

SEP candidates on the ballot in New Jersey

A WSWS reporting team

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Campaigners for the Socialist Equality Party have successfully placed SEP presidential and vice-presidential candidates Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence on the ballot in New Jersey. A total of 1,637 signatures of registered voters—more than twice the requirement of 800—were submitted to the New Jersey Division of Elections last month. The state Elections Division reported that the petitions were uncontested by July 30, the deadline for challenging nominations, and therefore our candidates will be on the ballot under the designation Socialist Equality Party.

Among the areas where SEP campaigners gathered signatures for the ballot petitions were Jersey City, Newark and Newark's nearby suburb of Irvington. All three cities have large minority and well-established immigrant populations. Whereas in an earlier period the area was one of the major industrial centers of the country, today there are few jobs in the manufacturing sector. Most workers find themselves in the low-paid service sector, including restaurants, retail trade, catering and entry-level office work. For nearly every manufacturing job in the Newark statistical area, there are nearly nine service jobs. In Jersey City, the ratio is more than 16 to 1.

Many of the workers signed the SEP petitions in response to our opposition to the war in Iraq and the demand for the immediate withdrawal of US and other foreign troops. There was strong support for the SEP's demand that the money now being spent on war be spent instead on housing, medical care and education, as well as other basic needs of the working class.

We also gathered signatures in the central New Jersey town of New Brunswick, home of Rutgers University, New Jersey's state school. Even though classes were coming to an end for the term, we received a very high signature rate among students concerned about the war and the prospects for the future of society. Many students expressed frustration with the pro-war position of the Democrats' John Kerry, and wanted to see a socialist alternative on the ballot.

Among our many supporters was a reader of the WSWS who owns a bar in Jersey City. When he heard about the campaign, he invited SEP representatives to circulate petitions in his bar.

A student at Rutgers' Newark campus at first expressed disbelief that there was a socialist campaign in New Jersey. After reading the leaflet, however, she signed the petition and invited the SEP to make a presentation at her school once classes resumed in the fall.

The WSWS spoke with several supporters of the SEP campaign. A WSWS reader said: "Anyone who follows politics diligently in the US knows that we are going to face a grim future whether the Republicans or the Democrats are in power. I do not expect the SEP to win the elections, but that is not the objective. By supporting the SEP, we are trying to make a point."

"If you observe the activities of the Democratic National Convention in Boston and the unusually large \$50 million tab for the convention, you know that the same lobbyists who support the Republicans will also support the Democrats and control them with their money."

Another reader of the WSWS wrote in to ask how she could help with the New Jersey campaign. Being 79 years old and confined to a wheelchair, she explained that she wouldn't be able to give out many leaflets. She did, however, volunteer to serve as one of the 15 electors representing the SEP in New Jersey.

She explained, "Having been born in 1924, I have lived through a lot of history—the Great Depression, World War Two, the Cold War, the McCarthy era, the decade of assassinations, Watergate, and so on. I cast my first vote in 1948—for Henry Wallace. As I grew older, I became 'sensible' and 'practical.' The country was not ready for socialism—how could it ever be when the population is brainwashed from kindergarten to see 'socialism' as a dirty word and to believe capitalism is synonymous with 'freedom and democracy'? Third parties could never win. So I voted for the Democratic candidates, in a spirit of *faute de mieux* [lesser evil], and sometimes holding my

nose.

“Politicians in both major parties are hamstrung by their dependence on the corporate giants who support them. If they try to move too far from the prescribed agenda they are eliminated.

“The extraordinary effort by the Illinois Democrats to keep the SEP off the ballot is extremely revealing. The Democrats are aware that there is widespread opposition to both parties, but that it is largely unfocused, and a party that offers a focus scares the hell out of them.

“The time for a socialist third party is now. The only alternative is global catastrophe. We can’t wait any longer. The SEP can’t win this election, but it can lay the groundwork for the future.”

Another long-time reader of the WSWS volunteered to become an elector for the New Jersey campaign. Responding to the news that the SEP had achieved ballot status, he said, “I support the campaign and the WSWS because I agree with the analysis that has been presented on the WSWS and I want to support and encourage the people who are doing this work.

“Specifically, I support the campaign because it gives people something concrete to do—vote for Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence—and because it is another way to educate people.

“I have a very low opinion of the Democratic and Republican alternatives. I was very disappointed that Dennis Kucinich went along at the Democratic Convention. The controlled and scripted atmosphere at that convention convinced me beyond any doubt that there is no reason to be a part of or have any hopes for the Democratic Party.

“I do not agree with the idea of supporting John Kerry because ‘anyone is better than Bush.’ I think an argument can be made that Kerry is worse than Bush. Finally, after, in my case, 40 years of voting for Democrats, it’s time to realize that it’s not working.”



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