

D'Artagnan Collier turns in petitions for Detroit mayoral campaign

Thomas Gaist, Bryan Dyne
11 May 2013

On Friday, D'Artagnan Collier, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Detroit mayor, submitted one thousand signatures to get on the ballot in the August 6 primary elections. After turning in the petitions, Collier released a statement thanking his campaign team and explaining the basis of his campaign.

Collier noted that the mayoral race is shortly after the appointment of an "emergency manager," Kevyn Orr, to run the city. Orr, he said, "has been given vast powers to extract every penny possible from workers and poor people, to pay off bondholders and restructure the city in the interests of the rich."

The purpose of the campaign, he said, will be to "give a voice to the working class," whose grievances and deep anger find no expression in the current political setup. Collier explained the SEP campaign's opposition to both big business parties and the entire establishment: "To fight for our interests, we cannot appeal to the Democrats and Republicans, the two parties of the rich. From the Obama administration, to Governor Rick Snyder, to Mayor Bing and the City Council, and all the other candidates for mayor—whatever their tactical differences, all agree that the working class must pay for the crisis of the capitalist system."

Collier's campaign will fight to unify workers throughout the Detroit Metropolitan area. "Every section of the working class faces the same attack," he said. "Auto workers who have been forced to accept a 50 percent cut in wages; teachers in underfunded schools; city workers facing sharp cuts in pay and benefits; firefighters doing their best as stations are shut down; elderly and disabled workers evicted from their homes as downtown Detroit is gentrified."

Referring to the standard claim that "there is no money," Collier pointed out that "The stock market is

soaring, yet they demand that workers' wages go down. Corporations are awash in cash, yet health care and pensions are being cut. Trillions have been spent on war abroad, yet there is supposedly no money to keep schools and libraries open."

Rejecting the racial politics employed by the Democratic Party establishment that has run Detroit for decades, Collier insisted, "Workers of all races and nationalities have the same interests. I reject attempts to pit Detroit against the suburbs, or to present the crisis in Detroit as a racial issue. The essential question is not race, but class."

Detroit has become a massive laboratory for the ruling class in their efforts to impose the cost of the crisis on the working class throughout the US and around the world. As Collier stated, "The wealthy see Detroit as a model for what they want to do everywhere. We must make Detroit the model for a counter-offensive by the working class."

Several supporters of the campaign joined Collier as he turned in the petitions.

Asked about the significance of the campaign, Detroit resident Betsy said, "The situation in the city is very dire. We have been under corrupt and negligent management for years. Detroiters have turned a blind eye, but now it is time to call for a change, and I can see that change coming forth through the leadership of D'Artagnan Collier."

After turning in the petitions, Collier and his team went to Warren Truck to speak to auto workers. He was warmly received by the workers and spoke at length to Brad, 29 years old with three years working at Chrysler, who agreed strongly with Collier's program.

"I'm from Texas. I moved to Detroit because of my family and I was able to transfer from Chrysler there to here. There is a big contrast. The neighborhoods in this

city are ridiculous. Everybody who's making money is connected to the City Council and everyone else is struggling to get by. And the mayor is almost a comic book villain.

"On the news, all I see are people getting robbed and killed. You might say that it starts at home, but no one does anything to try and address that."

Collier explained that the real criminals are the corporate executives that force people into desperate social and economic situations.

Johnson responded, "It's true. When I see Detroit, it's like Iraq.

"Compared to Detroit, Houston and Dallas are the land of milk and honey. There they have jobs. Here they layoff firefighters, police officers, medical workers. I heard on the news that the city can't pay for medical gloves. How do you lay off people you need?"

Collier replied that the emergency manager was installed into Detroit to escalate the offensive against the working class. He also connected what is happening in Detroit to broader issues in the US. "The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have an estimated cost of \$6 trillion. What could that money have done if used for social programs in the US?"

Johnson then spoke about his conditions of work. "You can't support a family on what I make. I'm just earning enough to survive. Here you get paid just enough to keep coming back.

"After taxes, union dues and all that crap, there is nothing. Then I have to pay a mortgage and insurance. If I had kids, food expenses would be even worse. And I don't work overtime because that's taxed so much. I'd rather rest my bones than pay the sixty percent tax rate. It's not worth it.

He also spoke out against the alternate work schedule, which has eliminated the eight hour day for auto workers. "I don't like the idea of ten hour days. We do a lot of hard work in the plant. Lots of heavy labor and lifting. Imagine standing up for ten hours. Then imagine also doing labor for that time. You get worn out. They try and get six hundred trucks past us per shift. That's too much."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit: