

Volunteers needed for petition drive

SEP launches campaign to put Van Auken and Lawrence on the ballot in the US

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Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party have begun petitioning to place presidential candidate Bill Van Auken and vice-presidential candidate Jim Lawrence on the ballot in as many states across the US as possible. In the first week of the campaign, hundreds of registered voters signed petitions in New Jersey, one of the first states in which the SEP is seeking ballot status.

Supporters of the SEP campaign spoke to voters in several New Jersey cities and towns, including the New York City suburb of Jersey City and the Newark suburbs of East Orange and Irvington. More than 700 signatures were collected toward the requirement of 800 registered voters for securing ballot status for SEP presidential and vice-presidential candidates. SEP supporters are making plans to conduct additional petitioning in Newark, New Brunswick, Montclair and several other communities in the state.

Campaigners plan to collect at least double the required number of signatures to ensure that, once filed, the petitions can withstand any challenge.

Many working people concerned about the war in Iraq and the continuous assault on jobs and living standards in the US signed the petitions right away, glad to see that a party offering an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans was fighting for ballot status. Even some voters who refused to sign because they felt socialist candidates would take votes away from the Democrats acknowledged that no fundamental differences exist between the two big business parties.

Answering the “Anybody but Bush” argument peddled by the Democrats and their supporters, campaigners pointed out that the Democrats’ presumptive candidate John Kerry, far from opposing the criminal war launched by Bush, supports the

continued occupation of Iraq and brutal suppression of its people. They explained that the SEP candidates were the only ones opposing the illegal occupation of Iraq and demanding the complete withdrawal of all US and foreign troops from the country.

In Maine, campaigners have collected nearly 300 signatures to place an SEP candidate on the ballot for the US House of Representatives. Signatures were gathered at the protest marking the first anniversary of the launching of the Iraq war held in the capital city of Augusta. Voters also signed SEP petitions in downtown Belfast and at the University of Maine, in Orono, just north of Bangor. To place our candidate on the ballot, SEP supporters in Maine must gather the signatures of 2,000 registered voters by May 25.

Petitioning will begin this weekend in Cincinnati to place an SEP candidate on the ballot for the US House of Representatives in the First Congressional District of Ohio. The signatures of 1,695 registered voters are required, but the SEP will also be compelled to take legal action to overturn the state’s restrictive ballot access laws and extend the deadline for the submission of signatures, which expired March 1.

In addition to New Jersey, the SEP is seeking to achieve ballot status for our presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Ohio, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Vermont, Rhode Island, Washington State, Colorado and possibly other states. The SEP will also run candidates for the US House of Representatives in southern California, New York City, the Metro Detroit area and Ann Arbor, Michigan. The party is running a candidate for US Senate in Washington State, and candidates for local municipal offices where possible.

Placing these candidates on the ballot is a serious

challenge. In no other advanced capitalist country is it so difficult for an independent working class party to exercise the elementary democratic right of running candidates in an election. Placing Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence on the ballot in all 50 US states would require collecting the signatures of nearly 750,000 registered voters (150,000 in California alone), as well as raising tens of thousands of dollars for filing fees and legal expenses.

Our ability to put the SEP on the ballot in the above-mentioned states and others depends upon the support we garner. Overcoming the onerous ballot restrictions requires the development of a grassroots political movement that will broadly mobilize workers, professionals, young people and students, and extend beyond the election itself, laying the foundations for the building of a mass socialist party of the working class.

The SEP calls on its supporters and all those who see the need to build such a movement to join our campaign and volunteer to put our candidates on the ballot.

Click here to participate in the SEP 2004 campaign



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