

Democratic Party schemes to remove COVID-19 whistleblower, Green Party candidates from the ballot

Alex Johnson
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In two reactionary attacks on democratic rights, the Democratic Party is seeking to eliminate political challengers to its left in this fall's midterm elections. The first is the removal of COVID whistleblower Rebekah Jones from the Florida primary ballot. The second is a protracted effort to keep the Green Party candidate for the US Senate race in North Carolina off the November ballot.

Although the Socialist Equality Party opposes the politics of both Jones (who is seeking a Democratic Party nomination) and the pro-capitalist Green Party, we defend the democratic right of third parties and independent candidates to appear on the ballot.

The nakedly undemocratic operations against their candidacies are a testament to the reactionary character of the Democratic Party and the fear within the ruling class of the growing social discontent and opposition brewing among workers seeking to break out of the straitjacket of the capitalist two-party system.

Both cases involve convoluted legal maneuvers in which there is a strong odor of criminality and dirty tricks, as the Democrats used hacked and falsified voter registration records against Rebekah Jones and impersonated Green Party petition gatherers and lied to voters in North Carolina.

Florida

On Friday, a Leon County Circuit Court Judge disqualified Rebekah Jones from running as a candidate in the state's Democratic primary election on August 23, following a concerted intervention from Democratic Party officials. The ruling arose from a lawsuit filed by Peggy Schiller, a retired corporate lawyer and the sole rival to Jones for the party's nomination in Florida's 1st Congressional District. The seat is currently held by Republican Matt Gaetz, an arch-

reactionary Trump worshiper.

Schiller's lawsuit alleged that Jones changed her party voter registration to "unaffiliated" in June 2021 while living in Maryland—she had left Florida briefly because of persecution by the administration of Governor Ron DeSantis—even though she registered to vote in the state in April 2021 as a Democrat.

A Florida election law passed last year requires anyone running for a partisan office to be registered as a member of the party for a full year before qualifying begins in June. The brief interruption in Jones' registration would disqualify her as a candidate.

Jones testified that she only registered to vote in Maryland once as a Democrat and the other changes filed with the state of Maryland were fabricated and not done by her.

Schiller's attorney and former Republican official Juan-Carlos Planas pointed to a number of Federal Election Commission (FEC) filings where Jones identified herself as an independent candidate for Congress. Jones initially announced she would run for Congress as an independent, but changed plans based on a new law passed by the legislature, making such campaigns more difficult, and ran as a Democrat out of necessity.

Judge Cooper rejected the claim by Jones that her voter registration information had been changed without her consent. While he was explaining his ruling, Jones interrupted him saying she could provide documents proving she was hacked. The judge immediately ordered her out of the Zoom hearing, saying he didn't allow anyone to speak during a ruling.

The undemocratic sabotaging of Jones' campaign is not unsurprising given the brutal violence and political slander she's faced following her firing from the Department of Health at the hands of far-right Governor Ron DeSantis, who sought to censor all opposition to his homicidal policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Jones was fired and subsequently persecuted for refusing to manipulate the

state's case and death numbers from COVID-19 so that the DeSantis administration could lift all coronavirus restrictions despite the rampant spread of the virus.

Shortly after being fired, Jones created her own COVID-19 dashboards to comprehensively track COVID-19 infections and deaths in Florida and in K-12 schools across the US. Several months later Jones was the victim of a Gestapo-like raid on her home ordered by DeSantis, where Florida state police barged into Jones' home with guns drawn at her and her family. The officers seized her phone, computer and several hard drives to prevent her from continuing to publish data on COVID-19 outbreaks.

North Carolina

On Friday, August 8, US District Judge James Dever III ordered North Carolina's Green Party's US Senate candidate Matthew Hoh be placed on the November ballot, in a ruling that rebukes the Democrat's flagrantly undemocratic attempts to eliminate a challenger for the US Senate seat held by outgoing Republican Sen. Richard Burr, who has announced his retirement.

In late June, the North Carolina Board of Elections voted in a 3–2 decision to not certify the Green Party's ballot status, thereby keeping it from the 2022 ballot. The vote was along party lines with three Democrats voting in favor against the remaining Republican board members. The Green Party alleged the decision was aimed at bolstering Democratic Senate candidate Cheri Beasley, out of fear that the Green candidate would likely take votes from her. US Rep. Ted Budd won the Republican primary in the race.

The election's board decision came after the Washington-based Elias Law Group, the counsel for the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee (DSCC), accused the Greens of misleading voters into getting them to sign the latter's petition to certify them for the ballot. Under state law, the Green Party needed at least 13,865 signatures and more than 16,000 were validated by county election officials.

Although 95 percent of petition signatures were collected by Green Party volunteers, Hoh said that 5 percent were gathered by contractors, "And two of those people seemed to have tried to run a scam and submit false signatures. That was around 200 signatures (in question)."

According to material uncovered by the Greens, Democratic operatives sought to undermine the party's campaign by calling up those who had signed the petition, disguising themselves as Green Party representatives. According to phone call recording, the caller then appeared

to read from a script, saying "the Green Party's presence on the ballot will take votes away from Democrats giving Republicans a huge advantage. That will help them win North Carolina in 2022 and 2024. Are you interested in having your name removed from the petition?"

The Green Party filed an emergency motion in federal court against the election board decision, leading the board to partially reverse course and agree, by a 4–0 vote, to restore the party's ballot status. But the board still sought to prevent Green candidates from appearing on the November ballot, claiming they had missed the filing deadline (because of the Board's own action in rejecting party status!)

The last matter remains to be determined in advance of the ballot printing, set for August 23, but the federal court was clearly hostile to the constitutional argument advanced by the board. The Democratic-controlled panel argued on the basis of state's rights that while ballot status for a party was subject to federal jurisdiction because it involved the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution, filing deadlines for candidates were a state matter and subject only to state courts.

Recognizing the assault on the rights of third parties to run candidates, Hoh said: "We met all requirements, we met all deadlines, and we were procedurally in order to be certified," Hoh said. "The process of us not being certified is unconstitutional. It takes away our ability to run candidates."

The Elias Law Group filed an emergency motion Tuesday with the US 4th Circuit Court of Appeals arguing that Dever's lower court ruling letting the Greens on the ballot would damage the Democrats.

The motion makes the revealing claim that adding the Greens to the ballot this late into the electoral process would cause Democrats harm "by forcing them to compete with a party that did not comply with the statutory deadline for naming candidates" and requiring the party to "expend party resources they would otherwise use for other purposes."



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