

Frederick Progressives

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March 11, 2018

2018 Questionnaire for Democratic Central Committee

Dear Deborah Carter, 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?

I am a registered Democrat since 1980 and have served as the Frederick County Democrats' secretary for the past eight years. In that capacity, I attend the monthly local meetings and the regular meetings of the full state Central Committee, as well as the meetings for all the subcommittees of which I have been a member. I have represented the Central Committee at hundreds of local Democratic and left-leaning club meetings, including Together We Will, the Women's Democratic League, the United Democrats of Frederick County, the North County Dems, and the South County Dems, as well as neutral organizations such as the Board of Elections. I understand what the job entails, know people at all levels of government throughout the state, and will be able to hit the ground running on June 27.

I have made many, many lobbying trips to both Annapolis and D.C. over the past thirty years – primarily with educational organizations, but also with recently-formed local progressive groups. In addition, when asked by Progressive Maryland to contact legislators, I have regularly done so.

I have a decades-long history of supporting Democratic causes through letters to the editor (and, from 2002 through 2008, in a regular column in the FNP), as well as phone banking, canvassing, staffing the Dem tent at events/carnivals/etc. I have spent incalculable hours registering voters and have donated as much money as I could to Dem candidates.

I support unions wholeheartedly and am a lifetime member of the Maryland State Education Association. (Literally a lifetime member, past and future; I paid the lifetime dues although I retired from teaching.)

I support LBGTQ+ causes wholeheartedly and will soon be joining the board of The Frederick Center. I have been on their marketing team and one of their FB page admins since December, and I became the editor of their newsletter in January.

Finally, please consider this: Unlike some past and current candidates, I do not believe that this position is a stepping-stone to what many deem "higher" office. I have proven that I am committed to *this* job and will not take it lightly or abandon it in mid-term.

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

I'm not thrilled with labels, but I suppose I do consider myself a progressive (to the left of your average Kennedy, for sure – and, for that matter, to the left of Bernie Sanders on the two issues that matter most to me: education and guns). As for the other “branches” of the Democratic Party, we all have more similarities than differences, more shared ideals than disagreements. Isn't it divisive to talk about differentiating rather than finding commonalities? One reason our current Central Committee is so productive is that we *appreciate* the diversity of ideas that each of us brings to the table. (P.S. As you can see in the picture below, my progressive bona fides go way back!)



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?

The Democratic Party is a huge tent. I fear there are some people who don't want it to be so; instead, they would prefer that everyone toe their tiny, specific line, or else they indulge in name-calling like “neoliberal” and other forms of bullying. There's little that can be done to build bridges with that particular group of voters, sadly, but they are just a small percentage of the whole. Fortunately, most other groups are reasonable, welcoming, and inclusive, as I have found when I visit organizations and attend events around the state. Just as the Republicans made room for the “Tea Party,” Evangelicals, Libertarians, and so on, Democrats welcome anyone who shares our ideals of educational, economic, racial, and environmental equity.

4. How would you promote diversity within the Party?

Diversity can be the strongest path to unity; we have known this since *e pluribus unum* first showed up on the Great Seal. Frederick County Democrats have made a concerted and often successful effort to promote diversity here. Our current Central Committee has African-Americans, Caucasians, a Puerto Rican, and an Iranian-American; devout Christians as well as atheists; members of varying sexual orientations; Baby Boomers and Millennials – just to give you a small idea of our range.

We have ongoing relationships with Elizabeth Chung at the Asian American Center and with Centro Hispano. We pitch our tent to disseminate information, register voters and recruit volunteers at such diverse annual events as the Asbury Community Block Party, the Latino Festival of Frederick, and the Asian Heritage Month Festival; and of course we are a sponsor of Frederick Pride.

Last summer, as part of a state-wide party initiative, we went on a door-to-door listening tour to find out what was important to every demographic. For the Frederick City election a few months later, we took information about the candidates into neighborhoods that differed both economically and ethnically, reaching out to as many marginalized residents as possible.

We regularly recruit and support local candidates who represent our diversity, too – which means that although Frederick County is 82% white (and Trump is in the White House), our children see two African-Americans and two women among the five city aldermen. They see Joy Schaefer on the Board of Education and several African-American candidates vying to sit there with her. They see Ysela Bravo running a campaign in legislative district 4, and so on. And while too many of our candidates in prior elections have lost their races to old white men, this may be the year it all changes; even those who do not succeed in 2018 will at least have been visible, which can only encourage increased diversity in the future.

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

I'm assuming by "independent" you mean anyone who isn't registered as a D or R. No, I would not support open primaries even if this were something over which a local Central Committee had any direct control. The purpose of a primary is for each party to select its nominees. If a person wants to have a say in the selection, that person has the option to join a party. If a group isn't happy with the two main parties and wants to create a Thigglebriggles Party and run a different candidate, I am ALL FOR IT. It would be a great thing to have many small parties (as they have in a number of European countries), each with its own primary. I would say to them: Gather your friends and allies, grow your party, and join in the political process on your own terms!

Some have argued that unaffiliated and third-party voters pay taxes, too, and those taxes are spent on primaries; they claim that this is unfair. Using the same logic, people could argue (and Republicans do) that it's unfair for their taxes to be spent on schools if they have no children, unfair for their taxes to be spent on libraries if they don't read or roads if they don't drive or hospitals if they don't get sick. And so on. But that's not how it works in a civilized community. We spend tax money on programs and institutions that benefit society as a whole, whether or not we as individuals use every single one of those programs and institutions. Primaries are no different, and it's selfish to demand otherwise.

