

THE BRAY

The latest news and updates from the Greenville County Democratic Party



PHOTO: GREENVILLE NEWS (SEE PAGE 8).

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We are being noticed . . .

BY KATE FRANCH



As the 2020 election season gets rolling, candidates and pundits are looking at the role Greenville County will play.

They are curious and expectant about what we will do in terms of engagement and turnout of Democratic voters. Rightfully so. With the third highest number of primary voters in the state, we are a huge piece in the puzzle of South Carolina politics.

We are being noticed . . . (continued)

So how do we fulfill our potential? The answer is really pretty simple. You'll typically hear me ask everyone to "do one thing" every year. But with so much at stake for our cities, county, state, and nation, I'm upgrading to asking for two commitments from you in 2019 and 2020:

1. DONATE: Everything you want the party to do, from promoting our Democratic values to educating voters and getting them to the polls to recruiting and backing candidates, is directly dependent on contributions. As a fully volunteer-run organization, every cent the GCDP receives goes to achieving our mission. The more we have in our bank account the more we will do. Truly, no amount one gives is too small. If everyone who receives this newsletter gives \$25, we can fund our daily operations, run a more expansive marketing campaign, and provide significant support to candidates. (Not everyone will answer this call, so if you are able to give more, please consider doing so!) Our success is in your hands . . . or more specifically, your wallet. greenvilledemocrats.com/contribute

2. VOLUNTEER:

There are many ways to give of your talents, skills, hearts, and hands. Here are a few:

Work on a campaign. Whenever a Democrat is on the ballot, we help him/her to get elected regardless of whether or not we live in that district. Each blue win helps to equalize the balance of power in our legislative bodies and improves the likelihood that the important issues are prioritized and addressed fairly, respectfully, and for the good of all citizens. Right now, Tina Belge is running in the SC Senate District 6 special election. She needs you. (tinabelge.org/join) In the fall, there will be elections in each city in Greenville County. Democrats will run on a partisan ticket for Greenville City Council seats but also in nonpartisan races in the other municipalities, and we'll rally to work for all of them. 2020 will then be right around the bend.

Get involved in your precinct. Connecting with fellow Democrats on a neighborhood and community level strengthens our ability to organize quickly and effectively and results in a better informed and empowered electorate. Well-developed precincts should be the fulcrum of political success. They help like-minded neighbors to find each other and confirm just how widespread we in fact are. Participate as you can – attend precinct meetings or step up to precinct leadership – you can make a tremendous difference right in your backyard. Email for more information.

Help the GCDP meet a specific goal. Our volunteer coordinator, Paul Merlo, has a list of opportunities focused on organizational needs such as voter education, fundraising, and communications. Your talents and skills could be a perfect match! You can reach Paul at volunteer@greenvilledemocrats.com.

So, wear your Democrat label proudly (you'll now, more often than not, find another blue someone in the room). And help the GCDP to fully achieve its potential. Because . . . we are stronger together and, together, we can ensure that everyone, no matter his or her start in life, can have a fair shot at the American Dream.

In solidarity,

Kate

Calendar of Events

February

- 23** GCDP monthly breakfast meeting, 8:30 AM, Upstate Circle of Friends, 29 Ridgeway Dr., Greenville 29605.
- 25** GCDP County Executive Committee Meeting, 6 PM, Hughes Main Library, 25 Heritage Green Place, Greenville 29601.
- 27** The Sun Does Shine, How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row, an evening with Anthony Ray Hinton, 7-8:30 PM, McAlister Auditorium, Furman University. [More information and registration.](#)
- 28** Dr. W. F. Gibson Foundation Black History Month Celebration honoring former SC senator Theo Mitchell and Leah Garrett, 6 PM, West End Community Development Center, 404 Vardry St., Greenville 29601. 864-414-3636

March

- 02** Democratic Women's Coffee Meet-Up, 9-10:30 AM, Panera Bread, 375 Harrison Bridge Road, Simpsonville.
- 05** Moms Demand Action Advocacy Day on gun violence, 9 AM., State House, Columbia. Join hundreds of gun sense advocates to lobby legislators. [Sign up for information.](#)
- 06** Young Democrats monthly meeting, 6-7 PM, Democratic Party HQ, 1300-J East Washington, Greenville, 29607.
- 09** Democratic Women's Coffee Meet-Up, 9-10:30 AM, West End Coffee, 1021 S. Main Street, Greenville, 29601.
- 11** Democratic Women monthly meeting, 12:15 PM, West End Community Development Center, 404 Vardry Street, Greenville 29601.
- 12** Beyond the Basics: The Math of Gerrymandering, presented by the League of Women Voters of Greenville County, 6:30 PM, Hughes Main Library, 25 Heritage Green Place, Greenville 29601.
- 16** St. Patrick's Day Parade, 1:00pm, march up Main Street with fellow Democrats and Tina Belge's campaign behind the GCDP banner; check the website for meet-up details closer to the date
- 23** GCDP breakfast meeting 8:30-10 AM, Upstate Circle of Friends, 29 Ridgeway Drive, Greenville, 29605.
- 26** Election Day for SC Senate District 6, 7 AM to 7 PM. Get out and vote for Democrat Tina Belge. **[Want to help her win?](#)**

