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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Committee for Democratic Election Laws (CoDEL) announced its formation at a news conference at the Hotel McAlpin today. In a statement prepared for the conference, CoDEL National Secretary Judy Baumann said that the formation of the committee represented a united effort on the part of political parties, groups and individuals to challenge restrictive and unconstitutional election laws throughout the country before the 1972 elections. Also present at the news conference were George Novack of the Socialist Workers Party National Campaign Committee; Benjamin Spock, Co-chairman of the New Party; and Edith Tiger, Executive Director of the National ~~Emergency Civil~~ Liberties Committee. A statement of support from Jose-Angel Gutierrez and Tito Lucero of the Raza Unida Parties in Texas and California was read.

The committee, whose endorsers include Representative Paul McCloskey, Dwight MacDonald, Salvador Luria of MIT, and a host of others, announced plans for challenging laws limiting ballot access to the Democratic and Republican candidates.

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**Committee for Democratic Election Laws**  
**Box 649 Cooper Station New York N.Y. 10003**

Laws requiring a distribution of signatures on an independent candidate's nominating petition will be challenged in New York and Missouri. Loyalty oaths will be contested in Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma. Filing fees and fees levied on candidates will be the issues of suits in Florida, North Carolina and Maryland. In addition the committee will address itself to the question of student voting rights and the age requirement for candidates. Prisoner voting rights and the right of Spanish speaking minorities to a Spanish language ballot will be championed in some suits.

Under the direction of General Counsel Leonard Boudin and Legal Director Ron Reosti, CoDEL will seek plaintiffs from a broad number of political parties and organizations. The suits will be filed between now and the 1972 elections.

Benjamin Spock, in supporting the committee, assailed current electoral restrictions as contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. "They are designed to make it as difficult as possible for any group except the Democratic and Republican parties to get on the ballot," he said.

George Novack pointed out that while the Socialist

Workers Party was running a serious campaign for the presidency, its candidate for President, Linda Jenness, would be able to achieve ballot status in only thirty states, because of arbitrary and ambiguous election regulations that stand in the way. Jenness herself was instrumental in challenging filing fees for candidates in the state of Georgia and in opening the Georgia ballot to candidates who had previously been too poor to run for office.



October 20, 1971

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York -- The Committee for Democratic Election Laws (CoDEL) announced its formation at a news conference in New York October 19.

The committee intends to seek legal action against restrictive and unconstitutional election laws throughout the country. These laws keep independent candidates and parties from being on the ballot and restrict the voting rights of students, transient workers and prisoners. CoDEL was supported in a statement by Jose-Angel Gutierrez, La Raza Unida Party Chairman (Crystal City, Texas), and Tito Lucero, La Raza Unida Party organizer (Oakland, California).

"We need an end to all filing fees that bar poor Raza people from becoming candidates," the two Raza Unida leaders stated. "We need ballots that are printed in Spanish as well as English in every state of the union. We need to eliminate laws providing one set of easy rules for getting on the ballot if you are a Democratic or Republican candidate, and another set of more difficult requirements for third party candidates." They urged others to join with supporters of CoDEL.

Dr. Benjamin Spock, New Party Co-Chairman and George Novack of the Socialist Workers Party National Campaign Committee also appeared on behalf of CoDEL. The committee (Box 649 Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003) is seeking the help of lawyers and law students, as well as endorsement and financial help from others.

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STATEMENT BY JUDY BAUMANN, NATIONAL SECRETARY, COMMITTEE FOR  
DEMOCRATIC ELECTION LAWS

When the people of South Vietnam were told to choose between one candidate or the waste basket, Secretary of State William Rogers commented, "Obviously the elections in a country like Vietnam are not pristine and pure, but neither are ours for that matter."

We are announcing the formation of the Committee for Democratic Election Laws (CoDEL) because we recognize—and want to do something about—the inequalities of the American electoral system.

The Committee for Democratic Election Laws will unite political parties, groups and individuals in order to challenge in the courts restrictive and unconstitutional election laws. Numerous such laws are in force in many states. These are laws which, for the most part, have been invalidated in one or more states but still exist in other states.

Under the guidance of Leonard Boudin, General Counsel, and Ronald Reosti, Legal Director, CoDEL will use its legal know-how to attack these laws, providing research materials, plaintiffs and publicity to the cooperating CoDEL attorneys who file the suits.

The Supreme Court has upheld the principle of "one person one vote" in many recent decisions. But many states violate that principle by requiring that independent nominating petitions be signed by voters distributed throughout a state.

We will be applying "one person one vote" to our suits challenging such distribution requirements in New York, Missouri, Massachusetts, and Illinois.

