

Significant vote for SEP candidate Niles Niemuth in Michigan's 12th district

By our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party's candidate in the 12th congressional district race in Michigan, Niles Niemuth, won 2,198 votes in Tuesday's 2018 midterm elections. Niemuth was the only candidate to run on an anti-war, pro-immigrant, socialist and internationalist program in the interests of workers in the United States and around the world.

Every vote cast for Niles was a class-conscious action and vote for socialism made by a worker or young person who had come into contact with the SEP's campaign over the previous six months.

Due to anti-democratic electoral restrictions, Niles' party affiliation was not listed on the ballot alongside his name. This meant that Niles did not get votes from those who wanted to support a socialist candidate but had not heard of his campaign. The only third party listed on the ballot was the Working Class Party and its candidate Gary Walkowicz, who received 6,684 votes.

Niemuth's campaign had been given only the most limited media coverage, with local TV station WDIV initially refusing to advertise it at all. It later published a link to Niles' campaign, after the *World Socialist Web Site* published an open letter to the news station demanding that it end its censorship.

Niemuth and his supporters spoke with thousands of workers, students and young people in the district, which includes Ann Arbor, home to the University of Michigan, Dearborn, the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the US, and the working-class and deindustrialized towns of Ypsilanti and the Downriver area.

Niemuth's campaign spoke with and gave a voice to striking hotel workers, autoworkers, teachers, workers at Amazon and UPS, immigrants, students, and workers of all backgrounds. It published dozens of articles, videos and statements on the major political

issues facing the working class in the US and internationally. His campaign was endorsed by Christine Assange, the mother of WikiLeaks' former editor Julian Assange, for its defense of her son, WikiLeaks and journalistic freedom.

Many workers and youth in Michigan and internationally were introduced to socialism by Niles' campaign. Ethan, a freshman at the University of Michigan, joined Niles' campaign after seeing a poster on campus this semester. He told the WSWWS his experiences after polling day:

"Today's elections were for most Americans just business as usual: they had the option to vote for a capitalist, warmongering Democrat or a capitalist, divisive Republican," he said. "But in Michigan's 12th district me, and thousands of others, had the option to vote for the working class by casting a ballot for Niles Niemuth, the only candidate promoting genuine socialism in the US."

"We are told that voting third party is a waste of a vote, but as long as we think Republicans and Democrats own our votes they will continue exploiting the poor, dividing us based on insignificant identity issues, and practicing imperialism. I was proud to work with the Niles campaign to educate people on these issues, and ultimately very proud to cast my first and only ballot today for socialism."

The WSWWS also spoke with Kat, one of the thousands who voted for Niles, outside a polling booth in Lincoln Park. She is studying environmental studies with a major in Chemistry at Henry Ford Community College, and working as a waitress at a local Sushi restaurant for anywhere between \$8 and \$12 an hour, depending on the night. She met Niles while he was campaigning at Henry Ford College.

"I was talking to Niles for a minute there," she said.

“I agreed with a lot of the things he was talking about. None of the other candidates were good. I think both the Democrats and Republicans are totally corrupt. They don’t allow room for other parties. Are we even democratic if there’s just two parties?”

Kat is 20 and was 12-years-old when Barack Obama was elected in 2008. She said she didn’t remember the election but “all I remember is everyone was happy about it. But he did a whole bunch of things that were horrible. It’s all for profit. The wars are for oil, using countries for their resources and acting like they are uncivilized nations that we need to fix.”

Jim, a graduate student at University of Michigan, who helped with the campaign, shared his thoughts today: “I voted for Niles because he was the only genuine Marxist on the ballot,” he said. “Since coming into contact with Niles and the SEP/IYSSE, I read a pamphlet by Leon Trotsky on fascism, and I had some of Trotsky’s warnings in my head when I voted. I voted for Niles because I wanted to give a class-conscious vote.”

He continued: “I started helping with the campaign because prior to it, I felt helpless about the entire political situation. I just feel like is not enough to just vote. I wanted to be part of something that challenges the status quo.”

“My hope moving forward from this election is that the working class and youth in the United States learns a lot about the Democratic Party in the next two years. Whatever the outcome they’re going to preach ‘civility’ and not to be ‘too impractical’ and all that. It’s a total trap. 2016 for me, is when I started looking for alternatives. I supported Bernie Sanders and he threw all of that behind a liar and right-wing political figure like Hillary Clinton.”

Jim concluded: “This election and the coming period is yet another chance for young people and workers to learn that liberalism and the Democratic Party are not going to oppose this shift to right. It’s time to start learning about Marxism, and to fight for an alternative. And I think Niles’ campaign will be viewed as the only legitimate alternative to people paying close attention.”

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