

German SEP candidates protest Democratic Party drive to bar socialist candidate from the ballot in Illinois

10 July 2006

The following letter has been sent to the Illinois State Board of Elections by three members of the Socialist Equality Party of Germany who are running for the Berlin state Senate in elections to be held this September.

The Socialist Equality Party in the US is waging a legal and political fight to place its candidate for state Senate from the 52nd Legislative District, Joe Parnarauskis, on the Illinois ballot. On July 3, the Illinois Democrats filed an objection to Parnarauskis's nominating petitions, challenging the validity of more than half of the 4,991 signatures submitted by the SEP to the State Board of Elections.

On July 11, a preliminary hearing on the Democrats' challenge to Parnarauskis's nominating petitions will be held by the Illinois Board of Elections—a body made up of four Democrats and four Republicans. We call on all of our supporters, all readers of the World Socialist Web Site and all those who defend democratic rights to send letters of protest to the State Board of Elections at webmaster@elections.state.il.us.

To whom it may concern,

As three candidates of the German Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit) in this September's Senate elections in Berlin, we wish to add our names to those protesting against the thoroughly undemocratic treatment of Joe Parnarauskis, the SEP (US) candidate running for the Illinois Senate from the 52nd Legislative District.

In Germany, we have just finished the process of collecting and verifying the several thousand signatures required for participation in the Berlin elections. We are therefore well aware of some of the difficulties that confront smaller political parties in obtaining ballot status.

While we are not inclined to glorify in any way the German electoral system, a situation such as that prevailing in the US—where political life is monopolised by just two parties and success or failure of individual candidates depends on the size of their campaign war chests—is, quite frankly, unimaginable here. Since the Second World War, political representation in the German parliament has required that parties receive more than 5 percent of the vote. As a result, parties such as the Free Democratic Party and the Greens, which have regularly recorded vote totals of between 5 and 10 percent, have had substantial representation in parliament and received generous financial subsidies from the state (reckoned on the basis of their vote).

Both parties have participated in government coalitions at the federal as well as the state and local level, and their leading members have held responsible cabinet positions in the national government.

Even a brief examination of the obstacles placed in the way of opposition parties in the US reveals the enormous gap between the democratic principles laid down in the American Constitution and the realities of contemporary political life. As the case of Illinois demonstrates, in addition to the enormous bureaucratic and financial obstacles placed in the way of the election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party, the Democratic Party is quite prepared to resort to bullying and intimidation in its desperation to maintain the existing caricature of democracy. We are alarmed and angered by the blatant and crude attempts of the Illinois Democratic Party to harass and exclude Joe Parnarauskis from the ballot.

In Germany, we followed very closely the campaign of the Republican Party to overturn the election results

in 2000 and secure the installation of George W. Bush as president. Now, we witness in Illinois the Democratic Party employing similar methods to prevent the emergence of a political alternative.

In its effort to find frivolous and transparent pretexts for blocking Parnarauskis's campaign, the Democratic Party can rely on a small army of lawyers and political operatives, along with the support of much of the media. In response, the SEP is forced to divert its resources and finances into a time-consuming and labourious effort to ensure that its candidate even appears on the ballot. What is the Democratic Party afraid of? Why is it so determined to prevent an anti-war candidate intervening in this election?

The only conclusion to be drawn from the thuggish tactics employed in Illinois is that the Democratic Party will go to any lengths to prevent the full scope of its collusion with the Bush government in the Iraq war and the administration's attacks on basic democratic rights from being revealed to the American people.

The widespread revulsion in Germany and throughout Europe for the current US administration has deep roots in Europe's own tragic experiences with militarism, dictatorship and political oppression in the twentieth century.

We therefore condemn the tactics being employed against SEP candidate Joe Parnarauskis and will use every opportunity in our own election campaign in the German capital to expose the anti-democratic methods being employed by the Democratic Party in Illinois.

Sincerely,

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To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact