

California recall results

Socialist Equality candidate John Burton wins 5,915 votes

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Socialist Equality Party candidate John Christopher Burton received 5,915 votes in the California recall election held Tuesday, October 7, according to the Secretary of State's office. Burton ranked 13th out of a field of 135 candidates.

Turnout for the election was estimated to be in the range of 60 percent of registered voters, an increase over last year's gubernatorial race, which set a record low of a 51 percent participation rate. However, voter turnout was still well short of the 70 percent typically seen in presidential races in California.

The SEP candidate campaigned on the basis of a principled opposition to the recall itself, while rejecting any political support for the Democratic Party. The campaign made opposition to the war in Iraq and the reactionary policies of the Bush administration central issues, while elaborating a genuine socialist program. On this basis, the SEP was able to gain the support of a small but significant layer of the population seeking an alternative to the two parties of big business.

Setting aside those so-called "minor" candidates who largely garnered votes on the basis of their celebrity status—former childhood TV star Gary Coleman, adult film actress Mary Cook and pornography magazine publisher Larry Flynt—John Christopher Burton was among the top three "non-major" contenders in the race.

In addition to these figures and the five so-called "major" candidates in the race, those ahead of Burton included two leading personalities from the Republican political establishment—Peter Ueberroth and Bill Simon—who had dropped out of the race but could not remove their names from the ballot, a well-known lawyer who campaigned for the legalization of

marijuana, and another lesser-known figure, whose last name is quite similar to that of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Support for Burton came from throughout the state, with the SEP candidate receiving votes in 55 out of California's 58 counties. The largest concentrations of votes came from the metropolitan areas in the North and South of the state.

Los Angeles County, where Burton is a well-known civil rights attorney specializing in police brutality cases, accounted for 37 percent of his vote total. The Socialist Equality Party campaigned heavily at universities, high schools as well as in working, middle-class and immigrant neighborhoods in the area.

Burton made six radio, five television and four campus appearances in this region, while members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party distributed approximately 14,000 election brochures at public locations throughout the metropolitan area. Burton came in 11th in the polls in Los Angeles County, with 2,193 votes.

In the surrounding counties—Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino and San Diego—Burton garnered 244, 178, 190 and 389 votes respectively. Three of the schools where Burton was invited to speak—Chapman University, Claremont McKenna College, and Irvine Valley College—are located in these areas.

The counties of the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento collectively yielded another 1,333 votes for Burton. Approximately 4,000 election brochures were distributed in these regions, where Burton and representatives from the Socialist Equality Party spoke with students and residents of the area at local colleges, high schools and universities. Significantly, Burton received 493 votes—and finished 10th among all

candidates—in Santa Clara County, the heart of Silicon Valley.

Burton received four times as many votes as Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) candidate C.T. Weber and nine times as many as Socialist Workers Party (SWP) candidate Joel Britton. Weber and Britton garnered 1,440 and 653 votes respectively.

These results point to the political collapse of these organizations. Britton and the SWP supported the recall and aligned themselves with the far-right forces attempting to overturn the recent gubernatorial election. The SWP put forward no coherent program and made no attempt to explain the pressing political and economic questions facing Californians.

Weber's low vote total likewise underscores the failed policy and perspective of the PFP. The PFP is an amalgamation of different middle class left groups, which formed a political bloc without any agreement on political principles.

Over the course of the past several years, the PFP has dedicated all its efforts towards regaining ballot status in California. The Peace and Freedom campaign for formal recognition as a political party in the state, which it did eventually achieve, served as a substitute for elaborating a political program. The PFP told the public that a socialist opposition would exist when this mix of petty-bourgeois organizations was officially on the ballot.

The support for the SEP came in the face of a total blackout by the major media in California. Those who learned about Burton's candidacy and went to the polls to vote for him did so on the basis of the party's independent fight to make its program known to Californians.

In addition to the 61-point election statement published by the SEP analyzing the significance and nature of the California recall election and elaborating a socialist alternative, over the course of the eight-week campaign the SEP and Burton issued eight statements on ongoing political developments and the pressing questions facing California voters.

These included: a call for a full investigation into the East Coast electricity blackout, a statement denouncing Jay Leno's attempt to portray the political crisis in California as a circus, a statement opposing the war and the reactionary policies of the Bush administration, an exposé of the bipartisan attack on workers' rights

contained in recently signed workers' compensation legislation, an analysis of the implications of the court decisions on a proposed delay in the California recall election, a statement exposing the travesty of the debates organized between the five "major candidates," and a call for a "no" vote on Proposition 54 as an attack on the social gains of the working class.

On the basis of the election statement, the principles and perspective advanced in these statements, and the public campaign the SEP demarcated itself from all other major and minor candidates in the race, including those who identified themselves as socialists or lefts. The results of John Christopher Burton's campaign point to a palpable shift among the most politically conscious layers in California, who are revolted by the backwardness and political reaction that dominated the recall election and are searching for a genuine alternative.



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