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

SAVE THE DATE

MAY
10 -11

SCDP State Convention, Columbia SC; open to the public / state delegates and alternates serve two-year terms, so those elected in 2018 will be called to the 2019 state convention

Save the Date: Tastings on the Town 2019

Mark your calendars for GCDP's second annual festival of food, drink and fundraising. Tastings on the Town: Flavors of Diversity will take place on March 21 from 6:30-9:00 pm at Endeavor Greenville at 1 North Main Street. What better way to celebrate International Women's Month in the Upstate than by sampling dishes that represent the rich cultural diversity that we enjoy in the here such as Mantoo from Afghanistan, Spinach Borek from Turkey and Paella made by Spanish chef Daniel Lopez? The evening will also feature wine and beer tastings, musical entertainment including jazz saxophonist [Charles Twilley](#), activities and special guests.



The price of an individual ticket is \$100 and we are offering Gold, Silver and Bronze Host as well as Business Marketplace Sponsor opportunities. Buy tickets online at <http://tastingsonthetown.eventbrite.com> or call 864-325-8540. If you are a business owner and would like information about the benefits of becoming a Business Marketplace Sponsor, please contact Corey Urbina, 202-236-7939, c_urbina@charter.net.

We hope to see you at this fun and festive evening on the town.

Absentee voting in person begins February 25th.

Tina Belge is on a mission

Tina Belge knows how to get things accomplished at the local level, whether it's through her work as a long-range planner for Greenville County, leadership of a local environmental non-profit, or volunteering for the United Way and other great causes. Now she's running to fill the vacated SC Senate District 6 seat in the March 26 special election.

Seemingly indefatigable, Tina seems to be everywhere. But she is on a mission and she's not wearing down. Get to know more about Tina, the factors that drive her, and the vision she has for a better future in [this profile](#).

Read the profile.



Gun Advocacy

Just one year ago, we were jolted briefly out of complacency by the sound of gunfire in a school.

Seventeen students and teachers died huddled in closets and under desks in the presumed safety of a classroom at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. Just six weeks later, the anger and outrage of students woke us and, throughout the country, we marched.

Nearly 2,500 people filled downtown's Main Street on March 24 to demand legislation to mitigate the threat of mass shootings in schools, malls, theaters, and concerts across the country.

Little has happened to change the harsh realities of this reality. But advocacy groups are not backing off.

Moms Demand Action will inundate the State House in Columbia on March 5 to advocate for sensible gun legislation to prevent senseless violence. [Get more information and register to join them.](#)

The organization has a number of local meetings. Find one that's close to you [here](#).

And it's not just schools that are targets or mass shootings that are the risk. South Carolina has been one of the top 10 states in the country for lethal domestic violence for the past 21 years.

Jennifer Wells is a career prosecutor who specializes in domestic violence cases. In remarks at last month's Women's March, Wells laid out the risks to women and children due to open and unrestricted gun laws in South Carolina. She has seen the toll of domestic violence fueled by the accessibility of guns. And she knows the harsh statistics that put each horrifying story into perspective. [Her remarks and her call for women to demand a safer society are reprinted on our blog.](#)



Nearly 2500 Upstaters gathered in downtown Greenville to March for Our Lives last March.

Greenville groups came together to help furloughed federal workers



Photo courtesy of The Greenville News.

A member of the Islamic Society of Greenville drops lunch off at GSP Airport for unpaid TSA workers during the government shutdown.

For 35 days, more than 800,000 federal employees went unpaid. Roughly 300,000 of those deemed "essential" were required to work without pay. TSA agents based at Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport and other federal employees here in the Upstate were among those affected. Far too many had to make tough decisions; some had trouble meeting bills, paying rent, or even feeding their families. But Greenville's community came together to help. We put together a list of organizations we found that offered assistance or accommodations to help workers get through. We know our list isn't complete, but we'd love you to add a shout out to the organizations you may know of in our story. [Read and comment!](#)

Dowe enters race as municipal election season ramps up



Dorothy Dowe announces she's running for City Council.

Dorothy Dowe, an entrepreneur, education consultant and engineer, has announced her plans to run for Greenville City Council. She will run for the at-large seat currently held by first-term George Fletcher.

Dowe is a director of two educational consultant companies, Strategic Vectors Academic Planning and Consulting and Got Math?; companies she co-founded in 2010 after a 12-year career as an engineer working for Jacobs Engineering Group, CRS Sistine Engineers and the International Paper Company.

Dowe believes her background as a project engineer as well as her entrepreneurial and business school experience give her a unique set of valuable skills. "Decisions today are made at breakneck speed but have long term consequences," Dowe said. "Greenville needs council people who have the energy and focus to do the research, stay abreast of the issues, network with constituents, and make smart choices. I am excited about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Greenville and would like to represent citizen interests as we chart our city's future. Greenville 2040 is the proposed vehicle for determining Greenville's direction over the next 20 years and council members will be major players in drafting and executing that vision during this term."

Dowe earned her BS in mechanical engineering from Duke and an MBA from the University of South Carolina. She and her husband Steve have been active, involved community members for 30 years. They have two children, a daughter Bailey and a son Parker.

Municipal seats across the Upstate are up for election this year.

City of Greenville (partisan races): Mayor, District 1 (seat currently held by Amy Ryberg Doyle), District 3 (held by Jil Littlejohn), At-large District (held by George Fletcher); also one Commissioner of Public Works. [More information.](#)

City of Fountain Inn: Wards 2, 4, and 6 [More information.](#)

City of Greer: Mayor, Districts 1, 3, and 5; one Commissioner of Public Works. [More information.](#)

City of Mauldin: Mayor, seats 2, 4, & 6 [More Information.](#)

City of Simpsonville: Mayor, wards 1, 3, and 5. [More information.](#)

City of Travelers Rest: Four council seats. [More information.](#)

There are many opportunities to serve in your community.

Black History Month

Every February, we focus on celebrating African-American culture, history, accomplishments, and achievements in history and in current affairs.

There have been a number of events throughout the month, but there's still time to see some exhibits and programs. And, of course, there's always time to read and educate ourselves.

This list is certainly not everything. But we encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities throughout the state and the county to immerse yourself in the richness of African-American history in South Carolina.



The work of David Drake, an American artisan and enslaved person, has intrigued historians. In 2016, he was enshrined in the **South Carolina Hall of Fame**.

- Prominent civil rights leaders like Greenville's own Lottie Gibson and other groundbreaking heroes are highlighted in the **South Carolina African American History Calendar**.
- Ten at the Top provides a **summary of historic places in the Upstate** and highlights civil rights luminaries from South Carolina on their website.
- Churches played a big role in the civil rights movement; find out more about some of these historic gathering places in this **article from The Greenville Journal**.
- The Green Book of South Carolina is an online travel guide produced by the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission. The guide features more than **300 heritage and cultural sites in the Palmetto State**.
- Closer to home, the Hughes Main Library is hosting an exhibit known as **"A Place for All People"** that celebrates the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C. The exhibit runs through February 28.
- The Greenville County Museum of Art (GCMA) is hosting a return showing of **"David Drake: The Greenville Collection"** on February 23 from 2-3 pm. The exhibit highlights the artistry of master potter David Drake, a slave who worked as a "turner" in several pottery manufacturing facilities in South Carolina's Edgefield District in the 1800's. Drake's life and work have fascinated scholars and historians due to his habit of writing verses and signing the pottery he made, despite a prohibition on reading and writing among slaves. David Drake was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame in 2016.
- The Riley Institute's Advance Team presents **"The Sun Does Shine, How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row"**, an evening with Anthony Ray Hinton, from 7-8:30 PM, in McAlister Auditorium at Furman University. Hinton was wrongly convicted of two capital murders in Alabama and spent thirty years on death row for a crime he did not commit. In 2015, he was exonerated after more than a decade of litigation by the Equal Justice Initiative.

MARCHING ON

Armed with umbrellas, Greenville activists gather, say we ARE the storm



LISTEN UP!

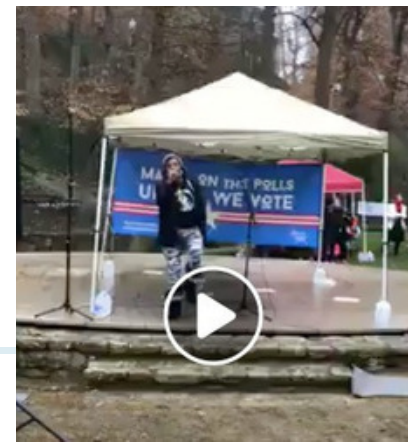
Many dynamic speakers fired us up. Follow the links to hear a few.

[Eric Swalwell](#), California congressman and possible 2020 candidate

[Lillian Brock Fleming](#), Greenville City councilwoman

[Tina Belge](#), candidate for state Senate District 6

[Traci Fant](#), founder of Freedom Fighters



OUR CAUSES: In words spoken and Sharpied



Is there a war on women? Well, judging by protesters and speakers at the 3rd Annual Women's March on Jan. 19, if there is, they have picked the wrong target.

