

SEP candidate to be placed on the ballot in Detroit

26 July 2010

Election officials in Detroit confirmed Friday that the SEP candidate for the 9th district of the Michigan state house of representatives, D'Artagnan Collier, would be on the ballot in the November 2 general election.

Supporters of the SEP submitted 1,129 signatures to meet the requirement of 600 to win ballot status for the candidate. Collier will appear as an independent candidate against incumbent Democrat Shantelle Jackson, who has the backing of big business, the trade union bureaucrats and the Detroit Free Press.

Collier, who was the SEP candidate for mayor in 2009, served as a commissioner on the Committee for an Investigation of the Dexter Avenue Fire and is a leader of the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs, formed to oppose the widespread and deadly cutoff of utilities to working class households in Detroit and other cities.

In response to the confirmation that he will appear on the ballot, Collier issued the following statement:

I am happy my name will appear on the ballot as an independent candidate for state representative in Michigan's Ninth Congressional District in the November general election. I'd like to thank all of our members and supporters who turned in 1,129 signatures to meet the requirements to place me on the ballot.

The requirements stipulated that no more than 1,200 signatures could be collected, of which 600 were required to be registered voters. However, members and supporters of both the SEP and the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS) actually gathered close to 3,000 signatures to place my name on the ballot in an overwhelming class response to the issues raised in our campaign.

Many workers literally grabbed petition boards out of our hands once they heard our opposition to utility shutoffs. There was huge anger at the fact that a quarter of a million Southeast Michigan households experienced a utility shutoff last year. Most workers had either personally lost their utilities at some point in the last year or knew someone who had. The fact that the Democratic mayor of Detroit, David Bing, sat on the board of directors of DTE for 20 years and had his election campaign chaired by the CEO of DTE was not lost on these workers.

Just last week, the Democratic governor, Jennifer Granholm, signed legislation on behalf of the utility giants to make unauthorized tapping into the power grid a criminal offense, deepening the attacks against the impoverished. She was joined by the utility unions who endorsed the policy of criminalizing the poor.

During the period of petitioning, Mayor Bing also threatened to close 77 parks within the city. This is in a city where 28 schools were closed this year and more than 100 schools have been closed in the last three years. During the same period, Bing has presided over massive pay cuts to Detroit Public School teachers and city workers in order to ensure the steady bond repayment to Wall Street.

Many Detroit workers agreed to sign the petition supporting my candidacy because they drew a direct connection between the Democratic Party and the downward spiral in living conditions that Detroiters have faced. This was a dramatic change from past years.

Workers also responded with disgust to the refusal of the federal government to extend unemployment benefits despite bailing out Wall Street and the banks to the tune of trillions of dollars. Detroit has an unemployment rate of nearly 50 percent. Many workers are drawing the lessons that the Obama administration

is devoted to the financial oligarchy no less than the Republican Party.

The burning issue confronting the working class of Detroit, like those throughout the country, is breaking with the Democratic Party and building an independent political party of the working class. Our party is the only party fighting to break the dictatorship of Wall Street and the corporate elite over political, economic and social life.

I am running in the election to speak on behalf of the working class and advance a socialist perspective.



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