

Socialist Equality Party candidates attain ballot status in Washington, Iowa and Michigan

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26 August 2004

The Socialist Equality Party's presidential candidates—Bill Van Auken for president and Jim Lawrence for vice president—have gained ballot status in Washington and Iowa. Success in these two states means that the SEP candidates will be in a position to address some 10 million voters and offer an alternative to the pro-war, big-business agenda of both the Democratic and Republican parties. In another achievement, the SEP's Jerry White has also been officially approved as a congressional candidate in Michigan's 15th District.

On August 24, one day after petitions bearing the signatures of approximately 1,500 registered Washington voters had been submitted to the Secretary of State's office in Olympia, the SEP was notified that at least 1,000 of the signatures were valid and that Van Auken and Lawrence would be placed on the ballot. This is the first time that the SEP or its forerunner, the Workers League, has stood candidates in any election in the state of Washington.

In Iowa, as of August 16, Van Auken and Lawrence were included on the list, posted on the Secretary of State's web site, of candidates running in the 2004 general election. Petitioners in Iowa, working in Des Moines, Mason City, Ames and Council Bluffs, had gathered almost 1,750 signatures, well above the 1,500 needed in order to win ballot status for Van Auken and Lawrence.

On August 25, Brad Wittman from the Michigan Bureau of Elections informed the SEP that Jerry White, our candidate in the state's 15th congressional district, is on the ballot.

In Washington, Iowa and Michigan the SEP's campaign to attain ballot status won support from

working and middle class layers opposed to the war in Iraq, the anti-democratic methods of the Bush administration, and the country's deteriorating social conditions. All of the most critical concerns facing the vast majority of people in the US—the destruction of jobs and their replacement by low-wage employment, the skyrocketing costs of education, the lack of healthcare and health insurance, and the continuous dismantling of all manner of social programs—form a daily part of the pressures weighing on voters in these three states.

For example, the jobs situation in Michigan, where White has attained ballot status, is typical of the entire swath of Midwest states that have been devastated by the process of deindustrialization. Michigan lost 10,000 industrial jobs during the month of June and another 16,000 in July. Since 2000, the state has shed more than 324,000 jobs, 65 percent of them in manufacturing. In the 15th Congressional District, White's main opponent is Democrat John Dingell, a supporter of the war whose views are in opposition to those held by the majority of registered Democrats.

In Washington, where Van Auken and Lawrence are on the ballot, the unemployment rate is 6 percent, half of a percentage point above the national average. Over the course of the last several years, there has been a stream of articles in the local press discussing deteriorating social conditions in the state—for example, almost one-fifth of the state's population required some form of food assistance from July 2001 to July 2002. Similarly, in 2003 a report on hunger in Iowa found that 90,000 households in the state, or 250,000 people, experience "food insecurity."

Having achieved ballot status in Washington, Iowa

and Michigan, the SEP will soon begin actively campaigning in these areas. Van Auken, Lawrence and White will use the elections as a forum through which to raise a public discussion on the central political and economic questions facing masses of people—the war in Iraq, the attack on democratic rights, and the onslaught on living standards. The SEP will organize the distribution of campaign materials in these states, as well as arranging speaking engagements and media coverage for the candidates.

Van Auken and Lawrence are now running as candidates in four US states, having already achieved ballot status in Colorado and New Jersey. As a congressional candidate for the SEP, Jerry White is joined by Carl Cooley, who was already placed on the ballot in Maine's 2nd Congressional District. In Illinois, Tom Mackaman beat back the Democratic Party's bad faith effort to keep him off the ballot as the SEP's candidate for state representative in the 103rd District.

The SEP is awaiting news on the ballot status of Van Auken and Lawrence in Ohio and is currently in the midst of petitioning to get them on the ballot in Minnesota. In addition, the SEP has recently filed an appeal against the decision by a federal judge to turn down the lawsuit by our candidate in Ohio's 1st Congressional District, David Lawrence, against the discriminatory filing deadline for third-party candidates.



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