

Letters denounce effort to bar SEP candidates from Ohio ballot

18 September 2004

The following are some of the many letters sent to the office of Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell protesting the efforts of Ohio authorities to bar the SEP's presidential and vice-presidential candidates from the Ohio ballot. The SEP collected and submitted the signatures of close to 8,000 signatures of Ohio residents who supported the candidacy of Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence. However, the Ohio secretary of state's office disqualified nearly 4,200 signatures on the SEP petitions. A preliminary examination conducted by the SEP over several days showed that at least 1,230 of these disqualified signatures were indeed valid, demonstrating the thoroughly undemocratic and dishonest methods utilized by Ohio election officials in their attempt to disenfranchise voters.

The SEP calls on all readers of the WSWs and all supporters of democratic rights to add their names to those demanding that the Ohio Secretary of State's office place Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence on the statewide ballot. Send e-mail messages of protest to:

Kenneth Blackwell Ohio Secretary of State election@sos.state.oh.us

Please send copies to editor@wsws.org

Dear Mr. Blackwell,

I am writing to request that you overturn the illegitimate effort to remove Socialist Equality Party presidential and vice-presidential candidates Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence from the November 2nd general election ballot in Ohio.

The SEP collected 7,983 signatures—far more than the 5,000 required by state law. When we consider that more than 89 percent of Ohio voting-age residents are registered to vote, and that in every case SEP petitioners carefully asked whether the signer was a registered voter prior to accepting signatures, it is a statistical certainty that the petitions contain far more than the 5,000 required by law.

Indeed, numerous objections filed against the SEP petitions are false on their face. Checkers have sought to disqualify voters for printing their names rather than signing. Signers have been disqualified for transposing numbers in their addresses, even when their names are clearly identifiable, for using their diminutive names rather than their full names, or, in the case of Asian voters, for mistakes committed by those who originally entered their names in the voter records. This list of abuses could go on.

The bases of such objections are radically wrong in both principle and practice. In every case, they are motivated by the basest and most transparent political calculations.

Mr. Blackwell, I must remind you that these fraudulent objections are not just an attack on the SEP or its candidates, Van Auken and Lawrence—the latter a native son of Ohio and a respected leader of its working class. They are an attack on the democratic rights of the 8,000 voters who signed SEP petitions specifically calling for a socialist alternative to the two established parties. Furthermore, the objections represent an attack on all voters in Ohio, who would be denied—through backroom political dealing and bureaucratic fiat—a choice guaranteed them by both democratic principle and the state of Ohio's own laws. By extension, this attempt to deny the legitimate aspirations of 8,000 citizens of your state reflects the besieged state of what now passes for democracy

in the US.

Your office has the power to intervene against this injustice, and must act decisively to do so. Thousands of people from all across the nation and the world will be watching your actions in the coming days.

Sincerely,

Tom Mackaman

Socialist Equality Party candidate, District 103, Illinois

15 September 2004

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

I am writing to protest the undemocratic methods used to judge the voter petitions of the SEP candidates for president and vice president. These actions will not only be noted in every state in the union but all over the world. The voters in your state deserve a choice besides the two establishment parties who march in lockstep on all the important issues. Are you ducking a real debate and a real choice?

Sincerely,

Vicki Doetsch

15 September 2004

Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell,

I must condemn your office's attempts to prevent Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Bill Van Auken and vice-presidential candidate Jim Lawrence from appearing on the Ohio ballot this election. It is clear that they have submitted adequate numbers of petition signatures from qualified voters to obtain ballot status. Your office commits subterfuge by denying the qualified voters of Ohio their basic constitutional rights to place whom they want on the ballot and in denying these candidates their constitutional right to run for office. In Illinois, the Democratic Party of Illinois attempted to use similar underhanded and illegal methods as your office is doing to keep an SEP candidate off of the ballot for State Representative by claiming petition signers and their signatures or addresses were invalid. The SEP and the voters of District 103 defeated that effort. You know quite well, as the Democratic Party of Illinois knew, that these Ohio voters are registered and live at the addresses shown on the petitions whether the signatures are printed or written or addresses had numbers accidentally transposed by the petition signer.

I must demand that you halt this most undemocratic attack on the basic Constitutional rights of Ohio voters and place Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence on the ballot. Your actions are nothing less than criminal and a scurrilous assault against the basic rights of Ohio voters as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United and the Constitution of Ohio.

End your assault on democratic rights now!

Sincerely,

Joe Parnaruskis

Westville, Illinois

16 September 2004

Mr. Kenneth Blackwell,

The action by the Ohio Board of Elections to disqualify more than 4,000 signatures on the petitions submitted by the Socialist Equality Party is yet

another example of the fictitious nature of American democracy. That the board has disqualified over half of the submitted signatures is itself an indication that the disqualifications are fraudulent and intended to intimidate not only the SEP, but also any future independent candidates in the state of Ohio. If this action is permitted to stand, it will be a clear signal that the ideals of the enlightenment embodied in the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are dead in Ohio. H. Rogers Jr.

12 September 2004

Dear Mr. Blackwell,

I am writing to you to protest the blatant attacks on the democratic rights of the Socialist Equality Party in Ohio. Your malicious attempt to disqualify their petition signatures is a conscious attempt to stifle any genuine democratic debate in Ohio come November. These kinds of actions are shameful in a country that claims to be democratic, and I demand that you cease them.

Sincerely,

Paul Enman

13 September 2004

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

The Socialist Equality Party in its 8,000 signatures clearly has met Ohio State law requiring 5,000 for it to be on the presidential ballot in Ohio. Please so certify.

