

Resolution to Reimagine the Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA)

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Whereas:

- The 2022 midterm elections present both incredible challenges and opportunities for the Democratic Party of Virginia (“DPVA”). The party of the sitting President generally faces a difficult electoral environment in this kind of election¹. But these challenges also present an opportunity for the DPVA to consider structural changes that will make it a more vibrant campaign organization focused on electing Democrats.
- We are grateful for the dedicated service by volunteers and staff with the DPVA as well as the extraordinary efforts by grassroots organizations around the state² which contributed to the Democrats, in 2019, regaining control of the Virginia Assembly for the first time in two decades. But the loss of the last state-wide election highlights the need for our state party to consider reforms that can improve how it operates.
- Elections are won and lost at the local level, where volunteers are spending countless hours organizing and mobilizing voters to turn out and vote for Democratic candidates. Structural changes to the DPVA could help modernize the organization, making it more responsive to rank-and-file Democrats, through engaging with local candidates and drawing on grassroots expertise in developing winning messaging.
- The Democratic National Committee has recognized the importance of directly supporting state parties with increased funding³. It would benefit the DPVA to examine whether there are ways for them to better engage with local committees, candidates, as well as state-level⁴ and local grassroots organizations through: providing support and learning lessons

¹ <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-the-presidents-party-almost-always-has-a-bad-midterm/>

² <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2018/2/16/1742026/-Lessons-from-Virginia-s-Grassroots-how-to-mobilize-fight-win>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/03/11/dnc-reform/>

⁴ The Virginia Grassroots Coalition: <https://viriniagrassroots.org/>

on effective messaging, training, and outreach while developing a more balanced relationship with the coordinated campaign.

- As Democrats, we want a party which is strong, transparent, inclusive, and effective. Achieving this requires that we ensure communication with local parties, members, and communities, provide financial support to down-ballot candidates, promote a compelling message through the development of a party platform, ensure strong outreach to rural counties, and provide quality training to volunteers. The recent elections for congressional district conventions highlighted some ways in which communication between the state party and local parties and activists could be improved. Examples included the need for better organization of the entire process, improved communication, including technology; enhanced transparency about the candidates running, as well as the role and structure of the state party.
- A vibrant bottoms-up organization characterized by an engaged and trained citizenry needs to ensure that clearly-defined outreach messages are validated by local groups before being communicated by party members to voters.

Therefore, be it resolved that, with the objective of ensuring that the DPVA becomes a more vibrant, inclusive organization, the ADC use this resolution to promote a dialogue among its members/other local committees on ways to improve DPVA structure and operations, focused on ensuring open communication, and building links to rank-and-file Democrats while erecting safeguards to ensure procedural fairness. The ADC should then advocate these improvements to the DPVA itself, and collaborate with other local committees to do so. The following recommendations are proposed to be shared with the Congressional District 8 (CD8) Committee and the State Central Committee and the Steering Committee:

Recommendations for ADC: Help to improve communication between the DPVA, ADC and other local committees by:

- Inviting Chairperson Susan Swecker and the CD8 chair to the ADC to address questions on how to make the DPVA more responsive to local parties.

- Requesting Alexandria Delegates to the CD8 to present on a quarterly basis to interested ADC members on their engagement and involvement in the CD8 Committee.
- Asking selected heads of the various state caucuses to participate in ADC meetings and provide suggestions on how to build caucus linkages/messaging throughout the state.
- Exploring innovative models for engaging with and supporting down-state local committees, such as “adopting a district”, “sister” committees, etc.

Recommendations for the State Central Committee.

- Initiate an open dialogue with local committees and grassroots activists around the state about: developing a long term strategy for the state party; creating a messaging strategy focused winning elections, develop a state party platform which clearly identifies priorities, drawing on the resolution process, as the basis for a winning partnership with the coordinated campaign; increasing the diversity of membership in state and local parties, while expanding outreach to underrepresented communities.
- Update the website more frequently and share any established “talking points” publicly. Make available on the website a detailed overview of the roles and responsibilities for the various state steering committee chairs as outlined in the Party Plan (updated in 2018),⁵ as well as job descriptions for DPVA staff positions.
- Share a comprehensive and transparent budget with all local committees and encourage them to share that information with their membership.
- Allocate funds to promote grassroots engagement, including training. This could also include investments in SPAN⁶ (State Party Advancement Network) and the development of a dynamic communication and messaging strategy that involves buy-in from local committees. Publicize and open up the virtual training sessions which are currently being offered to the local committee officers.
- Undertake on the State and CD level, a review of the challenges, both financial and operational, facing all local committees. Develop a plan,

⁵ <http://vademocrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/DPVA-Party-Plan-September-2018.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.spanetwork.net/>

shared and validated by local committees, to strengthen and support these committees.

- Review whether term limits for committee chairs at either the state or congressional district level would help expand the pool of participation in the organization; develop a mentorship process for recruiting new people to serve in leadership positions.