We will be challenging fees that are required from a candidate before his or her name is placed on the ballot. These qualifying fees make it impossible for poor voters to run for office. While such fees have been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, they remain in force in Louisiana and a number of other states.

Other fees levied on a party or candidate for services rendered by the state in checking the validity of signatures on nominating petitions will be challenged, particularly in Florida, North Carolina and Maryland.

Loyalty oaths designed to intimidate radicals from running for office must go, and we will be fighting them in Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma.

Student voting rights and prisoner voting rights will be issues in our cases. A Spanish language ballot for Spanish speaking voters will be another of our concerns, especially in those areas where a large percentage of Puerto Rican or Chicano voters reside, as in New York State.

We will be fighting for the right of the newly enfranchised 18-to-21 year old voter to be a candidate as well as vote. Recent moves by legislatures throughout the country indicate that such bodies are attempting to put age restrictions

on candidates where none now exist.

Our sponsorship includes prominent lawyers, civil libertarians, activists, and members of virtually every political party. Representatives of the New Party, the Raza Unida Parties, and the Socialist Workers Party are making statements at our press conference today. Other endorsers include Representative Paul McCloskey; Dwight MacDonal; Salvador Luria, Nobel Prize winner; Dave McReynolds, War Resisters League; Ruth Gage Colby, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; and members of the Peace and Freedom Party.

We are confident that before the 1972 elections we will see a political arena that is far more democratic than the one that now exists.

STATEMENT BY JOSE-ANGEL GUTIERREZ, CHAIRMAN, LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY (CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS); and TITO LUCERO, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA LA RAZA UNIDA PARTY

As representatives of the Raza Unida Party, we support the plans outlined by the Committee for Democratic Election Laws to challenge restrictive and unconstitutional election laws.

Chicanos and other peoples of La Raza have traditionally been the victims of the present electoral system. Because we are often poor we cannot afford to run for office. Because we speak primarily Spanish we cannot make full use of our vote. Because we want to form our own party we are faced with restrictive laws hampering our candidates from getting on the ballot.

We need an end to all filing fees that bar poor Raza people from becoming candidates. We need ballots that are printed in Spanish as well as English in every state of the union. We need to eliminate laws providing one set of easy rules for getting on the ballot if you are a Democratic or Republican candidate, and another set of more difficult requirements for third party candidates.

The needs of La Raza have not been met in the past by the two parties. We, recognizing this, have formed La Raza Unida Parties to serve our interests. We are pleased to join with other supporters of the Committee for Democratic Election Laws in this fight to challenge in the courts those laws that have prevented our party from reaching out to La Raza.



STATEMENT BY BENJAMIN SPOCK, CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE NEW PARTY AND  
THE COALITION

The election laws in many states are not designed to help people express their political choices. They are designed to make it as difficult as possible for any group except the Democratic and Republican parties to get on the ballot. Vast numbers of signatures must be collected by an independent party and large sums of money must be available.

This is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. These laws must be challenged by those who really believe in democracy and especially by those who think the Republican and Democratic parties are leading us to ruin by their foreign policies, war policies, and domestic policies. I will wholeheartedly support the efforts of CoDEL--as a citizen and also as an organizer for the New Party and The Coalition.

STATEMENT BY GEORGE NOVACK, SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY NATIONAL  
CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Minority parties and representatives of minorities know better than anyone else how unfair electoral regulations still are in this country. Their restrictions make it extremely difficult, and often impossible, for candidates not endorsed by the Republican or Democratic machines to obtain city, state or federal ballot status.

In the current presidential race the Socialist Workers Party plans to surmount these obstacles and place its national candidates on the ballot in at least 30 states. They should by right be on the ballot in all 50 states. But it will not be easy for the party to acquire ballot status anywhere owing to the arbitrary and ambiguous election regulations that stand in the way.

In the past few years the Socialist Workers Party has taken the lead in challenging laws that restrict the rights of independent and minority candidates and thereby disenfranchise sections of the voters. Its presidential candidate Linda Jenness, running for mayor of Atlanta, successfully filed a suit which set a precedent against excessive filing fees for office. This September our candidates for municipal office won a similar victory against high filing fees in San Francisco. In 1970 legal action by the Socialist Workers Party, with the aid of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, knocked down excessive distribution requirements for signatures

and other restrictions in New York State, where the legislature has since enacted fresh restrictions that we intend to challenge.

The Democratic and Republican parties, the rich and the powerful are not entitled to monopolize the electoral process. For these reasons we believe that the efforts of the Committee for Democratic Election Laws to abolish discriminatory regulations on voting deserve support from every citizen and organization concerned with democratic rights.