

Socialist Equality Party (US) condemns violent attacks on Chicago DSA Alderman Daniel La Spata

Socialist Equality Party (US)
5 February 2023

The Socialist Equality Party (US) condemns the attacks on Chicago first ward Alderman Daniel La Spata, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). On February 3, the windows and glass walls of La Spata's campaign office were smashed by two men clad in black, according to police. La Spata reported the security camera in the office was not working.

La Spata issued a statement the following day: "We're concerned that this is political retribution. Even at the beginning of our campaign back in October, we experienced attacks that felt like old-school Chicago politics. If vandals thought they would frighten or intimidate our staff and volunteer teams, they didn't succeed. Honestly, I believe this will only energize the base of neighborhood support that we've seen so far."

In the upcoming Chicago elections set for February 28, La Spata faces three opponents, including disgraced former first ward Alderman Proco "Joe" Moreno, who La Spata unseated in 2019, Sam Royko, attorney and son of the late columnist Mike Royko, and local preservationist Andy Schneider.

The first ward is on the near northwest side of Chicago and includes sections of trendy neighborhoods including Wicker Park, Bucktown, Logan Square and Ukrainian Village.

This is not the first time La Spata has been targeted for politically motivated violence. Last fall, while riding his bike with a group of supporters, La Spata was hit with a cup of beer hurled at him by former candidate for Illinois state representative Robert Zwolinski. La Spata told the media his group had come upon a chalking of "F*** La Spata" on their route when "a

man came running toward the group yelling and flung beer from a red Solo cup." Zwolinski took credit for the attack on Twitter but the alderman declined to press charges.

Alderman Moreno, first appointed to fill a vacancy in 2010 by Mayor Richard M. Daley, was involved in a series of scandals ranging from drunken destruction and abuses of power, filing fraudulent police and insurance claims for a stolen car that resulted in the arrest of his then-lover, and impersonating a police officer in order to secure a convenient parking spot. While out on bond, he sideswiped eight parked cars in the ward. He lost re-election in disgrace.

Touting his relationships with police and businesses in his effort to regain office this month, Moreno states he is being treated for alcoholism. His campaign also enjoys support from powerful members of the city council.

The municipal election campaign is well under way in Chicago, and nine candidates are vying for the office held by Mayor Lori Lightfoot, a right-wing representative of big business and defender of Chicago police violence. The unpopular incumbent is losing more support to opponents every week, and she has begun lashing out, particularly at groups she deems her opponents "on the left."

At the February 1 city council meeting, Lightfoot had DSA leader Sean Estelle escorted out of the chamber by police. Estelle made remarks during the public portion of the meeting, reading a protest against the mayor's decision to enter into a 15-year contract with Commonwealth Edison, the electric company at the center of an investigation into years of corruption with

state and local Democrats. Lightfoot's decision to conclude the deal did not pass in the city council.

There was some shock expressed at Lightfoot using police to remove Estelle. Local public television affiliate WTTW reported he had made no disruption. "Estelle hadn't even spoken to anyone else at the meeting before being approached by a police sergeant and being asked to leave the chambers," the station said.

To dismiss such attacks as a typical manifestation of the "Chicago Way" of Democratic Party political thuggery misses their broader significance. The same day La Spata's office was smashed up, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution denouncing socialism, which declared social programs and other forms of wealth redistribution to be basically unconstitutional.

The resolution was supported by the *whole of the Democratic leadership* in the House and by a majority of the House Democratic caucus, in preparation for new measures slashing government spending on social programs.

The DSA bases itself on the myth the Democratic Party can be reformed. This is as the Democrats are using the DSA to launder their reputation, after decades of pro-war and pro-Wall Street policies, by promoting DSA officials, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, to leadership positions. The Democratic Party, in trying to present itself as progressive, aims to keep workers and youth tied to it, and hold off the eventual emergence of a mass socialist movement.

The resort by both corporate-controlled parties to political repression and violence has an objective driving force. It is taking place amid a historic escalation of social demands by workers, who have shouldered decades of cuts and austerity and the loss of more than 1 million lives to preventable death from COVID-19. A wave of powerful strikes and protests has erupted in the US and globally, and governments are making preparations not to offer crumbs, but are attempting to halt wage growth by engineering a recession and further slashing social spending.

It is this movement of the working class that is this ruling class party's greatest fear, and the escalating political violence and hostility to even the most basic social programs, and the expanding war efforts,

underscore the dangers posed in maintaining any illusions about the capitalist parties.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact