

Election law expert protests efforts to bar SEP candidate from Illinois ballot

6 September 2006

Richard Winger, election law expert and publisher of the monthly *Ballot Access News*, has written opposing the efforts of election officials in Illinois to block ballot access to Socialist Equality Party candidate Joe Parnarauskis.

On Thursday, September 7, the Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE) will meet to decide whether Parnarauskis, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for State Senate in Illinois' 52nd Legislative District, can be certified for ballot status. On August 31, the SBE voted 5-3 to postpone a decision on granting ballot status to the SEP's candidate.

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 two-month-long campaign by the Democrats to bar the SEP candidate from the November ballot.

On August 28, 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 as well that Michael Frerichs, the Democratic Party candidate in the 52nd District, has refused to disassociate himself from the party's undemocratic practices.

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. 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!

Below we post Richard Winger's statements along with some of the most recent letters of protest to the SBE.

Illinois state legislators, by maintaining Illinois' current ballot access laws, are thumbing their noses at a treaty the United States signed in 1990. The Copenhagen Meeting Document, part of the Helsinki Accords, was signed by the United States in 1990. We promised “to respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties and provide such political parties with the necessary

legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law.”

Instead, in Illinois, the Democratic and Republican parties are guaranteed a spot on the general election ballot automatically, while every other party has to engage in almost impossible activities just to put their nominees on the general election ballot. This year in Illinois, only one party other than the Democratic and Republican Parties even tried to get on the Illinois ballot in a State Senate race. And we see the results.

Richard Winger, *Ballot Access News*

3 September 2006

I am writing to voice my alarm over the Democratic Party’s attempts to prevent Joe Parnarauskis from campaigning in the 2006 elections. Mr. Parnarauskis and his supporters should be commended for their dedication in acquiring the more than 3,000 signatures, far more than the 2,985 required by the state of Illinois, to rightfully obtain a place on the November ballot. Instead, the petty and cowardly actions of the Illinois Democratic Party have communicated a very discouraging message to the thousands of local college students who attend Parkland College and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Rather than energizing student action by intelligently engaging the very important issues of this election, the Democratic candidates have chosen to unethically challenge this candidate, a concerned, hard-working American who has far fewer resources and much less time for political wrangling. It is no wonder that so many potential young voters are left uninspired by the American political system.

I strongly urge the State Board of Elections to send a different message. Keep Joe Parnarauskis on the November 2006 ballot.

Sincerely,

Brian Hoffman

5 September 2006

To the Illinois State Board of Elections:

Here I go again, once more compelled to write in protest against the stonewalling tactics of the Illinois Democratic Party.

There is simply no legal or moral rationale for denying Joe Parnarauskis ballot status for the 52nd District. Instead, the Democrats are now focusing on a trivial technicality in order to prevent Illinois citizens from exercising their constitutional right to vote for a

candidate other than those put forward by the two main parties.

At this late juncture it is high time that the Board does what it is constitutionally bound to do, that is, to confirm that Mr. Parnarauskis has indeed satisfied all the necessary legal criteria to stand in the November ballot and ratify his unconditional right to do so.

Sincerely,

Dave Curtis

Champaign, Illinois

5 September 2006



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact