

Letters protest censorship of Niles Niemuth election campaign by WDIV

3 November 2018

The WSWs is publishing a selection of the letters that were sent in response the open letter written by Niles Niemuth, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Congress in Michigan's 12th District, protesting WDIV's censorship of his campaign. As of publication Voet has not replied to the open letter.

We encourage supporters of the SEP to write letters to Kim Voet at kimv@wdiv.com demanding WDIV reverse their decision to censor Niles' campaign and to send copies to niles2018@socialistequality.com

Dear Ms. Voet,

I urge you to list Niles Niemuth as a candidate for Michigan's 12th congressional district. If I were in Detroit and we were fortunate enough to discuss the election, I'd even try to convince you to endorse his candidacy. I've known Niles a long time, and can speak to his honesty, noble character and optimism: qualities in short supply in the political sphere.

But more importantly, in this election and in American politics more generally, voters understand that the major obstacle to improved living conditions in the United States is the stranglehold of money on democracy and society. According to a 2016 PRRI study, 57 percent of Americans "believe that because elections are largely controlled by the wealthy and big corporations, it does not matter if they vote." That belief is higher among black Americans (59%), Hispanics (61%), and white working class voters (64%).

Ms. Voet, what part does the media play in the problem of wealth and big corporations dominating official political life? Is your decision not to cover Niemuth's campaign related, directly or indirectly, to the family fortune of the Graham family that owns WDIV, as Niemuth alleges?

For most Americans, the fight for justice, for democracy, for equality, is linked to the tragedy of everyday life in a polarized and unforgiving society. Perhaps I cannot convince you to take up this fight or to endorse Niles. But can I convince you as a journalist to do your job, that is, to cover his campaign?

I hope you will do what is right.

Sincerely,

Daniel

Boston, Massachusetts

Kim Voet,

I am writing you in protest of your news station's anti-democratic and pro-corporate, pro-militarist refusal to provide coverage of the congressional campaign of Niles Niemuth. I am a

resident of Ypsilanti, which lies within Michigan's 12th congressional district. For over eight decades, the 12th district's congressional seat has been held by members of the Dingell family, a political dynasty which has remained thoroughly loyal to the pro-war, pro-business policies of the Democratic Party.

As a member of the Socialist Equality Party, Niles Niemuth is running a campaign against these reactionary forces that have gripped the 12th district for nearly a century. I am a supporter of the SEP because it is the only political organization that offers working people a genuine alternative to the two-party dictatorship of Capital.

Your refusal to cover his campaign lays bare the lie of a "fair and balanced" news media. Your news station has shown itself by its actions to be yet another corporate mouthpiece. Opinion polls indicate that distrust for news media is extremely high among Americans. Your organization's behavior is a perfect example of the cause of this distrust.

I demand that you immediately reverse your policy and offer equal coverage to all candidates on the 12th district congressional ballot. If you believe at all in democratic ideals, this is the only way forward. Keep voters informed, not in the dark.

Ted Curran

Ypsilanti, Michigan

Ms. Voet,

I strongly protest WDIV's anti-democratic decision to, on its own prioritizing, decide which of those candidates on the ballots within its broadcast area are to receive coverage—and those which are not.

In an earlier era, this would have been an outrageous and flagrant violation of the fairness doctrine.

I demand that your station practice the most elementary task of journalism: that to cover the news fairly and without favor—a doctrine of central importance when coverage of elections is conducted.

Don Barry, Ph.D.

Rochester, New York

Astronomer, Cornell University (retired)

Director, Spitzer Space Telescope Infrared Spectrograph Science Archive

Ms. Voet,

I was a reporter for 18 years with Gannett's the *Tennessean* newspaper in Nashville, Tennessee. Having read Mr. Niemuth's

open letter to your television station, I can't say that I am surprised. I have seen the media, including my former employer, treat third-party candidates in the same fashion. The argument is that any candidates other than Republicans and Democrats are "not viable," which is all quite true. But to reach that conclusion you must use "Catch-22" logic:

"There is no interest in your socialism"

"But how do we develop interest?"

"By getting press coverage, of course."

"But you won't give us press coverage!"

"That's because there is no interest in your socialism."

"But Pew research indicates a majority of young people are interested in socialism."

"Silly, If they were we would see press coverage."

There is, indeed, growing interest in socialism, ergo there will be growing attempts to stifle it as your station has done.

Be a real journalist in the best sense of the word and not a hack and include Mr. Niemuth in your coverage and on your webpage.

Respectfully,

Warren Duzak

To Kim Voet:

Eight years ago this month, Bill Keller of the *New York Times* defended the paper's decision to refuse to publish information released to it about the war on terror. "Freedom of the press includes freedom not to publish, and that is a freedom we exercise with some regularity," he wrote.

That is not freedom of the press—that is lying by omission, or censorship.

I read a disturbing letter this morning from a candidate for congress in Michigan's 12th district, Niles Niemuth, explaining that he and another third-party representative have been omitted from your news station's coverage on the upcoming midterm elections.

It is apparent that this is not a mistake on your part but rather a deliberate and conscious effort to exclude him from your platform.

Allow me to voice my disappointment, concern and opposition to your news station's censorship of these candidates.

It is the responsibility and obligation of news outlets to tell the truth to the public. In this case, it includes providing information on candidates you yourself may not agree with. Presenting the election as if there are only two candidates by refusing to give a platform to the others is indeed lying.

Not only are you blocking the electorate from accessing critical information on all candidates, you're directly contributing to the "fake news" campaign spearheaded by some of the most right-wing and reactionary figures in government. Through acts of self-censorship and lying, it is outlets like yours which ultimately hold responsibility for the rightful discrediting of the news in this country. Why should anyone trust the media when the media feels at liberty to publish only half the facts?

NBC released results from a poll a few days ago which shows 63 percent of voters in my age bracket (millennials) do not feel that congress represents them. Only a third are actually planning to vote this Tuesday. Why should people cast a vote for a party they don't agree with? There are other options and, whether you like it

or not, it's not your job to decide which candidates voters are allowed to choose from. It's your job to inform your audience honestly and intelligently about all options.

I'm sure you're under pressure from the rich people who own and run your news station, who prefer to confine voters to the two parties that correlate most with their own interests. However, I would like to remind you that rich people aren't the only ones who get to vote, and your news station serves a much larger audience than that.

We only have a few days until the election. Do your job. Cover the elections the way you're supposed to. Allow all candidates a platform.

Thank you,

K. C.

Good Day,

I am Christopher Drye a resident of Maryland and am following the coverage of the upcoming midterm elections. We have a strong interest in the state of Michigan's upcoming future and the concerns of its elected officials. I have not seen your station showing any interviews with the other third party candidates who are running for offices. There is a large interest in the independent and Socialist Equality Party candidates and I feel you should be giving them equal time as well. I would appreciate your attention in this matter.

Respectfully,

Chris Drye

Dear Ms. Voet,

I write to ask you to change your decision to censor Michigan 12th District candidates Niles Niemuth (Socialist Equality Party) and Gary Walkowicz (Working Class Party) by leaving them off your station's voter guide and by denying them the opportunity to record a brief video statement about their candidacies, opportunities you granted to the Republican and Democratic candidates for that same office.

In the letter he sent you, Mr. Niemuth made a clear case to be included in your station's pre-election coverage; there is no need for me to repeat his arguments here. Equally clear is his argument why you and your station chose to exclude him. You can do better than this. You must!

While I don't reside in Michigan's 12th Congressional District, I am a Michigan resident, a contributor to Mr. Niemuth's campaign, and I support the platform of the Socialist Equality Party.

Sincerely,

(The Rev.) Daniel S. Scheid

Michigan



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact