



Questions for the DNC Chair Candidates - 2017
From Democrats Abroad

1) Why are you running for DNC Chair?

“It is time for a new generation of leadership, to cope with new problems and new opportunities. For there is a new world to be won.” **John F. Kennedy**

President Kennedy’s statement may be even more true today, and no one knows more about our new world than Democrats Abroad! I am running for DNC Chair because I represent a new generation, and I believe I can unite all generations of Democrats around the world in a positive, forward-thinking agenda that addresses both old and new problems and helps all Americans take advantage of new opportunities.

In order for this agenda to carry us to victory in 2018 and 2020, we need to reach out in every community and to every voter. To do this successfully, we need to invest in Party organizations in every state, territory, and Democrats Abroad. We need all of you to have professional and specialized operations and capabilities on a permanent basis. This includes support for television, radio, and digital ads; social media outreach; and any other vehicle that affords Party organizations the ability to share their message in a timely and compelling manner. As a State Party Chair in a red state, I know the challenges we face, and I know that to meet these challenges we must start at the community level.

In order to succeed in every community, we must have a deep bench of candidates who are connected to their communities. In South Carolina, we have established the Clyburn Fellowship, to bring together a diverse group of dynamic young leaders from every county in our state to participate in a rigorous nine-month training program to prepare them to run for office, manage campaigns, and lead local parties. As DNC Chair, I will work with state parties, territories and Democrats Abroad to establish similar programs, particularly to groom candidates who can speak to the concerns of their constituents and win where others have lost.

The Democratic Party can not simply be a political organization looking for votes every two or four years; we must be a community organization working in our neighborhoods with grassroots activists addressing the day-to-day issues faced by middle and working class voters. In South Carolina, with our SC

Democrats Care initiative we organize service projects to help South Carolinians with everyday problems-by collecting school supplies for children and working shifts at the homeless shelter and conducting resume and financial literacy workshops. With our Party out of power for the next two years, and with Republican policies threatening so many, we must find other ways to improve people's lives while we are connecting voters to the Democratic Party.

I grew up in rural South Carolina, the son of a single mother. I remember the stories my grandmother told of having to pick cotton at a young age instead of going to school. Despite their struggles to stay afloat, my family instilled in me the belief that I could do anything I put my mind to. They were right. I am running for DNC Chair because I want my story of upward mobility to be the story of millions of young Americans growing up in challenging circumstances.

2) How would you describe your management style? What is your relevant organizational management experience? Would you work as a full time or part time Chair, and if part time, how would you manage?

I have said from the start of my campaign that the next DNC Chair must be a full-time Chair. The challenges are too great and the stakes too high for anything less.

I pride myself on being a collaborative leader who listens. In a big-tent party like ours, there is no other way to lead. As Floor Director for House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn in the 110th Congress, I was responsible for securing 218 votes for every piece of legislation that came to the House floor. The Democratic Caucus was incredibly diverse with regard to ideology, region, and ethnicity. With little margin for error, I had to build consensus from a wide range of perspectives and interests.

We never lost a party-line vote during my time as Floor Director. I succeeded by building personal relationships with Members, gaining expertise on the substantive issues, and leading a cohesive and accountable team of Deputy Whips and staff. Our success was contingent upon listening to the Members and their staff, understanding the diversity of the districts they represented, and appreciating their need to sometimes take divergent positions from party leadership. Understanding that diversity is our greatest strength and those differences also can present challenges is essential for being a leader in our party. These members trusted me to find a path forward that benefitted them and the party. These are the skills the next DNC Chair will need to succeed.

I have also demonstrated these skills as Chair (and Vice Chair) of the South Carolina Democratic Party. With a core of loyal "Yellow Dog" Democrats and

a growing base of young and diverse progressives, we have begun to build a Democratic electorate in South Carolina that will soon be able to carry the state just as we carried the nation in 2006 and 2008.

At the South Carolina Democratic Party, I have always encouraged honest and open discussions with our members and staff. It is important that the culture of an organization encourages open dialogue and interactions.

In every leadership role I have had in our Party, one thing has always been abundantly clear: while we have different views and perspectives, we must all think of ourselves as Americans first, Democrats second, and no political labels beyond that. We are not Clinton Democrats, Sanders Democrats, or Obama Democrats—we are Democrats, and we must be united and focused on the future. Like former DNC Chair Howard Dean, I represent the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party.

Leading a big-tent party isn't always easy, but if we want to win the House, Senate, governorships, state legislatures, and the Electoral College, we have no choice. My experience leading diverse groups of Democrats has prepared me to grow our tent successfully.

From managing a non-profit with hundreds of staff and volunteers to running the Whip Operation for House Democrats, I have led by being a trusted listener and consensus builder. I look forward to bringing these skills to the Democratic National Committee.

3) Do you think the position should be filled by a single Chair or by two Co-Chairs, as has sometimes been done in the past?

With full Republican control of government, just as we faced in the mid-2000s, I believe the DNC will function most effectively with one strong Chair who can simultaneously serve as a national voice of the Party and effectively handle the day-to-day management of the DNC. We need a DNC Chair who knows what the Party is doing in every community in America, and who has a platform to communicate that to the nation. That may not always be possible with two Co-Chairs with divided responsibilities, especially when we do not have a Democrat in the White House. Out of all the candidates, I believe I am best suited to successfully perform all of these functions as Chair.

4) What lessons should we learn from the 2016 elections and what do they mean for our strategy going forward? How are we going to attract voters who did not turn out for Democrats in 2016?

Since the election, I have thought often about my grandfather. His education topped out at fourth grade, and he spent most of his life paving the roads and highways in South Carolina. He was diagnosed with diabetes, and his experience with doctors made a bad situation worse. He told me that the worst part of his experience was that the doctors made him feel like he didn't matter—a constant refrain throughout his life.

In recent years, we have seen that far too many Americans feel that they don't matter to the institutions that are supposed to serve them. Black Lives Matter activists have demanded that law enforcement treat people of color like they matter. The Occupy Wall Street movement has demanded that major companies treat 99% of Americans like they matter. And many working Americans, especially those in rural areas, have demanded that both political parties treat them like they matter.

Donald Trump tapped into the feeling of this last group, and he was able to win an Electoral College victory on the strength of their votes. Tragically, President-elect Trump conned them, and his Republican cronies won't do anything to improve their lives. Our challenge—and our opportunity, now that voters will be watching carefully to see whether Republican governance gets results—is to offer an agenda that appeals to *all* Americans who justifiably feel that they don't matter to powerful institutions. As Chair, I will galvanize the grassroots to fight against harmful GOP proposals and I will draw stark distinctions so that all Americans will understand what we have to lose from Republican policies and what we have to gain by electing Democrats.

But if we want to retake the House, Senate, governors' mansions, and state legislatures, we have to appeal to voters in their own communities. That is why we must invest in rebuilding State Parties by increasing State Party Partnership investments to \$12,000 a month; train and recruit candidates with programs like the Clyburn Fellowship; and transform our Party into a community organization with initiatives like SC Democrats Care. To end the erosion of Democratic victories and support in red and blue states, we must start rebuilding our party's foundation now.

5) What changes should be made at the DNC to make it a more effective organization?

As a full-time DNC Chair, I will reorganize the DNC with the goal of focusing on State and Local Parties because I know that they are the ones who can reach voters where they are and show the voters that Democrats can improve their lives.

To that end, we must:

- Invest in all 57 Party organizations in states, territories, and Democrats Abroad by increasing the State Partnership Program to \$12,000 a month and easing restrictions on how that money is spent
- Provide Parties with professional and specialized operations, capabilities, and in-kind services on a permanent basis through regional Caucus hubs, i.e., provide political, press, fundraising, and tech staff dedicated to serve Parties in each region
- Empower regional Caucuses through joint fundraising and candidate support efforts and ensure Caucuses have dedicated funds to support local candidates and efforts
- Give young people a seat at the decision table by creating a Vice Chair position for those 35 and younger
- Spark a new wave of political technological innovation by creating a tech competition to address Party field and message outreach efforts
- Establish a surrogate program to assist Parties with securing Democratic speakers
- Host strategy and message coordination sessions with affiliated groups from the DCCC and DSCC and DGA to DLCC and DMO
- Provide financial and legal assistance to State and Local Parties and legislators to stop gerrymandering and challenge gerrymandered districts in court
- Push to get big money out of politics and cultivate small-dollar donors at the national, state, and local levels, as well as among Democrats in the territories and abroad

As a State Party Chair in a red state, I understand the struggles that each Party encounters. I know what it's like to fight to keep the doors open, meet a payroll each month, and conduct effect Party-building efforts. A key purpose of the DNC is to serve State and Local Parties and candidates, not the other way around, and that will be my organizing principle.

