

SEP Illinois candidate launches fall campaign despite legal obstructions

Tom Carter
7 September 2006

While the Illinois Democrats are using the every means at their disposal to remove Joseph Parnarauskis, the SEP candidate in the Illinois 52nd state senate district, from the November ballot, he has launched his election campaign, telling voters he “fully expects to be on the ballot.” Citizens of the 52nd district were shocked by the Democrats’ attempts to remove Parnarauskis from the ballot, and have responded warmly to his campaign.

Parnarauskis attended a Labor Day commemoration on Monday at the Zamberletti Park in Westville, Illinois, and supporters of Parnarauskis’s campaign spoke with a number of residents of the district there. Westville, where Parnarauskis was born and raised, has been hit hard by the decline in the coal mining industry. Significantly, even though American flags, “America” T-shirts, and “Support our Troops” bumper stickers were a common sight at the event, when asked about the war in Iraq, every single person with whom SEP supporters spoke responded that he or she opposed it.

June, for instance, said, “There is no sense in them being there [in Iraq]. I don’t care what anybody says—that’s what I think.”

Vicky told a supporter, “I just think it’s time to bring them home.” Commenting on the deteriorating living standards in the district, she said, “I’m a single mother. Every week I think—do I pay rent or buy food for my kids?”

Workers also expressed anger at the attempts by the Democratic Party to exclude the SEP candidate from the ballot. “It’s not right. It’s not fair. It’s just wrong,” said Tammy, a bartender.

“I think it would be great for you to be on the ballot,” said Terry, “I agree. We should have a choice. You have every right to be on the ballot.” “That’s not right.”

Kathy, a Kellogg worker and union member, told a supporter. “You should have a right to appear on the ballot. You know what it is? They’re scared.” Kathy said she was frustrated with the complicity of both the Democrats and Republicans in the decline of available healthcare to workers in the US. “Why can’t we take care of our elderly and our children?” she asked. “We need someone who represents the working class. If you’re for the working class, then I’ll vote for you.”

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Parnarauskis also attended the local Farmers’ Market on Saturday, where he encountered a similarly sympathetic response from workers.

Parnarauskis commented, “Everyone seemed to know my name and who I was. Most everyone is opposed to the war, and people are generally disgusted by what the Democrats have been doing. I look forward to waging a concerted campaign to bring my message of genuine democracy, social equality and lasting peace to as many people as I can.”

The campaign of Judy Myers, Parnarauskis’s Republican opponent, has agreed to begin scheduling a calendar of debates. Myers has previously stated her refusal to debate her Democratic opponent, Michael Frerichs, unless Parnarauskis is present.

Today, the State Board of Elections will reconvene to vote whether or not to certify Parnarauskis’s campaign—that is, to decide whether or not he will be on the ballot. On August 31, the SBE voted 5-3 to postpone a decision on granting ballot status to the SEP’s candidate until today, passing the statutory deadline of September 1. Today’s decision will be the culmination of more than two months of legal obstruction by the Democratic Party to the SEP campaign.



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