



Unsung Heroes



Message from the chair

Finding new motivation to move our mission forward

By Elias "Eli" Valentin II

Chair, GCDP

Happy New Year and I hope you all are looking forward to a happy, healthy, and successful 2021. This past year has tested us in so many ways. We are living through our country dealing with a world-wide pandemic, reacting to an economic crisis unlike any we have seen, and we all witnessed one of the most bizarre, yet exhilarating, election seasons in our nation's history. What energy do we have left for this upcoming year?

We have tremendous opportunities in front of us here as Greenville Democrats. Over the next couple of months, join us as we roll out our path forward. The elections here in the State of South Carolina and Greenville were not what many of us hoped for. Do not despair and do not be discouraged. We can look to our neighbor, Georgia, seeing how effective planning, consistent outreach, and the motivation to win can change the outcome of even the reddest of areas. It isn't something which will happen overnight, but it is doable. Sign up with our Mobilization team to get involved and listen to our voters and community members.

Opportunity is only one side of the coin. There are also challenges we must face head on if we want to become relevant in governance here in the Upstate. With 45 gone, will Democrats be as engaged? Can we unify around a subject, topic, issue, or person, the way we did around him? How many of us will be as active during these four years as we were the last four? Many of us saw the existential threat the President was on our country. It is why we called, knocked, text, and spoke to our friends about Hillary. It wasn't enough. So we dove in deeper. His election motivated people to step up their level of engagement, with so many people getting involved with politics for the first time. Will these folks still be as engaged? Will you? We need you NOW more than ever.

I am so anxious for the Biden-Harris administration. We need them to build back better, repairing the damage our former President has done domestically and abroad. I am so hopeful the leader of the Senate will be a Democrat. This will allow us to pass more robust legislation and confirm the team President-Elect Biden deserves and needs at this inflection point in America's history.



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I truly believe this is the time we must work in solidarity, pushing beyond what we think is possible. Our Democrats leaders will. I know President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris, from first hand knowledge, will work tirelessly For the People of this great country. Our majority in the Senate is a majority, but it is thin, however I know Leader Schumer and his team will work to provide relief to the American people.

I am thankful for the great leadership of Nancy Pelosi, steering the House of Representatives into action continuing to focus on the legislation that matters. My heart is overjoyed to see one of our own, Jaime Harrison, take over at the Democratic National Committee and continue to keep South Carolina prominent in the conversation of national politics.

Our piece to the puzzle comes right here in our own backyard. We must expand the electorate in Greenville and across South Carolina. We must hold accountable elected

Continued on next page

A different inauguration

By the time many of you are reading this, the inauguration will be over. And it will be a far different inauguration than any of us have seen.

Take, for instance, the National Mall. Instead of masses of people, it is now a Field of Flags. There are 200,000 US flags that represent the Americans unable to be present for this very different celebration.

Other sections contain the flags of nations of the world. And 56 pillars of light, representing the 50 states and six US territories illuminate it all

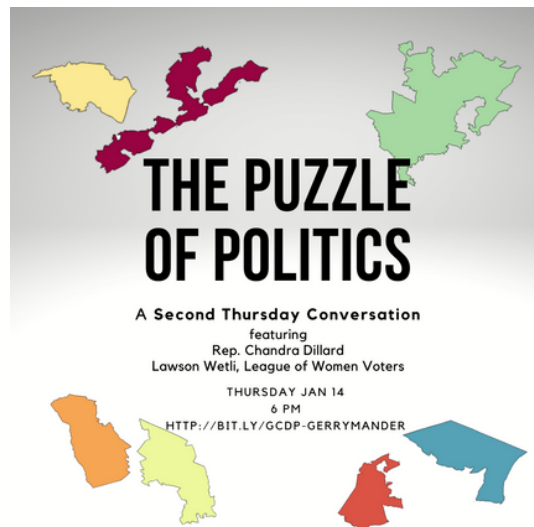


In case you missed it

Confused by how our election districts get drawn and how they become weaponized? We brought the League of Women Voters's co-president Lawson Wetli, and Rep. Chandra Dillard together to explain it to us because this year, the Legislature will be redrawing those district lines.

If you missed our virtual event, no worries, we've got a replay.

[Watch it now.](#)



The Democratic Women of Greenville County executed their peaceful transfer of power on Jan. 11. Incoming president Mary Wright was the featured speaker and outlined her vision for the organization.

If you missed it, you can catch up by [watching here.](#)

Message from the chair

Continued from previous page

officials, who vote against our interest and the interests of our communities.

This will play out as we see the fetal heart-beat bill, a potential education reform package (they have controlled all three levels of government for years and still can't get something to move us out of the bottom of the national education rankings), and will reveal folks true colors as we

work through the redistricting process. We CANNOT and MUST NOT accept a discriminatory map through redistricting, which exacerbates the racial injustice we see happening everyday in this state. This is the beginning of a new journey. Join us! Stay engaged, stay active and stay healthy. Let's continue to make Good Trouble!

Democratically yours,
Elias "Eli" Valentín II

Unsung Heroes

2020 was a difficult year in many ways. And certainly a tough election cycle with normal methods of campaigning and supporting candidates largely unavailable due to the pandemic. So many people stepped up to help – not only in our elections, but in the campaign for Georgia just recently successfully concluded (Yay Jon and Rev. Warnock!). We've selected a dozen volunteers who were with us through thick and thin to represent our appreciation for **all** our volunteers. [Read the full profiles of each of our Heroes online!](#)



LINDA DERECTOR

From the nominator: Linda brings passion to everything she does and so it was with her idea for a fundraising campaign. The 20.20 Vision campaign contributed significantly to our successful efforts to increase online donations. Linda also answered the call of precinct leadership, worked with local campaigns, registered voters with the League of Women Voters, donated to campaigns, made phone calls and wrote postcards. So, yeah, everything.



GLENDA MORRISON FAIR

From the nominator: Glenda has been a true public servant for Greenville County residents. Her ability to be present, responsive, and understand the needs of our families and students during the pandemic has been amazing to watch. She is fighting for our future and for the betterment of our education system. We are blessed to have her leadership on the Greenville County School Board.



KINARD JOHNSON

From the nominator: Kinard is truly an unsung hero for the GCDP. If you were to look up the definition of "Jack of All Trades" you would see a picture of Kinard. He is critical to so many things happening that many of us don't even know is transpiring. From coordinating our Office Volunteers as an inspiring leader or helping us with all of the renovations as we updated the office, Kinard is someone who does what it takes to move our Party forward.

More heroes on next page

Unsung Heroes



LEIGH LEARING

From the nominator: Leigh is someone who makes tremendous things happen for our Party and consistently steps up for us when we need it. She was the driving force in our Precinct Reorganization, taking the lead and making it happen despite a growing pandemic concern. Leigh will be an integral part of our growth in 2021 as she spearheads the Precinct Development Committee to action through community outreach. We are lucky to have her on the team.



EVELYN NOCELLA

From the nominator: Evelyn stepped up by becoming a Precinct President and Cluster Lead. She also volunteered to canvass for several candidates as well as participate in voter registration activities. Now she will lead the North Greenville County Democrats as their Chair for 2021.



STACEY MARS

From the nominator: Stacey is a natural organizer. She always comes in with a smile on her face and ready to work for the betterment of our community. As she stepped into the Volunteer Coordinator role in 2020, she has been crucial in providing support, guidance, and leadership with our most important resource: PEOPLE. She is willing to do whatever we need her to do and is a great teammate because she serves with humility and grace, hallmarks of the character she possesses.

More heroes on next page



ELAINE MCGRATH

From the nominator: Elaine is relatively new to Greenville, but she hit the ground running and immediately became a fixture in our office. A natural leader, she immediately took ownership of organizing political sign distribution and helping to implement digital

tools into our primarily analog environment. As Election Day approached, she took on the job of organizing our rides-to-the-polls program, organizing drivers, making schedules, and managing critical communications. Where there was a need, Elaine saw it and filled it.

Unsung Heroes



DANI NORMAN

From the nominator: Dani joined the fundraising committee, led by Regina Waldrep, facing a difficult year. Dani came up with Trivia Tuesday, an innovative idea to raise some money, attract younger Dems, and potentially bring in new people not currently connected with the party. From conception to completion, she took ownership of the project and turned it into a fun, revenue-producing reality.



HUGH OWENS

From the nominator: Hugh has worked on just about every campaign run in the last three years. He's quiet and does not seek recognition. But he's always there to help with the task at hand. He knocks on doors, phonebanks, hosts fundraisers and donates money. He protests with the Tuesday group out on Main St every week. Hugh is the very incarnation of an unsung hero and deserves our gratitude and recognition.



KIRSTEN PRUITT

From the nominator: She stepped up as both Treasurer and Secretary of Young Dems this past year, and she was constantly there when I needed help. She took on a ton of additional tasks, helped organize projects, and kept me sane throughout the year. She also manned a few tables and helped with volunteer opportunities with other groups when we needed someone.



SUSIE SMITH

From the nominator: Susie was incredibly helpful leading up to the election, volunteering to help out with whatever was needed. She helped us put together packets for all the poll watchers, and then served as a poll watcher herself on election day. She also created a quiet space at HQ the night before the election for anyone who needed it. I appreciated having her help! Her willingness to serve in whatever capacity was needed truly reflects the "all in" mentality that was the heart of this past election.

One more hero on the next page

[Read profiles of each of our Unsung Heroes on the GCDP website](#)



Unsung Heroes

WHITNEY WRIGHT

From the nominator: Whitney has been integral in the most important part of the Greenville County Democratic Party -- our outreach. Her work with the Huddle groups and coming off her leadership as 2nd vice chair is exactly why we are growing as a party.

5 Greenville women join Emerge class of 2021

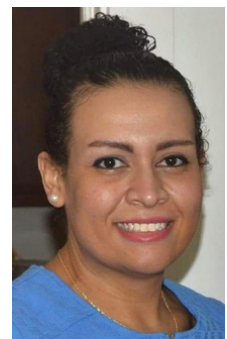
Five Greenville women join 25 other politically and socially active women from across the state who will make up the 2021 Emerge Class.

They are:

- Amber Galea, of Greenville, a media specialist at the Sara Collins Elementary School.
- Ebony Sullivan, of Mauldin, chief operating officer at Cassy Electric and former events and program coordinator at the Greenville County Chamber of Commerce.
- Kirsten Pruitt, secretary of Greenville County Young Democrats. And one of our Unsung Heroes for 2020. **See Page 6.**
- Stacey Mars, of Piedmont, volunteer coordinator of the Greenville County Democratic Party. And also one of our Unsung Heroes for 2020. **See Page 5.**
- Tricia Paul, of Taylors.

Emerge SC is the state arm of a national organization dedicated to increasing the number of Democratic women leaders from diverse backgrounds in public office through recruitment, training and providing a powerful network. The signature training program is an immersive program designed to train women to run for - and win - public office. The program takes place over six months, is staffed by consultants and experts from across the country, and covers key topics on strategy, communications, fundraising, and public speaking.

Four previous Greenville County graduates of the program are currently serving in either elected office, like City Councilwoman Dorothy Dowe, or in leadership positions in Democratic organizations like Mary Wright, president, Democratic Women of Greenville County; Adriene Atkinson, 1st vice president of DWGC; and Timicia Grant, 2nd vice president of DWGC. In announcing the class, Emerge notes: "This year's class is one of the most diverse we will train at Emerge South Carolina, as over 80 percent of the class represents the New American Majority - Black, Brown, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, young, and unmarried women."



It's back: Republican leaders put fetal heartbeat bill front and center

So many of us want to make a difference. We have things to say. Issues to stand up for. Wrongs to speak out about. And most of us do that on social media. While that's a great personal outlet, it does little to sway the opinion of the elected officials who are making decisions.

This month, we are re-launching our Advocacy Challenge. Our goal is to identify an opportunity each month to advocate with the intention of influencing results, not just releasing anger. The Advocacy Challenge will focus on an issue or piece of legislation that is currently on the front burner in South Carolina or Washington. We'll give you information and ask you to personally contact – either by mail or phone – the relevant elected officials and let us know how it went.

Our advocacy expert – Sharon Klompus – says phone calls carry the most weight. This month's challenge is on the Fetal Heartbeat Bill now in front of the State Senate. This bill failed to pass in the last session, and now it is – inexplicably – the first medical or health initiative that Republican leadership put forward.

The Issue: In case you thought that a pandemic might be the most important health issue confronting our elected officials, we can disabuse you of that notion. Senate bill S-001 is the next iteration of last year's attempt to virtually end abortion in the state. The Fetal Heartbeat Protection from Abortion Act was introduced by senators Grooms, Verdin, Kimbrell, Garrett, Martin, Shealy, Climer, Corbin, Cromer, Rice, Adams and Hembree, and fast-tracked to the Medical Affairs Sub-Committee, which held a hearing last week and immediately voted to refer the bill for vote of the full committee.

The bill would make abortion illegal once a fetal heartbeat can be detected. The only exception appears to be if the pregnancy would threaten the life of the mother. Even rape and incest are not exclusions. Doctors who perform abortions following the detection of a heartbeat are liable to fines and criminal penalties including jail time. The only change from last year's bill appears to be the ban takes effect at eight weeks instead of six weeks, or with the detection of a heartbeat.

In November, Republicans flipped three Senate seats and a



THE ADVOCACY CHALLENGE

FOR JAN: FETAL HEARTBEAT BILL

House seat. This has emboldened them to think that they can not only get this bill passed, but an entire package of draconian, anti-women's health legislation. According to the Post and Courier, these pickups have Sen. John McCravy (R-Greenwood), chair of the SC Family Caucus, optimistic about the fate of his omnibus SC Stands for Life Act, a package of laws that includes fetal heartbeat, barring dismemberment abortions, requiring informed consent on chemically induced abortions and an instant ban should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 case that gave women the right to terminate a pregnancy.

For talking points and information on finding your reps, visit our [Advocacy Challenge post on the GCDP website](#).

Tell us how you did:. On Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, post a comment on your experience with the **#AdvocacyChallenge-FetalHeartbeat**. If you had a particularly good response, you may want to share your specific "ask." Or how you approached the call. We may highlight some on social media and use the experiences to encourage others to engage in a more personal and effective way with our elected officials.

Expansion would improve health, economy in SC

Democrats in the state legislature have introduced resolutions that, if enacted, would put Medicaid Expansion on the ballot in 2022. We asked Dr. Dawn Bingham, a physician, health policy advocate, and former candidate for State Senate for her view.

By Dr. Dawn Bingham

As a physician, I support the expansion of Medicaid as a key strategy to improve health outcomes in South Carolina. The COVID pandemic has made it evident that the health of our citizens and the prosperity of our state are inherently intertwined.

Currently, 38 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Medicaid expansion and 12 states, including South Carolina, have not adopted the expansion. Nonetheless, Medicaid expansion is popular among South Carolina voters.

According to a poll conducted by Winthrop in 2019, 73 percent of respondents said they would support allowing more people to utilize Medicaid. Research has demonstrated that states that have chosen the expansion of Medicaid have citizens with improved access to health care, fewer delays in obtaining it, better self-reported health, reductions in mortality, and better economic stability for both patients and hospitals.

By expanding Medicaid, we can provide better health to over 200,000 more South Carolinians, and improve our dismal health statistics in areas such as infant mortality, maternal mortality, obesity, hypertension, and cancer deaths. South Carolina ranks 40th in the nation for public health, and this can be improved with Medicaid expansion.

South Carolina residents are paying federal taxes that are being used to fund Medicaid expansion for other states. We are missing out on \$15.8 billion in federal funding by not expanding Medicaid. The current legislature has



The GCDP interviewed Dr. Bingham for the health care segment of our Republican Record series. She discussed Medicaid expansion in the video above. Watch the full interview [here](#).

allowed us to subsidize other state's Medicaid expansion, while South Carolinians suffer without the added benefits this money would provide.

