

Letters protest Democratic Party efforts to bar SEP candidate from Illinois ballot

3 July 2006

Below we post several letters to the State Board of Elections in Illinois sent by readers of the World Socialist Web Site to protest the efforts by the Illinois Democratic Party to bar Socialist Equality Party state senate candidate, Joe Parnaruskis, from the ballot. On June 26 Parnaruskis, who is running for State Senate in the 52nd Legislative District, which includes the twin cities of Champaign-Urbana, submitted nominating petitions bearing the names of nearly 5,000 voters, well above the minimum requirement of 2,985. Within 24 hours, Democratic operatives, with close connections to the Illinois Democratic Party leadership in the General Assembly, began copying and reviewing the petitions in order to prepare a challenge to the signatures of hundreds of legally registered voters.

In 2004, state Democrats objected to more than half of the signatures submitted on behalf of the SEP state legislative candidate. Although preliminary examination by the Champaign County Clerk's office showed that the majority of these objections were groundless, the Democrats continued their bad-faith challenge for a month. The Democrats only dropped their challenge after the SEP took legal action and scores of WSWS readers from around the world sent letters of protest.

The deadline for the Democrats and Republicans to file an objection to the SEP petitions is Monday, July 3, at 5 p.m.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on the readers of the World Socialist Web Site and all those who defend democratic rights to email letters of protest to the Illinois State Board of Elections at webmaster@elections.state.il.us.

To whom it may concern:

I recently read about the onerous requirements that had to be met before placing third party candidates on the ballot in the state of Illinois. As if this weren't enough, the petitions are routinely and fraudulently challenged by the persons connected to the Democratic and Republican parties. Few of the signatures are actually found to be fraudulent but a lot of precious time and money is wasted by this process. Small third parties can't afford to be dragged into lengthy court proceedings that demonstrate nothing but effectively cripple their ability to run a proper election campaign. At minimum, the persons requesting such a review should be forced to pay the court costs of the smaller parties being "investigated." We have precious little freedom and even the little we have is being steadily and systematically undermined.

Indeed, in the case of the Socialist Equality Party, Mark Shelden, the Champaign county clerk, wrote on June 28, "If you were involved at all in the Mackaman case two years ago, you would have seen that the challenge was purely a harassment challenge. Fewer than half the signatures challenged by Democratic Party Chairman Gerrie Parr were actually tossed. Those of us who reviewed them would have awarded attorney's fees to Mackaman if there had been a legal provision to do so."

If the established parties are unable or unwilling to properly represent the needs and aspirations of the electorate, the various third parties should not have to suffer undemocratic exclusion by them from the electoral process.

Sincerely,

Jacob Rosenberg

1 July 2006

To the Illinois State Board of Elections,

It is my understanding that our forefathers based the Constitution on democratic pluralism and free speech—including political expression in all its peaceful manifestations. I don't see and hear that you are honoring these rights guaranteed to the citizens of Illinois. It is not my understanding that the state of Illinois' Constitution deviates from our Federal one in regard to these rights of free expression and political pluralism—with the emphasis on the words "political pluralism." From my view, you are making attempts—be it in a covert and equivocal fashion—to mandate any third party illegal. To be sure, as I say, you are guilty of it indirectly, by way of bureaucratic maneuvering, dirty tricks, and equivocal pontifications.

I find such behavior revolting. You make a mockery of all what our nation stands for. Like you have nothing better to do but to stonewall and stifle dissent through mindless and thuggish pettiness that make the discussion of how many angels are on the head of pin more productive!

I also find it interesting and most revealing just how strong your contempt for democracy, the Constitution and the law is, observing the antics of Mr. Jim Rogal of Springfield, Illinois. The WSWS gets to issue most vividly and I quote:

"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...

"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."

Maybe it's just me, but I entertain the idea that Mr. Rogal is wading in dangerous waters. I see him as a huge walking scandal waiting to happen.

In conclusion, it is beyond my comprehension how the Democratic Party, which claims it is the pillar of and supporter of democratic ideals, can behave in such a disgusting manner and an embarrassing manner at that. You are not who or what you say you are. To quote William Shakespeare:

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air."