On a personal note, I had at least twenty conversations one-on-one last year with unaffiliated voters who were angry that they could not vote in the Frederick City primary. I asked them whether they had ever voted in a county Board of Education primary, which is and has always been nonpartisan and open to all. Without a single exception, these angry voters reluctantly admitted that they had not done so. It seems to me that they negated their own argument; it's as if I – who never owned a gun or hunted – were suddenly to start complaining that I'm not allowed to shoot bunnies in my front yard. Such a complaint would have zero credibility.

[Perhaps it's unintentional, but the second half of this question implies a bias, revealing how I'm "supposed" to answer the first half. I'd love to have your endorsement – but if I read this question correctly, I probably just lost it.]

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?

That's not exactly the role of the Central Committee. You can read the Maryland Democratic Party bylaws, which govern us, here: <https://www.mddems.org/party-laws>. (While much of it is useful information, Article X in particular spells out the duties of the local Central Committee.)

That having been said, we see local messaging as part of our job. We have a subcommittee in place for that, which produces podcasts with candidates and elected officials, pushes information out on social as well as traditional media and via email, and creates print pieces to distribute. For example, brainstorming sessions with the leadership of five local Democratic clubs yielded this info card (front and back) that we handed out at events throughout the summer and fall of 2017 and had available in our tent at the Great Frederick Fair and other venues.



Frederick County Democratic Party Central Committee Members

BACK ROW:

Tony Soltero, Robert Kresslein, Josh Cramer,
Michael Sowell, Thomas Gill, Mark Jafari

FRONT ROW:

Myrna Whitworth, Lauren Beacham, Mari Lee,
Melissa Joseph Muntz, Deborah Carter, Deb Reynolds

WEBSITE: www.frederickdemocrats.org

EMAIL: info@frederickdemocrats.org

FACEBOOK: www.Facebook.com/FrederickDemocrats

TWITTER: @FrederickDems

INSTAGRAM: @frederick_democrats

FREDERICK DEMOCRATS PODCAST: on iTunes and Soundcloud

BY AUTH. FREDERICK COUNTY DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE / TONY SOLTERO, TREASURER

DEMOCRATS WORK FOR YOUR FUTURE!

EDUCATION

Democrats will make good public schools and libraries available to every resident, regardless of income, and make debt-free college and technical schools a reality for all.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Democrats will enact policies that create good-paying jobs and protect the rights of working people.

FARMERS

Democrats will fund programs to develop the next generation of farmers, with particular attention given to promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

ENVIRONMENT

Democrats will fight to preserve open spaces and public lands and waters.

OLDER ADULTS

Democrats will ensure that all people are able to retire with dignity and a high quality of life.

HEALTHCARE

Democrats will protect Medicare and Medicaid and advocate for quality healthcare for all.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Democrats will uphold the Constitution and challenge structures that have created lasting economic, political, and social inequities.

#FredDems

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

I believe I answered the first question at length in #4 above.

Voter turnout is another issue. To be frank, there's only so much that twelve individuals can do (much as we have tried) to reach and to persuade more than 160,000 registered voters. Despite family obligations and full-time jobs, almost every member of the current Central Committee has devoted hundreds of hours each election cycle to GOTV calls and canvasses. We have paid for GOTV mailers, including one in the 2016 primary that was sent specifically to unaffiliated households, reminding them that they could vote in the Board of Education primary. We have offered rides to the polls. And yet, it isn't enough.

One possible solution is to recruit more volunteers to help us with these efforts. I challenge everyone who agrees that we can and should improve voter turnout to join us when we start phone banking. It's easy to sign up at frederickdemocrats.org, and someone will be calling you when the time comes. Show up, and bring a friend. Another promising idea, which the Central Committee has discussed in the past, is to send absentee ballot applications to people who might not find it as easy to get to the polls. This has worked well in some other places, especially when the applications are pre-stamped and just need to be filled out and returned; however, it can be extremely expensive, and the money has to come from somewhere. Our candidates would obviously prefer that we spend our resources directly on their races.

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

GET. DEMOCRATS. ELECTED. In all honesty, anyone who answers otherwise probably hasn't read our bylaws.

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?

Of course not. To refuse to work with you would be like refusing to campaign vigorously for the gubernatorial nominee against Hogan just because my favorite candidate didn't win the primary. We all know how disastrous that would be.

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

• cosponsoring legislation?	N/A
• testify in support of legislation?	Have done, and will continue to do so.
• write an op ed?	Have done, and will continue to do so.
• speaking at progressive events?	Yes
• attending meetings?	Have done, and will continue to do so.
• meet with our leadership group?	Yes
• give updates on shared goals?	Yes
• writing letters to endorse a labor organizing drive?	Have done, and will continue to do so.

Other:

Since my participation in most of the above actions took place well before your group existed, my actions may or may not have aligned perfectly with your views; however, I believe my goals are more closely aligned with yours than not. I am, after all, the only candidate for Central Committee who went with Progressive Maryland to the office of Congressman Andy Harris on September 26, and I am also the only candidate publicly endorsed by Susie Turnbull at the time of this writing.



This is, by definition, a *partisan* position. In fact, the Maryland Democratic Party can remove from the Central Committee an individual who publicly supports a non-Democrat in any race where a Dem is running; this would include donating money to or putting up a yard sign for the opponent. Anyone who is not 100% committed to the *party* cannot do this job. We are not paid – in fact, our duties often cost us money – and therefore the ideal candidates are fully committed to Democratic principles.

