

SEP submits nominating petitions for Maine candidate

2 June 2006

Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party in Maine this week delivered nominating petitions to the Secretary of State's office in Augusta after gathering well over the number of signatures required to place the party's candidate, Eric DesMarais, on the ballot for state senate in District 32, located in the northeastern part of the state.

Maine is the first state where the SEP has filed for ballot status to participate in the 2006 elections. Petitioning is currently under way in Michigan's 12th Congressional District and California's 29th Congressional District, where Jerome White and John Burton respectively are the SEP candidates for US Congress, and in Illinois where Joe Parnarauskis is the party's candidate for state representative in the 52nd District. Petitioning will begin on July 11 in New York to place SEP candidate Bill Van Auken on the ballot for the US Senate race. The party is also running Paul Palinkas for state representative in Seattle, Washington—where petitioning begins later this month—and Christie Schaefer for state senate in Portland, Oregon.

SEP supporters in Maine submitted 284 signatures to local election authorities, who verified that 249 signatures were from registered voters, well in excess of the 200 signatures required by state regulations to qualify for ballot status. According to election laws, the secretary of state must wait until the completion of state primaries for the Democratic, Republican, Green and other independent parties on June 13 before officially placing the SEP candidate on the ballot.

Eric DesMarais, a graduate student at the University of Maine in Orono and a resident of Bangor for three years, will be running against Democratic incumbent Joseph Perry and Republican challenger Frank Farrington. Perry, a small businessman in Bangor, is chairman of the state Senate Joint Standing Committee

on Taxation and has promoted various efforts to cut taxes for business. Farrington, the president of Farrington Financial Group and a member of the Bangor City Council, also wants to create a "better business climate," i.e., reduce corporate taxes and further slash social protections for working people.

Maine's 32nd Legislative District is centered in Bangor, a city with a population of 31,473 that is the economic hub of the northern, central, and eastern parts of Maine, as well as the neighboring city of Hermon. The area has been hard hit by the decline in shoe and apparel manufacturing as well as the decline of the paper, lumber and fishing industries. Bangor International Airport is also a refueling stop for airplanes carrying US troops and casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Voters in Maine have a long history of supporting independent candidates. In 1992 billionaire independent presidential candidate Ross Perot received 30 percent of the vote in the state, coming in second behind Clinton and in front of George H.W. Bush. In 2004 the SEP's candidate for US Congress in the 2nd District, Carl Cooley, received 8,238 votes or 3 percent of the vote. Maine residents once again have registered their discontent with the two-party system by placing several third party candidates on the ballot to challenge Republican Senator Olympia Snowe and Democratic Governor John Baldacci.

The SEP campaign generated substantial interest and support. Campaigners petitioned in front of the Bangor Public Library, in the downtown shopping and office area, in front of the post office, and in Capeheart, a public housing development in the city. Many residents were happy to sign the SEP petition and campaigners often heard voters complain of frustration with the two big business parties, the ongoing occupation of Iraq and the growing economic distress in the area, including the

rising cost of gas and other necessities.

One resident in the public housing development who signed complained about the collapsing healthcare system. “I work two jobs, sometimes pulling in 50 or 60 hours a week,” he said. “It is great that my kids can receive healthcare from the government, but I can’t afford any. Where is the sense in that? There are certain standards anyone ought to get if they are involved in honest work.”

Time and time again, campaigners heard stories of friends and family members sent over to fight, as one resident put it, the “senseless oil war” in Iraq. One Capeheart resident complained, “My daughter joined the military because it was the only way for her to get an education; now she is stuck over in Iraq.”

Another resident nearly refused to sign, saying, “I never vote. I’m not signing.” When asked why, she said because she hates “Republicans.” When campaigners explained to her that the SEP stands in opposition to both the Republican and Democratic parties, she immediately signed, although she said she still wasn’t going to vote. Many residents said they were registered but had never voted. When asked why, they often replied that it didn’t matter for whom one voted.

The submission of the Maine petitions is an important step forward in the SEP campaign. We call on workers and young people to join our campaign to build a political movement in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans and advance a socialist program to defend the interests of working people.

To find out more about the SEP election campaign, and to support the petition drives to place our candidates on the ballot, contact the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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