SEP candidate in California turns in signatures in lieu of filing fee

Our correspondent
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Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party in southern California turned in 7,587 signatures on Tuesday as part of the campaign to put John Burton on the ballot for US Congress from the 29th Congressional District, which includes Pasadena, Glendale and part of Burbank.

Under California election law, the initial signature submission qualifies Burton for a waiver of the filing fee. These signatures, however, will go toward meeting the 8,842 signatures required to place Burton's name on the November ballot as an independent candidate.

The signatures represent a wellspring of support for the SEP's perspective of building an independent party of the working class based on a socialist program. SEP supporters in the district plan to wage an all-out campaign in the final weeks of the petitioning period to gather enough signatures to withstand any challenge from the Democrats or Republicans. The deadline for submitting the nominating petitions is August 11.

The number of signatures required to get on the ballot as an independent candidate is so extreme that the clerk at the elections board expressed surprise when SEP supporters brought in a stack of petitions more than seven inches high. She had never before seen so many petition sheets brought into her office.

In 2004, not a single person qualified to run for US Congress from California as an independent candidate, because the requirements are so onerous. So far, Burton is the only independent candidate to submit petitions in lieu of a filing fee.

Many signers who supported Burton's expressed opposition to the war in Iraq as well as the bombing of Lebanon. SEP petitioners struck a chord when they spoke of the disparity between the conditions of life for the working class population of the district and the lifestyle of the privileged elite, which piles up ever more obscene levels of personal wealth.

The 29th Congressional District is enormously diverse. It reflects profound demographic changes that are common to most urban centers in the United States. Workers from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, Armenia, Lebanon, China, Japan, Russia, Germany, Canada and England populate the district in large numbers. The SEP's position on the need for a united movement of working people and for the defense of immigrant workers has won a strong response.

Close to 40,000 election brochures have been distributed in both English and Spanish in the course of the campaign. The signatures collected have been obtained under difficult circumstances, including a heat wave that registered temperatures as high as 116 degrees Fahrenheit last weekend.

SEP candidate John Burton made the following statement following the submission of the signatures. "I want to thank all those who have signed our petitions. This represents a huge achievement. We know the election ballot laws are designed not for ballot access, but for the opposite—to prevent an independent political alternative to the Democrats and the Republicans. The support we have won so far speaks to the anger of millions of working people who feel they have no voice under the present political setup.

"I also want to thank all of our supporters who have tirelessly campaigned for these signatures. They are not paid petitioners. They have fought so very hard because we all believe passionately in the need to bring the program and ideas of the SEP to working people.

"Lastly, I am making an appeal for our supporters and readers of the WSWS in the area to join us in the last few weeks to insure that we go well beyond the required number of signatures, in order to prepare for any possible challenge that may be made by either the

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Democrats or the Republicans. While we already have over seven thousand signatures, we still have a long way to go in the final two weeks. From the experiences of the SEP in other areas of the country, we know that many valid signatures may be challenged."

Supporters of the SEP in the area will be organizing major petition drives over the weekends of July 29-30 and August 5-6.

To contact the SEP and join the campaign in California, click here.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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