

# Socialist Equality Party (US) National Congress adopts resolution on the coronavirus pandemic and the fight for socialism

**The Political Committee of the Socialist Equality Party (US)  
1 August 2020**

The Socialist Equality Party in the United States held its sixth National Congress from July 19 to July 24, 2020. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the Congress was held entirely online.

More than 30 percent of those who attended were participating in their first party Congress, which is held every two years. Leading members of all sections and sympathizing groups of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) delivered greetings to the Congress.

Over a period of five days, the Congress discussed and then adopted a resolution, “The global pandemic, the class struggle, and the tasks of the Socialist Equality Party,” which is published on the *World Socialist Web Site* today.

The resolution provides a comprehensive analysis of the historic, economic, social and political context of the pandemic and its revolutionary implications. Defining the pandemic as a “trigger event in world history that is accelerating the already far-advanced economic, social, and political crisis of the world capitalist system,” the resolution states:

The working class is confronted with a crisis for which there is no progressive solution apart from a revolutionary struggle against capitalism, leading to the conquest of state power, the establishment of democratic control by the working class over the economy, the replacement of the anarchy of the market with scientific planning, the ending of the nation-state system, and the building of a global socialist society dedicated to equality, the elimination of poverty and all forms of oppression and discrimination, a massive rise in the standard of living and the level of social culture, and the protection of the environment.

The resolution analyzes the crisis triggered by the pandemic in a broader historical, socioeconomic and political context:

While the specific conditions that produced the coronavirus have an accidental and contingent character, the response to the pandemic has been determined by the pre-existing conditions of capitalist crisis and the interests of the ruling class. The capitalist class has continued and intensified the same parasitic economic relations and social policies that it employed during the previous period.

A central theme of the document is that the pandemic marks a historic

turning point whose impact will prove no less decisive in shaping the course of the twenty-first century than that of World War I on the twentieth century. Rejecting the view that the fight against the pandemic is primarily a medical problem, the resolution explains: “As the uprising of the working class was necessary to bring an end to World War I, the class conscious intervention of the working class, in a struggle against capitalism, is necessary to create the conditions for an effective social response to the disease.”

The resolution examines the economic, social and political logic underlying the events of the last half-year. “To understand the present situation and chart a course for the future, it is necessary to review how the crisis has developed in the country which has become the global center of the pandemic, the United States.”

The resolution identifies three distinct stages in the development of the crisis.

The first stage was between December 2019 and March 27, 2020: “The outbreak of the pandemic, the suppression of information and the rescue of the corporate-financial elite.” It was during this period that the Trump administration and congressional leaders of both capitalist parties “made the socially catastrophic decisions that prioritized the rescue of the banks, large corporations and powerful Wall Street investors over preventing the spread of the pandemic and saving lives.”

Rather than taking measures to stop the pandemic, the ruling class pursued a policy of “malign neglect”—an “attitude of indifference on the part of governments to the virus, [which] was conditioned by concerns over its impact on the markets.” It used the months of February and March to prepare and implement a multitrillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street, culminating in the enactment of the so-called CARES Act on March 27, adopted nearly unanimously by the Democrats and Republicans.

While the ruling class sought to suppress any response to the pandemic, the resolution calls attention to the reaction of the working class:

In opposition to the ruling class’s policy of “malign neglect,” the working class began taking action to protect itself against the pandemic. Walkouts and protest actions were organized by workers employed by Instacart, Amazon and Whole Foods. Auto workers in the United States and Canada carried out a series of wildcat actions, which coincided with a wave of strikes and protests in Europe. Articles published on the WSWS and statements by the SEP, including the March 14 statement, “Shut down the auto industry to halt the spread of the coronavirus!,” were read and shared by tens of thousands of workers. Under growing pressure from the working class and with the bailout

legislation still in preparation, the federal, state and local governments were compelled to accede to a lockdown of the economy.

The second stage, between March 27 and May 31, 2020, was dominated by the reckless “back to work” campaign of the ruling class and the eruption of protests against police violence. The resolution reviews the bipartisan campaign within the political establishment to force a return to work, which began with a column advocating a policy of “herd immunity” by Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*. The resolution cites the warnings from the SEP and the WSWS that this policy would lead to an explosion of new cases and deaths.

The resolution analyzes the massive multiethnic and multiracial protests over police violence that spread throughout the US and internationally in late May following the murder of George Floyd:

While the protests were sparked by police violence, their underlying causes were anger over the protracted and severe decline in living standards, the crushing debt levels imposed upon youth and the bleakness of their prospects for the future, pervasive social inequality and its consequences, the constriction of democratic rights, and the impossibility of effecting meaningful change and improvement in social conditions within the framework of the existing political structures of the two-party system.

