

Wisconsin board approves ballot access for SEP candidates

Our reporter
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Wisconsin's Government Accountability Board decided Tuesday morning to place Socialist Equality Party presidential and vice presidential candidates Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer on the state's ballot in November. The decision came after a national and international campaign launched by the SEP.

Earlier this month, supporters of the SEP submitted 3,200 signatures to place White and Scherrer on the ballot, far more than the required 2,000. However, GAB elections specialist David Buerger initially announced that none of the signatures were valid because two of the ten electors on the petitions were listed in the wrong congressional district—due to the recent redistricting of the state. As a result, the petitions did not contain one elector in every district.

The same reasoning was given to argue that the Green Party candidates would also not be placed on the ballot. On Tuesday, the GAB also voted to approve a ballot line for the Green Party's candidates.

Buerger's initial recommendation ran directly counter to a 2004 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision ruling that district requirements for electors are not mandatory. The state's requirement that nominees acquire electors to get on the ballot is itself an archaic and anti-democratic procedure related to the fact that elections are mediated through the electoral college.

The SEP waged an aggressive campaign against the initial decision, and supporters sent letters from throughout the US and internationally. At a recent meeting in Sri Lanka addressed by White, SEP supporters adopted a resolution calling for White and Scherrer to be placed on the ballot. The campaign also obtained legal counsel to argue its case.

GAB legal staff responded earlier this month by reversing its initial recommendation, and at Tuesday's meeting it supported ballot access for the SEP and

Green Party. The board voted unanimously for this position.

After the GAB decision, White issued a statement stating, "I welcome the decision of the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board to place my running mate Phyllis Scherrer and me on the ballot for the presidential elections in November. I would like to thank all those supporters who wrote in to the GAB to demand that this be done and all those who made donations to the campaign to help cover our costs.

"While the final decision of the GAB is a victory for democratic rights, the whole process has cast a sharp light on the immense hurdles that are placed before parties that seek to challenge the monopoly of the Democrats and Republicans. The American population is effectively prevented from being able to voice its opposition to the pro-corporate policies of these two parties.

"Only after an aggressive campaign in opposition to this decision did the GAB staff reverse its position. SEP supporters were forced to expend significant time and money fighting the decision and getting two new electors.

"Wisconsin is not unique. States throughout the country make it nearly impossible for anyone without huge financial resources to qualify for ballot access. Some states require tens or even hundreds of thousands of signatures. The Democrats and Republicans, of course, are placed on the ballot automatically. The mass media meanwhile work to black out any discussion of a political alternative.

"The SEP denounces these ballot restrictions as a blatant attack on the most basic democratic right, the right to vote. We will continue to defend democratic rights through the only way such a defense can be successfully carried out—the independent political

mobilization of the working class against the two big business parties and the capitalist system they defend.”

Nicholas, one of the electors in Wisconsin, said, “This decision represents a victory for democratic rights, but most importantly it represents a victory for the working class. The wide support that the SEP found in its ballot access campaign indicates the fertile ground that exists for the development of the political consciousness of workers and the building of genuine organizations of working class struggle. These are the tasks that the SEP must carry out moving forward in the election campaign and in its work around the world.”

Richard, an SEP supporter and elector responded to the decision by stating, “This is one small, but important step for the industrial proletariat!”

Dylan, a student and an elector, added, “The fact that the SEP succeeded at all despite all the roadblocks is very impressive. I am ecstatic!”

The mass demonstrations last year in Wisconsin gave expression to the widespread opposition to the attack on the working class overseen by both big business political parties. At the same time, the experience revealed the role of the Democratic Party, the trade unions and their supporters in seeking to contain this opposition within the existing political framework.

The SEP will wage a strong campaign in Wisconsin and throughout the US to build the party among workers and youth. For more information and to become involved, visit socialequality.com.



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