

# Pat Noble

## Candidate for Board of Education - Red Bank, New Jersey



*“ ... Let’s use this election as a building block towards a stronger movement for a better education system. Consider joining the Socialist Party USA, a multi-tendency, democratic socialist organization that is committed to building a free, liberated society. Additionally, consider joining Revolutionary Unity, a new and energetic organization that seeks to unite anti-capitalists of various stripes under one banner.” -- Pat Noble, 11/16/12*

### **What motivated you to run for office?**

I wanted to use the platform of a candidate as an opportunity to spread socialist ideals to receptive individuals. The vast majority of electoral campaigns in the United States involve capitalist candidates that ignore, or are at least oblivious to, working-class issues. Running against these politicians gives a window of time to directly attack their politics, while at the same time providing and promoting a left-wing alternative. Understanding this is what motivated me to run.

### **What was your campaign budget?**

In the Board of Education campaign, I did not accept campaign donations, nor did I have a campaign bank account. I had a bank account of \$200 for my 2011 Monmouth County Freeholder campaign, which was the combination of my own money and \$50 from a friend. I found that my campaigns were not financially demanding, so active fundraising was not necessary. Seeing as how we won the Board of Education election without fundraising, this turned out to be true! Anyone who wanted to donate to my campaign was directed to the Socialist National Committee electoral fund.

### **Did you run openly as a socialist?**

The Board of Education elections are non-partisan, so no party designation appeared by my name on the ballot. In partisan races in New Jersey, we are able to put the title “Socialist Party USA” next to our candidates’ names, despite the state giving us no recognition as an organization. Despite this, I made it as clear as possible that I am a Socialist. My campaign website, as well as all campaign literature, stated that I am a Socialist, as well as a Socialist Party-endorsed candidate.

### **What kind of help did you get? Who were the key supporters of your campaign?**

Socialist Party members in the area were very helpful in promoting the campaign, particularly by helping to distribute campaign literature. I know of at least three Red Bank residents that went so far as to talk with their neighbors about voting for me. My comrades in Revolutionary Unity, another group I’m involved in, were helpful in using social media to promote the campaign. Greg Pason deserves a specific mention for working to promote a Socialist Party ticket in New Jersey, rather than three, separate campaigns (presidential, US Senate, Board of Education).

### **What was your campaign strategy/approach?**

In this campaign, strategy manifested itself in two forms: social media and literature. Social media is a powerful tool to reach out to a large number of people quickly, especially to the youth. Putting technology aside, simply talking one-on-one with literature in-hand can be a very effective way

to win someone over, not to mention the human face it puts on the politics being put forward.

**What was your messaging and what were the responses you received?**

This was a socialist campaign, and its message was promoted as such. With a local campaign, the key is to adapt a socialist message to local issues. For example, promoting an anti-imperialist position came out in the campaign platform in the form of opposing military recruiters in the high school. While there are always the right-wingers that will criticize no matter what, I believe the overall response to this campaign was positive.

**Describe the political climate in Red Bank.**

Red Bank is a very Democrat-populated town. The borough council is presently all-Democrat, and the Mayor position has been held by the Democrats for decades. Republicans occasionally run, though with a low level of funding and support.

**What are some of the main issues affecting your community? How did you address those concerns within a socialist framework?**

Education across the United States is facing an onslaught from the right-wing, and the Red Bank Regional High School is no different. Between budget cuts and an ineffective teachers union, as well as heavy military recruitment, there are a ton of issues involved. When addressing any issue, it's important to take a step back and look at it through a socialist perspective. Doing this is what creates the difference between simply disagreeing with the status quo, and presenting a viable alternative to the status quo.

**Did people challenge your position? What did they say, and how did you respond?**

As with any radical ideas, there will be people to challenge you. The key is to stay calm, cool, and collected. I've found that most right-wingers that challenge you are doing so on partial information and distorted realities, so they can be easily refuted. At a youth event in Princeton, NJ, an individual tried to make the all-too-common argument that all socialists are simply promoting the Soviet-era politics of Lenin and Trotsky. We discussed the "third camp" approach that the Socialist Party USA took towards the United States and Soviet Union, as well as the differences between democratic socialism and Leninism. By the end of the conversation, he still didn't agree with left-wing politics, but at least understood the differences in

various left-wing thought.

**What kind of media coverage did your campaign receive?**

Outside of a news article that announced all of the area Board of Education candidates, which simply listed races, names, and addresses, there was no pre-election media coverage of this election that I know of. I had hoped for more coverage, but given how low-key the Board of Education elections are in Red Bank, it is a continuation of an unfortunate trend.



**What were some of the greatest challenges or obstacles? How did you overcome them?**

Being a socialist candidate is always challenging, especially considering how little most people know about socialism. In the short term, the only way to overcome this is to present a consistent message, and to spread this message to as many people as possible.

**Anything surprising happen during your campaign?**

I'd say the fact that we won was the most surprising. I expected that we would do well in the vote tally, and I hoped for a win, but I did not expect a win or loss. I'm still a little bit in shock that a socialist was elected in this area; the fact that it was me just adds to it. I'm sure I'll shake it off by the time I'm sworn in.



**What are some things you would have liked to do, if you had more time and resources?**

I wish we were able to have more media coverage, but I am not sure if more time or resources could have helped that. I also would have liked to campaign more in the last weeks before election day, but Hurricane Sandy effectively suspended physical campaigning for the last week.

**How do you think the results of your campaign reflected the political consciousness of people in your community specifically and the American public in general?**

By electing a socialist and a young person, as well as ousting the incumbent, I believe that winning this election proves that the majority of people in the community are ready for radical change to the regional school board. Since the Red Bank voters also gave a majority of votes to every Democrat on the ballot, there is obviously a long way to go in terms of political consciousness. We also have to remember that consciousness extends far beyond the voting booth, and vote tallies are not the correct way to measure it. Instead, our measurement should be based on how many people are organizing and protesting for social justice and economic democracy.

**Do you plan to run for office again? If so, for what position? If not, why?**

I hope to run for office again in the future, though when and what for remains to be decided. I've legally been able to vote in two elections now, and in both elections, I have been on the ballot. For now, I look forward to the challenges of being an elected socialist, rather than a socialist candidate. That being said, I also look forward to promoting the same message of democracy, solidarity, and freedom that I promoted in my campaign.

**What are the responsibilities of your elected position?**

The purpose of the Board of Education is to establish policy and oversight for the school district. As a board member, I will participate in this, while at the same time bringing a socialist and youth perspective to the table.

**Who will you be working with?**

There are eight other Board of Education members. Additionally, I hope to work with both students and teachers to increase their role in deciding how the school should function.

**How long is your term?**

Three years.

**In what capacity do you think you will be able to promote socialism in your new position?**

I obviously cannot say how far my message will go on the Board of Education, but I can say that I will promote a socialist position as much as possible.