MACBETH, I, i, 11-12

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Alan Haas

Artistic director, The Artists' Shakespeare Festival
Minneapolis, Minnesota

29 June 2006

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to the Illinois State Board of Elections in reference to the petition of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) to place its candidate Mr. Joe Parnaruskis on the ballot for Illinois State Senate. Many politically conscious activists and citizens of countries in South Asia hungry for a true alternative of unbiased analysis of global politics turn daily to the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS), and are waiting attentively to find out what will happen to the ballot petition of the SEP this time around. Last time, as far as I could see, it was a total shamble muddled up by representatives of the Democratic Party in Illinois and, as the WSWS correctly predicted, in the end the challenge fell flat on its face.

One thing I am very much interested in finding out. After a petition for ballot rights has been legally approved by the regional election authorities (SEP candidate for the 103rd District in 2004) and after the SEP has been registered as a political party, with a long and unblemished history of progressive political activity in the region and throughout the United States, is it really democratic to request a fresh set of petitions every time it wants to place a candidate on the ballot for a new constituency in Illinois?

In many countries in both the West and East if and when a political party is recognised and registered by the state elections authority it automatically gains the right to place candidates on the ballot in any part of that country in any election. Though my knowledge of the complex structure of the American democracy could be rather limited, I ask, under which conventions of the fundamentals of democracy and the multi-party system can it be justified that the two major parties, the party in government and the main opposition, should have a free hand in not only scrutinising the policies and record of the minority political parties but going so far as to attempt to block its very right for the public vote at every new opportunity. This to me sounds like “we made the system, we run it and we also decide who would be a part of it.” It is like in ancient Greece—the Senate governed the Fundamentals and not vice-versa!

One final thing I would like to draw your attention to is the fact that the SEP was banned from petitioning outside of the public libraries in Champaign and Urbana. This was a blatant antidemocratic act in any sense of the word and would be regarded as a callous attack on the freedom of speech by freedom loving people all around the world. The Bush administration has been mincing the beautiful words ‘Democracy’ and ‘Freedom’ for the past couple of years in our part of the world and trying to give us lessons about them. There are many antidemocratic malpractices of governments in this part of the world. However, I would say the public libraries have always been the one place where we could discuss and debate political thought of any kind without fear of police reprimand.

I would urge the Illinois State Board of Elections—as many thousands from around the world would also do—to uphold the fundamental democratic rights of the SEP and the voters of the 52nd Legislative District without letting the two big parties muscle in to deprive the voters of their choice of an alternative.

Thanking you,

Pandula Godawatta

Sri Lanka

29 June 2006

To the State Board of Elections:

It is the duty of the Illinois State Board of Elections to put an immediate stop to the illegal and unethical deprivation of the right to run for office of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and its candidate for State Senate in the 52nd Legislative District, Joe Parnaruskis, as well as other political opponents of those in power.

The challenges being prepared against the more than sufficient signatures collected by the SEP to obtain ballot status are without merit

and are nothing but a fishing expedition to deny democratic rights. Perhaps it is time for the Democratic Party to end the charade it carries out with the use of its name. How is this different than the actions by which the Republican Party is generally considered to have stolen recent presidential elections.

The reported involvement of key Democratic Party activists while still Illinois state employees—Jim Rogal, who has worked as assistant chief of staff for State Senate President Emil Jones, and Elizabeth Brown, a house staff member for Democratic Speaker of the House Michael Madigan—should be investigated for their illegally “acting under color of state law” to interfere with constitutional rights.

Although I am a resident of New York, we are all aware of the broader national implications of local elections. As a teacher of history and government, I am aware of the corrupt reputation of Democratic Party politics in Illinois. It is time to give a chance for the voice of all people to be heard in the elections necessary for democracy.

Sincerely,

Harvey Lichtman

New York

30 June 2006

To the State Board of Elections:

The article, “Democratic operatives aim to bar SEP from Illinois ballot—Who are Jim Rogal and Liz Brown?” proves beyond a doubt that the Illinois state Democratic machine is engaged in a corrupt, criminal attempt to unconstitutionally prevent the Socialist Equality Party from placing a candidate on the ballot. It is no secret that the Democrats fear that a third-party candidate will drain votes away from them, and they will do anything to stop it. This is a disgusting violation of the most basic principle of democracy—the right to freely choose one’s representatives. I will do whatever I can to publicize this sordid enterprise, and to shame those who are complicit in it so they will be revealed to all for what they really are—unprincipled, corrupt party crooks. I call on the State Board of Elections to resist this despicable maneuvering and to publicly denounce the Illinois Democratic Party for its slimy, undemocratic dirty dealings.

Robert Rotstein

30 June 2006



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact