

*UAlbany students protest for voting rights,*  
**Election official calls it political grandstanding**



Photo: The Enterprise — Jarrett Carroll

Pictured above:

***Don't prevent students from voting on a technicality**, was the message on the University at Albany campus yesterday morning. Meton Simpson speaks on behalf of the Albany Chapter of Blacks in Government along with other activists, students, and political candidates about students' having to use post office boxes to register to vote. Anton Konev, a challenger for a Guilderland seat in the Albany County Legislature, is at right. UAlbany junior Brian Mascaro listens in back. The Albany County Board of Elections says it is not preventing anyone from voting and that political motivations were at play in Wednesday's protest.*

GUILDERLAND — Community activists and students got together yesterday morning at the University at Albany to protest what they called a violation of the Equal Protection Clause by the Albany County Board of Elections.

A handful of protesters and students said the board of elections would not allow hundreds of UAlbany students to vote in the November elections.

Albany County Board of Elections Commission John Graziano described the event as political grandstanding and said the board “supports and encourages students to vote.”

“There was a candidate who came forward to us and he feels he wanted to make this an issue,” Graziano said yesterday. “There’s nobody being denied the right to vote.”

The candidate Graziano spoke of is Anton Konev who originally sought a Democratic primary challenge against Mary Lou B. Connolly for a seat on the Albany County Legislature, but his petition signatures were challenged and he fell short of the needed number of names. He enrolled as a Democrat and is now running on the Republican ticket against Connolly.

Connolly currently represents District 32, covering parts of eastern Guilderland.

Konev, who describes himself as community activist and is a UAlbany graduate, currently finishing a master’s degree there, helped orchestrate the protest and he said the university and the board of elections acted on the situation only after he and other activists made the matter known to the public.

“This board of elections has been a huge headache since day one,” Konev told *The Enterprise* after the protest. “The board was not processing forms from rightfully registered students...forms that did not have a post-office box.”

He said the protest has nothing to do with politics and added that he has been helping students register since he was an undergraduate at the school.

Graziano said the Albany County Board of Elections has had a long-standing relationship with the university and that the post-office-box requirements were created in the mid-1990s in order to better serve student voters.

“The Albany city line runs right through the Dutch Quad,” Graziano said of one of four main dormitory buildings on campus. The Indian Quad is in the town of Guilderland and the other quads are in the city of Albany. “So you have a Guilderland district and an Albany district on campus and, in order for them to vote properly, we need to find them...We need that P.O. box number.”

Graziano said that voters are not being disenfranchised. They are only put on “an inactive list” if they cannot be found on campus, but can still vote in November, he said.

— *Jarrett Carroll*