The third stage began with Trump’s June 1 press conference at the White House, at which he declared his intention to invoke the Insurrection Act to deploy the military against the protests. This initiated the administration’s ongoing attempts to establish a presidential dictatorship. While this initial coup attempt was not successful, the SEP warned in a statement on June 4, cited in the resolution, that “nothing could be more dangerous than to think that the crisis has passed. It has, rather, just begun.”

This warning was confirmed even as the SEP Congress was meeting, with the deployment in Portland, Oregon of federal paramilitary forces operating under Trump’s command. Anticipating the threats over the past week by Trump to delay or cancel the upcoming elections, the resolution warns: “Regardless of which party wins the election—and that requires the debatable assumption that the election will be held—the tendencies that found such noxious expression during the Trump administration will persist and worsen.”

The Democrats responded by ceding all opposition to Trump to the military, while escalating their own campaign to divert social opposition. “The sections of the capitalist class and the affluent middle class aligned with the Democratic Party,” the resolution states, “always extremely sensitive to any sign of working class militancy and socialist influence, intervened to hijack the demonstrations and misdirect them along explicitly racist lines.”

Congress delegates participated in an extensive discussion on the background to the Democrats’ racist campaign, legitimized by the *New York Times* 1619 Project, to rewrite American history:

Determined to disorient the protest movement and suppress the growth of the class struggle, the *New York Times* intensified its campaign—which it had initiated in August 2019 with the launching of the 1619 Project—to discredit the American Revolution, the Civil War and its principal leaders. What began as

a legitimate demand for the removal of the statues of leaders of the Confederacy became the occasion for defacing and removing statues that memorialize the lives of Washington, Lincoln, Grant and even a prominent abolitionist.

Notwithstanding attempts to place “race” at the center of politics, the resolution insists that “the overwhelming social reality of the United States is economic inequality, which is rooted in the division of society based on class.”

The resolution also warned of the escalating preparations by the United States for war. Both Trump and the Democrats, moreover, are committed to an expansion of war abroad. The resolution states:

Throughout the pandemic, there has been no letup in the bellicose policies of the United States. US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo has maintained a heavy travel schedule, demanding support for American threats against Russia and its primary geo-political rival, China. The Trump administration has sought to generate hostility by referring regularly to the “Wuhan virus,” even to the point of claiming, without any evidence, that China set out to infect the American public.

The resolution warns:

The danger of war should not be underestimated. There are many examples in the twentieth century of a crisis-ridden regime—that of Hitler is the most notorious example—resorting to war as a solution to what it perceives to be a desperate crisis within the border of its own country.

On the basis of its analysis of the past seven months, the resolution advances a perspective and program of action for the weeks and months ahead:

The first half of the year has been dominated by the response of the ruling class to the pandemic. The response of the working class will come to the forefront in the second half. The disastrous consequences of the ruling class’s policies have delivered a staggering blow to the legitimacy of the capitalist system. The corporate response to economic collapse—mass layoffs, wage-cutting, demands for the further slashing of expenditures for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other vital and already underfunded social programs—will meet with growing resistance in the working class. Opposition will mount to working in unsafe conditions and to school reopenings that facilitate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. There will be opposition to evictions and foreclosures. Therefore, the Socialist Equality Party foresees an immense growth of working class struggle, which through the intervention of the party will assume a politically class conscious and anti-capitalist character.

In outlining the tasks of the Socialist Equality Party, the resolution explains the significance of “transitional demands” that

connect the issues and needs arising from a concrete situation to the strategy of socialist revolution. In relation to the coronavirus pandemic, the SEP calls for and will fight for an end to the reckless and criminal back-to-work campaign; the repeal of the corporate-Wall Street bailout; an emergency program to provide economic security for all unemployed people and vastly expand the health care infrastructure; the expropriation of the wealth of the corporate and financial elite to address the urgent social crisis facing tens of millions of people; and the establishment of workers' democratic control of the major banks and corporations.

In the discussion of the resolution, Congress delegates emphasized the relationship between the development of the objective situation and the activity of the Socialist Equality Party. There was extensive discussion of the SEP's experience in establishing rank-and-file safety committees in factories and workplaces to protect workers against the threat posed by viral transmission.

Changes and additions proposed by delegates in the course of the discussion were incorporated into the final draft of the resolution. The vote on the resolution was conducted online, and it was passed unanimously.

The Congress delegates elected a new national committee. The members of the incoming national committee reelected Joseph Kishore as national secretary, Lawrence Porter as assistant national secretary, and Barry Grey as US editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*. The Congress delegates reelected David North as national chairman.

The Congress resolution provides an unequaled analysis of the crisis triggered by the pandemic, directed toward the development of socialist class consciousness and the independent action of the working class. It provides a direction for revolutionary politics and the development of a socialist movement of the working class. It deserves the most careful study by workers and young people in the United States and throughout the world.

*Read the resolution, "The global pandemic, the class struggle, and the tasks of the Socialist Equality Party." To contact and join the SEP and the ICFI, click here.*



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**