



LCDCC December 16, 2020 VIA ZOOM

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Call to Order and Introductions: Quinlan O'Connor (Chair)

- **Quinlan** called the meeting to order at **7:03 PM** via Zoom. Quinlan welcomed all, and asked for introductions. In attendance (by Zoom identification): **Shawn Whyte, James Reavis, Mark Mackin, Rep. Moffie Funk, Rep. Rob Farris-Olsen, Sen. Jill Cohenour and Joe Cohenour, Joann Hansen, Shani Henry, Jan Clinard, Kyle Joiner, Laura Duculon, Kev Hamm, Sandi Luckey, Jacob Torgerson, Jakob Miles, Korbin Bragstad.** Officers Tonia Bossell and Kate Dramstad were excused.

Business: Sandi Luckey, Montana Democratic Party

- Sandi described the analytic response to the state-wide Democratic defeat as “14 round tables in 10 days”. These Dem subgroups included cyber, labor, women, youth, Natives, former leaders, etc. To plan a way forward, the party needs to “burst the Helena bubble”. Focus groups of Republicans who previously voted Dem showed a perception that Dems are no longer for working people.
- This post election analysis is almost complete, and results will be presented to the executive board and central committee chairs first, and then more generally.
- Sandi focused on tasks performed by the MDP with the unprecedented amount of staff and funding available this cycle. The state party did human resource work for local campaigns, digital coordination for social media, and lots of (successful) digital security. An innovative Native vote program (including a virtual Pow-wow) led to 60-70% voter turnout on reservations. The MDP is promoting local central committees on reservations as well.
- Newspaper and digital ads statewide targeted rural voters to advocate improved internet access as well as support for Montana farm/ ranch issues in opposition to big corporations.
- Overall, there were 83,000 new voters this cycle but most were older than 60. Steve Bullock got more votes than ever in his Senate race BUT his opponent received more. In Montana, election outcomes in an area can now be predicted by the percentage of voters that are college educated. (And only 30% of Montanans have a college degree). The big take-away from 2020 was the end of ticket-splitting among Montana voters.
- Sandi said Dems need to get outside their comfort zones and listen to disgruntled voters. Central committees need to recruit more precinct representatives. Dems need to focus (even more) on jobs and the economy. Montana newspapers refused to run stories pitched by the MDP, so communication alternatives are needed.
- During the session, the MDP will (virtually) host weekly updates for central committees from legislative leaders. Jacob asked that Dems link poor commodity prices in rural MT to national Republican actions.

Business: Jacob Torgerson, Montana state adviser, United Rural Democrats

- **Jacob** descends from 3 generations of Eastern Montana farmers. He ran in the 2020 Democratic primary for the Montana legislature (SD40).
- United Rural Democrats is a new (founded less than a month ago) organization spearheaded by Joseph Shepherd of Iowa (see https://twitter.com/rural_united)

- The group of young activists aims to organize in each state to focus on winning back rural voters with a strong economic message. Jacob said he would have more information next month about URD.

Minutes and Financial: Group

- Secretary **Linda Beischel** submitted November minutes to the chair, who posted them on Zoom for participants to view. Minutes were accepted without objection.
- Treasurer **Shawn Whyte** reported a balance of \$1154.00, accepted without objection. She filed the required COPP report. Shawn thanked all the legislators for their work.

Legislator reports: Rep. Rob Farris-Olsen (HD 79)

- **Rob**, a member of the Joint Rules Committee reported that all Democratic amendments to Rules regarding the 2021 session (including COVID precautions) are likely to fail. Republican proposals include return to 2017 rules that give the Speaker even more power than in 2019, as well as giving committee chairs absolute power to decide if a bill receives a hearing. Rob noted that some Republicans do support a fairer process.
- **Rep. Moffie Funk** (HD82) said she admired staff who had to sit through Republican combativeness and disrespect in meetings. Rules Committee Republicans showed no inclination to implement public health COVID recommendations. Rob said he thinks Democratic messaging about the legislature's COVID risk to local economies is effective. Rob reported that Dem alliances with "reasonable Republicans" are tenuous, and citizen comments from inside the "Helena bubble" are likely ignored. He advised coordinating testimony with legislative leaders (Rep. Kim Abbott and Sen. Cohenour).
- Shawn and Linda asked that Dem legislators communicate the message they prefer.
- Quinlan noted that LCCDCC has a legislative messaging subcommittee.

Legislator reports: Rep. Mary Ann Dunwell (HD 84)

- **Mary Ann** was unable to attend due to another commitment. She submitted a written report which was summarized by Linda Beischel, and posted in Zoom chat.
- The extreme conservative majority on Joint Rules refused to accept public comment earlier today, despite protests from Democrats. This afternoon, House Rules shut down public comment from Rep. Dunwell and ordered her microphone muted.
- Mary Ann asked that the central committee organize a response to reckless GOP behavior in the Rules committee, especially regarding COVID precautions to protect public health. Dem amendments to allow a remote session, postpone the session until more are vaccinated, or even to require masks and distancing, were all defeated. Mary Ann also urged precinct representative reach out to local Democrats to motivate and organize. Those voters can then reach out to their neighbors who may be regretting an R vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM. **Next meeting Tuesday January 12, 2021** at 7 PM via Zoom. Respectfully submitted, Linda S. Beischel, secretary