

Socialist Equality Party election campaign: Naomi Spencer for West Virginia House of Delegates, 16th District!

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The Socialist Equality Party (US) is running Naomi Spencer for the West Virginia House of Delegates in District 16. SEP members and supporters are currently collecting signatures to get on the ballot in the district, distributing the SEP presidential election statement and speaking to hundreds of residents about the campaign.

Naomi Spencer, 38, is a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Equality Party (US). She is a regular contributor to the *World Socialist Web Site* and has been a member of the SEP since 2005. A graduate of Morehead State University in Kentucky with a degree in art, Spencer works as a web designer and writer. She lives in Huntington with her husband and two sons.

Along with the SEP's presidential and vice presidential candidates, Jerry White and Niles Niemuth, Spencer will provide workers and young people with a socialist alternative to capitalism and the corporate-controlled political system.

The issues facing workers in Appalachia are dire, but they are by no means unique. Workers all over the US and around the world confront the same problems: the danger of world war, relentless attacks on democratic rights and soaring social inequality.

West Virginia's 16th District encompasses the city of Huntington, an industrial rail town on the Ohio River whose economic fate is intimately tied to the coal industry. The region, long a distressed area, has been buffeted by instability in the global economy.

After extracting trillions in profits from the labor of generations of miners and other workers, the global energy giants, coal bosses and bankers have left West Virginia in a state of economic, social and environmental ruin. The state has among the worst unemployment and labor force participation rates in the

country. Poverty and the lack of access to public health and other services are widespread, affecting every aspect of life, including death itself. The life expectancy for males in McDowell County, for example, is only 64 years, 12 years below the national average and roughly the same as the impoverished African country of Namibia.

These conditions are not the product of "unfair trade deals," as the Democrats and Republicans claim. Rather, they are the product of the breakdown of the world capitalist system. Following the crash of 2008, the ruling class, under the leadership of the Obama administration, has overseen a massive transfer of wealth into the hands of the banks and corporations.

Throughout the world, the corporate and financial elites are seeking to make the working class pay for their crisis. As coal miners in West Virginia are losing their livelihoods, a million and a half coal miners and steelworkers in China are being laid off.

The history of the class struggle in West Virginia—from the Mine Wars of the 1920s and 1930s to the miners' rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s—proves that nothing can be won without mass struggle.

However, the United Mine Workers contained these struggles within the Democratic Party and the capitalist system. The UMWA, along with the entire AFL-CIO and Change to Win trade union federations, responded to the decline of American capitalism by transforming themselves into tools of corporate management. Underscoring its role as an anti-working class organization and tool of the coal bosses, the UMWA is backing Democratic gubernatorial frontrunner, Jim Justice, a coal baron and the state's richest man.

The US presidential primaries showed that tens of

millions of workers and young people are looking for an alternative. On the one hand, the billionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump has sought to channel mass disaffection of the political system by blaming Mexican, Muslim and other immigrants for the economic and social crisis. To the extent that Trump was able to win a hearing, it is due to the treachery of the unions and their subordination of the working class to the Democratic Party, which seeks to mask its indifference to the economic plight of workers with racial and identity politics.

More significantly, Bernie Sanders—who described himself as a “democratic socialist”—gained more than 12 million votes nationally and won 51.4 percent of the vote over Hillary Clinton’s 35.8 percent in West Virginia, secured far higher margins in the poorer counties and among young people. Sanders’ support in the state demonstrated that broad sections of the working class are looking for a way to oppose the capitalist system, and that the fundamental class issues are coming to the fore.

Sanders, however, is now wrapping up his campaign and getting ready to back Clinton, a warmonger, shill for Wall Street and the personification of the corrupt relationship between the government and the giant corporations. From the beginning, the basic purpose of Sanders’ campaign has been to contain deep social anger and channel it back into the Democratic Party.

Workers need an alternative. The SEP campaign in West Virginia will fight to bring a socialist and internationalist program and perspective to the workers of the entire region. To all workers fighting to defend their jobs and living conditions, to young people drowning in debt, to those who are sick of endless war, we say: Get involved! Support Naomi Spencer for House of Delegates District 16 in 2016! Take up the fight for socialism!

Read more about the campaign and get involved here.



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