Many speakers exhorted protestors to take the next step and become active every day. Not just resisting, but working toward to make things better. Toward gender equality, toward racial equality, toward pay equality .. are we seeing a theme here?

Want a way to make a difference? Volunteer with the GCDP!



"I represent a bipartisan organization, but there's only one party that supports women's rights."
– Vicki Ringer, Planned Parenthood

"Win hearts, not wars. Send books not bombs. Humanity first. Make friends, not foes."
– Fareeha Qazi, Muslim Women of Greenville

"If you are active, stay active. If you aren't active, get active!"
– Evvie Harmon
Read profile of Evvie

"This movement is about our state. And we must stand up for what is right."
– Chandra Dillard, State Representative, District 23

Trump-free News Roundup

With so much news happening, it's hard to read it all. Especially when we are inundated with harassing presidential tweets that suck up all of the news time. Here are a few stories we've found that don't include Trump:

Youth says 'no' to skirting gun control legislation

In 2015, nine black parishioners were gunned down while attending a bible study class at their church in Charleston. The confessed shooter, Dylan Roof, obtained the gun he used because of a timing delay in his criminal background check. Many thought sensible gun control measures, such as a bill to close what is now known as the Charleston Loophole, would have bipartisan traction at the State House. Not so. It died in committee. But Senate Bill 154 has been brought back to life this legislative session by concerned students, among others. -- [READ MORE](#).

There's nothing boring about abuse of power

Unless you are an attorney, a drug dealer, or a frequent viewer of CSI, you might not be familiar with civil forfeiture. The Greenville News and Anderson Independent undertook a two-year investigation to dig into this practice and, in a series titled TAKEN, brought to light systemic abuse of police power to confiscate personal property. The data-based reporting, coupled with profiles of victims, drew statewide attention. It has even led to a bipartisan group of legislators planning to sponsor legislation to drastically reform this broken system. -- [READ THE SERIES](#).

New ways to die in South Carolina

The state Senate has passed legislation that reverts to allowing electrocutions and firing squads as means for executing prisoners. Apparently, drug companies don't want to sell the chemicals for lethal injection to the SC Department of Corrections for fear of legal challenges and bad publicity. Is this happening outside of SC? If so, will all states look at returning to more draconian methods of execution? The bill now goes to the House, where it has not been successful in the past, for approval. -- [READ MORE](#).

Top Dogs

State representative Chandra Dillard and county Democratic Party chair Kate Franch made the list of influential Dems for 2019. Compiled by the Post and Courier newspaper, the list identified influential Dems ranging from elected officials to advocacy leaders who would be pivotal in the 2020 elections. -- [SEE THE LIST](#).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: A PRIORITY?

Affordable housing in Greenville County - and the state - lags far behind the growing need. Not surprised? Is it \$\$ that's the issue? Not entirely. Budget priorities often put housing behind more high profile, visible projects. In this op-ed, Jalen Elrod, first vice chair of the GCDP, outlines some legislative steps to move us forward. --[READ MORE](#).

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Greenville County Chair

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LAURA HAIGHT

Communications Coordinator

January Contributors

Our thanks to the January contributors to the Greenville County Democratic Party:

Gina Blohm, Glenn Dorsey, Kate Franch, Gayle Hewitt, Kinard Johnson, Leslie Johnson, Anita LeBold, Ashley Newton, Mary Strom, Starla Taylor, Jessie Wofford

Our apologies to Gayle Hewitt who should have been listed in the last Bray as a 2018 Yellow Dog Donor.

Did you know that from August 2018 to October 2018, the GCDP saw hundreds of people walk through our door for yard signs alone? Did you know that when presidential candidates plan a visit to South Carolina, they almost always reach out to the GCDP? Did you know the GCDP is investing in technology with a new cloud-based phone system and constant upgrades to our website, making it possible for us to do more phone banks with more volunteers?

You can help us meet the challenges Democrats face in Greenville County by becoming a 2019 Gold Yellow Dog member (\$1000 pledged in 2019), Silver Yellow Dog member (\$500 pledged in 2019), Bronze Yellow Dog Member (\$250 pledged in 2019) or Yellow Dog member (\$120 pledged in 2019).

For more information, contact Anita LeBold, treasurer at 864.325.8540 or anitalebald@hotmail.com.

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

YOU CAN MAKE MUCH-NEEDED DONATIONS IN PERSON, BY VISITING THE OFFICE, MAILING A CHECK, OR DONATING ONLINE 24X7 AT [GREENVILLEDEMOCRATS.COM/CONTRIBUTE](https://greenvilledemocrats.com/contribute).

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.