

Parnarauskis issues statement on the eve of Illinois election board hearing

Our reporter**7 September 2006**

Today, September 7, the Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE) will hold a hearing by teleconference in Springfield and Chicago and vote whether or not to allow Joseph Parnarauskis, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for State Senate in the 52nd District, onto the November ballot. This decision is the culmination of more than two months of legal obstruction by the Democratic Party to the SEP campaign.

After the SEP had met every legal requirement under Illinois law, and even received the recommendation of the SBE's own hearing examiner, the Democratic Party still moved on August 31 to block Parnarauskis from the ballot, with its four members of the board voting to postpone a decision until September 7. The Democrats have also indicated that they will go to court if the ruling goes against them. If there is a deadlocked 4-4 vote tomorrow, the SEP will be placed on the ballot.

On the eve of the vote, Parnarauskis issued the following statement to the press:

“From the beginning, the objections by the Democrats had nothing to do with determining whether or not I had a ‘modicum of support,’ the legal requirement to qualify for ballot status. On the contrary, it was always a fishing expedition to find or invent any legal pretext to eliminate the signatures of legitimate voters and exclude a socialist and antiwar candidate from the ballot. The frivolous and bad-faith character of this process is exposed by the technicality on which the Democrats are now relying to toss out hundreds of signatures: the Democrats claim that because 44 of my nominating petitions read ‘State Senator’ under ‘Office’ instead of ‘State Senator—52nd district,’ that those signatures are invalid, even though ‘District 52’ was clearly printed on the top of the page.

“This attack on the right of citizens to vote for a

candidate of their choice exposes the fact that the Democrats, just as much as their Republican counterparts, are hostile to the democratic rights of working people. In an effort to defend the two-party monopoly they will resort to the basest means to disenfranchise voters seeking a political alternative to the bipartisan policies of war, enrichment of corporate America, and attacks on democratic rights. Fundamentally, the Democrats are terrified of my campaign and the broad support I have won.

“I demand that I be placed on the ballot, and that the Democrats and Republicans abide by the will of the thousands of people that signed my petitions, and the thousands more who are looking for an alternative to the policies of both big-business parties.”

In his brief to be filed at today's hearing, SEP Attorney Andrew Spiegel dismisses the arguments by the Democratic objectors that the SEP “mislead” voters during the campaign, citing David Herman, the hearing examiner appointed by the SBE to review Parnarauskis's case.

Spiegel notes: “Herman found it was especially telling that the objectors failed to present any evidence that any of the 430 people who signed those 44 petition sheets was confused about the office being nominated by the new party. Although the objectors tried to stretch their . . . objection into a claim those people may have been confused, none of them were brought in to testify; there were no Affidavits from any of them—no evidence whatsoever, just the wishful thinking of counsel for the objectors.”

Spiegel observes that during the course of petitioning the SEP waged a public campaign, distributing thousands of leaflets, eliciting scores of letters from supporters to defend the SEP's right to petition, and many articles on the campaign, each making clear that

Parnarauskis was running in Illinois' 52nd State Senate district. The campaign was featured on the *World Socialist Web Site* and was reported on by the Champaign-Urbana *News-Gazette*, the *Daily Illini*, newspaper of the University of Illinois, and television and radio.

Spiegel concludes that the State Officers Electoral Board (SOEB) “instead of straining the imagination for a justification to remove the candidate from the ballot . . . should be exercising the presumption in favor of keeping this Candidate on the ballot as required by the Illinois Supreme Court,” which found that the “purpose of election laws is to sustain and enforce the provisions of the Constitution and the rights of voters and not to contract or subvert them or egregiously restrict such rights.

“The SOEB should accept the Report and recommendation of the Hearing Examiner. The objections to the candidate’s 44 sheets must be overruled and a finding entered that he has met the signature requirement and that his name should appear on the ballot in the general election.”

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’s right to appear on the ballot. Emails 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!



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