

SEP surpasses number of valid signatures needed to be placed on Illinois ballot

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On Wednesday afternoon Socialist Equality Party supporters in Illinois established that they had attained some 3,250 valid signatures—well above the legal requirement of 2,985—on petitions seeking to place Joe Parnarauskis on the November ballot as the party's candidate for State Senate in the 52nd Legislative District. Parnarauskis is running in the district, containing Champaign, Urbana and Danville in east central Illinois, against Democrat Michael Frerichs and Republican Judy Meyers.

The SEP supporters completed the time-consuming process of countering Democratic Party challenges to some 2,500 of the nearly 5,000 signatures on the Parnarauskis petitions by “recovering,” i.e., proving the official legitimacy, of some 700 names. Hundreds of other signatures were ruled invalid because they belong to people who have moved since they registered to vote, or live just outside the district. These are bona fide voters, but the Democrats successfully suppressed those individuals' right to seek an alternative to the two-party system.

The examination of the objections, at the State Board of Elections (SBE) headquarters in Springfield, Illinois, took up two full days. After working on only two computer terminals August 1, SEP supporters worked at seven on Wednesday. The extra computers became available following the completion by the Illinois Green Party of its “records examination.” The Democrats offered some 23,000 objections to the 39,000 signatures gathered by the Greens for their statewide slate.

Green Party candidate for governor, Rich Whitney, announced August 2 at a press conference held at the state capitol building in Springfield that his party had considerably more than the 25,000 valid names it needed to have its state candidates placed on the ballot.

The WSWWS will post an article on the Green campaign and related matters in the next few days.

At the SBE headquarters all day Tuesday and Wednesday morning, where the Democratic challenge to the Green and SEP campaigns were going on simultaneously, SEP supporters sometimes sat in for the Greens if they were short of observers. Following the completion of their records examination, Green members returned the favor for the SEP Wednesday afternoon.

That the SEP campaign has clearly established the legitimacy of more than 3,000 signatures does not mean that the Democratic objection is thrown out and that Parnarauskis is automatically placed on the ballot. Oh, no! That's what would happen in a fair-minded and democratic electoral process. Instead, the Democrats will very likely seek to challenge many of the signatures that have been proven to belong to registered voters.

They may, for example, claim that individuals who were newly registered at the time of signing the Parnarauskis petition were not yet *legally* registered voters, because an individual does not receive official notice until several weeks after registering. The Democrats may very well bring in handwriting analysts to challenge the validity of certain signatures!

As we have noted before on the WSWWS, the Democrats, who grovel to George W. Bush and Republicans, are astonishingly energetic and resourceful when it comes to efforts to restrict the population's right to alternatives on the left.

SEP members and supporters were obliged to spend many hours ahead of time, over the past few weeks, combing through data bases to substantiate the validity of signatures on the Parnarauskis petitions. Moreover, legal and other experts in “ballot access,” who gave

generously of their time, needed to be consulted and employed.

That an entire industry should be devoted to “ballot access,” that is to say, to organizing the effort to penetrate the fortress of political power that the Democrats and Republicans have made as impregnable as possible, speaks volumes about the current situation in America. In Britain and Canada, by contrast, candidates are placed on the ballot through the gathering of a nominal number of signatures, plus a filing fee.

The process of gaining access to elections in the US, supposedly an elementary right, is truly Kafkaesque, with bureaucratic and legal hurdles placed at every point. To sit at the computer terminal and respond to the Democratic objections, this writer can testify, is an infuriating process. One sees the names and signatures of registered voters—representing real human beings—appear on the computer screen, one after the other, which match names and signatures on petitions, only to see the Democratic objections sustained because the individual, at the time of signing the petition, resided at a different location than at the time of registering to vote. The SBE clerks, who are quite conscientious in their labors, have no choice but to follow the regulations.

As far as the electoral system is concerned, US citizens lose certain rights when they move! There is no possible legal or constitutional justification for suppressing the signatures of these individuals. It is an arbitrary measure, which strikes off from the petitions the names of many students and the less privileged, who are more likely to move. The Democrats are engaged in a truly reprehensible undertaking.

One of the Democratic Party demands, which has not yet been resolved, is that 44 petition sheets, including more than 400 names, be tossed out because the heading on the petition listed the office for which Parnarauskis is running as “State Senate,” not “State Senate—52nd Legislative District.” The Democrats claim this omission was “misleading” to the voters, although each petition began with the preamble, “We, the undersigned, qualified voters of the 52nd State Senate Legislative District...”

By the same logic, since the Democratic Party objection sheets listed the candidate as “John J. Parnarauskis,” instead of “Joseph J. Parnarauskis,” his

correct name, every one of their objections should be thrown out as “misleading.” The whole process is unworthy and degrading.

Over the course of the next few days, the SEP intends to consolidate its total of signatures as State Elections Board officials rule on a number of outstanding questions, including the validity of names printed instead of signed (!), and so forth. We are quite determined to defeat each and every one of the Democrats’ underhanded efforts.

The SEP and the World Socialist Web Site call on all supporters and readers to donate to the SEP election fund to defray the costs of this antidemocratic process (Make a donation today!), and to continue to write letters of protest to the Illinois State Board of Elections at webmaster@elections.state.il.us. Please send copies of all messages to the WSWS.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact