

Illinois Democrats prepare challenge against petitions to place SEP candidate on ballot

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Less than 24 hours after the Socialist Equality Party submitted nominating petitions to place its candidate for Illinois state Senate, Joe Parnarauskis, on the ballot, a functionary for the Illinois Democratic Party purchased copies of the petitions and began reviewing them.

The action is clear evidence that the Democratic Party is preparing to conduct another fraudulent challenge to SEP petitions, just as it did in 2004 when party officials unsuccessfully attempted to disqualify the signatures of hundreds of legally registered voters and bar the SEP from the ballot.

On Monday, Parnarauskis delivered petitions bearing the names of 4,991 registered voters to the State Board of Elections office in Springfield, Illinois. Because the party anticipated another challenge from the Democrats, the number of signatures was well above the 2,985 required to place Parnarauskis on the ballot for state Senate from the 52nd Legislative District, which includes the home of the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

The Democratic Party is reviewing the SEP petitions for one and only one reason—to keep a socialist candidate opposed to the war in Iraq and the right-wing policies of both major parties off the ballot and preserve the two-party monopoly of the American corporate elite. While the Democrats prostrate themselves before the Bush administration and the Republicans, they act with utter ruthlessness against their opponents on the left.

The Democratic machine proceeds from transparently anti-democratic motives. It has no concern for the wishes of duly registered voters who signed the SEP petitions because they want to see an alternative to the two major parties on the ballot. The Democrats' past record of unscrupulous attempts to bar third party and

independent candidates—including the Green Party and Ralph Nader as well as the SEP in 2004—serves as a warning that it will employ all means, fair and foul, to keep Parnarauskis off the ballot in the November midterm election.

According to the election board's web site, on Tuesday, June 27 at 8:45 a.m., Jim Rogal of Springfield, Illinois copied the 521 petition sheets submitted by the SEP. Rogal also copied the petitions of the Green Party's candidate in the 1st District in Chicago, Dorian Breuer, one of several Green Party candidates whose petitions were copied by Democratic Party operatives.

Rogal is an employee of the Illinois Senate Democratic Fund, a political action committee that raises money for state Democratic candidates. When contacted by the *World Socialist Web Site*, Rogal said he copied the petitions to make sure the SEP had "complied with the law."

He said it was his job to "review all petitions filed for state Senate" and claimed that he checked not only the petitions of the SEP and the Greens, but also those of the Democrats and Republicans.

Although he is listed in the Illinois directory of state employees as an assistant chief of staff for the state Senate, and is cited on other web sites as a member of the staff of Emil Jones, the Democratic president of the Illinois Senate, Rogal said he no longer works for Jones and is now employed by the Democratic fundraising committee.

It is illegal for paid employees of the state to carry out partisan activity during work hours under the state's Election Code and the State Employees Ethics in Government Act.

In 2004, the Illinois Democrats challenged the nominating petitions of SEP candidate Tom

Mackaman, who was running for state legislator in the 103rd District, which includes Champaign and Urbana. The challenge began with the Democrats using paid legislative staffers, including one directly employed by House Speaker Michael Madigan, to review the SEP's petitions. Paid staffers were also used to challenge the petitions of the Greens, the Libertarians and independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader.

Geraldine Parr, a vice-chair of the Champaign County Democratic Party, then filed an objection that challenged more than half of the over 2,000 signatures filed by the SEP. It quickly emerged that the challenge was lodged in bad faith, replete with arbitrary objections to perfectly valid signatures. The objections had clearly been made without any serious examination of the registration records of voters in the county.

When Democratic petition checkers were presented with the voter registration rolls during a preliminary examination of the signatures by the County Clerk's office, they refused to withdraw the objections, even when shown proof that the signers were legally registered. As this was occurring, a spokesman for Madigan, one of the top Democratic officials in Illinois, slandered the SEP with the false accusation that it had submitted "phony petitions."

After a month-long legal fight that included a line-by-line check by county officials that proved the validity of the vast majority of the signatures that had been challenged, the Democrats withdrew their objections, acknowledging that the SEP had more than enough signatures to qualify for the ballot.

When asked by Andrew Spiegel, the SEP's attorney in Illinois, if the Democrats were preparing another such challenge to the SEP and the Greens, a lawyer for the Illinois Democrats said it was "too early to tell." The deadline for challenges is 5 p.m. on July 3.

The Socialist Equality Party and the WSWS call on all those who signed petitions to place Joe Parnarauskis on the ballot, and all those who value and defend democratic rights, to contact the Illinois State Board of Elections immediately and demand that the legal rights of both the SEP and voters in the 52nd Legislative District be upheld, and that any attempt to disqualify the signatures of registered voters be halted.

Send email messages to the Illinois State Board of Elections at webmaster@elections.state.il.us.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact