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'Invalid' signatures disqualify Socialist petitions

By Deb Kollars

Socialist Workers Party members Joe Swanson and Cheryl Porch said they are outraged but not surprised that election officials have declared them ineligible to run on the November election ballot.

Swanson said they were informed of the decision Friday by Secretary of State Allen J. Beermann. Beermann is expected to make the official announcement today.

Although the two candidates for governor and lieutenant governor turned in 3,715 signatures on their nominating petitions, Swanson said he was told that election officials found only about 1,800 to be valid. State law requires a minimum of 2,000 valid signatures for gubernatorial petition candidates to get on the ballot.

In a statement released Friday, Swanson

and Porch charged that they are victims of discrimination by the Democratic and Republican parties. Through their appointed election officials, the parties "are doing everything they can to keep our names off the ballot," Swanson said.

"The reason they are doing this," the statement said, "is because we offer a program for the working people and farmers of this state and because we favor independent political action by the workers and farmers against the Democrats and Republicans and their two-party monopoly."

Swanson said he and Porch plan to organize a write-in campaign and are considering filing a lawsuit against the state challenging the decision.

Normally, about 10 percent of the sig-

natures on a petition are found invalid. The rate of disqualification for the Socialist Workers Party petition signatures ran between 50 percent to 60 percent, the highest ever, Beermann said.

Douglas County had the highest rate of disqualification. Of the 1,036 signatures gathered, Election Commissioner Lee Terry found only 355, or 39 percent, to be valid.

In Lancaster County, 1,278 of 2,385 signatures, or 53 percent, were valid, Election Commissioner Elaine Usher said. Swanson said he and Porch collected the signatures in 29 counties.

Swanson contends that the election commissioners "just didn't want us on the ballot. So they did all they could to discount the signatures."

He said signatures were gathered in the same areas that other petition candidates have covered in the past — areas that usually have only about 10 percent of the signatures disqualified.

He said many signatures were discounted because addresses didn't correspond with voter registration lists. Swanson said that in those cases, the voters probably were unemployed, had been forced to move and hadn't had a chance to report an address change.

Beermann said most of the signatures were invalidated because the signers weren't registered to vote.

"The law is wrong," Swanson said. "And we will continue to try to get on the ballot. With 3,700 signatures of people who support us, we feel we should be on the ballot."

Problem of trains blocking crossings unchanged

By Vicki Ruhga

The Missouri Pacific Railroad is ignoring the problem of trains blocking intersections for long periods of time, according to Coffey, UNL business manager.

"They are stone-walling this issue, and the situation is exactly what it was a year ago," he said.

Coffey explained that the trains often block the intersections by the Harper-Schramm-Smith residence halls for 20 to 50 minutes. This conflicts with a Lincoln city ordinance allowing trains to block an intersection for only 20 minutes, according to a spokesman from the Lincoln Police Service Office.

"This creates a real hazard for students walking to

class, as well as automobile traffic," Coffey said. "Eventually people end up crawling on or under a train which isn't moving."

Last year the Missouri Pacific took a hard line in dealing with UNL, according to Coffey.

The railroad stated that each day it must "make up" a train by putting box cars together at an intersection. Before a train can be moved off the intersection, a minimum amount of air pressure must be built up for the brakes, according to a Federal Trade Commission law, Coffey said.

The railroad claimed the right to prosecute anyone crossing under or on trains last year, but no student was ever arrested for that reason, said Capt. Ken Markle of the UNL Police.

"The UNL Police won't arrest any student for this," Coffey said. "The problem is caused by the railroad, not the students."

"I have tried several times to contact the railroad, and so far my success rate is zero," he said. "The only people who are able to exercise leverage on the railroad seem to be the Nebraska Public Service Commission, which organized last year's meeting."

Coffey said administrators will meet tomorrow to determine what course of action to take this year.

Tom Mockler, Residence Hall Association president, also believes the Missouri Pacific has the upper hand in the problem.

Mockler said one possible solution to the problem would be to stop blocking the intersections for more than 10 minutes, but the railroad dismissed this as not economically feasible because they must make up the trains.

"Just a few days ago, a train blocked the intersection for 36 minutes," Mockler said. "If the train is not moving, many people choose to crawl through the middle, rather than stand around and wait."

The RHA is getting organized for another assault on this problem, Mockler said.

Kent DeJong, Harper-Schramm-Smith complex president, said broad-based student support is needed to solve the problem.

"This year we are trying to get the entire complex involved, rather than just a few people," DeJong said. "We will also try to get help from various organizations on campus."



Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

Husker football player Paul Miles studies economics Sunday afternoon near the Nebraska Union.

ASUN vice president refuses salary in protest

By Erick Peterson

Bob Fitzgerald, ASUN second vice president, is refusing his salary because ASUN President Dan Wedekind is not being paid one.

"It's out of principle," Fitzgerald said. "Dan's position is a lot like a job, and it just isn't fair that he isn't getting paid for it."

Since taking office last March, Fitzgerald has returned \$200 in paychecks to ASUN officials. During the summer, when both Wedekind and Fitzgerald worked in the ASUN office, Fitzgerald split his pay with Wedekind.

The student president does not receive a salary because of a decision by the NU Board of Regents two years ago that a student regent is constitutionally pro-

hibited from taking pay. However, the ASUN first and second vice president can be paid.

"People are afraid it's going to cause waves on the administration or regental level," Fitzgerald said. "That's not my point. I'm pointing out the plight of the individual involved, and also of the office."

Regent James Moylan of Omaha said, "I commend him (Fitzgerald), I guess."

Fitzgerald said a student, especially a married student like Wedekind, needs some kind of compensation for the time spent on the job. Also, the last time UNL students voted on ASUN executive salaries, they voted in favor of paying the president, he said.

Wedekind has to work at his father's business each weekend in addition to his

ASUN duties.

"He's more than taxed. If Dan shouldn't be getting paid, then I shouldn't," Fitzgerald said.

The situation has a real effect on how people are able to do the job, he said.

"If the university administrators, regents and students want responsible people in the office, this (lack of a salary) could hurt that," he said.

Unfortunately, most people aren't even aware of the situation, he said.

"Everyone's totally surprised that Dan isn't paid. Most people don't understand why I'm doing it. Whatever the reason is, right now there's an injustice," he said.

Wedekind said the official reason given for the regents' action two years ago was that board members believed the student regent and the student presi-

dent were the same position because the same person did both jobs.

Since the state constitution prohibits regents from being paid, they removed the salary.

"However, the regents' own lawyer did not confirm that this interpretation was correct," Wedekind said.

The regent's decision was unfortunate, Wedekind said.

"The people who are losing out are the students. I may not be devoting the time that I should devote to it," Wedekind said.

An expense account had been one suggestion for reimbursing the president, he said, adding this method probably would not work because of the potential for misuse.

Continued on Page 2