

SEP candidate Niles Niemuth speaks on Michigan Radio

Our reporters
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Campaigners for Niles Niemuth have collected the minimum required number of signatures to place the Socialist Equality Party candidate on the ballot for Michigan's 12th congressional district. In order to overcome the restrictive ballot access requirements enforced by the Democrats and Republicans, SEP campaigners will continue to collect signatures right up until the July 19 deadline.

Niles and his supporters campaigned in Ann Arbor, home of the University of Michigan, and the economically hard-hit industrial city of Ypsilanti on Tuesday. The campaign has evoked popular interest among workers, students and young people looking for a socialist alternative to the two corporate-controlled parties. Over the weekend, hundreds signed petitions for Niles at a rally in Ann Arbor opposing Trump's witch hunt and mass deportation of immigrants.

Also on Tuesday, Niles was interviewed by Michigan Radio about the campaign to get on the November 6 ballot.

"We've been all over the district," Niemuth said. "We've been in Ann Arbor, Dearborn, downriver in Trenton and elsewhere, and everywhere we've gone people have been very excited to see that there is finally going to be another option."

The radio report noted that some of the issues the SEP candidate is focusing on in the campaign are "opposing the wars in the Middle East, protecting immigrants and abolishing ICE, fighting social inequality, and preventing internet censorship."

"Ultimately, as Socialists, we believe that the working class should be in control," Niles said.

While the victory of Democratic Socialist of America

(DSA) member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in New York's 14th congressional primary last week showed the growing movement of workers to the left, Niles said, "Ocasio-Cortez is a Democrat, she supports the Democratic Party, and her politics are 100 miles from our politics. We are fighting for a political perspective that is independent of the Democratic Party."

Niles is running against Democratic Congresswoman Debbie Dingell, a former lobbyist for General Motors, who took over the 12th Congressional seat after the retirement of her husband, John Dingell, the longest-serving congressman in US history. The district, which is home to several auto assembly and parts plants, has been hit by decades of deindustrialization and declining living standards.

There was an enthusiastic response among workers and youth for the SEP campaign at the farmers market in downtown Ypsilanti and several workers and young people stopped to sign the petition and speak with Niles.

"The Democrats are hopeless, they cannot be reformed," said one retiree who signed the petition. "It's not just Trump. the entire government is captured. How many countries is the US bombing right now?"

"We need candidates that are not controlled by big business," said the retired worker, who said he attended a Socialist Equality Party meeting at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) during the 2016 elections. Speaking about the growth of working-class opposition, he said, "Teachers showed their collective power with the strikes earlier this year. It's encouraging to see the working class starting to fight back."

"I think this is a great idea," Kyra, an EMU student, said as she stopped to sign the petition. "We have to have a new mindset because bad things have become normalized. The state of Michigan stopped giving

bottled water to the residents of Flint, but they handed over Great Lakes Water to Nestle. And all this money is being spent on war—which is the dumbest thing. The US says it's the sole superpower, but the world is interconnected, and young people don't want to fight each other in wars.”

Robert, a worker recently laid off from a plant that manufacturers hydraulic equipment, stopped and said “Heck yes,” when campaigners asked him to sign a petition to put a socialist on the ballot. “These CEOs, like Jeff Bezos from Amazon, are making billions when those who actually making the product are barely surviving. My plant, which makes parts for the giant stamping presses used in the auto industry, was bought up by a larger corporation and they downsized us.

“I agree with socialism because the working-class people who are working the hardest are not getting an equal cut. The unbalance is not right. All these corporate executives ever talk about is increasing their profit margins to satisfy their shareholders. What would happen if they got less and we got more? Do they really need to have four homes for their wives and their mistresses? How many yachts do they need?

“We’re told it’s the Mexicans who are taking everything away. What a load of mess. I’ve worked alongside of Mexican workers on landscaping jobs and these are some of the hardest-working guys. We should embrace diversity and people who come to this country to try to make a better life.

“Why does Ford have to make \$20 billion while young workers are making half the wages? And, as for the United Auto Workers union, half of them have been indicted and the other half should be too.

“The people who are the souls of this country, the teachers, the firefighters and other workers don’t get anything, but the CEOs never have enough.”

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