

Frederick Progressives

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March 11, 2018

2018 Questionnaire for Democratic Central Committee

Dear Deborah Reynolds, Candidate for Democratic Central Committee:

Frederick Progressives, as a chapter of Progressive Maryland, is a grassroots community organization that acts for social and economic justice by developing civic leaders and cultivating allies in order to advance economic, racial, and environmental equity, and to change our economic system for the benefit of all people in Maryland.

Learn more at www.ProgressiveMaryland.org

Progressive Maryland supports candidates who will work to build a society and economy that works for all Marylanders, with special emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups—low and moderate income residents, people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and all oppressed and exploited people. Elections can have an enormous impact on our work to reduce inequity and to improve the lives of residents all over the state. It is our responsibility not only to advocate for residents but also to empower them to engage in the political process at every level, from member-led canvasses to trainings for our members who wish to run for office.

To be considered for Frederick Progressives & Progressive Maryland's endorsement, please return the completed questionnaire by email to FrederickProgressives@riseup.net no later than 5 P.M. on Friday, March 23, 2018. Your responses will be available to the public at www.FrederickProgressives.com

Sincerely,

Josh Cassell
Secretary - Frederick Progressives
(301) 928-0697

1. What professional experience, personal experience, education and or training do you possess that makes you a qualified candidate for a member of the Central Committee?

- . For the past 19 years, I have sold direct mail and print services to many small businesses in the Frederick County area—some of which are immigrant owned businesses. My relationships with these business owners has given me a unique perspective on how immigrants and minorities are treated in this area, and makes me want to work to elect Democrats both locally, and on the State and federal levels, who will work to advocate for equal treatment for immigrants and ensure that our immigrant neighbors feel safe and valued in our communities.
- I have served, for the past several years, as a member of the Golden Mile Alliance, and currently serve as the President of the Board of Directors. The GMA promotes and fosters a vibrant West End of Frederick City, through residential, business & economic development activities and engagement. I became involved with the GMA because I felt that parts of Frederick City--our west end in particular—were being left out of the City's economic boom, due to a lack of attention promoting economic development, and a lack of understanding for the diverse residential makeup of this area. To that end, I was part of the DCC that helped to elect an all Democratic Board of Alderpersons and Mayor in November of 2017—all of whom are very concerned with boosting economic and employment opportunity and enhancing the quality of life for residents of the West End, and many other parts of the City.
- In my volunteer work as a Deacon at Frederick Presbyterian Church, I have seen first hand the need for strengthening the Social Safety Net in the greater Frederick County area. I work several times a year volunteering at the Emergency Family Shelter, which is run out of churches throughout Frederick. We also provide meals for the Changing Lives Program at the Rescue Mission and work at the Linton Shelter. These volunteer opportunities spur me on to work with other DCC members to elect Democrats who will recognize that the Frederick County area urgently needs more funding for helping homeless and lower income families find affordable housing, job and educational opportunities within our communities.
- I was appointed by the Frederick Mayor's Office in March of 2017 to be a member of the West Side Regional Park (formerly Hargett Farm) steering committee, to develop the park site and work on funding the park through public/private partnerships. I feel that the work of bringing much needed recreational opportunities to Frederick City's West End has helped me in my work with the DCC, because we meet with local elected officials to further the Park property.
- Finally, I feel very compelled to work to elect Democrats who will work on finding solutions to the addiction crisis that is affecting our whole society. I have first hand experience in seeking treatment for one of my children. We have to continue to make sure that every family has affordable options for successful treatment for both addiction and mental health issues, and this is something I feel comfortable discussing with the candidates we work to elect.

2. What, in your opinion, differentiates traditional/establishment/centrist parties and progressives? Do you consider yourself to be a progressive, and why?

In my opinion, right now, traditional/centrist Dems and Progressives need to be finding common ground as much as possible to elect Democrats who will work towards the goals of equality, economic and social justice, and strengthening the social safety net. My personal beliefs fall into two categories: one, as a pragmatist who believes in Democratic principles: we need to work hard to elect Democrats up and down the ticket whose views reflect their constituencies because a Democrat in elected office will advocate for our policies way more than a Republican ever will. I am also a strong supporter of health insurance for all Americans, raising the minimum wage, LGBTQ rights, free/greatly reduced community college tuition sanctuary cities, DACA, a path to citizenship, and many other viewpoints that Progressives also support. As a member of the Democratic Central Committee, I am tasked with the job of electing Democrats up and down the ticket, and, while those candidates may vary on their viewpoints, it is my responsibility to work to elect them.

3. What can the Central Committee do to bridge the gap between the different groups of voters, such as Progressives, Libertarians, and Democratic Socialists and how, as a Committee member would you facilitate that bridge building?

I think the Frederick County Democratic Central Committee does engage in outreach. Our Members attend and participate in many different groups throughout the County. In my opinion, we can listen to different groups of voters, and, of course, our monthly meetings are open to the public. From a personal standpoint, I can commit to attending forums/discussion groups/group meetings that will broaden my view and increase my understanding of the many subgroups that make up our Frederick County voter base. Frederick County is a great place to live, but we can improve on several fronts, including, more affordable housing for those on limited incomes, and our young people, better wages, and being more open and welcoming to immigrant populations. I think that listening and participating more in Progressive groups could help us be more inclusive and give our candidates for office a better understanding of the needs of all voters.

4. How would you promote diversity within the Party?

Again, a Central Committee member's primary job is to get the Democrats elected who have filed to run. As a member of the DCC Volunteer and Outreach committee, however, we do work to recruit volunteers that represent a demographically diverse group of voters. For example, we participate in National Night Out throughout Frederick, which attracts the African American and Latino community. Several times a year, we set up a booth at Frederick's First Saturday, to promote awareness of our Democrat Candidates, and our upcoming events/volunteer opportunities, to families and young people. We also have booths at special events like, The Frederick Fair, summer carnivals, etc., to promote the Democratic Party to voters throughout Frederick County. We also participate in voter registration, both as a DCC, and when asked to register voters at various public events. We also engage in outreach to the LGBTQ community by setting up a booth at Frederick Pride. On my own, I attempt to sign up to volunteer at as many of these events as possible, in order to talk with our growing, diverse community of Democratic voters and to recruit volunteers to canvass for our candidates, throughout the City and County.

5. Would you support expanding the Primary to include independent voters and how would you advocate for that change in Maryland?

I would not support expanding the Primary.

6. As a Central Committee member how do you plan to organize issue campaigns to engage voters on important progressive issues? What are some of those issues for you?

This question does not exactly apply to our responsibilities on the Central Committee. Again, our primary job is to work to support and promote the candidacies of Democratic candidates who have filed to run and to elect Democrats up and down the ballot. While we certainly participate in promoting their candidacies through public events to promote awareness and engage voters, i.e., organizing and volunteering in candidate forums, setting up displays at public events (Frederick Pride, The Frederick Fair, First Saturday, etc), we do not organize issue campaigns. However, it has been a long-standing responsibility of Frederick County DCC members to engage in letter-writing campaigns. We take turns writing letters to the editor on topics that are Democratic-centered, but are of personal interest to ourselves—for example, letters advocating gun control, funding education, LGTBQ rights, etc.

7. How will you reach out to diverse communities and increase their participation in the Party? What means will you employ to improve voter turn out?

I think that question 4 addressed how the DCC does do outreach to diverse communities. We engage in voter registration throughout the year. We support candidates throughout the County by recruiting volunteers to canvass all over Frederick County. We work to support groups that bring young people into the Party, like the Young Democrats of Frederick County, and the Hood College Democrats—we attend their meetings, promote their events. (For example, the Hood College Dems have participated in several debates this year, which DCC members have attended.) Several DCC members actively participate in local Democratic “meet-ups”, like and North and South-County Dems, and in clubs like UDFC and Women’s Democratic League. We will also be running a program to offer rides to polling stations. I hope that all these activities, along with our participation in public events throughout the County, will increase voter turn out in November.

8. What do you see as your most critical function as a Central Committee Member?

My most important role is to be dedicated to working for the election of Democrats to public office up and down the ballot.

9. If Frederick Progressives /Progressive Maryland does not endorse you for this race, would that affect your willingness to work with the group in the future on important issues?

No. My personal goal is to work to elect Democrats, because I believe that social, racial and economic justice, and strengthening the social safety net, are basic values of the Democratic Party, and these are values I work to support.

13. Would you be willing to support Frederick Progressives priorities by:

● cosponsoring legislation?	This is not a role of a DCC member
● testify in support of legislation?	As a private citizen, this is something I would do.
● write an op ed?	Writing letters to the Editor is something encouraged on both the DCC, and something I would do on my own.
● speaking at progressive events?	Yes
● attending meetings?	Yes
● meet with our leadership group?	Yes
● give updates on shared goals?	Yes
● writing letters to endorse a labor organizing drive?	Yes

Other: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my viewpoints with you. I have had the good fortune of living, working, and raising my family in Frederick County since 1985, and I have always felt a strong need to give back to the community that has given me so much. . Of all the special events, non profits, kids' programs and activities I have participated in, my work on the Democratic Central Committee is easily the most important and valuable work I have done. I am so lucky to live here, and I want to work to ensure that affordable housing, social, racial and economic justice, a strong social safety net, and a good education system, are available to all of our residents. Democrats work for those values, and I hope to continue to work to elect Democrats up and down the ballot, and continue to turn Frederick County blue.