

Democrats set up unit to attack third-party candidates

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The Democratic Party is launching a full-scale campaign against third-party competition in the 2024 presidential election, mobilizing both the resources of the Democratic National Committee and of outside political action committees funded by longtime Democratic multimillionaire donors.

The effort is its first-ever publicly announced campaign against third parties, although the Democrats have a long and sordid record of behind-the-scenes efforts to block the emergence of any left-wing, let alone socialist, challenge to the capitalist two-party system. Democrats have frequently challenged the efforts of socialist candidates to obtain ballot status, particularly in closely contested elections.

The initial target of the public Democratic campaign, according to reports Thursday by NBC News and the *Washington Post*, is the announced third-party campaign of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is running on a right-wing program of vaccine denial and other conspiracy theories. But there is little doubt that it will be directed primarily at the campaigns of Cornel West, Green Party candidate Jill Stein and, in particular, the recently-announced campaign of Socialist Equality Party candidates Joseph Kishore for president and Jerry White for vice president.

NBC reported: “The Democratic National Committee is building its first team to counter third-party and independent presidential candidates, people involved told NBC News, as the party and its allies prepare for a potential all-out war on candidates they view as spoilers.”

The NBC article added, “More legal challenges are almost guaranteed, with attorneys actively monitoring third-party ballot access attempts across the country to look for any slip-up that could be exploited.” That is, the Democrats are preparing to challenge every

signature and use every anti-democratic legal maneuver to prevent challengers from being on the ballot.

“The DNC has hired veteran Democratic operative Lis Smith, best known for her work guiding the 2020 presidential campaign of Pete Buttigieg, to help oversee an aggressive communications component of its strategy, which also includes opposition research and legal challenges. Underscoring how important Democrats view the effort, it is being overseen by Mary Beth Cahill and Ramsey Reid, two veteran DNC insiders ... Matt Corridoni, Smith’s former deputy on the Buttigieg campaign and most recently a top aide to Rep. Jake Auchincloss, D-Mass., is also joining the team as a spokesperson.”

The NBC and *Washington Post* articles cited a series of comments by prominent Democratic Party operatives blaming the party’s losses in the 2000 and 2016 presidential campaigns on the role of the Green Party and independent Ralph Nader. In both elections, the Democrats won a plurality in the popular vote but lost in the Electoral College, but they chose to blame not the archaic and anti-democratic structure involving electoral votes, but the supposed “spoiler” role of Nader and Jill Stein, who “diverted” votes from Democrats Al Gore and Hillary Clinton.

This effort includes not only well-funded Democratic-oriented groups like Third Way, American Bridge and Move-On, but newly established groups like Citizens to Save Our Republic, which, the *Post* reported, “called on all third-party candidates to sign a pledge to leave the race in six swing states by July 1 if they have not qualified in enough states to win the electoral college and have not polled competitively.”

A new super PAC, Clear Choice, was recently founded by Pete Kavanaugh, a deputy campaign manager for Biden’s 2020 campaign. In a statement

issued by the group, Kavanaugh declared:

“It’s imperative that this election is a clear choice between President Biden and Donald Trump. No third-party or independent candidate has any chance of winning a state in November, never mind reaching 270 electoral votes. They are spoilers, plain and simple. We’re here to work with allies to ensure those candidates are held accountable, and everything is on the table.”

That “everything” includes brazenly anti-democratic methods labeled insuring that third-party candidates “play by the rules,” that is, they conform to rules set down by the Democrats and Republicans to exclude third-party competition as much as possible.

The efforts to counter third party campaigns avoid dealing with the political issues which motivate voters to break with the Democratic Party, mainly the right-wing and pro-war policies of the party and its candidates. Instead, they seek to terrorize voters with the prospect that if they refuse to vote for Biden, Trump will win. As one official told NBC, Trump’s ceiling in the popular vote was about 46 percent, and the Democratic strategy was to “compel the remaining majority of voters to back Biden.”

Longtime Democratic operative Joe Trippi, now with Citizens to Save Our Republic, explained this analysis, according to NBC: “Trump expanded his vote share from 2016 to 2020, from 46.1% to 46.9%, but won in 2016 and lost in 2020 because of third parties, Trippi argued. In 2016, third-party candidates collectively received almost 5% of the national popular vote, while in 2020 they earned only about 1.5% of the vote.”

The result was a Biden victory, a formula which must be repeated in 2024, Trippi claimed. “The single biggest threat that helps put Trump back in the White House is third-party candidates. It’s not Biden’s age. It’s not whether Trump gets convicted. It’s not any of that stuff,” he told NBC.

This utterly cynical approach is a hallmark of the decay of capitalist politics. It is in fact the thoroughly right-wing character of the Biden administration, together with its systematic efforts to revive the Republican Party on the basis of support for war, that is responsible for the fact that Trump is in a position to regain the White House.

Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore noted that Michigan, the first state in which the

SEP is seeking ballot status, is considered one of the most critical states for the Biden reelection campaign, and that the resources of the Democratic Party and its most fervent backers, such as the United Auto Workers union bureaucracy, would be mobilized against the socialist campaign.

“The SEP campaign is fighting for the working class to break with the Democrats and the Republicans,” Kishore said. “There is no alternative for working people and youth between the fascist Republican Trump and the Democrat Biden, instigator of imperialist war in Ukraine and defender of genocide in Gaza.

“In the initial stages of our drive to collect enough petition signatures to meet the state requirement of 12,000 registered voters, we are explaining the connection between the fight against war and the fight of workers against inequality and capitalism, and for socialism.”



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