

USA: Left forces prepare a conference for future electoral cooperation

Thursday 26 February 2015, by [Correspondent\(s\)](#) (Date first published: 17 February 2015).

Electoral Action Conference Will Bring Together Leaders Building Alternatives to the Two-Party System

Activists and candidates from around the country will come together on May 2-3 in Chicago to share their experiences and to launch a network for future cooperation at the Future of Left/Independent Electoral Action Conference.

The past few years have seen a significant uptick in independent political initiatives on the left, from election campaigns to new local electoral and social movement formations, to referenda campaigns. Kshama Sawant's November 2014 election to the Seattle City Council captured the attention of leftists across the country, but a number of other exciting campaigns have also been path breaking, including the Jackson Plan of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Richmond Progressive Alliance's David and Goliath fight against Chevron in the East Bay. Many recent political developments have brought organizers building alternatives to the two-party system together with those using direct action and referenda to help win gains against fracking, for a \$15 minimum wage, and other important initiatives.

Left to right: Brian Jones, Kshama Sawant, and Howie Hawkins. Sawant and Hawkins have endorsed the conference.

"There has never been a more critical time in history to come together to discuss independent left political action," said Gayle McLaughlin of Richmond Progressive Alliance. "Using my experience in Richmond as a gauge, it is clear people are eager to continue participating in a bold movement for social change. There have been breakthroughs in other places as well. Movements are starting to bubble up throughout our nation. But as long as we remain isolated, the two-party system will continue to weaken our democracy. We need to learn from one another's experiences, and not fear conflicts or differences among us, in order to break through that isolation. There is no time to lose and this conference offers us an exciting beginning!"

"So much impressive political work has been done around the country, but not enough people know about it" said conference endorser Dan La Botz. The Future of Left/Independent Electoral Action Conference is intended to encourage dialogue amongst those who are committed to left politics outside of the two-party system, to share experience and reflections of campaigning, to discuss the purpose of running and challenges once in office, and to explore the relationship between social movements and elections.

This initiative, which was first proposed by Solidarity in the summer of 2014, gained ground after an uptick of left electoral activity throughout fall of 2014. Following the November elections, Socialist Alternative made a public call supporting such conferences in 2015. The conference, which is supported by Solidarity, Socialist Alternative, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), and other left groups, focuses on third-party and independent candidates and grassroots organizers. Over fifty individuals and organizations have endorsed the call or joined to work on organizing the

May conference in Chicago.

The conference will promote independent political action, build issue-based coordination among disparate movements, candidates, and left/progressive parties, and develop and adopt a means for continued networking, conversation, and mutual support. The organizers hope to gather experienced candidates and organizers representing the social movement sectors, people of color, youth, women, LGBTQ, and individuals with disabilities to have strategic dialogue of left electoral strategies and tactics. It will have a mix of plenary sessions, theoretical panels, inspirational talks, and practical workshops. The end goal is to use the conference to build and ongoing support network around electoral issues.

Robert C., February 17, 2015

To endorse the call to the conference and be placed on a low-volume announcement listserv, please send your name and affiliation to [leftselect gmail.com](mailto:leftselect@gmail.com).

P.S.

* <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/4361>