

THE BRAY the voice of the GCDP GREENVILLE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The latest news and updates from the Greenville County Democratic Party

10,000 South Carolina teachers protested at the State House on May 1. But it did little to move a landmark education bill.

Photo: The State



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Local/state elections take center stage

BY KATE FRANCH

CHAIR, GREENVILLE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY



The weather is heating up as we head into summer and so are the opportunities to put democracy into action. You don't have to wait for 2020, you can make a difference right here and right now.

Tuesday, June 11, is Primary Election Day for the Greenville City Council 2019 municipal election. The GCDP is putting on the election - that is, it will be possible for voters to cast their ballot **ONLY** if we man the polls. We need everyone. I mean, if we ever needed you, it's **NOW**. And, what could be more democratic, and Democratic, than helping our friends and neighbors to exercise their right to franchise? More information is available on **page 6**. Please help. This really is grassroots democracy at its core.

Local/state elections take center stage (con't)

Carrie Counton is running in the special election for the SC House of Representatives District 19 seat that has been vacated by Dwight Loftis. This is the seat for which she ran in 2018 and, if she can get the same 4272 voters to the polls, she has an excellent chance of winning. The special election is Tuesday, August 20. We don't have to man this one, but we must help her campaign. We need more Democratic voices in Columbia to stop scary legislation such as the fetal heartbeat and constitutional carry bills, and to enact meaningful policy such as green energy, infrastructure, and education reform. Let's start with Carrie. For more information, visit her website votecarriecounton.com.

The South Carolina Democratic Party's 2019 state convention on Saturday, June 22 will be the formal kickoff for the 2020 races. Everyone is welcome to attend, not just party leadership, delegates and alternates. The first round of confirmed speakers includes SC representatives Jim Clyburn and Joe Cunningham, and Democratic presidential candidates Sen. Michael Bennet, Sen. Cory Booker, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Rep. John Delaney, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Sen. Kamala Harris, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Rep. Seth Moulton, Rep. Beto O'Rourke, Rep. Tim Ryan, Rep. Eric Swalwell, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Marianne Williamson, and Andrew Yang. Keep abreast of what's happening at scdemweekend.com and make plans to be in Columbia. It promises to be full of good old-fashioned political fun with a modern twist.

Our summers are blessed with beautiful blue skies. Let's match them with formidable blue hearts and hands at work on the ground to make "it's a great day in South Carolina" a true-blue reality.

In solidarity,

Kate

Calendar of Events

June

01

Democratic Women's Coffee Meetup, 9-10:30 AM, Panera Bread, 708 Fairview Rd, Simpsonville, 29680.

03

Greenville County Democratic Party Executive Committee Meeting, 6:30PM, Hughes Main Library, 25 Heritage Green Pl., Greenville, 29601.

06

Free Screening of the documentary Rigged-The Voter Suppression Playbook, 6-8PM, Anderson County Library, [registration](#) is requested.

07

First Friday Precinct Officers Lunch (North Greenville), noon, Chicora Alley Firehouse, 117 N. Poinsett Highway, TR, 29690.



08

Wear Orange Weekend and Greenville observance, 11 AM-1 PM, 1 City Plaza, Greenville 29601. The 5th National Gun Violence Awareness Day honors the those killed or wounded by gun violence, and survivors of gun violence.

[Registration requested.](#)

Calendar of Events

June

10 **New Time, Different Location** Democratic Women's monthly meeting, 6 PM-7:15 PM, Springfield Baptist Church 600 E McBee Ave Greenville, 29601.

11 Democratic Primary Election for At-Large Greenville City Council seat, 7AM-7PM. (City of Greenville voters only)

14 Second Friday Precinct Officers Lunch (South Greenville), noon, Anita's Mexican Restaurant, 101 Alice Ave., Simpsonville, 29681.

15 Democratic Women's Coffee Meetup (Greer/Eastside), 10 AM, Junto Coffee, 232 Mill St., Taylors, 29687.

18 House District 19 special election primary day. (Republicans only)

18 Moms Demand Action (Augusta Rd), 7 PM, Augusta Road Library, 100 Lydia St., Greenville, 29605.

20 Moms Demand Action for Gunsense Meeting, 1:30 PM, Taylors Library, 316 West Main St., Taylors, 29687.

20 District 25 Monthly Precinct Engagement Meeting, 6 PM, Upstate Circle of Friends, 29 Ridgeway Dr., Greenville 29605.

SAVE THE DATE

June 21-22 **SCDP State Convention- Columbia, SC**

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.

<https://www.apnews.com/879cb0e085d942da867a7fd24c90c725>

The Blue Palmetto Dinner will be the evening of June 21st, and the convention will be held on June 22nd. Here's a list of nearby hotels. The SCDP encourages bookings as soon as possible!

Hampton Inn- 822 Gervais St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 231-2000

Sheraton Hotel- 1400 Main St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 988-1400

Marriott Hotel- 1200 Hampton St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 771-7000

Springhill Suites- 511 Lady St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 978-2333

Aloft Hotel- 823 Lady St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 445-1900

Hotel Trundle- 1224 Taylor St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 722-5000

Staybridge Suites- 1913 Huger St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 451-5900

Holiday Inn Express- 501 Taylor St, Columbia, SC 29201 (803) 744-4000

21 Third Friday Precinct Officers Lunch (West and Central Greenville), 12 PM, Swamp Rabbit Cafe and Grocery, 205 Cedar Lane Rd., Greenville, 29611.

24 Moms Demand Action Golden Strip Monthly Meeting, 7-8 PM, Simpsonville Hendricks Branch Library, 626 NE Main St., Simpsonville, 29681.

24 Fourth Friday Precinct Officers Lunch (Eastside), 12 PM, Mazzitelli Deli, 224 Trade St. (inside Chelsea's Ladies Apparel), Greer, 29651.

28 Fourth Friday Precinct Officers Lunch (Eastside), 12 PM, Mazzitelli Deli, 224 Trade St. (inside Chelsea's Ladies Apparel), Greer, 29651.

Date Change

29 GCDP monthly breakfast meeting, 8:30-10AM, Upstate Circle of Friends, 29 Ridgeway Drive, Greenville, 29605.

GCDP taking applications for summer interns

Applications are now open for high school and college students who want to get hands on experience with the Democratic Party.

We are offering three sessions and a flexible set of working hours, with a minimum commitment of 10 hours per week. Interns will do anything from hands-on community activism, working with candidates and GCDP canvassing teams, to administrative support.

Applications are being accepted through June 3 and applicants will be notified by June 15. Apply here: bit.ly/Summer-intern-application

What did the Legislature do this year?

Energy dereg, abortion and concealed carry advance; education, election security languish

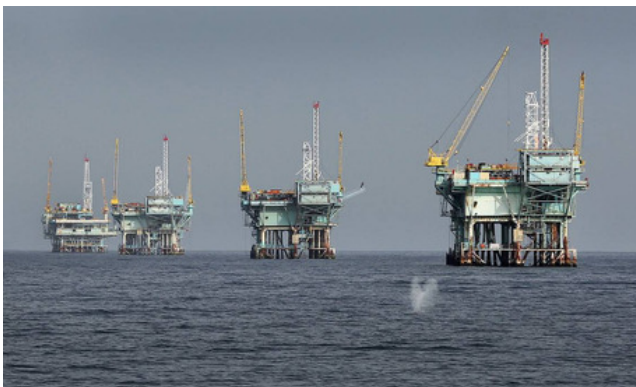
BY SHARON KLOMPUS AND ROXANNE CORDONIER

On May 9, the South Carolina legislature adjourned the first year of the 2019-2020 legislative session. According to The Statehouse Report, a surge in bipartisan support made what was supposed to be the “year of education” the “year of the environment” instead. Of particular note were the passage of a solar energy bill and growing resistance to the threat of offshore oil drilling.

