

Widespread support as SEP concludes Wisconsin petition drive

By Niles Williamson and Nicholas Russo
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In just eight days the Socialist Equality Party's campaign to gain access to the presidential ballot in Wisconsin has garnered more than 3,000 signatures, well over the legal required minimum of 2,000.

This show of support from Wisconsin workers demonstrates widespread interest in a socialist perspective. It comes in the aftermath of mass protests against budget cuts last year, which were channeled by the Democrats and the unions behind a recall campaign against the Republican governor.

On Saturday campaign teams and supporters gathered signatures throughout the state. Petitions were circulated in La Crosse, Eau Claire, Kenosha, Madison, and Milwaukee. Over 1,000 signatures were gathered on Saturday alone.

Many of those who signed petitions expressed their disgust with both the Democratic and Republican parties. Signers readily acknowledged the subservience of both parties to Wall Street and the alienation of workers from the entire political system.

The SEP's call for a break with the Democratic Party and the building of an independent movement of the working class was met with enthusiasm from workers and young people.

Over the course of the week, in face of anti-democratic solicitation laws and threats of arrest, presidential candidate Jerry White, vice presidential candidate Phyllis Scherrer, and SEP supporters talked with thousands of workers and young people. They also distributed thousands of leaflets, collected hundreds of dollars in donations and sold dozens of copies of *The Lessons of Wisconsin*, a pamphlet addressing the experience of the protests and subsequent recall elections.

Speaking to the *World Socialist Web Site* on his experiences during the campaign White said, "This is a

very powerful achievement and confirmation of the fight the SEP is taking up to provide the working class with a political alternative to the two big business parties. It is also a testimony to the very hard work of the young volunteers that worked many hours over this last week fighting to bring a socialist program to the working class.

"Everywhere we went, from Madison to Milwaukee, from West Allis to Kenosha, there is a deep sense among workers that the entire political system gives them no means of expressing their political interests. We had to quickly explain to workers that the SEP campaign was not part of the corporate backed political parties, but in fact a revolutionary campaign to give the working class a voice, to mobilize its struggles against budget cutting, war and the slashing of wages and living standards.

"We detected among workers and young people a distinct sentiment of opposition. We were the only movement to explain the significance of the protest movement that erupted in Wisconsin last year, and how that powerful movement was diverted and suppressed by the Democrats, the trade unions, and their pseudo-left supporters such as the International Socialist Organization.

"Our campaign is aimed at drawing the lessons of this critical experience. We anticipate struggles as part of an international movement against the efforts to make the working class pay for the economic crisis.

White added, "We have fulfilled the legal requirements to get on the ballot in Wisconsin, but history shows that the Democrats and Republicans, even once such requirements are fulfilled, will do everything they can to prevent the working class from having a voice in elections. We are prepared to oppose any such efforts to exclude the SEP from the ballot in

November.

“I want to appeal to young people and workers in Wisconsin to help to make this campaign known and assure that workers have a voice in November.”

Phyllis Scherrer summarized the general mood of young people and workers she met while campaigning. “There is a politicization of workers and young people that corresponds to the disenfranchisement of those same workers and young people by the Democrats and Republicans.

“There was a response to the international perspective of the SEP. When we emphasized the global strategy of the financial elite and corporations, there was recognition that the working class needed its own international strategy. Globalization was not an abstraction to the workers and young people that we spoke to.

“While there are still some illusions in Obama, most workers and young people were willing to sign the petitions and discuss the bipartisan attacks on the living standards of working people. The call for the re-appropriation of the wealth of society from the financial aristocracy won an enormous response. Workers, youth and students recognized the looting of the public treasury by the bankers, the gambling away of pensions and public funds for social services on Wall Street, and the gall of the wealthy to demand that the population pay trillions of dollars to bail out and prop up the banks.

“One woman whose husband tried to pull her away, came back to sign and demanded that he tell her who else was insisting that Wall Street be held responsible for their crimes.

“There was an enormous response from young people and teachers,” Scherrer added. “Many of them explained the impoverishment of the Milwaukee Public Schools and the way charter schools had taken their funds. I asked one school social worker about the enormous class polarization that we saw in Milwaukee and throughout the country. She responded with disdain to the re-election of Obama, and declared, ‘We need a revolution today!’”

This powerful response is an indication of the disgust workers and youth hold for the political establishment and their determination to fight against austerity, not just in Wisconsin, but across the United States and around the world. The SEP is the only party that gives

a voice to these aspirations.

The SEP will submit completed petitions and declaration of candidacy forms to the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board next week, ahead of the August 7th deadline. We call on workers and youth in Wisconsin, the United States and internationally to support our election campaign and take up the fight for socialism.

For more information on the SEP campaign and to get involved, visit socialequality.com.

To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>