

More letters protest Democratic Party efforts to bar SEP candidate from Illinois ballot

8 July 2006

Below we post more letters from WSWS readers protesting the Illinois Democratic Party's effort to exclude Socialist Equality Party state Senate candidate Joe Parnarauskis from the 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.

The Democrats are employing the same antidemocratic methods as in their unsuccessful bid to bar SEP candidate for state legislature Tom Mackaman from the ballot in 2004. They have one aim—to exclude as many signatures as possible, using whatever technical discrepancies they can find or invent. A preliminary examination of the Democrats' objections has already revealed that they are seeking to disqualify legally registered voters whose signatures and addresses on petition sheets clearly match the information on their voter registration cards.

In addition to the SEP, the Illinois Democrats are challenging the entire statewide slate of the Illinois Green Party, including its gubernatorial candidate Rich Whitney.

The Socialist Equality Party intends to wage an aggressive legal and political fight to place Joe Parnarauskis on the Illinois ballot. On July 11, a preliminary hearing on the Democrats' challenge 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 and all readers of the World Socialist Web Site to send letters of protest to the State Board of Elections at webmaster@elections.state.il.us

This fight will require a considerable expenditure of funds. We appeal to all of our readers and supporters, and all those who defend democratic rights, to send contributions to the SEP election fund.

To whom it may concern,

It has come to my attention that 2,500 of the nearly 5,000 signatures gathered to place Joe Parnarauskis on the ballot for the upcoming State Senate election have been challenged by a Gregory Lietz and John Dreher, whom a quick Google search reveals to be Democratic precinct committeemen for Vermilion County, Illinois.

Regardless of the two gentlemen's intentions in challenging the petitioning-gathering efforts of the Socialist Equality Party on what will no doubt be spurious grounds, this will serve to perpetuate the voters' perception of their own political impotence, which will be reflected in low election day turnout and disinterest or disgust in each and every Democratic and Republican politician.

After all, since many believe that votes cast within the confines of the two-party system don't count, why should they then believe that their signatures to put alternative parties on the ballot count if these smaller parties are besieged at every turn in their efforts to do so?

On this, the two hundred and thirtieth anniversary of the American Democratic Experiment, we find that experiment in a state of profound decay. I would ask that you do your part, however small it might seem relative to the problems facing this country as a whole, to reaffirm the universal principles of that experiment, giving the citizens of Illinois a chance to shape their own government rather than to be shaped by it.

Sincerely,

Dan Conway

Northridge, California

7 July 2006

To the Illinois Board of Elections,

I am writing to call for a summary dismissal of the fabricated and manufactured challenges to the nominating petitions for Joe Parnarauskis, state Senate candidate for the SEP by Democratic Party (DP) hacks George Lietz and John Draher. The contrived complaints echo those used to challenge SEP candidate Tom Mackaman in 2004, which were subsequently dismissed. That previously rejected petition complaints are submitted again in 2006 is a blatant indictment of the harassing nature of the Democratic Party's challenge. A full investigation into the Democratic Party officials orchestrating this undemocratic attack should be conducted with perhaps an independent body. State DP Legal officials should recuse themselves.

The SEP legal costs to fight these frivolous charges should be paid by the Democratic Party.

Tony Bell

7 July 2006

State Board of Elections:

Please consider this e-mail a protest to your state's continued practice of keeping alternative political candidates off voting ballots.

Regardless of the magnitude and details of your illegitimate opposition to allowing alternative candidates ballot access (in the past illustrated by the frivolousness of your opposition), I will keep all the confused, angered, and wavering Democrats and Republicans that I know of informed of how true political options are derailed in "on the ground" scenarios that have previously played out in your state, and that are likely to play out again.

Pete Liebl
Lenexa, Kansas, US
6 July 2006

To Whom It May Concern, from a concerned American:

The scheduled hearing petitioned for by Democratic leaders on July 11, which is designed to call into question the validity of a significant number of signatures on a candidacy petition by the Socialist Equality Party to run Joe Parnaruskis for State Senate, and also to call into question the integrity of the many who make up this international party, has me deeply concerned. In my home state of Maryland, candidates may register without the aid of any petition. I first of all find it difficult to understand such a law requiring a specific number of signatures. It seems to me that if even ONE person wanted to vote for Parnaruskis, it would be an abridgement of that person's voting rights to deny them his name on the ballot. But Parnaruskis has had nearly 5,000 people in Illinois sign his petition, and the Democratic Party is troubled that he may steal their votes. So they are resorting to a campaign of extortion, making a smaller party pay the legal fees necessary, take time out of the campaign process, to appear before you in court. It is my utmost hope that the members of the Illinois State Board of Elections will be able to see this bald-faced attempt at election fraud by the members of the Democratic Party for what it is: a stifling of the antiwar and socialist impulses in our society by a large corporate machine hungry for votes that it would not necessarily get if the people had a healthy alternative.

I admire the first sentence on the Illinois State Board of Elections web site. It reads: "The integrity of the election process is protected by access to it." Many of the names the Democratic Party will question on July 11 will be for insane reasons: failure of the petitioner to use cursive handwriting, neglect to write in an apartment number. This is a reliance on bureaucracy to stifle progress. To make a person's handwriting conform to state regulations before giving them what they petition for is morally wrong.

If the Democratic Party was an average Joe and the hearing on July 11th was in a people's court, this would be called lawsuit abuse.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Kevin Southern
Newark, Maryland, US
7 July 2006

Below we post an exchange between a WSWs reader and Steve Sturm, the general counsel of the Illinois State Board of Elections. (The first letter is reposted from the WSWs of July 7, 2006.)

On July 3, the Illinois Democratic Party filed an objection challenging the validity of more than half the signatures collected on nominating petitions for Joe Parnaruskis, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for state Senate from the 52nd Legislative District.

As a lawyer and as an ordinary American citizen, I am writing to protest in the strongest terms the dishonest and anti-democratic actions of Democratic Party functionaries Gregory Lietz and John Dreher in their bad-faith objections to voter signatures supporting the placement of Parnaruskis on the ballot. I urge the state board of elections to take all appropriate action to oppose these activities by the Democratic Party, which dishonestly aims at keeping the

SEP (and other parties) from the ballot. This is a threat to the very heart of American democracy.

Respectfully submitted,
John J. Tobin
(US citizen, resident of Tokyo, Japan)
6 July 2006

Steve Sturm replies for the Illinois Board of Elections:

An objection to the candidacy of Mr. Parnaruskis was filed on Monday, July 3 by two private citizens, Gregory Lietz and John Dreher. Any presumption of a connection to the Democratic Party is conjecture. The State Board of Elections will consider the objection and employ a hearing officer to rule on the issues raised in the objection. That process will take several weeks and may involve checking the validity of the signatures on Mr. Parnaruskis' petition. The Board will then determine if Mr. Parnaruskis' petitions were filed in compliance with the Election Code. He will remain on the ballot if they were.

Steve Sturm
6 July 2006

John J. Tobin replies:

Dear Mr. Sturm:

I appreciate your quick reply to my e-mail, which I sent on Thursday, July 6 (Tokyo time).

A Socialist Equality Party statement dated July 6, 2006, that appears on the *World Socialist Web Site* states that Messrs. Lietz and Dreher are "two local Democratic Party precinct committeemen from Danville." If this statement is correct, we are not here presuming a connection between them and the Democratic Party, or conjecturing about such a connection. There is a very real connection.

In any case, given the blatantly obstructive, unfair, and politically sordid methods used by the Democratic Party in the Mackaman campaign, I would urge more than a little skepticism concerning Democratic Party challenges of signatures to put SEP candidates on the ballot.

Sincerely,
John J. Tobin, attorney-at-law (admitted in Massachusetts)
7 July 2006



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact