

Wisconsin Supreme Court blocks mailing out of absentee ballots pending ruling on Green Party ballot access

By Jacob Crosse
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On September 10, the Wisconsin Supreme Court, in a 4-3 decision, blocked the further mailing out of any absentee ballots pending a decision by the court on whether to overturn an August 20 ruling by the Wisconsin Election Commission which barred Green Party presidential candidates Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker from appearing on the ballot.

The court gave no indication on when a possible ruling will be made, but the state deadline for absentee ballots to be mailed out is September 17, while the federal deadline for overseas and military ballots is September 19. Pending the court's decision, no ballots will be sent to voters who have already requested them.

Following Thursday's ruling Hawkins issued a statement, which read in part, "The Democrats and Republicans are using the Greens as pawns on their political chessboard for their own partisan purposes. Both are putting the right to vote in Wisconsin at risk."

Last Thursday's decision, split between the liberal minority and conservative majority, has left county clerks throughout the state in limbo, as they were to begin distributing over 1 million absentee ballots that have already been requested to voters this past weekend. With the COVID-19 pandemic raging through the state, including on campuses in La Crosse and Madison where thousands of students are quarantined as part of the criminal bipartisan "herd immunity" strategy, it is expected that roughly 2.3 million absentee ballots will be cast.

While US President Donald Trump and the Republicans are more overt in their attacks on democracy by limiting absentee voting, enlisting right-wing forces as "pollwatchers," or calling on federal agents and the military as part of the Insurrection Act

to threaten in-person voting, the Democratic Party is playing the same dirty game by stifling voter choice and purging left and third parties from the ballot. In addition to Wisconsin, the Green Party is facing legal challenges initiated by Democratic party voters and/or lawyers in Nevada, Arizona, Oklahoma, Indiana and Pennsylvania against its right to appear on the ballot.

In Democratic-controlled Michigan and California, partisan election boards, state supreme courts, and finally the US Supreme Court, have refused to allow the names of Socialist Equality Party candidates Kishore and Norissa Santa-Cruz to appear on the ballot, depriving millions of voters of the opportunity to vote for a socialist candidate this election.

In the case of the Green Party, the Hawkins-Walker campaign had previously gathered and submitted the requisite number of signatures to appear on the ballot. However, after two deadlocked 3-3 decisions along party lines, the Wisconsin Election Commission ruled in August that their names were to be stricken from the ballot.

The Democratic members of the commission argued that due to an address change by Walker, who had moved to a new apartment this year, over 2,000 valid signatures that had been gathered with the old address on them were no longer valid, even though Hawkins and Walker attest their campaign was in constant communication with the commission and updated them on the address change. The party had gathered over 6,000 signatures total, yet, in one of the many draconian measures meant to stifle democratic rights, the commission will only accept 4,000.

In a statement Hawkins alleges that the election commission chair, who is a Democrat, restricted

testimony during their hearing which would have demonstrated the candidates had exercised their due diligence in relation to the commission. After the commission ruled against the party, Hawkins stated that they attempted to find an attorney who would accept the case in order to challenge it in the state Supreme Court but the campaign had difficulty finding an attorney. According to Hawkins several attorneys they contacted cited their political allegiances to the Democratic Party as the reason why they wouldn't help, which helped delay the court's ruling. A Republican-affiliated law firm ultimately acted on behalf of the Greens.

Pending the court's decision, the approximately 2.3 million ballots that have already been printed without Hawkins' and Walker's names on them will not be sent out. According to the election commission, which is made up of an equal number of Republican and Democratic party members, an estimated 378,000 ballots had already been prepared to be sent out before the ruling was issued, with an unspecified number allegedly already mailed to voters.

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* has reported that of the 378,000 ballots prepared, they were unable to confirm that any had actually been sent out, but this hasn't prevented Democratic-aligned media outlets such as the *Washington Post* from reporting on the supposed "spoiler role" the party could play by "siphoning" votes from Joe Biden and the high cost of reprinting the millions of ballots with new names on them.

Hawkins, in another press release, pushed back on the notion of the Green Party being a spoiler and even suggested that putting the party on the ballot could have a positive effect for the Democrats, writing, "Green candidates bring voters to the polls that otherwise would stay home."

While the court "reviews" whether or not to put Hawkins-Walker on the ballot, the delay has already postponed sending out the ballots by several days, and possibly weeks. Any irregularities or delays in the highly contested state, which Hillary Clinton lost by 23,000 votes in 2016, will be seized upon by Trump as evidence of a conspiracy against him.

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