

No challenge filed to Socialist Equality Party candidate's nominating petition in Michigan

Our reporter
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The Michigan State Board of Elections will not meet until September 7 to decide whether to certify Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidate for Congress Niles Niemuth for the November 6 general election ballot, but officials have said that the deadline has passed for any outside group to file a challenge to the more than 5,800 signatures submitted July 19 by Niles and his supporters.

The signature total was nearly double the required number of 3,000 signatures of registered voters living in Michigan's 12th Congressional District, which includes Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Dearborn, and the Downriver suburbs of Detroit. The signatures were collected in an aggressive five-week campaign that mobilized dozens of petitioners and won wide support among youth, students and working people.

Potential challengers had until July 26 to file objections to the petitions submitted by the SEP. The Democratic Party has frequently challenged the petitions of third-party opponents, including the SEP and its predecessor the Workers League, but no Democratic Party operative attempted such an anti-democratic maneuver this year.

Candidates in both capitalist parties regularly engage in efforts to use minor technicalities against their political rivals. In the neighboring 11th Congressional District, the incumbent Republican congressman was disqualified from the primary ballot in 2012. In the state's First Congressional District, which comprises the Upper Peninsula and the northern third of the Lower Peninsula, the Democratic Party establishment's choice for the congressional nomination this year, retired Marine Corps officer Matthew Morgan, failed to qualify for the primary ballot due to improperly filled-out petitions. He is running in the primary as a write-in candidate.

The September 7 meeting to certify candidates takes place one month after the August 7 primary election for parties with ballot status, including the Democrats and Republicans, ensuring that any recounts and challenges to the results of the primary contests will be resolved before the Board of Elections takes final action.

The incumbent Democrat from the 12th district is Representative Debbie Dingell, a former auto industry lobbyist and multi-millionaire who succeeded her husband John, the longest-serving congressman in US history. John Dingell, Jr. held the seat for 59 years, after succeeding his father, John Dingell, Sr. All told, a Dingell has occupied the downriver Detroit seat since the early 1930s.

In a statement to the World Socialist Web Site, Niles thanked his supporters for the successful petition drive, while cautioning that until the State Board of Elections makes an official ruling, the SEP must remain prepared to oppose any attack on the democratic rights of the party and its supporters.

"The nearly 6,000 signatures to put my name on the ballot are a clear demonstration by working people and young people that they want a genuine alternative to the two corporate-controlled parties," he said. "Throughout the 12th district we found a tremendous disgust for the policies of the Democrats and Republicans, opposition to war and militarism, support for the rights of immigrants, and a growing interest in socialism."



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