More letters demand ballot status for Illinois SEP candidate

2 September 2006

On Thursday, August 31, the Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE) in Chicago voted to postpone a decision on granting ballot status to Joe Parnarauskis, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for State Senate in Illinois' 52nd Legislative District. The board's 5-3 vote puts off a decision as to whether Parnarauskis can be certified for ballot status until at least September 7, when the board reconvenes.

The board's vote to postpone the decision came as the result of the intractable opposition of the four Democratic Party members on the eight-person board, who repeatedly blocked attempts to certify Parnarauskis as a candidate throughout the day-long proceedings. Their actions culminate a nearly two-month-long campaign by the Democrats to bar the SEP candidate from the November ballot.

Earlier in the week, the hearing examiner appointed by the SBE to review the legal challenge by the Democratic Party to the SEP's nominating petitions issued a recommendation that Parnarauskis be placed on the ballot. Examiner David Herman stated that the SEP had collected 3,229 signatures, well over the required 2,985. He rejected as well the Democrats' efforts to disqualify 44 full petition sheets on the grounds of a technicality—that the petitions indicated that Parnarauskis was running for "State Senator" instead of "State Senator—52nd Legislative District."

The Democrats' efforts have aroused widespread opposition, as demonstrated by the letters that continue to be sent to the Illinois State Board of Elections demanding that Joe Parnarauskis be certified as a candidate. Interest in the case and anger at the undemocratic attempt to deny the SEP ballot access reveal the broad support the Socialist Equality Party campaign has been able to garner.

The local media has concerned itself with the case. An August 31 editorial in the *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette* called on the SBE to grant ballot status to both Parnarauskis and the Green Party's candidate for governor, Rich Whitney. On the day following the SBE meeting, the *News-Gazette* morning edition's lead article reported that the SEP candidate was "the subject of fierce debate at the State Board of the Elections on Thursday."

The article noted that Michael Frerichs, the Democrat Party candidate in the 52nd District, has refused to disassociate himself from the party's undemocratic practices: "Frerichs said he was not directly involved in the petition challenge, but he declined to denounce his party's tactics." Frerichs' claims of noninvolvement were contradicted by one of the Democratic Party objectors, attorney Gregory Lietz, who told a WSWS reporter in early August that he was involved only because he was "a friend of Mike Frerichs."

The Socialist Equality Party calls on all its supporters and all those who defend democratic rights to continue to flood the offices of the Illinois State Board of Elections with letters demanding that it immediately reaffirm Joe Parnarauskis' right to appear on the ballot. E-mails can be sent to the Illinois State Board of Elections at webmaster@elections.state.il.us. Please send copies of all messages to the WSWS.

The SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site* also call on all supporters and readers to donate to the SEP election fund to defray the costs of the fight against this antidemocratic process. Make a donation today!

Below we post the most recent letters of protest to the SBE.

Sirs:

It has come to my attention that the Socialist Equality Party represented by Joe Parnarauskis is being denied the right to run for the State Senate even though the SEP has met the nomination qualifications.

How is it that the state of Lincoln has stooped so low as to let partisan politics block the democratic process? I ask that SEP be allowed to run.

Regards,

Curtis Smith

Taipei, Taiwan

1 September 2006

To the State Board of Elections:

I am writing to demand the inclusion of Joe Parnarauskis—the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Illinois Senate from the 52nd District—on the official ballot and the immediate cessation of the undemocratic and unlawful campaign by his rivals, the Democratic Party, to exclude him.

Joe Parnarauskis easily surpassed the necessary 2,985 signatures of registered voters required for third party candidates to obtain ballot status under state election laws. Further, this Election Board has already found that 3,229 are legitimate signatures after exhaustive review.

The campaign of exclusion has gone beyond the traditional bullying of smaller party candidates allowed by the restrictive election laws in the state. It threatens the very principles of democracy enshrined and enumerated in the Constitution.

At the time of its writing, there were no established political parties, and the Constitution makes no reference or preference as to their entitlements or their viability. However, the Constitution—and especially its first ten amendments—proclaims the rights to free and open exchanges of ideas, to access to those ideas through various media, and to access by the candidates that represent those ideas in their programs to open elections as the *fundamental* principles that establish political democracy.

By allowing the major parties to exhaust the energetic and financial resources of the SEP and its candidate through this bad-faith effort and simultaneously disenfranchising registered voters from choosing the composition of their ballot, the very essence of democracy is at stake.

Place Joe Parnarauskis on the ballot! Do not let this undemocratic campaign continue for another day!

Omri Goldshtrom

Austin, Texas

1 September 2006

To: Illinois State Board of Elections

Once again I find myself writing to urge you, the members of the board, to do the right thing and affirm SEP prospective candidate Joe Parnarauskis's constitutional right to be included on the ballot for State Senate in the 52nd District.

