

# SEP in Michigan files petitions to place US congressional candidate on ballot

**Our reporter**  
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The Socialist Equality Party on Wednesday submitted qualifying petitions bearing the names of 5,045 voters to the Secretary of State's office in Lansing, Michigan to place its candidate for US Representative in Congress, Jerome White, on the ballot in the state's 12th District. The filing of the petitions was the culmination of a three-month campaign, in which the SEP overcame many obstacles thrown in the path of third party candidates by the Democrats and Republicans and collected well above the 3,000 signatures required by the state to place an independent candidate on the ballot.

In the course of the campaign, SEP petitioners won the support of workers, college students and young people looking for a political alternative to the pro-war and pro-big business policies advanced by the two major parties. An important contribution was made by several new supporters, whose efforts to place a socialist candidate on the ballot was their first practical political experience.

According to a Secretary of State employee, the Bureau of Elections will complete a "face check" of the SEP petitions over the next few days, which he described as a routine examination to make sure those who signed the petitions reside in the 12th Congressional District and petition circulators were registered Michigan voters. The deadline for an outside party to challenge the petitions is July 27 at 5 p.m. If no challenge is made, the State Board of Canvassers, a body of two Democrats and two Republicans, is supposed to simply ratify the recommendation of the Secretary of State's office and place the candidate on the ballot.

Due to Michigan's restrictive ballot access laws, Jerome White will appear on the ballot as a candidate "With No Party Affiliation." In order to run candidates

under the party's name in the 2006 election, the SEP would have had to collect a minimum of 31,776 signatures in order to establish a "new political party" in the state. By comparison, congressional candidates from the Democratic or Republican parties only need to submit 1,000 signatures.

Despite these and other hurdles, such as a virtual prohibition against petitioning at privately owned malls and other retail locations, the SEP campaign was able to give voice to the widespread opposition to the Bush administration and the complicity of the Democratic Party in the criminal war in Iraq, the attack on democratic rights and the unrelenting assault by corporate America against the jobs and living standards of working people. The powerful response to the SEP expressed the growing alienation of workers towards the two-party system and a further discrediting of the Democratic Party.

There was a forceful response to the SEP candidate's call for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and an end to the squandering of billions of dollars, and the lives of thousands of US soldiers and tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis, in a war to dominate the oil resources of the Middle East. Campaigners spoke with several returning soldiers as well as the relatives of those in Iraq, who readily signed the SEP petitions and expressed anger that both the Democrats and Republicans were continuing the war and ignoring the popular opposition against it. At least 90 soldiers from Michigan, including six from the 12th Congressional District, have been killed in Iraq.

The SEP campaign was also able to elicit a powerful response for a socialist alternative to attacks on the working class, particularly in Michigan's auto industry, where Ford, GM and auto parts maker Delphi are eliminating nearly 100,000 jobs and slashing wages and

benefits. Many workers expressed anger over the complicity of the United Auto Workers union with the auto bosses, particularly in imposing higher out-of-pocket medical expenses on hundreds of thousands of retired autoworkers and their families, and then going to court on behalf of GM and Ford to prevent retirees from taking legal action to protect their promised benefits.

The growth of social inequality in America—expressed in the multimillion-dollar payouts to the big oil, auto and airline executives, on the one hand, and the declining living standards of workers who are facing wage-cuts, higher gas prices and economic insecurity, on the other—has generated a deep distrust of the entire economic order in the US. During the course of the campaign petitioners made a case for a socialist alternative to the profit system, as a means of establishing genuine equality and putting an end to the vast accumulation of wealth for the financial elites at the expense of working people who produce society's wealth.

SEP petitioners won support in Hazel Park, Southfield, Eastpointe, St. Clair Shores, Warren, Oak Park, Ferndale and other cities in the 12th District, which is located in the working class suburbs north of Detroit. They also won warm support from workers in Detroit, who, although unable to sign SEP petitions because they did not reside in the district, expressed solidarity with the fight against the war in Iraq and the war against working people at home.

After filing the petitions in Lansing, Jerome White told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “This is a major achievement for the working class. Being on the ballot will give us the ability to present our socialist program to a wide audience of working people who are looking for a way to oppose the war in Iraq and the war of corporate America against their jobs and living standards. The two-party system is increasingly being discredited and exposed for what it is: a political tool of the wealthy elite to advance their selfish interests at the expense of the vast majority of the population. Far from opposing Bush, the Democrats have collaborated in the criminal war in Iraq, the undermining of democratic rights in the guise of the war on terror, and the right-wing policies that have further impoverished working people.

“I look forward to challenging my Democratic

opponent, incumbent Congressman Sander Levin, who has long claimed that the Democratic Party represents ordinary working people. The Democrats' pro-war and pro-big business policies and Levin's record itself shows the utter fraudulence of such a claim. Levin voted for the Patriot Act, which opened the door for government spying and other attacks on democratic rights, and, while he expressed initial reservations about the war, he has since voted to fund this criminal war and against setting any date for the removal of troops. Like the Republicans, the Democrats speak for America's wealthy elite, and, in many cases, they are part of the ruling elite themselves.

“The *Detroit News*, for example, just reported that Levin is one of seven members of Congress from Michigan who are millionaires or multimillionaires. In addition to collecting his \$165,000 congressman's salary, he also earns a handsome income from renting out his Martha's Vineyard home. Levin, however, is far from the exception. About half of the senators and one-third of the members of the House of Representatives belong to the Millionaires Club in the US Congress. This only underscores the enormous chasm between working people and the Democrats and Republicans. It also explains why the two parties are so desperate to keep the SEP off the ballot in Illinois and other states and prevent the emergence of a political movement that will express the interests of the broad mass of working people.

“Along with the SEP candidates in New York, California, Illinois and other states, I intend to bring our party's policies to the widest possible audience and lay the groundwork for building the Socialist Equality Party as a powerful political alternative to the two capitalist parties and their policies of war and social reaction.”

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