However, before we reorganize and rebuild the DNC we must look at the past to prepare for the future. I will undertake a complete review of the current organizational structure, staffing structures and patterns as well as all of the policies, procedures and processes currently in place. We will also conduct surveys of the entire membership for input. And, we won't reinvent the wheel. For instance, I believe there was a tremendous amount of good work and planning in the **Democratic Victory Task Force Action Plan** for 2016, after the 2014 elections. It wasn't the ideas in that Plan that were the problem, it was

the lack of implementation of those ideas, which the DNC spent a year developing, which was our downfall. So, I pledge not to “reinvent the wheel” but to streamline our processes and staffing so we actually modernize the way the wheel turns.

6) Democrats Abroad members vote in all 50 states. What are your views on implementing a 50-State Strategy? What role do you see for Democrats Abroad?

We absolutely must implement a 50-State Strategy. More precisely, we must implement a 57-State/Territory/Democrats Abroad Strategy. When I worked for Congressman Clyburn in 2005 and 2006, when he was Vice Chair and then Chair of the House Democratic Caucus, he was the only member of Democratic Leadership in the House or Senate who supported Howard Dean’s 50-State Strategy. We did it, and it paid off; in 2006, we won the House majority by picking up seats in red states like Indiana, Kentucky, and Kansas—seats that we never would have expected to pick up in early 2005. Similarly, when the DNC makes resource allocations early next year to support our efforts for the 2018 cycle, we won’t be able to predict where all of our pickup opportunities will be. So we have to invest everywhere to be ready to compete everywhere.

Democrats Abroad has to be a key element of this strategy. The DNC needs to work hand-in-hand with Democrats abroad to develop strategies to grow voter participation rates among voters living abroad, to increase our opportunities to pick up Democratic votes in every state and district around the country. Democrats Abroad can and must be our most effective weapon in meeting this organizational challenge. The DNC must simultaneously view Democrats Abroad as the 57th Party entity alongside State and Territory Parties as well as an integral part of the other 56 Parties, because Democrats Abroad can and must deliver votes in every single state and territory.

7) Concerning Democrats Abroad (DA):

- **How would you plan to include Democrats Abroad in the DNC's resource allocations in future election cycles?**
- **Would you ensure that DA is allocated funding (like other state parties) under the State Party Program (SPP) to use for an Executive Director as well as Communications and GOTV initiatives abroad?**
- **Would you agree to designate a point person within the DNC for Democrats Abroad, allowing us easy and effective interface with the Party?**

As noted above, I simultaneously view Democrats Abroad as the 57th Party entity alongside State and Territory Parties as well as an integral part of the

other 56. As such, I believe DA should be an equal partner in the State Partnership Program, which I plan to increase to \$12,000 a month. I also plan to ease restrictions on how SPP funds can be used, so DA would be able to use those funds as you see fit—for an Executive Director, Communications Director and initiatives, GOTV initiatives, and any other activities DA chooses while following mutually agreed upon accountability measures. DA must not only have a point person at the DNC within the regional structure but DA must have a point person at each of the 56 State and Territory Parties to ensure effective coordination in increasing the voter participation rates of Democrats Abroad in all of the states and territories where they are registered to vote. The DNC will effectively facilitate these contacts when I am Chair.

8) Like voters in all states, Democrats Abroad members have concerns specific to overseas Americans. What is the best medium for state parties like us to raise these issues within the Democratic Party and see them addressed?

When I am Chair, the DNC will focus on soliciting input and listening to concerns from Americans throughout the country and living abroad. Every State Party, Territory Party, and Democrats Abroad will know me, other DNC officers, and members of the DNC staff. We will actively promote open lines of communication. If you raise concerns that are best handled by elected officials, the DNC will facilitate those connections as well. Again, the DNC exists to serve you, not the other way around. That is the attitude I will bring to the job and the culture I will inculcate among everyone at the DNC.

9) What other remarks would you like to make to Democrats Abroad?

President Obama has significantly improved America's image in the world from the depths of the Bush Administration's blunders. We are all apprehensive that President-elect Trump's recklessness and authoritarianism will erase all the progress we've made on the international stage. Fortunately, the Trump Administration is not the only face of America that the world will see. We also have you, Democrats Abroad. Our nation is counting on you to be America's better angels in the world, to remind friend and foe alike that while Donald Trump may be our president, he does not represent who we are as a nation and as a people. We know you are up to the challenge, and when I am the DNC Chair, we will "have your back