Thank you,

Paul Zarembka

13 September 2004

To whom it may concern:

I have just reviewed a news article concerning the review of signatures for the Socialist Equality Party's petition to have their candidates added to the Ohio ballot. I am very disappointed that your offices would deny Ohio citizens' right to petition due to "block lettering" and "transposed street address numbers." Irregardless of the style of lettering one might use to sign a petition, they have nevertheless signed the petition as a voting citizen and should therefore be counted. Furthermore, if your offices plan to be this picky about the style of lettering, you should inform voters and/or groups calling for petition signers of these incredible standards for filing a petition in the State of Ohio.

I did not sign the petition, although, had I had an opportunity to sign it, I would have. Most likely I would have been considered as "not genuine" by your offices, given the number of folks that were disenfranchised from this petition. I ask that your offices review this petition again and let the democratic process work as it is supposed to. And, if at all possible, add my name to this petition as a registered voter in favor of adding the Socialist Equality Party to the ballot for the coming presidential election. If not, please inform me what would be necessary to be added to this petition.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kaye Catron

Pataskala, Ohio Registered to vote in the county of Licking, State of Ohio

14 September 2004

Mr. Blackwell, et al:

I write this email to demand that the SEP presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence, be allowed to stand on the Ohio ballot in November.

The attempt to exclude them, even though they clearly gathered the required signatures and followed the proper procedures, is a blatantly political attempt to eliminate any challenge to two-party domination of the electoral system.

This latest attempt at politically motivated and procedurally questionable exclusion comes in the wake of the state's successful and

disgraceful effort to exclude David Lawrence, the SEP's candidate for Congress in Ohio's 1st Congressional District, from the ballot.

In order to facilitate true democratic participation in the electoral process in the state of Ohio, and to preserve the good name of the State of Ohio, I urge your office to act in the interests of the voter and overturn this latest effort to abort the will of the people.

Sincerely,

Stu Zimny

Albuquerque, New Mexico

14 September 2004

Dear Mr. Blackwell,

I have just become aware that the Department of Elections in the state of Ohio is using every manner of underhanded device to keep a socialist candidate for president in the state of Ohio off the ballot in 2004.

The pretexts used to disqualify over 7,000 signatures in support of placing the socialist candidate on the ballot are clear evidence that the intention is simply to keep a socialist candidate off the ballot in November.

This is a tactic that has been used in this election year to keep socialist candidates off the ballot in other parts of the country. But as a long-time resident of Ohio I am truly disappointed and outraged that Ohio is also engaging in such anti-democratic stratagems.

This widespread phenomenon would indicate that the democratic institutions in the United States are in a serious state of crisis and decay. To make matters worse, it is a crisis that cannot be solved through the legal recourse to democratic redress, since it is democracy itself that is in peril. It would indicate that the country is rapidly headed for an authoritarian dictatorship.

This trend is already manifested by the fact that neither of the two candidates for president in 2004 have the support of those voters who repudiate the US invasion of Iraq. Already, the narrow spectrum of choice available to American voters in this election is a sign that huge sections of American voters are being disenfranchised.

I would ask that your office investigate these accusations against the Ohio Board of Elections and that the two candidates of the Socialist Equality Party for president and vice-president of the United States, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence, be placed on the ballot in November. Do not deprive the voters of Ohio the democratic right to decide for themselves who they will vote for in November.

Respectfully yours,

Raúl Reyes

16 September 2004

Mr. Blackwell: Your tactics in the disqualification of thousands of legitimate voters' signatures that were obtained through the honesty, integrity and convictions of principled individuals in the SEP drive to place Van Auken and Lawrence on the presidential ballot are contemptible. Most disturbing to me is that you are apparently African American, as evidenced by your picture on your web site. You should know better. Certainly it is clear to you, as it is to me, that we do not live in a democracy, nor do the oppressed have a voice in government, as long as the choices are Democrat/Republican. Why don't you at the very least present yourself honestly as a fascist supporter of a frightened capitalist government that will sink to any depth to save itself. You disgust me.

G.A. Clifford

15 September 2004

Dear Secretary Blackwell, I was very disheartened to learn that the Ohio Board of Elections has been actively presenting obstacles to presidential and vice-presidential candidates Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence by allowing county registrars to disqualify more than half the signatures on petitions filed in August to place the Socialist Equality Party candidates on the Ohio ballot. The decision to eliminate more than 4,000 signatures seems to have been deliberately timed to make it virtually impossible for

the SEP to find replacement signatures within the 5 p.m. September 15 deadline.

I was particularly discouraged to learn of the highly unfair methods of rejection used on signatures gathered in my birthplace, Cuyahoga County. The reasons for rejecting these signatures (40 percent of the County total) seem to have less to do with legibility than with political prejudice on the part of the Board of Elections.

In an effort to reverse this highly un-democratic action, I urge the Ohio Board of Elections to allow Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence to appear on the statewide ballot.

Thank you for your consideration in this most important matter.

Very truly yours,

Max Alvarez Washington, DC

16 September 2004

Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio Secretary of State:

As a registered voter of Ohio, I am appalled to learn that the state of Ohio is denying ballot status to the Socialist Equality Party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence.

Growing up as a kid in New York City, I was always told that what made the United States so great was that any person, regardless of their social background, race, religion, etc., could eventually become president of this country; they did not tell us that they had to be a Democrat or a Republican. In a "true democracy," the people decide who should be on a ballot, not politicians. Since the SEP signed almost 8,000 people who said that they were registered voters, it seems that there are many people in this country that would like an alternative to our two-party system. Since I was never approached by the SEP, I am sure that there are thousands of other registered voters that would like to see a "democratic" presidential election on November 2, 2004

T. Hankerson

16 September 2004



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact