



MARYLAND **GREEN** PARTY

Co-Chair Report 2019-2020

Prepared by: Andy Ellis, Co-Chair of the Maryland Green Party
Input by: Conner Wolfe, Hunt Hobbs & Brian Bittner

Overview

In the year since the 2019 Maryland Green Party assembly, the Coordinating Committee has focused on work that prepares us for the 2020 election cycle and the growth and increased attention that comes with a presidential election. Primary areas of activity have included ballot access, fundraising, and internal processes and systems.

During the second half of 2019 we had a better-than-ever fundraising period, hired two part-time staff, held several successful events, and made substantial progress on our technology and organizing infrastructure.

Progress in these areas continued into the early part of 2020, but the COVID-19 crisis has put us in a precarious position. Our ballot access efforts were suspended as a result of the State of Emergency and are currently tied up in federal court. If we do get ballot access, our candidates face a significant challenge campaigning in the midst of a global pandemic. Our fundraising efforts have largely halted as many people have lost jobs, and others are afraid of what will happen next.

At the same time, for tens of thousands of Marylanders the failures of business-as-usual politics have become more clear than ever. The two corporate parties are both rushing to bail out corporations while workers, communities, and small businesses suffer. Lesser-evil national politics has disenfranchised and disillusioned more voters across a wider spectrum of the electorate. The COVID-19 emergency is not even over but the next crisis, the climate crisis, is just around the corner.

It is a time of challenging limits and great possibility.

Ballot Access Update

When we began our campaign to restore the Green Party's ballot access last year we needed 10,000 signatures by this coming August. Ballot access is a crucial goal because without it we would not be able to run any candidates under the Green banner anywhere in Maryland. Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers across the state we now have over 5,000 signatures in hand. Our volunteers went to festivals and fairs, door-to-door, rallies, forums, commuter hubs, and more in all sorts of weather and conditions to get us this far. As usual, the work of our volunteers is the backbone of our enduring ballot access and is the reason we exist as a party.

Like everything else in our lives, our ballot access campaign was hit hard by the COVID-19 State of Emergency. We were unable to continue seeking out crowds of people or even to simply approach strangers on the street. For a few months we struggled to make progress. Now, however, we have taken two major steps to get our ballot access back, even under these difficult constraints. The first is joining with the Libertarian Party of Maryland and other petitioning groups to sue Governor Hogan for enforcing the requirement that we collect 10,000 signatures when it is immoral and impossible to do so. We hope that the courts will follow the precedent set by Green Party legal victories in other states and reduce the signature requirement to a level that is reasonable in the circumstances.

Our second major step has already resulted in a victory: for the first time ever, the Maryland Board of Elections will allow petition signatures to be collected electronically. We commissioned a developer to build an app that will allow the public to sign our petition online with relative ease, and we are launching a phone-banking campaign to call thousands of Green Party supporters and allies to gather their electronic signatures and spread the petition even farther.

We will be holding online video training sessions beginning this Friday June 5th and Sunday June 7th at 6pm to teach volunteers how to phone-bank for us using our app. Please register for the training so we can give you access to our phone-banking platform by emailing greenpartyballot@gmail.com with the subject line "Phone bank training – (your name)".

Recommendations

1. The MGP-CC needs an all-out push to get as many electronic signatures as possible. The app we have developed will make the technical part of this much easier, but there will need to be a significant organizing effort to get Greens and allies collecting signatures.
2. Fundraising efforts should all be directed at ballot access until we are on the ballot. There will be costs associated with ballot access staff, legal fees, technology, and marketing. A budget should be prepared immediately and all hands need to be on deck for the final push.
3. A media and messaging campaign should be developed to use social media and earned media to get as much attention as possible on the online collection process

Financial State of the Party

Fundraising

In the past year, the party has worked to increase our fundraising capabilities and has appointed a volunteer fundraising coordinator to help us with this effort. This has included an improvement in our materials, a revised set of policies regarding fundraising, and a substantial push for more sustaining donors. We also hosted an in-person fundraising event and launched a concerted year-end fundraising campaign.

Amount Raised	\$9,516.30	+49.92%
Number of Donations	307	+38.28%
Number of Donors	68	+36%

Our year-end fundraising campaign had a target of \$2500 in one-time donations and 50 sustaining members. We launched this campaign on October 26th and it ran through December 31st. We raised \$3570 in one-time gifts, and ended the year with 25 sustainers.

Our in-person fundraising event held December 14th in Baltimore brought in \$2300 and was attended by over 40 people.

Recommendations

1. We need to have a broader appeal for donations from more members and supporters. A few people who have been donors for quite some time made up the vast majority of our donor base this year. A priority of the coordinating committee in the coming year needs to be to expand the one-time and recurring donor base. This is not just about making asks, but must also be about building relationships.
2. Events like our December 14th fundraiser are a practice worth continuing and expanding. New people came to the event, learned about the party, and donated. Prior to COVID-19 we had discussed having a mid-year fundraiser as well as an end-of-the-year fundraiser, and the CC needs to plan for this year-end fundraiser while identifying ways to make up for the lost revenue due to the COVID-19 crisis.
3. Donors should be on paths that escalate their contribution from the first donation to a second donation to become sustaining donors. A comprehensive donor stewardship plan should be developed to build relationships with donors and to ensure that we are growing the breadth and depth of our donor base.

Finance

The Party spent less in the last year than it took in. Our total expenditures were \$7531. The biggest categories of expenditures are:

\$4829-Staff

\$2000(Deposit)-Legal Fees

\$700-Database and technology fees.

In addition to the individual donations we received we also were awarded a \$1000 grant by the Green Party of the United States Ballot Access Committee and \$500 was donated toward our legal fees in our ballot access lawsuit by the Howie Hawkins presidential campaign committee.

We currently take in about \$200 per month in recurring donations.

Recommendations

1. The MGP-CC should create a budget document that aligns with party goals and raise enough money to cover it.

Technology Infrastructure

One of the key roles of the Maryland Green Party is to maintain the technology needed to perform our basic functions. In the past year we have done a lot of work on the existing technology we have and we have also added several new tools which make it easier to reach members and track our impact.

Key technology initiatives include:

Membership database maintenance

During the course of the last year volunteers and staff have spent countless hours cleaning up the Nationbuilder membership database. This database maintains lists of registered Greens, volunteers, donors, people who have signed up for our email list, and all other people who interact with the party. Most of the work done this year was to remove and resolve duplicates. As of this date we have:

22,908 people in the database
2645 emailable
2433 Callable
904 textable

Call Hub Phone Banking Tool

During the spring of 2020 the party invested in CallHub, a phone banking and text banking tool that allows volunteers to connect to our database and make phone calls from wherever they are, with results logged in a central location. This type of technology has been essential to many Green Party campaigns and has become a mainstay of Democrat and Republican campaigns. Our first campaign using this technology will be around our digital signature collection

Open Source Digital Signatures

On April 22nd, as a result of lobbying by the Maryland Green Party, the State Board of Elections authorized electronic signature collection for new party petitions, charter amendments, and unaffiliated candidates. The MGP contacted Patrick McGuire, a Green supporter and open source developer, to build the Maryland Electronic Petition Signatures platform. The web-based platform uses user-provided information, matched against the State of Elections database, in order to fill out a digital petition. This platform includes a backend administrative function which allows circulators to check for fraud, exclude duplicates, and batch print petitions. We have shared this platform with several other groups as well. This tool is the only chance we have to get more signatures during the pandemic and will be a key reason Greens are on the ballot in 2020.

Membership Listserv

In the summer of 2019 the MGP-CC launched a membership email listerv. Previously we only had an email listserv for the members of the CC, but not broader party membership. The membership listserv is hosted using GPUS tools for state parties. While the infrastructure is established for this listserv it has not been maintained and thus is not serving its intended purpose.

Recommendations

1. Continue to improve the membership database by integrating voter lists, updating contact information, and putting people on paths to further engagement.
2. Add additional membership engagement capabilities including Do-Gooder petition software, so that we have as many ways possible to communicate with and engage our members.
3. Appoint admins and moderators for the membership communication channels: Facebook groups, CC listservs, and Member listserv so that members can stay informed and discuss Green Party issues.

Internal process decisions

One of the major areas of focus during the last year was internal decision-making processes. Much of this centered around our presidential primary, but most of that work did not create future-focused work, and will likely need to be revisited in future election cycles. The items detailed below will last beyond this year and help to make our internal processes more democratic and more deliberate:

Coordinating Member Conflict of Interest Policy

The MGP-CC passed a conflict of interest policy that asks CC members to declare any official role they have with campaigns seeking the nomination of the MGP. The policy requests that those with declared conflicts recuse themselves from decisions that relate to those candidates.

<https://www.loomio.org/d/X3uDvfh9/proposal-conflict-of-interest-policy>

Coalition and Endorsement Policy

The MGP-CC established a policy that lays out guidelines for how we endorse policy or join coalitions. The policy calls for communication about the coalition or endorsement, requires evaluation of the effectiveness of the coalition, and creates provisions for the MGP to change an endorsement or leave a coalition.

<https://www.loomio.org/d/j7YKDctf/proposal-for-approving-coalitions-and-endorsements>

Decision Making Process

The MGP-CC agreed to a formal decision-making process that specifies how proposals are brought by members of the CC, what time period is required for deliberation, and how decision making occurs and is recorded.

<https://www.loomio.org/d/IYAoG59f/decision-making-proposal>

Endorsements outside of the nominating process

The MGP-CC made a policy that said that in the absence of a Green Party ballot line, the Maryland Green Party may endorse the candidacies of unaffiliated candidates or the candidates of non-corporate parties.

Recommendations

1. The decision making process that was agreed upon in the Spring of 2020 should be more fully developed to include templates for proposals, processes for decision-making, and training for loomio.

2. Create a guidebook that publishes internal policies so that they are available to all members of the CC and to the public, so that each decision we make has a solid basis of agreed upon rules around it.
3. Create an officer position that is responsible for developing, documenting, and regulating internal decision making processes, so the CC does not have to spend so much time as a committee formulating these guidelines.

Organizing Efforts

The Maryland Green Party organized around several key policy and social justice issues during the last year. These efforts helped to show how our values are expressed and helped us to reach out to new people who may not be familiar with the Green Party in Maryland. These efforts included

Green New Deal Events and Goals

In October 2019, the Maryland Green Party in cooperation with the Baltimore City Green Party hosted a public meeting about the Maryland Green New Deal. Based on feedback from activist groups, local green leaders, and MGP members we published a set of goals for transformative climate action in Maryland by 2030.

<http://www.mdgreens.org/gnd>

Joined the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition

In the Fall of 2019 the Maryland Green Party joined the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC). BTEC understands that public transit is a civil rights and environmental, economic, and racial justice issue. The BTEC is currently seeking a Ballot Initiative for a Baltimore City charter amendment that would create a regional transit authority that is democratically elected and representative of the interests of transit riders.

Filed Ethics Complaint against Governor Hogan

In February of 2020 the Maryland Green Party filed an ethics complaint against Governor Larry Hogan based on the personal profit his business interests have garnered as a result of decisions made by the State of Maryland. The case is still pending and we will update you on the process.

http://www.mdgreens.org/ethics_complaint_hogan

Recommendations

1. Organize more online and in-person events to bring more attention to the values and solutions of the Green Party and get more people involved in the Maryland Green Party.
2. The Presidential election and its aftermath will be the highest-profile opportunity to attract new people to the Green Party and there should be a plan to engage and activate those people who will be drawn in by this election.
3. Continue to develop policy solutions and goals with coalition partners and allies so that the broader public is aware of Green Solutions.

Conclusion

The last year has been a difficult one: our ballot access drive and internal processes have taken up much of our time and energy. COVID-19 changed all of our plans and forced us to quickly change how we operate. The attention on Trump and the Democratic Party primary has sucked up most of the political oxygen. Anger and revolution is spreading across the country.

The 2020s have the power to be a transformative decade. As we have seen in the first half of this year, the solutions the two-party system offer are insufficient to deal with the problems we face, and people are raising their voices to demand better. There is an opportunity for the Maryland Green Party to play a major role in bringing Maryland toward racial, economic, and environmental justice, but we will need to continue building on the work we have done for the last 20 years.

The upcoming election provides a great opening for Greens to define themselves and build across the state, but the COVID-19 crisis has left us in a precarious position. Ballot access is tied up in the courts and campaigning will be very difficult if social distancing guidelines are still in place. The MGP-CC will need to work hard to overcome these challenges and prepare for all possible outcomes.

The new officers and members of the MGP-CC are well suited to lead us through this difficult time. They have the experience, commitment and perspective to help us grow and thrive in this critical time.

Appreciations

Officers

Many thanks go to all of the officers of the Maryland Green Party.

Bill Barry and Virginia Smith will both be leaving their roles as officers at the end of this week and they have both been indispensable in keeping the party moving forward this year.

- Virginia has provided detailed and very useful notes so that we can keep focused on the tasks at hand and so that the work of meetings does not evaporate when the meeting ends.
- Bill has been consistent in the three years he has served as membership director in reminding us our job is to organize our members and has provided a lot of great ideas about how to do so.

Steve Wollett and Brian Bittner are continuing in their roles and I greatly appreciate their work.

- Steve has done the hard work of trying to build up the western Maryland membership base from the ground up and has travelled all over the region as an evangelist for the Green Party.
- Brian has been a great treasurer; his reports are accurate and detailed and he has helped make sure we are in good financial health. He has also taken on a lot of the work to improve our internal process and that is a much-needed improvement.

Finally thank you to Tim, Margaret, Kevin, Nancy, and Hunt for their service on the National Committee.

Staff

Robert Edward Smith - Communications - Robert has maintained our website, social media, and email campaigns as well as working on much of the messaging and branding. He has redesigned the email templates so each has a call to action, he has written most of the content we sent out, and he has tracked analytics including both the numbers of people we have following us, and the effectiveness of our messaging. This helps us to make sure we are not just yelling into the void, but are actually connecting with people.

Hunt Hobbs - Ballot Access - Hunt has produced and executed a ballot access plan, recruited and maintained volunteers in the database, lead trainings, coordinated canvasses, and set up means of tracking and coordinating the efforts so far. Crucially, he has also coordinated with the State Board in order to make sure they know what we are doing. In the face of the COVID-19 State of Emergency he has set up a phone banking system for the party, rewritten the plan, and is ready to lead a series of electronic signature canvasses once we have the new tool ready. This makes sure we have a plan, the people, and the tools to ensure we have ballot access.

Conner Wolfe - Fundraising - Conner Wolfe, as a volunteer, has spent probably over 100 hours cleaning up and maintaining our membership database, designing fundraising content, looking through membership and donor lists, designing policy, and sifting through previous donations to help us have one of our most successful fundraising years in our history. We have more sustaining donations, more big donations, and enough money to pay staff because of his efforts to help us get more engagement and more donations.

Thanks also to all the cc members, local leaders, staff and volunteers. It was an honor to get to work with you as co-chair!