

The 2010 elections in Detroit and the fight for socialism

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On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party, I would like to thank everyone who worked for and supported my campaign for Michigan's House of Representatives in Detroit's 9th District.

The results of the 2010 elections, in Detroit and Michigan, and indeed in every state and city across the country, express the complete political disenfranchisement of the population. Two years after the election of Barack Obama, with his slogans "change we can believe in" and "the fierce urgency of now," conditions facing workers in Detroit and nationally have sharply deteriorated. The wars in the Middle East and Central Asia continue, and trillions have been handed over to the big banks.

Through their right-wing and anti-working class policies, Obama and the Democrats—who won an overwhelming majority of the vote in Detroit in 2008—succeeded in disillusioning such a broad base of his previous supporters as to make possible a sweeping Republican victory.

In Detroit, Democrats exercise a virtual one-party monopoly. In my district, the Democratic vote fell by over 40 percent in two years, from 34,062 in the 2008 elections to 20,092 on Tuesday. Voter turnout in the city was abysmal—only 22 percent of eligible voters. These numbers clearly illustrate a deep disaffection with the political establishment.

Our own vote total of 134—about one percent of the vote—was small but important. As one of four candidates on the ballot, each vote cast for me was a highly conscious political decision. Many of these ballots were cast by voters who otherwise would not have gone to the polls.

The working class faces an increasingly desperate situation. The results of the 2010 election—at the national, state, or local level—will be used to justify new wars abroad and to redouble the attack already underway on the jobs, living conditions, and democratic rights of working people in this country. The election poses all the more urgently the need to break with the two big business parties and build up the Socialist Equality Party as the independent party of the working class.

In Michigan, the Republican Party has taken control over the governor's mansion and the legislature. With the state confronting a \$1.6 billion deficit, it is assured that cuts will be enacted against every aspect of social spending. They will make the brutal cuts put in place under Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm pale in comparison.

At the national level, the Republican Party is already acting as though its victory and assumption of control of the House of Representatives gives it the "mandate" to push through tax cuts for the rich while slashing social spending.

But it would be a grave mistake to believe that the Democratic Party offers a defense against the Republicans in even the slightest way.

While the fear and hatred of the Republicans is well-founded—and explains the high percentage of Detroit residents voting for Democratic candidates—on basic questions of policy the Democrats and the Republicans agree up and down the line: wage cutting, cuts in social spending, and police-state repression for workers here, and militarism and wars abroad.

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing, a Democrat, has already signaled his willingness to work with the Republican Governor-elect Rick Snyder in imposing new cuts and shutting down whole neighborhoods in Detroit. In

Washington, the Obama White House has made clear its willingness to extend Bush-era tax cuts for the rich, while preparing jointly with Republicans for an assault on Social Security.

The burning issue is the need to break the political monopoly of the two capitalist parties and build a party of and for the working class, that fights behind a program calling for full employment, the right to health care, good quality education, and the rebuilding of cities like Detroit. That party is the Socialist Equality Party. That is why I stood in the 2010 elections, and that is why we will continue to fight.

Ours was the only campaign in the entire country that articulated and fought for the interests of the working class. It is for this reason that our efforts were followed closely not only in Detroit and Michigan, but across the US and internationally through daily coverage on the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The SEP campaign focused on exposing the social crisis in Detroit before a national and international audience. We called for the public ownership of utilities and a massive jobs program to rebuild Detroit.

This work was closely related to the SEP's involvement in the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS), and will continue after the election. With the real unemployment rate in Detroit likely near 50 percent, energy giant DTE's actions in shutting off utilities to homes will lead to more deaths this winter, DTE's killing season.

The campaign of the Socialist Equality Party does not end with the elections. If the working class is to defend its rights and interests, under conditions in which the entire political establishment is moving to the right, it must enter into struggle. This requires the building of new organizations, such as CAUS, completely independent of the Democratic Party and the trade unions.

Above all, the working class needs its own party and its own program. In the coming weeks and months, the SEP will intensify its fight to build an independent socialist party of the working class. I urge all those who supported my campaign and voted for me to make the decision to join and build the Socialist Equality Party.

For more information on the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs, click here. To find out how to join the Socialist Equality Party, click here.



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