Energy/Environment

On the last legislative day of the year, lawmakers approved H.3659 the SC Energy Freedom Act; it now goes to the governor for his signature. The bill moves the state toward deregulation of South Carolina’s energy market and creates more competition. Conservation Voters of South Carolina Executive Director John Tynan supports the move, telling the Statehouse Report, “This is a uniquely South Carolina approach that is rooted in allowing competition. It moves us toward a market-driven energy sector that has broken the utility monopoly hold that allows clean energy to thrive and actually compete.”

The legislature threatened to block bans on single use plastic bags but didn’t follow through. The plastic bag bans have been implemented in 17 communities across the state, mainly along the coast.



The legislature threatened to block bans on single use plastic bags but didn’t follow through. The plastic bag bans have been implemented in 17 communities across the state, mainly along the coast.

The General Assembly hasn’t blocked offshore drilling but the issue is on the agenda of a special session beginning May 20. Lawmakers will have to decide whether to concur with the Senate’s budget proviso that would bar the state from allowing infrastructure to support the industry for at least one year. Additionally, the Trump administration has paused reopening the Atlantic Ocean to seismic testing.

Education

Despite a full court press to pass a massive education reform bill, lawmakers couldn’t reach the finish line. The House passed its version of education reform, H.3759, by a 100 to 3 margin on March 7 and it was sent to the Senate on March 12. It continues to be debated in the Education Committee where many hearings have been ongoing.

Of interest is a Senate Education Committee hearing from Wednesday, April 24, 2019 where a PowerPoint presentation highlighted statistics on standings of SC students. That PowerPoint presentation can be accessed from the State House website Home Page

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/SenateEducationCommittee/Senate_Education_Briefing_4_23_19.pdf

Some victories for women's health in 2019 session

BY COURTNEY THOMAS
WREN UPSTATE LIAISON

Women's issues were definitely on the agenda for the first year of this two-year legislative session. Results were mixed – some definite wins, some significant challenges. Track the progress of these bills and others at scstatehouse.gov.

12 Month Supply of Contraception (H. 3279): 12 Month Supply of Contraception (H. 3279): This bill would require private insurers and Medicaid to cover one-year's supply of birth control at a time. It was heard in the House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee on the last day of session. Since it was the last day there were time constraints that did not allow it to move forward, but representatives have pledged to work over the summer to examine data, have some of their questions answered and take action in January 2020.

End Child Marriage (S. 196): This bill would remove the pregnancy exception so no person under 16 can be married. Child marriage has devastating and lifelong consequences so it is heartening that it passed through both the House and the Senate and is heading to the governor's desk.

Sexual Assault Kit Tracking Systems (H.3309): Passed through the House and is on the Senate Judiciary Committee agenda for January 2020. It would provide required annual/semiannual reporting from the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) about the status of assault kits. And survivors could anonymously track and receive updates about their kits.

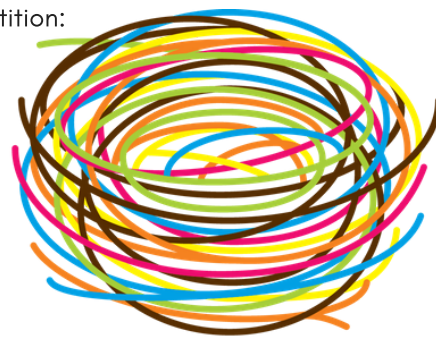
Lactation support act (H. 3200, S. 406): Passed through the House and would provide women with the right to breaks and a private space to express milk.

Anti-Shackling of Pregnant Persons (H. 3967): Passed through the House, in Senate Corrections committee. This bill would prevent the shackling (leg, waist, ankle restraints) of pregnant inmates during pregnancy, labor, delivery and postpartum recovery.

Fetal Heartbeat Bill (H3020): Passed through the House. The six-week abortion ban, or the "heartbeat bill," would prevent most women from getting abortions as early as six weeks into pregnancy (long before many women know they are pregnant). Let your legislators know how you feel about this legislation by signing this petition:
<https://www.scwren.org/wedeservebetter/>.

What can you do to help?

- Schedule an Advocacy 101- email cthomas@scwren.org
- Schedule an in-district meeting with your legislator. Now is the time to build relationships. If you need help scheduling a meeting here in town, we're happy to help. If you want more than coffee, feel free to up the ante. Invite your senator or house member to a community event or to your work site. Help them see how their decisions affect your every day. Include them in the conversation.
- Host a letter-writing or postcard party for bills you want to move in 2020. Our website has several letter templates. <https://www.scwren.org/blog/share-your-story/>
- Attend our End of Session Event on June 6. We'll be in Spartanburg to give a more in-depth look at where we left things this legislative year. That's June 6th, 6-8, reserve your ticket here <http://bit.ly/2QtDqj7>.



WREN

Women's Rights &
Empowerment Network

We need poll workers

We've got a primary election coming up on June 11 for the Greenville City Council At-Large seat currently held by George Fletcher. Two candidates – Dorothy Dowe and Lindsey Jacobs – are vying to be the Democratic Party nominee to contest this seat in November.

The City of Greenville is one of only a handful of municipalities in the state that hold partisan elections. Local political parties are responsible for putting on municipal primaries, so the GCDP will provide the manpower and the funds for the June election.

Polling sites across the city will be staffed with volunteer poll workers, and for that, we need you. In fact, we'll need roughly 100 of you during the course of the day.

Here's the skinny:

- Primary Election Day starts with setting up polling sites around 6:30 AM and ends with shutting down when the polls close, running the tapes of the vote count, and getting the voting machines back to the Election Commission office around 7:30-8 PM.
- We hope that a number of volunteers will be able to work all day, but we'll also schedule for two shifts: 6:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The GCDP will provide lunch.
- You will receive training from the Election Commission during the week before the primary. Multiple training days and times have been scheduled to accommodate all of our volunteers. The training lasts approximately 1½ hours.
- The GCDP is hiring an experienced poll clerk for each of the polling places to provide guidance and support throughout the day.
- You can be a poll worker if you are 16+ but only one worker under 18 at a time will be assigned at a polling place.

Being a volunteer poll worker for this important primary election is a fairly unique opportunity to experience democracy in action firsthand, understand how the voting process works from the inside, and play a key role in ensuring that everyone who is duly registered is able to cast his or her vote. Not only will you help your beloved GCDP fulfill a critical political responsibility, but you will also increase your confidence if you want to be a poll worker or poll watcher in the 2019 or 2020 general elections. And you'll probably have fun along the way.

In order to ensure that everyone gets trained, we need to have our spots filled by June 7. If you are willing to help or if you have questions about your responsibilities, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Paul Merlo ASAP (volunteer@greenvilledemocrats.com).

GCDP Huddle supported returning veterans

In May, we came together on Memorial Day, as a community and a nation, to remember the many Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice to create, secure and defend the United States of America. The GCDP Huddle supported the LCpl Jordan Haerter Home for Transitioning Veterans, which is operated by the Fellow Countrymen Organization. Fellow Countrymen's mission is to prevent veteran suicide by providing transitional housing and to ensure that veterans receive all eligible benefits and gain meaningful employment through mentorship.

Learn more about this month's beneficiary.

Join GCDP and be part of the Democrats Care community. Email Whitney Wright @ whitney.wright@gmail.com



Meet the GCDP: Paul Merlo

Paul Merlo focuses volunteers' passion on impact

This is another in our continuing series of Q&As with members of the GCDP. Management Team. Paul Merlo is the co-coordinator of volunteers for the party. A transplant from a blue-state background to a red-state reality, Paul has decades of experience in political organizing that he brings to the effort to turn South Carolina blue.

Q. Let's start with a short bio

I was born in Pittsburgh, PA, and lived most of my life there. My daughter is a public school fourth grade teacher in Virginia. I am no longer married. I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a BA in a special studies program of Philosophy and Political Science with a concentration in moral philosophy and a minor in economics. I also had minors in English Literature and Religious Studies. I had been politically active in Democratic politics since I was 15 and planned to make a career in public service but I learned that you could spend your whole career helping others get elected without making a real contribution to policy. I loved the process of politics, but I wanted to make sure that my life made a real difference at something.



When I graduated, a confluence of qualification, experiences, connections and dumb luck gave me the opportunity to be the first patient's advocate at a newly opened county nursing home. This was real advocacy work. Eventually, I moved onto a faith-based not-for-profit that is a leader in dementia care. During that time, I had the privilege of leading a team that began to use Montessori and other teaching methods to create new interactive care modalities that made unexpected and truly life-changing improvements to functionality and quality of life. Six years ago, I changed direction. I accepted a grant-funded position to develop and initiate a STE(A)M+ Academy in a very small public school in an unincorporated rural community in the Oklahoma Panhandle. After four years, the grant funding expired. At that time, a family member who lives in Greenville had some healthcare needs. I came here temporarily to help but fell in love with the community and have decided to stay.

Q. You've got a long background in Democratic politics; can you describe your experiences?

I was 7 years old in 1968 and lived in a family of working-class adults who talked and debated intelligently, thoughtfully and openly about events in the nation like civil rights, the Vietnam War, Nixon and other issues. Even then, I knew that the idea of the United States that I was learning about in school and church, and which inspired and captivated me, was not fully realized in the real world. It is a work in progress and each generation, each individual really, has the opportunity and duty to bring us closer to that idea upon which our nation is founded. By age 13, I knew that the Democratic Party represented the best avenue for us to become the nation we were founded to become. At 15, I volunteered on my first political campaign (we won) and accepted steadily more and more responsibility from the local Democratic Party. At age 16, I managed my first campaign, a candidate for state legislator (we lost). Since then, I have remained very active in Democratic politics and campaigns on all levels of government. Prior to moving to Greenville, I was on the board of directors for Western PA for Kerry, a canvass director in Allegheny County for President Obama's re-election in 2012 and did a little field work for Wendy Davis's gubernatorial campaign in Texas in 2014.

Meet the GCDP: Paul Merlo (continued)

Q. You must have felt out of place moving to SC; do you think we are catching up - as Democrats?

Actually, moving from very, very “blue” Pittsburgh to the “infrared” Oklahoma Panhandle was a more interesting adjustment. Still, when I moved here, my expectations were very low. It is, after all, the state of Lindsey Graham and Trey Gowdy, but it is not as dogmatically extreme as Oklahoma. Truthfully, I was not planning to stay and was not invested. In a way, I viewed it as a sort of decompression; the way you might recover from a time deep in the ocean before returning to the surface. Pink SC was the intermediary stage I needed before I could return to blue Pittsburgh without my blood boiling and my head exploding from the change in political pressure.

It has been an inspiring, invigorating surprise. I have found the vision of the party leadership to be bold, ethical and yet remarkably pragmatic and intelligent. The GCDP strategic plan is comprehensive, intricate and well thought out. The community is a fabric of compassionate, well-versed, intelligent and motivated individuals committed to positive change in many important issues. There are more Democrats than I expected, and they are making themselves known in greater and greater numbers and with more and more energy every day.

Q. How important will volunteers be in the upcoming municipal elections as well as the run up to 2020?

The GCDP is a party of volunteers, all the way up to the party chair. But that makes sense because, really, we are a nation of volunteers; of individuals, stepping out from the personal priorities of their private lives to work together for the common good and to contribute their combined energy to forge a “more perfect” union than what was passed on to them. Our story as a people really begins, not with “once upon a time,” but with “We the people.” Those words are the mantra of our democracy; they are the motto of American volunteerism; they are the key to our future success as a community of free people, here in Greenville and as a nation.

Q. What’s the most important quality of a volunteer?

There really isn’t one paramount quality. In some ways, this answer depends on the particular role that the individual fills. But I think it always starts with this: Be sincerely yourself. When you do that, you engage others with the best of who you are, and your words and actions have credibility and impact. In addition, the volunteers who carry our party’s message to the voters become effective when they learn to listen to, understand and speak using the meaning of words as they are understood and used by the voters we want to persuade. When we engage with voters using their words and their understanding of those words, we can engage in meaningful dialog and truly begin to educate and persuade.

Q. Two-parter: What’s the most moving, empowering experience you’ve had as a volunteer BEFORE coming to SC? And same question since you’ve been the volunteer coordinator?

One day, during my first campaign, I was tasked with leading a group of student volunteers to deliver absentee voter applications to residents in local nursing homes. My team went to a private, faith-based home with a stellar reputation. The facility was clean, did not have unpleasant odors and the staff was courteous, helpful and even seemed affectionate with the residents. We had a list of names and the residents that I visited were clean, dressed appropriately and groomed. Still, there was a cloud of loneliness and despair that hung with suffocating heaviness in the air. It overwhelmed me, it seemed to cling to my clothes and skin.

When we got back to the car, I began to weep. I had not cried in front of anyone else since my parents divorced four years earlier. It shook me to realize this was in my community, in America, in the 20th century and that this was a choice. We treated these aged souls this way not because we couldn’t do better but because we chose to not do better. Back at HQ, more composed but still distressed, our campaign manager took me aside. He was unyielding: This is why we are working so hard; this is why the campaign is so important; this is why my contribution is vital; stay with the campaign and fight to make a difference or slink away and whimper in the dark – it was my choice – but, one way or the other, make it and stop wasting time. We had important work to do and damn little time to do it. I stayed.

I have seen the same reaction on the faces of some of our volunteers as we have canvassed in some of our neighborhoods here in Greenville. I’ve watched the realization sink in that this is in Greenville, this is America, this is the 21st Century and, somehow, we’ve chosen to let this happen and let it continue. I’ve seen the weight of this realization engulf and weigh them down, their shoulders slump, pace becomes a shuffle, tears form. I haven’t shared the pep talk that salvaged my activism. I haven’t had to—every one of them has come back and remained an active volunteer. What a remarkable group of people we have on our team!

SHOPPING FOR THE CAUSE

Want to shop for a cause? Of course, all things being equal you'd probably rather patronize a business run by a fellow Democrat. We're here to help connect you. Businesses can purchase inexpensive ads on our Democratic Marketplace and we'll help them reach our constituents. We've got a new ad this month from Daniel Lopez, owner of Time To Taste Catering. Let's help Dems do business! Check out the marketplace and, if you're in business, consider placing an ad for a three-month, six-month or one-year term.



Time to Taste Catering | No event is the same, no menu should be either! Let our custom menus and no-hassle process give you and your guests an unforgettable experience.

Contact Daniel (daniel@timetotastecatering.com).

**WANT TO
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AD HERE?**

AND HELP THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AT THE SAME TIME?

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Questions? Email
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May Contributors

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

David Armstrong, Ron Cowen, Gayle Hewitt, Michelle James, Kinard Johnson, Anita LeBold, Ashley Newton, Sara Stuart and Starla Taylor.

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).

Some of our donors choose to make their gifts recurring. Maximize your donation by making it recurring. Go to

<https://greenvilledemocrats.com/contribute/>. For more information, contact Anita LeBold, treasurer at 864.325.8540 or treasurer@greenvilledemocrats.com.

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.

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