

THE BRAY *the voice of the* **GCDP** GREENVILLE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The latest news and updates from the Greenville County Democratic Party



MEMBERS OF THE 116TH CONGRESS TOOK THEIR SEATS WITH A NEW ATTITUDE.

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Chair's Message

BY KATE FRANCH



Happy New Year! 2019 is off and running. Somehow, but thankfully, we are at the midpoint of the current administration in Washington. What a difference an election can make though! While our frustration, anger, and alarm have not dissipated (in fact they are probably stronger than ever), hope is on the horizon. With the swearing in of the 116th Congress on January 3, we again have a US House of Representatives with a Democratic majority that will not only be the voice of the people but also a roadblock to the never-ending presidential chaos that threatens and undermines the values that have made America great.

Chair's Message (continued)

We expect this to be the “anti-corruption Congress.” House leaders have declared that some of their first legislative efforts will focus on changes to campaign finance, ethics, and voting rules. If enacted, those efforts should help to make the playing field more level again and begin to restore faith in our democracy and the very institutions that were created to implement and protect it. Ethics legislation, in particular, would be an important step in making the electoral process more accessible, more accountable, and more representative of the people.

Closer to home, the first regular session of the 123rd South Carolina General Assembly has begun in Columbia and the new Greenville County Council has been sworn in. President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.” Toward that end, the GCDP communications and volunteer coordination teams are continually expanding and improving how we keep you connected with and informed about the work of our elected officials.

The GCDP is also continuing the focus on building and empowering our precincts in order to have true grassroots reach and connection. The goal is to continue to increase voter turnout by more effectively mobilizing and engaging voters. We know that a majority of Americans are aligned with Democratic platform ideals - we just have to help translate that alignment into policy through the ballot box. You can support this important work by responding to precinct officers in your neighborhood when they reach out or by becoming a precinct officer yourself.

In terms of upcoming elections, Tina Belge is running for the SC Senate District 6 seat in the March 26 special election and municipal elections will be held in November. The races for three Greenville City Council members and mayor will be partisan. In addition, 2020 presidential contenders will visit the state throughout the year in the run-up to the Democratic primary. The shift in political demographics that is taking place here is being recognized, so you can expect many of them to come to the Upstate.

Can you tell that we will have a place for you? Use our resources and let us know what else we can do to keep all of us engaged, become a volunteer, help us strengthen our resources by donating (make it recurring for extra impact). With your involvement and support, the change that brought mid-term wins in November will continue driving transformation locally and nationally. 2019 could be our best year yet!

Kate

Calendar of Events

January

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 22 | Greenlink Advocacy for the disabled, 5:30 PM, Greenville County Square. 29601. | 26 | GCDP monthly breakfast meeting 8:30 AM, Upstate Circle of Friends, 29 Ridgeway Dr., Greenville 29605. |
| 24 | Teacher Shortage Public Forum, 6-8 PM. Hosted by League of Women Voters of Greenville County, JL Mann High School. Free but registration required . | 26 | Young Democrats Onesie Bar Crawl, 6 PM-Pour Taproom 7 Falls Park Dr., Greenville. |
| 25 | WREN's Upstate Legislative Kick-off breakfast, 8:30 AM, Greenville Unitarian Fellowship, 1135 State Park Rd., Greenville 29609. | 31 | Grants Open House, 5:30-6:30PM, sponsored by Public Education Partners, 700 Millennium Blvd., Greenville, SC 29607. Information: 864-233-4133. |

February

- 01** African American Elected Officials Prayer Breakfast 7:30 AM, Long Branch Baptist Church, 28 Bolt St., Greenville 29605.
- 02** Democratic Women's Coffee Meetup (Simpsonville), 9 AM, Panera Bread, 708 Fairview Rd, Simpsonville 29680.
- 04** GCDP County Executive Committee meeting, 6-7:30 PM, Hughes Main Library, 25 Heritage Green, Greenville 29601.
- 06** Young Democrats monthly meeting 6-7 PM, GCDP HQ, 1300 J East Washington St., Greenville 29607.
- 09** Democratic Women's Coffee Meetup (Greenville), 9 AM, West End Coffee Shoppe, 1021 S. Main St., Greenville 29601.
- 10** Greenville NAACP Membership Meeting, 4-5:30 PM, Tabernacle Baptist Church, 400 S. Hudson St., Greenville 29601.
- 11** Democratic Women's monthly meeting, 12:15 PM, West End Community Center, 404 Vardry St., Greenville 29601.
- 23** GCDP monthly breakfast meeting 8:30 AM, Upstate Circle of Friends, 29 Ridgeway Dr., Greenville 29605.
- 28** Dr. W. F. Gibson Foundation Black History Month Celebration honoring fmr SC senator Theo Mitchell and Ms. Leah Garrett, 6 PM, West End Community Development Center, 404 Vardry St., Greenville 29601.

