

Socialist Equality Party wins significant vote in California primary elections

By Jonathan Burleigh
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According to preliminary counts in the midterm primary elections in California, David Moore, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidate for Senate, won 14,504 votes (0.4 percent), and Kevin Mitchell, the candidate for House of Representatives in the 51st district, received 900 votes (1.9 percent).

The results show a significant class-conscious vote for the SEP candidates. In their respective races, Moore and Mitchell advanced a socialist and revolutionary program to mobilize the working class against inequality, war, censorship, the attack on immigrants and the capitalist system.

Moore finished first out of nine independent candidates (and 22 out of 32 candidates overall). He received more votes than John Parker, the candidate for the Peace and Freedom Party, which has a party ballot line. Moore received only 3,000 votes fewer than David Hildebrand, the candidate backed by the Democratic Socialists of America, who ran as a Democrat and had significant financial and institutional support.

Outside of the Democrats and Republicans, only the Libertarian candidate did better than Moore, with 33,703 votes, but the total Libertarian vote was down over 75 percent, from 141,000 in the 2016 primary.

Overall, the election saw a fall in voter turnout, an expression of widespread disaffection with the political system. Only 3.9 million people voted in the Senate primary, down from 7.5 million in 2016 and 4.8 million in 2010, the last time California had a midterm senate race.

The SEP candidates faced significant hurdles in promoting their campaigns. Anti-democratic ballot access laws meant that their affiliation with the Socialist Equality Party was not listed on the ballot. Instead, they ran as independents. Moreover, Facebook

refused to allow either SEP candidate to purchase ads on their platform for over a week in the immediate run up to the election.

Despite these difficulties, the SEP saw a large increase in its vote. The last statewide election the SEP contested in California was the 2003 gubernatorial recall election, when the SEP candidate won 5,915 votes out of 9.4 million cast, compared to Moore's result of 14,465 out of 3.9 million cast.

Details of the vote indicate that the SEP received a higher percentage of the vote in more heavily working-class areas, particularly in the Central Valley, San Diego and Los Angeles. Moore won 1.0 percent of the vote in Fresno County, a heavily agricultural region located in the Central Valley. This was significantly higher than the vote for Hildebrand, the DSA candidate.

Moore received 1.4 percent of the vote in Imperial County, the most impoverished and heavily immigrant county in the state, located on the Mexican border. Imperial County is in the 51st district, where Kevin Mitchell ran for the SEP, receiving one out of every 50 votes cast.

The fall in support for both the Democrats and Republicans, as well as the established "third parties," alongside a small but growing vote for the SEP, is a reflection of the initial stages of a political radicalization of the working class and widespread hostility to the Republicans and the Democrats.

"I want to thank everyone who supported the SEP campaign, including through financial donations," Moore said. "Our campaign marked an important advance and makes clear there is a strong foundation for expanding the political influence of the SEP throughout the state and beyond.

"We launched this campaign in order to organize

workers on an independent political basis, in opposition to the capitalist system,” Moore explained. “This year we have seen a surge of working class struggles, particularly among teachers, who have sought to break free from the stranglehold of the Democratic Party and the unions. This is a sign of things to come.

“The SEP campaign won a strong response from immigrant workers,” Mitchell said, “who are facing a brutal wave of repression at the hands of the Trump administration. Immigrant workers know that the Democratic Party offers no alternative, having gone through the experience of the ‘deporter-in-chief,’ Obama.

“The Democratic Party has collaborated with Trump to fund the border wall with Mexico, inflate the military budget and cut corporate taxes,” Mitchell added. “Their opposition to Trump has centered on criticism that he is ‘too soft’ on Russia, which is combined with the promotion of the identity politics of the upper middle class.”

Moore concluded with an appeal: “The aim of the SEP is to unite all workers, immigrant and native born, of all races, genders and nationalities, in a common struggle for their social rights, and against war and dictatorship. This requires a fight against the capitalist system.

“Even though our election campaign is over, our work is just beginning; I call on all our supporters to join the SEP and take up the fight for socialism.”

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