

Democrats attack ballot access in Washington state

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On Friday, the Thurston County Superior Court in Washington state will hear arguments from Democratic Party officials attempting to remove presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. from the ballot in the state. The Democratic Party is advancing an arbitrary reinterpretation of state rules that would inflate the requirement for collecting signatures to gain ballot access, applying that reinterpretation retroactively against candidates who followed the existing requirements.

The case against Kennedy's campaign was filed on August 16 by Washington State Democratic Chair Shasti Conrad, and, according to the *Washington State Standard* news service, is being funded by the Democratic National Committee.

To successfully get on the ballot in Washington state, a party must identify 12 electors and collect 1,000 signatures. State law dictates that the signatures must be collected at "nominating conventions" which are announced in advance in a newspaper ad at least 10 days before each convention is held. At least 100 signatures must be collected at each convention.

According to the Secretary of State's guidelines, a nominating convention is an "organized meeting of registered Washington voters." They also make clear that, "Multiple meetings may be held at different times and locations and still qualify as a single convention."

Under these guidelines, the Kennedy campaign submitted 4,181 signatures on June 14.

In an August 9 letter written to Secretary of State Steve Hobbs, the Democrats argued for a new interpretation of this requirement that would overturn decades of precedent. The *Standard* reported that Stephen Reed, state communications director for the Democrats, said, "We believe that the Robert F. Kennedy Jr. campaign did not follow the rules. We do not believe they can prove that they did."

Underscoring the legally baseless character of the

Democrats' challenge, the state government issued a press release on August 13 rejecting the Democrats' position and announcing that "nine presidential nominations by minor parties and independent candidates have qualified to appear on Washington's Nov. 5 General Election ballot."

One state official told the WSWS that they plan to certify all the campaigns on August 23 unless the court rules otherwise. According to that official, the state's position is, "We're not the convention police." In other words, it is up to the candidate and his or her party, not the state, to decide what "convention" means under the rules.

In addition to Kennedy's We The People Party, several other independent and third party campaigns, including the Socialist Equality Party ticket of Joseph Kishore for president and Jerry White for vice president, are also currently qualified to be on the Washington ballot.

According to the Secretary of State, "Ballots will be mailed to registered voters statewide by October 18."

In attacking the right to ballot access, the Democrats are doubtless concerned that in addition to mailing out ballots, the state will also be required under state law to mail out voter pamphlets to the state's 5 million registered voters that include campaign statements from each of the candidates, including the Socialist Equality Party.

The anti-democratic attack against Kennedy's campaign in Washington has the potential to affect other third-parties in the state, if the Democrats' reinterpretation of state law is accepted.

This attack is part of the broader nationwide effort by the Democratic Party to keep independent and third-party candidates from appearing on the ballot. Other attacks by the Democratic Party on ballot access include kicking Kennedy's campaign off the ballot in New York, removing Cornel West from the Michigan ballot, and

challenging multiple campaigns in Georgia.

Earlier this year, NBC reported that the Democratic Party had set up a well-funded, high-level task force specifically to attack ballot access for third parties. “The Democratic National Committee is building its first team to counter third-party and independent presidential candidates,” NBC reported in March, “as the party and its allies prepare for a potential all-out war on candidates they view as spoilers.”

“More legal challenges are almost guaranteed,” NBC added at the time, “with attorneys actively monitoring third-party ballot access attempts across the country to look for any slip-up that could be exploited.” The attack on ballot access rights in Washington is doubtless bears the fingerprints of this team of attorneys and operatives.

For his part, Kennedy, a right-wing anti-vaccine figure, reportedly made an appeal to Vice President Kamala Harris recently for a cabinet position if she wins the November election, presumably in exchange for his endorsement and withdrawal from the race.

The Democratic Party is waging its campaign to block ballot access for third parties with renewed intensity at the same time that it conducts this week’s Democratic National Convention. In his speech to the convention Monday, President Joe Biden claimed that, during his presidency, “democracy has prevailed ... and must be preserved.” The theme was echoed by speakers both before and after the current American head of state.

In fact, American ballot access laws make it all but impossible for third-party candidates to appear on the ballot in all 50 states. Where a party or candidate manages to satisfy the arbitrary and inflated requirements, they inevitably face dirty tricks, resource-draining legal challenges, and procedural maneuvers from the Democrats, who are exempt from these rules and who wield the enormous financial resources they possess to block access to the ballot.



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