For more details on these events and updated listings, please check the [GCDP calendar](#).

Lila Brock Statue

BY LAURA HAIGHT

A statue of Lila Mae Brock, community advocate, Order of the Palmetto recipient, and mother of Greenville City Councilwoman Lillian Brock Fleming, has been commissioned by the city. The statue will stand at the entrance of Unity Park, the city's newest signature park.



Reflecting on lessons she learned from her mom, Lillian told us: "I learned so much about human kindness, hard work, sacrifice and the love of God from my Mom. As I grew older, I finally understood why it was necessary to knock on doors for the Democratic Party, attend community meetings, register people to vote and always go to church. Lila Mae Brock was one of a kind and I thank God for having her in my life. I still miss her everyday but when I look in the mirror each morning, I see her reflection so I have to exemplify that which she taught me."

[Learn more about Lila Mae Brock's impact on Greenville.](#)

Save the Date: Tastings on the Town 2019

Tastings on the Town goes international this year as GCDP celebrates the rich international cultural diversity that we share here in the Upstate. Tastings on the Town: Flavors of Diversity will be Thursday, March 21 from 6:30-9:00 pm at Endeavor in the One Building, One North Main Street. Here is your opportunity to sample food and wine from different countries while you mingle with fellow GCDP supporters. The evening will also include a special guest, musical entertainment and auction items. The price of an individual ticket is \$100 and there are also gold, silver and bronze level sponsorship opportunities. Last year's event was sold out so it is not too early to buy your tickets. For more information, contact Corey Urbina, c_urbina@charter.net.

Medicaid Work Rules

BY LAURA HAIGHT

Following through on an idea they first floated in April of 2018, South Carolina officials are proposing a job requirement as a prerequisite for Medicaid.

The proposed rule change would require that clients prove they are working at least 80 hours per month or participating in job-training or volunteer activities. This makes South Carolina one of four states in the country seeking a waiver from the federal government. One state - Kentucky - has been approved.

The rules change would impact an estimated 180,000 of the 1.3 million South Carolinians currently receiving Medicaid. Exempt clients include single parents, two-parent households where one parent is disabled, and those in drug-abuse programs.

[An analysis from the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families and the SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center](#) found that the proposed rule would predominantly affect very poor mothers in small towns and rural communities. African-Americans would be disproportionately affected. The trickle-down impact of health coverage loss will severely impact poor children who are already at risk. The report noted that South Carolina was one of nine states that had significant increases in children without health coverage in 2017.

[Quoted in the Post and Courier](#), Sue Berkowitz, executive director of the S.C. Appleseed Legal Justice Center, argues that the proposal does not address significant barriers to employment, including transportation, the cost of child care, or the scarcity of jobs in rural areas.

What can you do?

Public comment on this proposal, which was released a month ago - in the midst of the holiday season - has been light, [according to SC Medicaid Director Joshua Baker](#). As of the end of December, the state had received only two comments.

Make sure your voice is heard: Submit a comment online about the proposed "Community Engagement" waiver, by visiting msp.scdhhs.gov/cew/site-page/public-comment.

Comments may also be emailed to CEWaiver@scdhhs.gov, or mailed to the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, ATTN: Community Engagement Waiver, P.O. Box 8206, Columbia, SC 29202-8206.

Approximately 50 people attended a public hearing held last Wednesday by the state Department of Health and Human Services. A number of Democrats spoke passionately in opposition to the proposed rule change including A.J. Stone, Young Democrats president Katie Vann, Democratic Women of Greenville County president Lee Turner, and Katie Thompson.

Jake Erwin on voting security

BY LAURA HAIGHT

This is another in our continuing series of Q&As with members of the Executive Committee of the GCDP. Jake Erwin is the voter protection chair for GCDP and SCDP. Erwin is an attorney, a former public defender, who now has his own law practice specializing in criminal defense and personal injury in Spartanburg.

He is a graduate of Clemson University and the University of South Carolina School of Law. He's a musician with a passion for politics and, in addition to his work with the GCDP, he produces the [Podmetto Politics](#) podcast with Jarrod Wiggins and Chris Fedalei.



1. Describe the role of the voter protection chair in broad strokes, please?

As voter protection chair, my primary obligation is to coordinate with volunteer poll watchers and attorneys to ensure that election laws and procedures are followed on Election Day. Hopefully this helps lead to every vote landing where it was intended to, and everyone who wanted to vote getting to. In addition to being the county VP chair, I am also part of team that runs voter protection on the state level for SCDP. For the midterms, I helped devise the game plan statewide, and supervised the Upstate region on Election Day.

2. South Carolina is the only state in the country where the same voting machines are used in every county, every precinct. Was this a good decision or not? And, are we stuck with continuing to do it this way, or do you see a chance for counties being able to make their own decisions going forward?

Machines fail, in ways that are both expected and unexpected. Hopefully, there are procedures, devised and executed by human beings, in place that can minimize the impact of these failures. I think this is true in any field that utilizes technology, and elections are no different. I don't really have a problem with all of the machines being the same, as I don't think having a variety of machines in the field would change this underlying truth one bit. I expect it actually could complicate things. Additionally, I have no faith that individual county decision makers would make smarter decisions than those on the state level.

3. How likely is it that we will have new voting machines by November 2020?

The Election Commission has made it clear that this is necessary. Democrats in the statehouse have made it clear this is a legislative priority. However, per usual, Republicans control both the Executive and Legislative branches of our State government, so it is up to them. While I have had conversations with Republican lawmakers in which they expressed a desire to replace the machines as soon as possible, I think it would be surprising to see a Republican controlled legislature spend a dime of state money on a problem that is mostly theoretical.

4. What types of systems may be under consideration and how secure do you think they are? Are you a proponent, for example, of paper ballots with optical scanning/digital backup?

I am far more concerned with voter suppression and disenfranchisement than I am with the equipment. Sure, the outdated touch-screen machines break down too often, and some of that could be avoided by using paper ballots (but, of course, we all remember the difficulties in Florida during the Bush/Gore recount). There is no perfect election, and no fool-proof method of accepting and counting votes. I am much more interested in the boring stuff: Are the precincts in poor, mostly black neighborhoods supplied with enough backup machines to replace them quickly? Are the volunteer poll-workers following proper procedures with every voter, or are racial and socioeconomic biases guiding their interactions with voters? Are voting locations that have changed from prior elections properly publicized and marked? These questions, while not as sexy as those about hacking and cybersecurity, I think have a far greater impact on the fairness of elections in South Carolina.

Meet Jake Erwin (continued)

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5. Is it likely that the state will have true early voting by 2020 or at any point in the future? What can we do to make that happen?

We have early voting in everything but name in our "in-person absentee" voting. Any expansion or improvement of that system would come through legislation, and to this day I have yet to hear of a single Republican lawmaker in favor of expanding early voting. So, if we want that to happen, we could elect a legislature full of Democrats.

6. How secure is my vote in Greenville County?

I am not convinced that a single vote in Greenville County has been changed or lost because of malicious action. In that sense, your vote is secure. Most people do not vote, and those in power want it to stay that way. That's the real problem.

7. Taking all issues together from cybersecurity, to social engineering on internet platforms, to voter suppression, how vulnerable is our election system in SC?

I am not at all concerned about a cyber attack on our election infrastructure. Social engineering on the internet is a plague on our society, but I think that problem goes far beyond election integrity (and, frankly, politics at-large). Our voter-ID law disproportionately affects minorities and poor folks and I am convinced that it, like all voter-ID laws, was designed that way. In that sense, the integrity of South Carolina's vote is beyond vulnerable: it is already deeply compromised.

Donation to GCDP

Greenville County Councilwoman Xanthene Norris, representing District 23, recently donated \$973.17 in unspent campaign funds to the Greenville County Democratic Party. Edith Chou accepted the donation on behalf of the GCDP.

Councilwoman Norris was elected to her fourth term on County Council in 2018. She is Chairman Pro Tem of Greenville County Council. She currently serves as vice chair of the Public Safety and Human Services Committee and is a member of the Finance Committee.

We appreciate her generosity and her continued support of the GCDP!



Legislators Focus on Education Reform

BY SHARON KLOMPUS

On January 8, the South Carolina Legislature convened its 123rd session. Seven hundred and forty-four pre-filed bills were waiting for them. Understanding the legislative process and keeping track of proposed legislation that could impact our lives is difficult to navigate. Fortunately we have an expert at our disposal. Long time Democratic activist Sharon Klompus has agreed to keep our members updated on pending legislation.

Sharon's analysis of the current batch of legislation under consideration reveals that the largest number of bills deal with K-12 public education (37 in the Senate and 65 in the House). The flurry of bills might have been in response to a detailed five-part special report entitled *Minimally Adequate*, published in November 2018 by the Post and Courier newspaper. https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/sc-education-bills-teacher-pay-hike-proposed-in-wake-of/article_6f20b59c-fee4-11e8-aid7-ff64b53cffee.html

During the two-year legislative session, probably only about half of the the 744 pre-filed bills will see daylight. You can monitor the progress of these bills by following [South Carolina Legislature Online](#) or you can take the easy way out and read the monthly summary in The Bray.

Sharon will follow legislative action and update us each month.

GCDP Huddle Gives Back

BY WHITNEY WRIGHT



Over the holidays, the GCDP Huddle collected personal care items and holiday treats that were used to assemble 21 gift bags for clients of Meals On Wheels. The group also collected and packaged feminine care materials for donation to the Homeless Period Project and hosted a second-semester school supplies drive for Upstate Circle of Friends and Quest Leadership Academy.

