

US: SEP files for Colorado ballot status

Tim Tower
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On Monday, June 21, supporters of the Socialist Equality Party filed the required affidavits and signatures to place its candidates for president and vice president of the United States on the ballot in Colorado. Well in advance of the July 2 deadline, the filing included nine electors and four alternates to ensure that Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence will appear on the state's ballot. A drawing will be held during the first two weeks of July to determine the order in which the names of candidates will appear, and the completed ballot will be certified September 8.

The stand taken by these electors, many of whom are new to the SEP, demonstrates a growing alienation from the two-party system and the emergence of an opposition to its program of imperialist war and social reaction.

The first few to sign up as electors were drawn from a number of respondents who have written to the *World Socialist Web Site* in recent months to offer support and contribute funds to the campaign. An unemployed high school teacher from Boulder stated, "As a world party, the SEP clearly is in a position to represent the interests of all workers throughout the world, and as such, the fact that the US seems to be more and more trying to dominate and run the world, connotes the idea that there should be no government without representation."

He said that the lack of decent jobs posed a sharp crisis in the state. In April, 6,000 Coloradoans lost their jobs, raising the total number of unemployed in the state to 127,200. Measured against a total employed of 2,377,300, the increase raised the unemployment rate two tenths of 1 percent to 5.1 percent.

After securing several electors in Denver, SEP supporters went to the town of Boulder, which is dominated by the University of Colorado. Distributing election materials on the Pearl Street Mall in the town center, they assembled a core of supporters including graduate students, a pre-school teacher, a poet, a

musician, and a construction worker who gathered around the campaign table to discuss the socialist strategy to oppose the war in Iraq. The discussion focused on Democrat John Kerry's support for the war and the domestic program of the Bush administration and the need for a socialist alternative to the two-party system.

One elector explained that he had supported the Green Party four years ago when they held their nominating convention in Denver. He had believed at the time that they would build a broad, grass-roots movement against capitalism. Since then, he had become disgusted with the opportunism of the Greens and their maneuvering within the two-party system.

Colorado politics is dominated by the regressive and reactionary policies of its Republican governor, who has aped the Bush administration in advocating massive tax cuts for the wealthy while gutting social services and education. Governor Bill Owens recently pushed through the largest tax cut in state history with the lion's share of the \$1 billion raised from cuts in sales, personal income and capital gains taxes being shifted from state programs to the pockets of the very wealthy.

The US Census Bureau analyzes state education funding in relation to personal income. For 2000-2001, Colorado ranked 49th in K-12 revenue and 48th in K-12 spending. When the comparison to personal income is taken out of the equation, Colorado ranked 36th and 33rd, with per-pupil revenues of \$7,366 and per-pupil expenditures of \$6,515.

Underscoring the crisis in the state's schools, a recent report entitled "Quality Counts 2003" gave Colorado a "C-" for the adequacy of its education resources, ranking the state 41st out of the 50 states. Furthermore, based on US Department of Education data on instruction expenditures, Colorado ranked 46th in this category for 1999-2000, spending 57.9 percent of its annual education expenditures on instruction-related

functions. The national average was 61.7 percent.

In lockstep with the two parties in Washington, the state administration places the blame for the crisis in the schools on the teachers and staff members who struggle every day against deteriorating conditions. Governor Owens sponsored an education accountability system—including detailed, online school report cards—that has won the praises of the reactionary Heritage Foundation and of Education Secretary Rod Paige who called it “the envy of the nation.”

This month, Families USA released a report entitled, “One in Three: Non-Elderly Americans without Health Insurance,” in which Colorado did not fare better than other states. Nearly one out of three people (32.1 percent) under the age of 65 went without health insurance for all or part of the two-year period from 2002 through 2003. Of the 1.3 million uninsured Coloradoans, nearly two thirds (66.0 percent) went without health insurance coverage for six months or longer during this period. Of the total population below the age of 65 of 4,078,000, those who went without medical insurance numbered 1,309,000.

The vast majority of the uninsured (84.1 percent) are either working or members of working families. Though Hispanics, African Americans and other ethnic minorities are more likely to be without health insurance than white, non-Hispanic people, the largest category of the uninsured (683,000) were white and non-Hispanic. In Colorado, 56.1 percent of Hispanics, 36.5 percent of African Americans, and 38.8 percent of “other” ethnic minorities were uninsured, compared to 24.1 percent of white, non-Hispanic people.

Other supporters and volunteers have contacted the WSWS from around Colorado Springs and Ouray in the mountains to the southwest with the hope of assisting the SEP campaign in the Denver area and throughout the state in the coming months.



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