

Workers denounce effort by Wisconsin officials to exclude SEP from ballot

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Election officials in the state of Wisconsin are attempting to exclude the Socialist Equality Party's (SEP) presidential and vice-presidential candidates from the November ballot. Workers and youth throughout state have spoken out to denounce the politically motivated move.

On August 3, SEP campaigners filed nomination petitions with over 3,200 signatures, well above the legal requirement of 2,000, to place Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer on the ballot in November.

The state's Government Accountability Board (GAB) claims that because two of the SEP's ten presidential electors do not reside in the congressional districts indicated on the petitions, all of the signatures will be disqualified. The state only recently carried out a redistricting that resulted in the discrepancies. One elector voted in elections a few months ago, only to discover now that she is actually in a different district.

The move by the GAB is a blatant attack on the democratic rights of voters in the state. It is aimed at silencing the voices of more than 3,000 voters who expressed their desire to see the SEP on the ballot, while preventing any independent working class opposition to the two party system.

Behind the non-partisan façade of the GAB, the Democratic Party in particular is hard at work to exclude alternative political parties from the ballot. In Wisconsin, a state which will be highly contested in November, the Democrats want to exclude any party that could draw votes based on workers' opposition to austerity and their disgust with the political establishment.

Ballot Access News is reporting that, in addition to the SEP, the GAB is attempting to exclude the Green Party from the November ballot on the exact same grounds.

These anti-democratic actions contravene a 2004 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision, *Nader v. Dane County*. The court found that the residency requirement for presidential electors was in fact not mandatory and that Nader and the Green Party should be placed on the presidential ballot.

Nicholas, a presidential elector from Northeastern Wisconsin, responded indignantly, "This decision is undemocratic! The voices of the over 3,000 Wisconsin voters that want to see the SEP on the ballot are being silenced. Since there is a legal precedent for this sort of challenge being overturned, the SEP should be on the ballot. For these types of governmental officials it doesn't matter what the law says, they will do what they want to do. Unless you have a lawyer to take these people to court they are going to use every means to exclude alternative views from the political process regardless of the law."

A presidential elector who wished to remain anonymous said, "Bureaucracy, bureaucracy, bureaucracy. This is all too typical in dealing with our government." She continued, "My feeling is that if the requirement was not mandatory for Nader in 2004 it shouldn't be mandatory now. It's unfair. Due to the lack of information from the GAB and the exceptions that have been made in prior cases Jerry and Phyllis should absolutely be on the ballot."

Dylan, a presidential elector and student from Milwaukee, said, "I think it's a pretty clever tactic on their part to make it very difficult for third party candidates get on the ballot. You have to hand it to them because they make it seem like it isn't a conscious effort, that it is non-partisan, but it clearly is. All the bureaucracy and the roadblocks they set up are very Kafkaesque."

When asked about what the GAB's move says about

the state of American democracy Dylan replied, “It’s not actually in the strictest sense a democracy; it’s been altered. Some people would say you need strict regulations to rule out all the people that aren’t serious candidates, but that means only the people with tons of money and resources are able to gain access to the process. For people without tons of money it is a struggle to participate in American democracy.”

Justin is a young worker from Madison who also signed as an elector. “What the election authorities are doing is completely disenfranchising all of those who signed the petitions and were electors, including me. In picking a fight with the Socialist Equality Party, the Democrats are stooping even lower than the Republicans who let the recall election petitions through with little challenge. The Republicans figured they would just defeat the Democrats outright in the elections. But the Democrats don’t want socialists on the ballot who will show that they are no different from the Republicans.

“When I signed as a elector I knew exactly what I was doing. I wasn’t signing for a party that is only looking to get my votes or money, but one that represents the whole working class. I was active in the protests against Scott Walker last year when I met the SEP. I threw my lot in with the Democratic National Committee and the recall campaign. But I saw in real time what the SEP warned about, that the recall was nothing more than an effort to strangle the protests. The Democrats’ defeat was an epic fail. As it was happening all I could think about what was the SEP had told me.

“I doesn’t surprise me that the Democrats don’t want the SEP on the ballot. They want to keep the two parties in power and the working class unrepresented.”



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