

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

Socialist Equality Party
8 July 2004

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 2,003 signatures, far more than the 1,325 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.

At a hearing Tuesday, July 6 in Urbana, the Democrats failed in their initial bid to block ballot status for Tom Mackaman. The election board decided to authorize Sheldon to carry out a line-by-line check of the challenged signatures, in the presence of representatives of both the SEP and the Democratic Party. The county clerk will report back to the board for a final ruling at a hearing July 27.

The discussion at the hearing confirmed that the Democratic Party challenge is in bad faith, and has no basis either in fact or law. Tom Mackaman pointed out that a preliminary check of the challenged signatures showed that a clear majority were valid. Given the fact that more than a thousand signatures were of unchallenged validity, the SEP petition will clearly have far more than the 1,325 signatures required by law.

The Democrat who challenged the SEP petition, former county chairwoman Geraldine Parr, did not even attend the hearing to support her claim. The attorney representing the Democrats was clearly unfamiliar with the facts of the

challenge and could provide no answers to questions from election board members.

It has now come to light that the challenge to Mackaman's petitions involved the mobilization of state legislative aides, who are on the public payroll, to carry out political dirty work for the Democratic Party. The two individuals who first secured and examined copies of the nominating petitions, Liz Brown and Brendan Hostetler, are Democratic Party functionaries and employees of the Illinois House of Representatives. According to the date and time of their visits to the election offices, these state employees engaged in partisan political activity, aiming at depriving a citizen of the state of Illinois of his right to run for office, during working hours and at taxpayer expense.

The moves by the Democrats to purge the SEP candidate from the November ballot are part of a broader drive by both of the corporate-dominated parties, the Republicans as well as the Democrats, to keep independent and third-party candidates off of the Illinois ballot, or subvert their campaigns by various bureaucratic machinations, and thereby maintain the political monopoly of the two-party system.

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, successfully challenging a Nader petition 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. 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 Republicans 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-Cheney and Kerry-Edwards, four multi-millionaire politicians who are all 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 pro-war politics and anti-democratic methods of Kerry and the Democrats to add their voices of protest against the attempt to exclude antiwar candidates from the November election.

Continue to flood the county clerk's office in Champaign County, Illinois with protests calling for the Democratic challenge to be thrown out and for Tom Mackaman to be placed on the ballot. Send emails 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.

Make a financial contribution to support the SEP campaign—donate online.

See Also:

Statement of SEP candidate Tom Mackaman to Champaign County, Illinois Election Board
[7 July 2004]

Illinois Democratic officials use legislative staffers to attack third-party campaigns
[6 July 2004]

Stop the Democratic Party's attack on third-party campaigns! Place SEP candidate Tom Mackaman on the ballot in Illinois!
[3 July 2004]



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