

Campaign to place SEP candidate on ballot in New York wins broad support

A reporter
20 July 2006

In the first week of the petition drive to place Socialist Equality Party candidate for US Senate Bill Van Auken on the ballot in New York, campaigners have gathered more than 3,500 signatures.

The campaign has elicited strong support from among wide layers of working people, students and professionals throughout New York City, in Westchester County and in the western city of Buffalo. Many who signed expressed agreement on the need for a socialist challenge to incumbent Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton, particularly over her prominent role in backing the continuation of the war and occupation in Iraq.

In many areas, those who have signed the petitions included soldiers recently returned from Iraq or relatives of those who are there or are about to be shipped out.

“My daughter and my son-in-law are both being sent over there next month,” one middle-aged man on the Upper West Side of Manhattan said as he signed the petition. “It used to be that they sent them for six months, but they’ve been told that they could be there for a year. This war was wrong from the beginning, and it’s got to stop.”

A woman in East Harlem signed, saying, “Anything against this war. I’m with you 100 percent. Bush is a criminal. I was against this war from the start and I’m disgusted with it. The Democrats are to blame, too. We have to have an alternative.”

In many cases, people expressed anger and disgust with the role played by Hillary Clinton for her right-wing policies on the war and other issues. In the past months, the incumbent Democrat has won the endorsement of the right-wing owner of Fox News and the *New York Post*, Rupert Murdoch, while staking out reactionary positions on issues ranging from flag-

burning to gay marriage. Many workers were quite conscious of how Clinton has enriched herself in office, reporting a household income for last year of more than \$7.5 million.

“I used to think that Hillary Clinton was going to do something for poor people, but I realized she isn’t,” said one woman in Brooklyn. “She’s helping the same people as the Republicans to get richer.”

Another signer in Brooklyn added, “What I keep wondering is what is wrong with the Democrats? Why are they so weak? They haven’t done anything to stand up to the Bush administration or stop this war because they represent the same interests. I’m glad finally to see that for those of us who are anti-war there is an alternative party to Clinton and the Democrats. Thank you for what you are doing.”

In Brooklyn, a transit worker who signed the petition expressed her anger over Clinton’s support for the anti-union Taylor Law, used against bus and subway workers during last December’s strike, as well as against her own union for contributing to her campaign. “Every time I see her face on television, I feel like vomiting,” she said.

Robert from the Upper West Side of Manhattan signed the petition, saying, “Let me tell you, the two great dangers to this country are corporate culture and the Christian right. If your party is fighting them, I support you. I don’t want to end up living under a bigoted fundamentalist regime.”

Among those signing were many who considered themselves Democrats, but could no longer stomach the policies backed by Clinton and the leadership of the party. One Upper West Side woman initially refused to sign, declaring that her local Democratic club had “always opposed the war and stood for progressive legislation.” But she went on to speak about other

issues: “Public housing is not being fixed up and is being warehoused to drive up housing rents. If you speak up, they target and victimize you. That is why I am being thrown out of public housing. Once, a Democratic official came to our club. He promised things, but nothing was ever done.” Having convinced herself of the need for an alternative to the Democratic Party; she signed the petition for the SEP.

As petitioners were finishing up for the day in East Harlem, a man walked by talking on his cell phone asked, “What do you have there?” Informed that it was a petition to put the Socialist Equality Party candidate Bill Van Auken on the ballot for Senate, he signed and then excitedly told his wife over the phone, “The socialists are back in East Harlem.”

The first week of the petitioning drive has revealed the enormous potential for the SEP’s Senate campaign in New York state, but a major effort still lies ahead.

While candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties can gain ballot status just by being chosen at a party convention, New York’s anti-democratic election laws require that independent candidates submit 15,000 signatures to obtain a place on the ballot, while providing a petitioning period of less than six weeks for obtaining them.

The SEP aims to gather 25,000 signatures before the August 22 deadline, seeking to go well beyond the legal requirement in order to guard against attempts by the Clinton campaign to use technical challenges to keep the party off the ballot. The law also requires that at least 100 signatures be submitted from each of 15 out of the state’s 29 congressional districts, which means that petitioners will be working in various parts of the state.

We urge all of our supporters and readers of the World Socialist Web Site in New York to join in this effort.

On Saturday, July 22, SEP campaigners will be petitioning throughout New York City as well as in Buffalo, New York. In New York City, one of the major petitioning locations will be at the Fulton Mall, at the corner of Fulton and Flatbush, beginning at 11 a.m.

For those who wish to petition in other areas of the state, petitions may be obtained by signing up below, or by calling the SEP New York campaign headquarters: (718) 729-4312.

The SEP will be holding a public meeting at its headquarters July 30 at which its candidate for senator, Bill Van Auken, will speak on the escalating crisis in the Middle East and his opponent Hillary Clinton’s support for both the Iraq war and the US-backed Israeli aggression in Lebanon and Gaza.

SEP Public Meeting

Sunday, July 30, 2 p.m.
23-03 45th Rd., Suite 401
Long Island City, Queens

(By subway: 45th Road-Court House Square on the #7 Line or 23rd St.-Ely Ave. on the E line)

Sign up to support the SEP election campaign!
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