

# Germany: Socialist Equality Party to run candidates in Berlin state elections

Ulrich Rippert  
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The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party, PSG) will run its own slate of candidates in the Berlin state elections this September.

At its June 1 meeting, the Berlin state elections authority confirmed that the PSG is eligible to seek ballot status. In total, 36 parties have been certified to run for the state legislature on September 17, 2006, among them a number of right-wing organisations, such as the Republicans, the German National Party (NPD), the Constitutional Offensive Party and the Constitutional State grouping.

To gain ballot status, the PSG now has to file 2,200 voter petitions. Each form has to be verified by the residents' registration office.

The PSG regards participation in the Berlin state elections as an important step in the building of an international socialist party that opposes war and stands for the defence of democratic rights, for social equality and for the eradication of poverty.

The PSG is standing against a state government in Berlin—a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Left Party-PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism)—that revels in its description as a “red-red” administration. In reality, however, it represents the interests of the proverbial “Berlin sleaze” in big business and politics and is hated by the population at large.

A statement calling for support for the PSG's election campaign begins with the words: “Our goal is to provide a clear voice and a revolutionary socialist orientation to the widespread opposition to the anti-social policies of the Berlin state government of the SPD and Left Party-PDS.”

The PSG rejects the constantly repeated argument that “the coffers are empty”—the standard formulation employed by the rich and super-rich to push through

new social cuts and impose poverty on the mass of the population.

As the PSG election statement says, “It is not only the number of homeless people, beggars and impoverished families that is dramatically increasing, but also the number of the well-off and millionaires.

“The tax breaks implemented by the federal government have effected a gigantic redistribution of wealth from those at the bottom of society to those at the top. Many millionaires and large-scale enterprises now boast that they have drastically reduced their tax payments, or pay nothing at all. In addition to the €1.8 billion loss of revenue for the Berlin state coffers as a result of the 2001 tax reforms, the state legislature stumped up €1.75 billion in the same year to bail out the scandal-ridden Berlin Bankgesellschaft. Since then, as part of its ‘risk control law,’ some €300 million annually is made available to the bank to secure the lucrative financial assets of Berlin's elite.”

The PSG makes no secret that it is seeking to put an end to this orgy of enrichment. “Our aim is not to reform capitalism or beg for alms, but to replace it with a socialist system in which the economy serves the needs of working people rather than the profit interests of a financial oligarchy and the greed of corporate bosses.”

On the basis of its socialist and internationalist perspective, the PSG fights for the political independence of the working class. This question has an especial significance in Berlin. There is hardly another German city or state where all the various party combinations have been tried out, from a so-called “grand coalition” (SPD and conservative parties), a so-called “traffic light coalition” (red-yellow-green, representing the SPD, Free Democratic Party and the Greens), a “red-green” and now the “red-red”

coalition. The result for ordinary working people has remained the same: rising unemployment, the closure of social facilities and services, the dismantling of social and democratic rights and increasing pauperisation. Meanwhile, the decaying capitalist society that advances these policies creates fertile ground for the rise of right-wing extremist forces.

The PSG election campaign aims to break the working class from the influence of the social democrats and all their political appendages. It thus stands in direct contrast to the group Election Alternative-Work and Social Justice (WASG), whose programme is thoroughly unserious and contradictory.

At the federal level, the WASG is seeking to amalgamate with the Left Party-PDS, but in Berlin it wants to stand candidates against it. The WASG is striving to deflect the increasing criticism of the policies of the Berlin state government coalition of the Left Party-PDS and SPD into old, worn-out illusions that the trade unions and the former Stalinist bureaucracy—in the shape of the PDS—can be reformed and pressured to the left.

But the political experiences of the past two decades throughout the world show that the opposite is the case. Under the pressure from below, the reformist apparatuses have simply moved ever further to the right. The recent WASG federal congress also confirmed this development. It expressly defended the anti-social policies of the Berlin state legislature and opposed the WASG running its own candidates in Berlin. The WASG's Berlin association had to seek a court order to overturn the ruling of the organisation's federal executive banning it from standing in Berlin.

In Berlin, the WASG encourages the illusion that the Left Party-PDS can be reformed in the interest of working people. That can only lead to political frustration, which will be exploited by right-wing forces. The PSG takes the opposite stance, stressing it is "high time that an end was put to the hopes and illusions that by putting pressure on the SPD, the Left Party-PDS or the trade unions a better policy and a solution to social problems can be achieved."

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit is appealing for the broadest support in gathering the necessary signatures to gain ballot status, helping circulate political material and holding election meetings. The PSG also calls on readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to make

generous donations to help finance the campaign.



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