As a Champaign resident and registered voter who added his signature to the SEP petitions in support of Mr. Parnarauskis' candidacy, I am

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deeply disturbed, indeed angered, that the Illinois Democratic Party persists in its efforts to subvert the democratic process through its specious objections to this candidacy. Desperate to avoid third party candidates that stand for policies independent of what is tantamount to a two-party political monopoly, the Illinois Democrats are trying the same tack that they used when they attempted (unsuccessfully) to block the SEP candidate, Tom Makaman, from standing in 2004. Now as then, the SEP has gathered more than enough signatures to qualify for being put on the ballot. There is simply no excuse for this flagrant abuse of the democratic process by the Democratic Party in Illinois.

If you are seriously concerned with upholding the democratic process in this state, then there is but one course of action: throw out Illinois DNP's objections and ratify Mr. Parnarauskis's candidacy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Curtis

Champaign, Illinois

1 September 2006

To: Illinois State Board of Elections

Please accept this urgent appeal to place Joe Parnarauskis, SEP candidate Illinois Senate for the 52nd District, on the ballot for this November 2006 elections.

We are living in the most dangerous of times! It is a time of multiple crises! Scientists have forecast that global warming could threaten the existence of humanity. Futurists are alarmed that unchecked overpopulation trends will result in global starvation, wars for food and water, barbaric wars for diminishing resources (oil).

The unending militarism and wars of the Bush administration are bankrupting the nation. The needs of the majority, the working people of the United States, for universal healthcare, good public schools, affordable housing, living wage jobs, etc., are being ignored.

After two national elections (2000, 2004) in which the legitimacy of the election results is a serious question, we are now facing this by-election in November 2006. Despite massive protest by millions of people in numerous demonstrations in this country and worldwide, the destruction to this planet and its peoples grinds on without end.

This election may be the last democratic opportunity for the people of this country to express their concerns and register their desire for a change in government and in leadership. The role of third parties is essential to present the view that a better world is not only possible but necessary.

Please restore some hope to what is left of the democratic process.

Please place the name of Joe Parnarauskis, Socialist Equality Party candidate for the Illinois Senate from the 52nd District, on this November ballot.

Jeremy Wells,

Santa Monica, California

1 September 2006

To the Illinois State Board of Elections:

I write to urge the Board to grant ballot status to Mr. Joe Parnarauskis, candidate for state Senate of the Socialist Equality Party. Mr. Parnarauskis has clearly met the requirements for ballot status, having collected 3,229 valid signatures. The refusal of the four Democratic members of the State Board of Elections to vote to grant the SEP candidate ballot status despite the recommendation of the hearing examiner appears to be without foundation in fact or law. These members appear to be motivated solely by narrow partisanship.

Denial of Mr. Parnarauskis's ballot status based on mere pretext should be considered a violation of Mr. Parnarauskis's rights to due process and equal protection both under Section 2 of the Illinois constitution and under the 14th Amendment of the federal constitution.

In addition, Board of Elections members are bound by the Illinois State Constitution, which provides that "All elections shall be free and equal." The refusal to certify a candidate based on frivolous grounds—such as the absence on some petition sheets of the phrase "52nd District" after "State Senate"—Is likely also a violation of the Illinois Election Code, which prohibits the use of "deception, forgery or bribery" to carry out activities whereby another is "deprived of having or exercising any right, privilege or immunity secured by the Constitution or laws of the US or state of Illinois relating to the conduct of elections, voting, or nomination or election of candidates for public or political party office."

Mr. Parnarauskis has shown that a large number of the objections under the category "Signers not registered at address given" were transparently false. Mr. Parnarauskis's petition checkers were able to verify these signatures simply by searching for the address in the Champaign County voter registration database and then matching a name with a signature. It appears that those working for the Democratic Party did not bother to follow this simple procedure and simply rejected thousands of signatures out of hand. This is evidence that the objections were filed in bad faith; it may also be evidence of election fraud.

I urge the Board of Elections members to take their duties as public servants seriously, bear in mind the consequences to themselves and to their fellow citizens if they do not act in accordance with the law, and to certify the ballot status of Mr. Parnarauskis.

John J. Tobin, attorney at law

Tokyo, Japan

1 September 2006

To Whom It May Concern,

I write in support of the democratic rights of the Socialist Equality Party's candidate, Joe Parnarauskis. It is becoming painfully obvious that the most elemental democratic right to present a range of options to the electorate is being willfully and programmatically curtailed in your district, this at a time when the United States proposes to bring democracy where citizens make meaningful choices to the most distant corners of the world. Have you no shame?

In my youth in Hungary under the Stalinists, the United States was held by so many as a shining example of democracy, as your nation has been for centuries. You need to read over again the words of your country's founders, the heroes of the American Revolution, and please do not put any further burden on an important tendency without the resources to fight for the most basic of political rights, to put views before the electorate.

Andrew Linder

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

1 September 2006

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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