

Frederick Progressives

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March 11, 2018

2018 Questionnaire for Democratic Central Committee

Dear Michael Sowell, 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?

From a professional standpoint, I have worked 35 years in community development and public policy positions at the local, regional, state and federal levels of government. I started my career in community development as a Frederick County Extension Agent for the University of Maryland in 1981. My responsibilities included working with all the elected officials in the county, non-profit organizations and community based organizations. I was responsible for working on issues such as growth management, energy and water management, strategic planning and so forth. I ended my career in government four years ago working with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). At HUD, I worked in the State and Small Cities Office, which was responsible for the management of the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). In addition, I was responsible for the oversight of the Appalachian Regional Commission program (ARC), which included approval of the funding for projects received by the ARC designated states.

I was appointed and then elected to the Frederick County Democratic Central Committee in 2014. I was nominated as the Vice Chair for the Central Committee the same year I was elected. In the four years I have been on the Central Committee we have witnessed the election of Jan Gardner as County Executive, as well as three democratic council members. The election of Michael O'Connor as Mayor of Frederick City, and six democrats as Alderman for the first time in the history of Frederick City.

In addition, I also serve on the fundraising sub-committee for the Central Committee. The fundraising sub-committee has been responsible for putting together a short and long-term strategy for raising money for the Democratic Party in Frederick County. In the four years on the sub-committee, the Democratic Party has raised more funds to assist in the election of democratic candidates in the history of the Central Committee.

I hold a B.A. degree in African Studies and Urban Studies, and a M.A. in Public Administration from the University of Maryland, College Park.

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

I consider myself to be a Democrat. I have been a lifelong member and have voted for the parties' nominee at the local, state and federal levels.

As a member of the Frederick County Central Committee, our job is to elect democrats. That is my focus and my objective, which is why I am running for re-election to the Central Committee.

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?

Being a member of the Central Committee we have worked hard to identify democratic candidates that are willing to run for office. I have worked and will continue to work with those that identify with the Democratic Party to elect democrats to office. Those that want to identify themselves as Progressives, Libertarians and so forth, I would hope would want to see Democrats and not Republicans elected to office. That is the fight and I cannot imagine anything else that should bring the “Democratic Party” together!

4. How would you promote diversity within the Party?

The Central Committee works as a team, and as a team we are always working with various entities through out the county to pursue candidates interested in running for office. As a member of the Central Committee I have depended on my involvement in the community to connect with individuals that have expressed a desire to run for office. In the four years I have been on the Central Committee I believe the diversity of candidates has increased substantially if you look at those that have filed in the city elections, and in 2018.

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

In my opinion, this is a question for Maryland voters and not for a candidate for the Central Committee.

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?

The Central Committee function is not based upon issues. The main objective of the Central Committee is voter registration, pursuing and encouraging candidates to run for office, getting Democrats elected to office and raising funds for the Frederick County Democratic Party.

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?

Currently the Central Committee has an Out Reach Sub-Committee that has participated and organized voter registration drives throughout the county. The Sub-Committee is responsible for establishing a calendar of events every year for all members of the Central Committee to attend. The Central Committee has participated and will continue to participate in the Asian American Festival, the Latino Festival, Pride Festival and so forth. The Central Committee has held voter registration drives at a number of churches, carnivals, fairs and so forth. Last year in particular, we held “get-out-the-vote” drives in targeted neighborhoods, and also conducted phone banking.

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

See previous answer for question number 6!

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

I am currently on the Frederick County Democratic Central Committee. As a member of the Central Committee, and as Vice Chair my focus is not on specific issues. I am interested in getting Democrats elected to office.

Candidates run on issues and voters elect candidates that run on particular issues.

If someone is planning on running for the Central Committee based on an issue, I believe that would be a concern.

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

● cosponsoring legislation?	Not a responsibility of the Central Committee
● testify in support of legislation?	Not a responsibility of the Central Committee
● write an op ed?	Central Committee members already perform this function
● speaking at progressive events?	Central Committee members are invited to speak at events to discuss the work of the Central Committee
● attending meetings?	Central Committee members already perform this function
● meet with our leadership group?	Central Committee members are invited to speak at events to discuss the work of the Central Committee
● give updates on shared goals?	Central Committee members are invited to speak at events to discuss the work of the Central Committee
● writing letters to endorse a labor organizing drive?	Not a responsibility of the Central Committee

Other: