

# Campaign in Morgantown wins support from workers and students

Our reporters  
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*For more information on the SEP campaign and to get involved, visit [socialequality.com](http://socialequality.com)*

Socialist Equality Party vice presidential candidate Phyllis Scherrer and her supporters campaigned Tuesday in Morgantown, West Virginia for a public meeting at the Morgantown Public Library this coming Thursday. The workers of the area had a strong and supportive response to the campaign.

Scherrer lives in Pittsburgh and has intimate knowledge of the problems facing the region.

Despite sitting upon the world's greatest reserve of high-quality coal, West Virginia ranks last or near last in almost every measure of social well-being among the states.

According to the US Census Bureau, the state's poverty rate increased from 17.7 percent in 2009 to 18.1 percent in 2010. An additional 13,088 West Virginians were thrown into poverty during that time bringing the total number of poor residents to 326,507.

According to the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, between the official start of the recession in December 2007 and September 2010, West Virginians taking advantage of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamps, had increased by 43.1 percent. At the same time, participation in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) increased by more than 10 percent.

Scherrer and supporters spoke to a number of workers and young people in Morgantown.

Vanessa Cuppett, a student at the local university, was pleased with the SEP's stance on Obama's recent capitulation to the right-wing attack on contraceptives.

"I'm not a fan of the attacks on Planned Parenthood. My mother is divorced and only has a high school diploma, so she only has a minimum wage job. The only health care she gets is from Planned Parenthood. That's where she gets her yearly physicals, and they check for breast cancer and anything else she needs."

Vanessa continued, "They're [the religious right] basically attacking the right to have health care and attacking those who can't afford health care and contraceptives." Heatedly, she added, "Some women also take birth control for other things, like endometriosis. Why is this anyone else's business what medication you take?"

Ben Snyder, a young worker who graduated from WVU with a degree in art, said, "I'm working two jobs, at a t-shirt shop and a hotel, to pay off my student loans and pay rent and board."

When asked about the general job situation, Ben replied, "At the t-shirt shop, I'm involved with part of the creative work, so I get to use my degree, which is rare for art majors. I was lucky to get to have a job quickly, right out of school."

He continued, "It's especially hard in smaller towns to find jobs. A lot of my old high school friends have kids now, but it's really hard to find jobs. For them, starting a family, it's even worse."

Ben also commented on the recent massacre in Kandahar. "I think it's terrible. The soldiers are put under extreme strain and this is what happens, especially when there is no support back home for mental conditions. It also has to be difficult for the soldiers when it is hard to justify the war itself."

Molly, another recent art graduate, discussed her

student loan situation. “I had a scholarship for tuition but it was only half. The rest was loans. Right now I work retail at minimum wage trying to repay my loans.”

Molly also said that the amount of money available for scholarships has been decreasing in recent years. “Like my older brother, I was eligible for the in-state scholarship, but he received a full ride. The money was there when he went to school.”

When asked by Scherrer about the SEP’s perspective on the Kandahar massacre, Molly agreed. “It is a product of the war. It is the rule and not the exception.”

Molly continued, talking about her own experiences with health care. “I’ve had lots of trouble with health care, especially after I graduated. I didn’t have any for a while, and was terrified that something would happen to me. Thankfully, I was able to be put back on my dad’s health insurance.”

A passerby agreed with the general thrust of the SEP’s campaign. “I agree. I think there should be something other than the Democrats and Republicans.”

A group of youth from the area stopped to talk to the candidate on their way to a concert. They had a lot to say about the local employment situation. “The entire thing is bad,” said one. “The pay is bad, the benefits are bad, the hours are bad. I work at Panera’s, get paid \$7.25 an hour and work maybe ten hours a week. It’s almost a waste of my time.” Another added, “That’s where having two or three jobs comes in.”



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