

Democratic Party escalates efforts to block third parties from US presidential ballot

Jacob Crosse
21 March 2024

The Democratic Party is intensifying efforts to block third-party and independent candidates from appearing on the ballot in November, a campaign which is directed particularly against presidential candidates appealing to left-wing opposition to the Biden administration, including Socialist Equality Party candidate Joseph Kishore, Green Party candidate Jill Stein and independent candidate Cornel West.

On Wednesday, the *New York Times* reported that an “increasingly alarmed” Democratic Party “has put together a new team of lawyers aimed at tracking the threat” posed by “third-party candidates” in order to block them from appearing on the ballot.

In the language of a military operation, the *Times* reported that this “legal offensive” will be “led by Dana Remus, who until 2022 served as President Biden’s White House counsel, and Robert Lenhard, an outside lawyer for the party...”

They will be engaged in “a state-by-state counterinsurgency plan ahead of an election that could hinge on just a few thousand votes in swing states,” the *Times* wrote.

“Conventional wisdom within the Democratic Party now,” the *Times* added, “is that any vote not for Mr. Biden benefits Mr. Trump, and there are concerns that giving people more choices on the ballot is more likely to hurt Mr. Biden.” The last thing the Democratic Party wants is “more choices,” otherwise known as “democracy.”

Lenhard, quoted favorably by the *Times*, the unofficial press organ of the Democratic Party, said the purpose of the legal offensive “is to ensure all the candidates are playing by the rules, and to seek to hold them accountable when they are not.”

The “rules” regarding campaign finance and ballot access are established by the Democrats and

Republicans to safeguard the monopoly of the two-party system. And they are being constantly altered to make it ever more difficult for independent candidates to get on the ballot.

While minor nuisances for the Democrats or Republicans, with access to billions in funds supplied by the financial aristocracy, for third parties and independent campaigns, not bought and paid for by billionaires, failure to comply with campaign finance laws can result in onerous fines that can cripple an organization.

In terms of ballot access, each state has different ballot and financial requirements, with some states such as California and Texas requiring well over 100,000 signatures to achieve ballot status. Unsurprisingly, Lenhard defended these anti-democratic measures to the *Times*, claiming they are a way to “ensure that the people who are on the ballot have legitimate bases of support, and it’s not simply a vanity project.”

The *Times* report comes after NBC News and the *Washington Post* reported earlier this month that the Democrats had already hired a team of lawyers and political operatives to engage in “opposition research and legal challenges” to “third-party and independent presidential candidates.”

None of the major third-party campaigns have achieved ballot access in all 50 states yet. The Green Party, which received a significant vote share in 2016, is currently on the ballot in 20 states and is actively petitioning to get on the ballot in 20 more states.

This reporter reached out to the campaigns of Jill Stein, Cornel West and several Democratic politicians to get their response to the Democratic Party’s efforts to block voters from having a choice outside the two big businesses parties.

Jason Call, campaign manager for Jill Stein 2024,

stated:

Rather than try to take away ballot options that would better represent the interests of the American public, perhaps the Democratic Party should focus on passing legislation that would actually help struggling people such as a universal single payer healthcare program or guaranteed housing. Sadly, both major political parties in America are fully beholden to the corporate interests which fund the political system. Third parties, in particular the Green Party, are a challenge to that system of corporate hegemony which seeks to deny the general public their own collective power.

Call added:

I find it laughable that the Democratic Party has positions on playing by the rules when Green Party candidate Matthew Hoh, running for North Carolina Senate in 2022, had to take the [North Carolina] Board of Elections to court when they attempted to deny him a legally earned spot on the ballot. Furthermore, the establishment controlled [Federal Elections Commission] took Jill Stein to court for “improperly” using matching funds designated for the primary, when she followed the exact same rules applicable to 2012.

The fine levied was \$175,000. If this is the plan Democrats intend to use, to tie up third party campaigns with trumped up legalese, or to change rules midstream because they are afraid of losing voters to candidates who better represent their values and priorities, I don't know how that can be considered an exercise in democracy. The Democrats appear to want to kill democracy in order to save it.

Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Joseph Kishore responded to the intensifying efforts to block third parties on Twitter/X, writing, “I condemn and

oppose the Democrats’ ‘all-out war’ on third parties and independent candidates. The SEP supports the right to appear on the ballot for all independent and third party candidates, including the SEP campaign as well as the campaigns of Jill Stein, Cornel West and others.”

Kishore added:

The Democrats’ “all-out war” also exposes the pretense that it is defending democracy against the fascist Trump. When the Democrats talk about the “right to vote,” what they really mean is the right to choose one of two representatives of the corporate-financial oligarchy. And their principal concern is to make sure that nothing gets in the way of the escalating global war, including the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza.

The defense of democratic rights is impossible without addressing the root cause of dictatorship: the staggering concentration of wealth in the hands of the capitalist oligarchy. The wealth of the billionaires must be expropriated and the gigantic corporations must be transformed into publicly controlled utilities, run on the basis of social need, not private profit.

The Cornel West campaign has not yet replied to a WSWs request for comment. Similar efforts to solicit a comment went unanswered from Senator Bernie Sanders (Independent-Vermont), and Democratic representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (New York), Rashida Tlaib (Michigan), Pramila Jayapal (Washington) and Ruben Gallego (Arizona).



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)