

Socialist Equality Party candidates win ballot status in Michigan

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The Michigan Board of State Canvassers voted unanimously Monday to place Socialist Equality Party candidates Joseph Kishore for president and Jerry White for vice president on the Michigan ballot in the November 5 US election.

The SEP candidates qualified through a petition drive that collected more than 20,000 signatures of Michigan voters. The petition was filed last month, and the Democratic Party could find no basis for challenging it. The state Bureau of Elections reviewed it, determining that the SEP candidates had met the requirement of at least 12,000 valid signatures of registered voters, as well as a further requirement of at least 100 signatures in a majority of the state's congressional districts.

The campaign reported that dozens of SEP supporters campaigned for more than four months to collect the necessary signatures. Many were obtained in the four-county Detroit metropolitan area, comprising Wayne, Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw counties. Thousands of signatures were collected by campaign teams in Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Flint, Port Huron and other towns and cities across the state. Residents of 75 of the state's 83 counties signed to support placing Kishore and White on the ballot.

The success of the SEP petition drive in Michigan has enormous national and international significance. The state of Michigan is a focal point of the 2024 election. It is a "battleground" state, and at the center of the escalating political crisis in the United States.

Michigan was one of the three industrial states narrowly carried by Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in 2016, then won by Joe Biden over Trump in 2020. After the 2020 election, Trump met with Republican state legislators and sought to have them overturn his election defeat and have the Biden electors chosen by the voters replaced by Trump electors.

In the course of the 2020 campaign, a violent right-wing conspiracy targeted Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer for assassination, after Trump had issued a public appeal to "liberate Michigan" from the initial coronavirus lockdown resulting from walkouts by auto workers who forced the shutdown of major plants. The group plotting to kidnap and execute Whitmer was arrested on the eve of putting their plans into operation.

In 2024, the two main capitalist parties are flooding the state with television and social media advertising, paid campaign workers, and, in the case of the Democrats, a mobilization of union officials and employees. The two parties will likely spend more than \$100 million in Michigan alone on their rival campaigns, and they are prepared to spend millions more on legal challenges after the vote.

The candidates themselves are visiting Michigan almost every week. It is noteworthy that Trump is focusing his Michigan appeals on ultra-right and militaristic forces whom he would summon into violent action in the event he loses the state. Last week, he addressed a rally in Howell, the town where the Ku Klux Klan was refounded in the 1970s, and where neo-Nazis marched publicly only a few days before Trump's arrival.

On Monday, Trump addressed the national convention of the National Guard Association, held in Detroit. Throughout 2020, Trump repeatedly urged the calling out of the National Guard, first to suppress protests against police violence following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, and later, after the election, to suppress protests against his plans to remain as president in defiance of the voters.

Trump has threatened that, if returned to the White House, he will deploy the National Guard in major

cities throughout the country to round up immigrants and suppress protests.

In a statement posted on X yesterday, Kishore wrote that “The Socialist Equality Party will use this campaign to fight for a socialist leadership in the working class. [Jerry White] and I will oppose both the Democrats and Republicans, the parties of the corporate and financial oligarchy.”

The statement continued, “The SEP will fight to mobilize the working class against the genocide in Gaza, backed by both parties, and the escalating US-NATO war against Russia. We will oppose the turn by the ruling elites toward fascism and dictatorship.”

Michigan is home to the largest Arab-majority city in the US, Dearborn, and there is enormous opposition to the genocide in Gaza among workers and young people throughout the state. Protests were organized at major campuses, including the University of Michigan and Wayne State University. As campuses reopen, university administrators, closely linked to the Democratic Party, are implementing major attacks on basic democratic rights and free speech.

Over the past several weeks, a central focus of the SEP campaign in Michigan has been on fighting for a rank-and-file rebellion of autoworkers against the United Auto Workers (UAW) apparatus, which is collaborating in the planned destruction of more than 2,000 jobs at Stellantis’ Warren Truck Assembly Plant outside of Detroit.

Kishore issued a statement last week calling for a united movement of all rank-and-file workers against layoffs.

Michigan is still the center of the auto industry, and UAW President Shawn Fain is now one of the most active promoters of the Harris campaign and the Democratic Party. Fain and other union officials are backing the escalating global war, which requires at the same time a war on the working class at home.

“The SEP rejects entirely the claim that opposition to dictatorship and fascism can be opposed by supporting a party of imperialism and war,” Kishore stated. “Both the Republicans and the Democrats represent two factions of the corporate and financial oligarchy.”

“The widespread support for the SEP campaign in Michigan reflects the real sentiments of workers and young people everywhere,” Kishore added. “In our election campaign, here in Michigan, across the US and

indeed around the world, we will fight to explain the fundamental political issues confronting workers, develop their understanding that no solution can be found to any of the problems confronting working people except through the fight for socialism, and that this great historical task can only be achieved by adopting a global strategy.”

The WSWS will continue to provide coverage of the SEP election campaign as part of its overall reporting on the 2024 elections.



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