objections to his candidacy in Champaign County Court, Courtroom K, on Tuesday, July 6, at 10 a.m. Within 10 days of the local board's decision, the candidate or objector may file a petition for judicial review with the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

The SEP is calling for emails to the Champaign County Election Board to demand that it reject the effort of the Democratic Party to keep our candidate off the ballot. Emails should be sent to Champaign County Clerk Mark Shelden's office at: mail@champaigncountyclerk.com

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

The Objector's Petition was filed by Geraldine Parr, the current treasurer and former chair of the Champaign County Democratic Party. It claims that 1,021 signatures

collected by SEP supporters—more than half the total—are invalid. This charge has no factual or legal basis. Instead, it is a litany of technical minutiae, claiming some signatures are invalid because they contain printed letters rather than cursive, or because “addresses are missing entirely or are incomplete” (which could be as little as a missing apartment number).

The principal allegation, affecting 80-90 percent of the challenged signatures, is that those who signed were registered at one address but signed at another. This is a quite common phenomenon in a heavily student community—Champaign includes the campus of the University of Illinois—where people change their residence frequently. That the Democrats make this charge the basis of their challenge shows their intense hostility to the democratic rights of student youth.

The objection makes wholesale fabrications, claiming there are “sheets which bear a circulator's affidavit which is not sworn before a notary public or other appropriate officer. Every signature on the sheet therefore is not valid.” In fact, all 105 sheets of signatures were signed by the circulators and notarized.

The Democrats' objection to the SEP petition is not only anti-democratic, it is thoroughly cowardly—conducted in the manner of a poisoner or a burglar, who hopes to strike without leaving any fingerprints. A spokesperson at the District Office of State Representative Jakobsson denied she had any connection to the challenge, although it was based on an examination of Mackaman's petitions by two paid Democratic staffers at the Illinois State House of Representatives, Elizabeth Brown and Brendan Hostetler. Brown and Hostetler, when contacted by a WSWs reporter, each claimed to have acted as “private citizens,” not as agents of the Democratic Party, although Hostetler described Jakobsson

as a friend, adding, “I make an effort to support my friends.”

The challenge to the SEP in Illinois is not an isolated or exceptional action. It is part of a concerted effort by the Democrats to suppress third-party election campaigns, not only in Illinois but throughout the United States. In Illinois alone, Democratic and Republican operatives have filed objections to ballot status petitions for two dozen candidates, including independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader, the Green Party presidential ticket and other Green candidates, Libertarian candidates, and other independents.

Nationally, the Democratic Party is engaged in a systematic effort to disrupt the Nader presidential campaign, filing objections to Nader’s petitions in Arizona, and packing a hall in Oregon, rented for a nominating convention, in an effort to prevent Nader’s supporters from placing him on the ballot.

These anti-democratic tactics have been sanctioned at the highest level of the Democratic Party. Jano Cabrera, a spokesman for the Democratic National Committee, told the *New York Times* June 30: “We are aware that different state parties are challenging the validity of signatures Ralph Nader has gathered ... we support these efforts.”

The actions of the state and local Democrats express more than their desire to suppress any electoral alternative to the two-party system, reactionary and anti-democratic as that is. More fundamentally, the Democratic Party is engaged in a desperate effort to block any political discussion in the 2004 elections of the most important issues—the war in Iraq, and the ongoing attacks on democratic rights and living standards—on which the Democrats and the Republicans stand together.

There is a profound political significance to this decision by the Democratic Party to attack, not the Republicans or the Bush reelection campaign, but third-party candidates, especially those like the SEP, the Greens and Nader, who are appealing in one way or another for the votes of those opposed to the war in Iraq.

In the 2000 election, after Republican Party vote suppression in Florida, threats and intimidation to block the recount, and finally the intervention of the US Supreme Court, the Democratic Party and the Gore campaign capitulated to the right-wing theft of the election. At the time, the SEP warned that this surrender—and the endorsement of it by the corporate-controlled media—demonstrated that there was no significant constituency in the US ruling elite for the defense of democratic rights.

Four years later, the Democrats have decided to mimic the Republican Party’s attack on democratic and ballot rights. Just as the Republican sought to prevent the counting of legitimate votes for Gore in Florida, the Democrats are seeking to prevent the counting of legitimate petition signatures for SEP candidate Tom Mackaman in Illinois, as well as for Ralph Nader and other independents. There is no doubt that SEP candidates in other states could face similar anti-democratic attacks.

The principal function of the Kerry campaign, as far as the US ruling elite is concerned, is to exclude any challenge to the legitimacy of the war in Iraq from the official debate in the 2004 elections. Opinion polls show the majority of the American people oppose the war in Iraq, and 40 percent favor an immediate withdrawal of all American troops. Those tens of millions of people are entirely unrepresented in the contest between Bush and Kerry, two multi-millionaire politicians who are both pledged to maintain the US occupation and suppress Iraqi resistance, no matter what the cost in money and lives.

The SEP campaign inevitably becomes a target for political censorship because our presidential ticket, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence, and our congressional and state legislative candidates, like Tom Mackaman, have placed the war in Iraq at the center of their campaigns. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all American and other foreign troops from Iraq, the payment of reparations to enable the Iraqi people to rebuild their country, and a war crimes tribunal to judge the US officials responsible for this monstrous act of aggression and conquest, which has already cost tens of thousands of lives.

We urge all those who oppose the war in Iraq and who are angered by the prowar 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

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