This decision back in 2012 by then Gov. Nikki Haley, and perpetuated by Gov. Henry McMaster has weakened the health of South Carolinians and throttled our healthcare systems during the pandemic. Additionally, it has disproportionately affected people of color, particularly Black Americans. As a result, the decisions about whether to expand Medicaid has implications for any efforts to address disparities in health coverage, access, and outcomes among people of color.

An article in the New England Journal of Medicine reviewed the financial picture of the 37 states (including DC) that have expanded Medicaid. The findings show "Medicaid expansion appears to be a win-win from the states' perspective — giving health insurance to millions of low income adults and offering financial support to safety-net hospitals, without any adverse effects on state budgets."

"Increases in Medicaid spending were subsidized entirely by increased federal funding to expansion states, with no significant changes in spending from state revenues associated with Medicaid expansion ... How could states have expanded Medicaid without increasing state spending, when they were on the hook for 5 percent of the expansion costs in 2017 and 6 percent in 2018?"

[There's more to this story. Continue reading this article online on the GCDP website.](#)

Calendar: What's going on?

January

20

Just Mercy Youth Screening and discussion, 1-4:30 PM, Camelot Theatre, 48 E. Antrim Drive, to register, call Jalen Elrod 864-915-7020.

20

A virtual community panel discussion; The Covid 19 pandemic and impacts on communities of color in the Upstate. 6:30 PM. [Register](#).

20

MLK Day Celebration luncheon 11:30 AM, the events center at Greer City Hall, \$5. [Information](#).

20

MLK Interfaith Celebration, Daniel Memorial Chapel, Furman University, 7 PM. [Information](#)

21

Democratic Black Caucus virtual monthly meeting, 6-7 PM, email whitney.wrightsc@gmail.com for a link.

23



9-10:30 AM, Our special guest is Clay Middleton, a Democratic strategist currently a member of the Biden Transition Team. Middleton is a South Carolinian, Democratic strategist, and former member of the Obama Administration. You don't want to miss this conversation. [Join our virtual meeting on Zoom.](#)

February: Celebrating Black History

FEB

All month, the 5th annual African American History month art exhibition is on display at the Greenville Technical College library. 7:30 AM-8 PM, Monday through Thursday, 9 AM-1 PM Friday and Saturday, 506 S. Pleasantburg Drive, Building 105, admission is free

8

Five Forks branch of the Hughes Main Library stories of segregation and desegregation at its I Remember When: Black History Month event. 104 Sunnydale Drive, Simpsonville, 2-3 PM, admission is free.

9

First Christian Church hosts an African American History month celebration and observance, 3 PM, 704 Edwards Road, Greenville, admission is free.

17

Greenville County Schools hosts an interactive exhibit commemorating 50 years since integration at the Upcountry History Museum, 3-6 PM, 540 Buncombe Street, Greenville, admission is free.

17

The Children's Museum of the Upstate commemorating the 50th anniversary of integration in Greenville County Schools with One Voice: A Black History Narrative, 7-9 PM, 300 College St. Greenville, admission is \$10.

17

Martin Luther King Spoken Word Celebration, 7:30 PM, Radio Room, admission is \$15. [Tickets](#).

22

St. Philip's Episcopal Church, 31 Allendale Lane, Greenville, "Breath, Eyes, Memory" reimagining racial trauma exposure, response and resiliency among African American boys and men. Free.

26

The Black History month monologue contest sponsored by the Greenville chapter of the NAACP, 6:30 PM, Room 101 John Hall, Furman University.

28 Days of Black History

Our 28 Days of Black History can be books to read, films or videos to watch, podcasts to listen to, news or magazine articles or projects to read. This list can be a project map for anyone seeking to expand their knowledge or increase their understanding.

Please contribute by emailing your suggestion to gcdpcomms@greenvilledemocrats.com. Please include a description, a link (if it's online), and your name and contact information (in case we need to contact you for information). We will list you as a contributor unless you request your name be withheld.

[See what we have so far and send in your contribution!](#)

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We welcome your one-time or recurring donations on our website.

<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/greenville-county-democratic-party-1>

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Our office remains closed until further notice due to COVID spikes. We will be checking voicemail and email remotely a few times each day so please call us at 864-232-5531 or email

headquarters@greenvilledemocrats.com

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