On Saturday, January 26, the GCDP Huddle will continue to promote Democrats Care by assisting with the annual Allen Temple AME Church Festival of Life event being held at the West End Community Development Center. The venue address is 404 Vardry Street, Greenville, SC 29601. Those interested in volunteering should attend an informational meeting at West End Community Center on Sunday, January 20 at 2:00 p.m.

The GCDP Democrats Care Huddle is a service committee that works to improve the lives of the people of Greenville County. We lend our hands, knowledge and hearts not just at election time but all of the time because we want to show that Democrats care. We are the in-person representatives of the vision, values and priorities of the Greenville County Democratic Party. Our official motto is "How can we help?" For more information contact Whitney Wright, GCDP 2nd Vice Chair, whitney.wrightsc@gmail.com.

Dillard Honored by Ten at the Top

BY ROXANNE CORDONIER

Ten at the Top, a non-profit comprised of civic leaders across 10 counties in the Upstate, recently honored SC State Representative Chandra Dillard with the [Burdette Leadership Award](#).

The award recognizes women who have both served and taken leadership roles across the Upstate. This marks the third year of the Burdette Leadership Award; previous recipients include Minor Shaw and Dr. Becky Campbell.

Ten at the Top hosts public forums and other events across the Upstate on issues of regional significance with the goal of building consensus to address critical challenges.



Applications open for county boards and commissions

Volunteering on county boards and commissions is an important way to have a role in improving Greenville County – from planning and development to treating drug and alcohol addiction.

The County is currently accepting applications from residents seeking to fill spots becoming vacant this spring. Applications are accepted through January 31..

See the available vacancies and get information on the application process here:
<https://www.greenvillecounty.org/apps/county councilboard/countywideboards.aspx>

If you apply, please let us know so that we can support you during the application process and while you serve.

Yellow Dog Contributors 2018

DOUBLE GOLD

Maurice and Sharon Cherry

GOLD

Ann Funderburk, Frank and Anne Holleman, Eric and Helen Graben, Harry Chapman, Kinard Johnson, Xanthene Norris

SILVER

Corey and Ricardo Urbina, Paula Catterall, Candy Fletcher, Lawson Wetli, Peggy Baxter, Chandra Dillard, Elizabeth Richardson, Edith Chou, Ron Cowan, Laura Haight, Steven Price, Democratic Women of Greenville County

BRONZE

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YELLOW DOG

Lillian Flemming, Rita McKinney, Ruth Todd, Linda Hines, Leah Garrett, Susanne Coe, Susie Brannon Smith, Susan Bufano, Susan Stewart, Jim Cloonan, Robbie Brady, Susan Cyr, Lisa Carlson, Nancy Davis, Fred and Jill Erickson, John and Terri Geek, Karen Hahn, Lucille Herwald, Jeverus Howard, Edward Jones, Nadia Land Greene, Francis Moore, Anne Parrott, Dave and Penny Pence, Diana San Miguel, Phil and Bonnie Silberman, Kate Franch, Nicolette Grumbine, Linda and Bill Hardman, Rebecca Philpot, Carlyle Steele

The Greenville County Democratic Party has gone through some financial hills and valleys over the decades. Traditionally, Southern Democrats have been rich in talent and enthusiasm and underfunded in real dollars. In 1985, three friends – attorney Frank Holleman and Democratic activists Joanne Montague and Ann Funderburk – established the Yellow Dog Democrat Club. Its goal is to encourage members to give a significant annual gift to create a reliable source of revenue. That’s critical to fulfilling our mission of supporting – and electing – Democratic candidates, being a watchdog for Democratic issues in the county and state, and promoting education and understanding of Democratic values.

Gold Yellow Dog Level: Contribution of \$1000 in a year.

Silver Yellow Dog Level : Contribution of \$500 in a year.

Bronze Yellow Dog Level: Contribution of \$250 in a year.

Yellow Dog Level : Contribution of \$120 in a year.

Becoming a Yellow Dog is as easy as clicking on this link where you can make a one-time or a monthly recurring contribution:
<https://greenvilledemocrats.com/contribute/>. Questions? Email treasurer@greenvilledemocrats.com

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November & December Contributors

Our thanks to our November and December contributors to the Greenville County Democratic Party:

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Many of our donors have chosen to support us monthly with recurring donations. Please consider maximizing your impact by making your donation recurring.

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Thank you.

GREENVILLE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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Know someone who would like to receive The Bray? Call HQ or contact headquarters@greenvilledemocrats.com. Please mail contributions to party headquarters. If your financial contribution to the GCDP is over \$100, please indicate profession or retired (required by SC Ethics Commission). Thank you.