

SEP candidate exposes Democrats' election fraud at Chicago press conference

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On Tuesday, following the preliminary hearing before the Illinois state Board of Elections in Chicago, (see “Attorney for SEP candidate calls on Illinois election board to throw out Democrats' ballot challenge”) the Socialist Equality Party participated in a press conference sponsored by Free and Equal Elections, a coalition promoting ballot access for all political parties.

The press conference was attended by representatives of the SEP, including the party's candidate for state representative, Joseph Parnarauskis; representatives of the Green Party; ballot access attorney Andrew Spiegel, legal counsel for both parties; and representatives of Free and Fair Elections. The press conference was covered by the local ABC affiliate in Chicago, National Public Radio 91.5 FM, and the Medill News Service.

The central focus of the press conference was to expose the flagrant criminality of the attempt by the Democratic Party to bar third party candidates from the November election, in effect disenfranchising all those who signed petitions in favor of placing these candidates on the ballot.

Attorney Spiegel opened the press conference by referring to the denial of ballot status for Ralph Nader in Illinois in 2004, and to a comment made by Judge Richard Posner, who presided over the decision, and who justified the delay in the verification of nominating petitions because of the history of vote fraud in Illinois. Spiegel then commented that it is necessary to “short circuit this process, because vote fraud in Illinois doesn't start at the election but way before the election, when Democrats and Republicans try to keep third party candidates off the ballot as they are trying to do now.”

Spiegel referred to the campaign of SEP state legislative candidate Tom Mackaman in 2004, and the

struggle waged to defeat the attempt by the Democrats to exclude signatures for various reasons, including that they did not perfectly match signatures on registration cards, sometime signed years earlier. Spiegel described the “astronomical signature requirements” for third party candidates, which in most cases are 10 times the number of signatures a Democrat or Republican are required to submit, if required at all.

Spiegel was followed by two representatives of the Green Party, who pointed out that 80 percent of the objections they reviewed in a sample of petitions were from properly registered voters.

SEP candidate Parnarauskis then made a statement, calling for the throwing out of the Democrats' fraudulent objection, and explaining the political significance of the Democrats' fear of any political challenge from the left. “The objection filed by the Democratic Party against my candidacy is a serious attack on democratic rights,” he said. “It has no factual basis and should be rejected by the state Board of Elections.”

Parnarauskis continued: “The issues involved in the effort to keep me off the ballot have implications that go far beyond the 52nd Legislative District of Illinois. The right to vote, the right to have one's vote counted and the right of citizens to vote for a candidate of their choice have emerged as critical matters of public concern in the US presidential elections in 2000 and 2004, and in countries throughout the world, as recent events in Mexico show.”

Parnarauskis echoed the remarks of the Green Party that the Democrats' objection had been made in bad faith. “Our preliminary review of the challenged signatures demonstrates that this objection is not only factually wrong—it was filed in bad faith by operatives of the Democratic Party who knew that they were

challenging perfectly legitimate voters. In the last several days my supporters, working under difficult time restraints and with an inadequate database provided by Champaign County officials, found that at least 180 signatures out of some 500 challenged by the Democrats were clearly valid. Based on these results, obtained from a review of less than one-third of the 521 petition sheets submitted, there is no doubt that the SEP has collected more than enough signatures to meet the state's requirement."

"What is this but evidence of wholesale and systematic election fraud?" Parnarauskis declared. "The objection filed on behalf of the Illinois Democrats is not a search for the truth. It is a politically motivated effort to exclude the SEP from the ballot and disenfranchise the 4,991 voters who signed our petitions."

Parnarauskis then addressed the political reasons for the assault on his candidacy. "Why is the Democratic Party of Illinois, including Governor Blagojevich, Michael Madigan and other machine politicians, trying to keep the SEP off the ballot? It is because they want no discussion of the criminal war against Iraq. The Democrats don't want it discussed because of their direct collusion with the Bush administration in this war—a war that is based on lies and in violation of international law.

"They don't want a discussion on this government's assault on democratic rights ... from the illegal wiretapping to the interception of computer communications. And while they grovel before the Bush administration, the Democrats spare no efforts to block their opponents on the left from gaining ballot access and to silence the vast opposition to the war, the attack on democratic rights and the destruction of jobs and living standards.

"Given this record of criminality, the state Board of Elections should not accept any claim made by the Democrats on face value. Quite the contrary! The assumption should be made that they are following the same pattern of bad faith and frivolous challenges long carried out by their party. The state Board of Elections should throw out this bogus objection and place my name on the ballot for the November election."

Responding to a reporter's question as to why socialists, Greens and Libertarians were united on the question of ballot access, Jerome White, a national

spokesman for the SEP election campaign, said, "Despite our political differences, we are opposed to the reactionary effort by the two-party system to bar third party candidates from the ballot and limit political debate to what is acceptable to the corporate-controlled parties, whose differences on all matters of importance, including war, are minimal, at best."



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