

# SEP launches drive to place candidates on Wisconsin ballot

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The Socialist Equality Party is gearing up for a petition drive to place the party's candidates for US president and vice president, Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer, on the ballot in the Midwestern state of Wisconsin. The SEP urges all supporters in Wisconsin area to participate actively in this important campaign.

Last year, Wisconsin was the scene of the largest working class demonstrations in the US in more than three decades. Hundreds of thousands of workers and young people protested against \$1.2 billion in budget cuts and the attack on the workplace rights of public employees by the Republican administration of Governor Scott Walker.

In most states, the SEP will run an aggressive write-in campaign for its candidates because of the restrictive ballot access laws written and enforced by the Democrats and Republicans to exclude socialists and other third party candidates. Many states require tens of thousands of signatures of registered voters, and the SEP would inevitably be involved in a protracted and costly ballot access fight against both big business parties, which use the flimsiest grounds to disenfranchise voters who sign our petitions.

In Wisconsin, the ballot access requirements are relatively less onerous, though still very high. A minimum of 2,000 signatures must be turned into election authorities by August 7 to place White and Scherrer on the ballot as independents for the November 6 presidential election. A total of 10 electors are also necessary, consisting of one from each one of the state's eight congressional districts and two at-large.

The conditions facing the working class in Wisconsin belie the White House's claims of an economic recovery and typify the social crisis confronting workers nearly four years since the Wall Street crash. The state of 5.3 million has been hard hit by

deindustrialization. This includes the shutdown of the Janesville General Motors plant as part of Obama's 2009 auto restructuring and savage wage cuts carried out with the agreement of the unions at Harley-Davidson and other manufacturers.

The state's largest city, Milwaukee, has an unemployment rate of over 10 percent, and one out of every three black men are jobless. Other big cities, like Madison, Green Bay and Kenosha have also been hit hard by the economic and social crisis, including \$800 million in public education cuts.

Anger over these conditions and the growth of social inequality fueled the mass movement that erupted last year in response to Governor Walker's austerity measures and his effort strip the state's teachers, nurses, municipal workers and other public employees of workplace protections. A spontaneous movement exploded largely outside of the control of the unions, which involved hundreds of thousands of workers and young people in school walkouts, job actions, mass demonstrations and the occupation of the capitol building in Madison.

Fearing this could spark a movement nationally, including against Democratic politicians imposing similar austerity measures at the state and federal level, the Democrats, with the full collaboration of the unions and their liberal and pseudo-left supporters, set out to dissipate and crush the movement. From the beginning the unions made it clear they would impose Walker's savage wage cuts on their members. Their only concern was defending their narrow institutional interests, above all their ability to collect dues from workers' paychecks.

After more than a month of increasingly militant protests, and with demands for a general strike winning popular support, the unions called off the protests. They diverted the struggle into the dead end of a recall

campaign to remove Walker and elect a Democratic governor. Last month, Walker predictably routed his Democratic challenger, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, a pro-business candidate who had used Walker's anti-worker law to attack the city's public employees.

During the mass protests, the SEP championed the demand for a general strike to drive Walker from office and oppose all attacks on social programs and workplace rights. It insisted that this requires a break with the Democratic Party. The SEP opposed all of those, including the International Socialist Organization, that acted as the political front men of the unions and promoted the lie that the Democrats offered workers a political alternative to the Republicans.

In the campaign to place its candidates on the state ballot, the SEP will explain the critical political lessons of this struggle and fight to provide workers and youth with a socialist alternative to the Obama administration and the Democrats.

Announcing the decision to seek ballot status, SEP presidential candidate Jerry White said, "We call on all workers and young people, including the hundreds who met our party during last year's mass protests, to support our campaign to place us on the Wisconsin ballot. Join us in collecting the necessary signatures and donate to help cover the costs of this working class campaign.

"The events in Wisconsin during February-March 2011, like the revolutionary upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt that helped inspire the Wisconsin protests, demonstrated the enormous social strength, self-sacrifice and determination of the working class. Most critically, however, they revealed the decisive importance of political leadership and perspective.

"The unions and their supporters from the liberal *The Nation* magazine and pseudo-left groups like the ISO claimed that the Democrats were 'on the side' of the working class. This was and continues to be a lie. Obama, like Walker, upholds capitalism and the economic and political dictatorship of the banks and major corporations.

"For the working class to defend our most basic social rights—for jobs, decent living standards, quality education and other social services—we must build our own mass political party. This party must be based on a socialist program, to fight for workers' power and reorganization of the economy to serve human needs,

not private profit.

"My running mate Phyllis Scherrer and I call on you to support our petition drive and make the decision to join and build the SEP."

*To become involved in the SEP campaign, click here. The effort to get on the ballot in Wisconsin will require substantial resources. Please make a generous donation to the SEP campaign today!*



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