



General Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m.

II. Hybrid Meeting Instructions; Approval of Minutes, Agenda, and New Members

- A. A. Yohai: If you are speaking, please stand where I am so that people can see you both on Zoom and in the room. Hold the microphone at a fist's distance from your mouth so that you are audible without feedback.
- B. Draft agenda accepted.
- C. Minutes adopted unanimously.
- D. New members were unanimously approved.
- E. A. Yohai: Raise your hand using the "raise your hand" button if you are on the Zoom. Don't use the chat for meeting business.

III. Introduction of Special Guests

- A. A. Yohai: Del. Ghazala Hashmi, state senator from Chesterfield and candidate for lieutenant governor, and Del. Kathy Tran are with us tonight.
- B. G. Hashmi: I represent Richmond City, as well as Chesterfield. In 2016, we all remember when we thought our election was going in one direction and woke up to a grim reality that we lost the election. I was really, really devastated. I was a college professor teaching English, and while I always followed politics and volunteered for campaigns, I realized I had not done everything I could have in that election. I had spent a lot of time teaching students the philosophical ideals of Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and woke up to the reality that Donald Trump had silenced those voices, that diversity.

For me as an immigrant and Muslim, this was personal to me. I had so many students who were those targeted Muslims who had come from the Muslim ban countries. Many had gone abroad and now were trying to get back into the country. I called our attorney general to find out how we could help these students. Trump had just been inaugurated and implemented the Muslim ban, but as I was driving to work, I couldn't even get out of the car due to a panic attack, because I had heard about a new policy Trump had proposed: a Muslim registry to track and register every Muslim in this country. We know about those registries in the Holocaust and the Japanese-American internment.

That was the triggering moment, because I was so afraid of what it meant for my family, my daughters, and my community. We told our daughter to keep her passport with her at all times and didn't know whether we would be rejected now. I had to decide what I was going to do, how I was going to respond to the dark impulses, and I knew I had to be visible, so I decided to run for office. I went for it. Nobody asked me to run, because I was a political outsider. We not only flipped that seat but did so by 10 points. That one seat made the difference and flipped the Senate and brought in the Democratic trifecta. We were able to pass consequential laws during that time on early voting, safe abortion access, environmental legislation, and educational funding. In that moment, we were able to make a change. Our one-seat majority in the Senate has saved Virginia



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from Gov. Younkin's radical changes. Now we are rightfully focused on making sure that we win Congress, that we return Senator Kaine to the Senate, and that we win the presidency, electing the first woman president ever. We have to have a Democratic majority to pass key constitutional amendments. Abigail Spanberger is our presumptive Democratic nominee for governor. We have legislation that Virginia wants to see succeed, and we need to have that relationship between the branches of the administration to succeed. We will be able to move the needle for historically disenfranchised people. We have to vote for and secure the (re)election of Kaine and Harris/Walz.

IV. New Business

- A. Vote to Ratify Endorsement of Statewide [Constitutional Amendment](#)
- i) A. Yohai: The Steering Committee met earlier this month in an emergency meeting and approved this amendment. We now need to ratify that approval.
 - ii) K. Tran: This was brought to me by a surviving spouse of a military member killed in the line of duty. This is a very small group affected. We gave them an exemption from the taxes. Right now we have a tax exemption to those with 100% service-related disability. This would include the surviving spouses of service members killed in training or operational accidents. In 2021, out of the 8.5 million Virginians, there were 182 surviving spouses, including those who were killed in the line of duty. It passed unanimously in the House and Senate, so I hope that y'all are able to endorse it so that it can appear as recommended on the sample ballot.
 - iii) S. Sedgwick: Motion made to open discussion, limit discussion to 15 minutes total, 1 minute 30 seconds each. This was unanimously approved.
 - iv) Diane: Are suicides included as being killed in the line of duty? K. Tran: Depending on the circumstance, they can be.
 - v) K. Rhem: In every case, the Department of Defense determines whether the death was in the line of duty, and they are very generous in that determination.
 - vi) D. Simon: For those who have already voted, this was listed as recommended on the sample ballot. Why?
 - vii) A. Yohai: We already made the decision in the Steering Committee, and that's why it is listed as recommended on the sample ballot.
 - viii) L. Lippolis: What happens if we vote no? What are the arguments against? K. Tran: It was unanimously recommended by the House and Senate, so thank goodness it was not politicized. It is a local tax, so there is a small loss of revenue for some localities.
 - ix) The amendment passed unanimously.

V. Treasurer's Report

- A. If you look at the revenues in support, we are above where we expected to be in terms of membership dues due to enthusiasm—a lot of new members signing up. Finance Committee put together one hell of a fundraiser (Blue Fairfax Dinner). Gems and recurring donors help a lot with the bottom line. That's where we are going to get the



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most bang for our buck. A lot of the Chair's Direct Appeal fundraising comes in the second half of the year. We expect to raise about \$20K more than we planned. It's never enough.

- B. In terms of expenses, we are on track with what we planned. We see a lot of absentee ballot requests and chase those, so that costs a lot of money. For the next 40+ days, we are going to have a lot of energy. Let's take advantage of it at the polls and in the wallet.

VI. Chair's Report

- A. I want to share with you all we have seen a blockbuster presidential debate. I don't remember loving a debate so much. We have a stupendous nominee. At this moment two months ago, we are all warming up to a new reality, an unprecedented moment in American politics. Republicans are pushing for early voting this year. We need volunteers, so contact your precinct captain to volunteer for early voting.
- B. J. Herrer, regional political director: The Harris Campaign sees us as the underdog, because a lot of people are not very well informed. Trump is a quasi-incumbent with a base. We are not just turning out people to get out the vote. We are persuading them to vote and how are you going to get to the polls. Secondly, we're going for the weak Trump voters. Some of them have flipped. We have the messages of patriotism, strong national security, and American exceptionalism. It's for a good reason that we are going for that. Debate watch parties are not just for fun; they're for homing in on the messaging. If you bring friends, we're going to hound them to volunteer. It's going to be tough, but we are going to win this one.
- C. A. Yohai: Let's bring this home. We're going to win Virginia, but the more we do here means the less resources Kamala has to burn in Virginia. We have submitted a FOIA request to find out what exact criteria Republicans are using to come up with the plan to refer people to the Commonwealth's Attorney, because we want everyone who is eligible to vote to be able to vote.

VII. Vice Chairs, Committees, and Caucuses Reports

- A. K. Rhem, Precinct Ops: If we want to win this election, we want to plus up the vote in FC, so that we win the state of Virginia. If you are not sure what the best use of your time is, please talk to your district's precincts vice chair or membership chair. We want to staff all the 16 early voting sites with people handing out sample ballots. Please don't engage with the trolls. We are representing the FC DP, so let's all represent our party and values positively.
- B. N. Golding, Finance: I wanted to thank everyone who came to the Defend Democracy BBQ. Sen. Warner came. We had awesome new volunteers. I wanted to stress Andrew's ask for people to try to become Dem Gems. It really helps when people are giving to us monthly. We will have no more fundraising events until December 8.
- C. M. Challender, Voter Protection & Election Law: We have had some exciting times in voter protection. We have over 100 trained observers and 180 shifts covered. So far, the voting is normal and calm as usual. I appreciate everyone who chipped in for our FOIA fundraising campaign. I want to be clear that the Republicans have referred people for



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prosecution who registered as non-citizens. This is political and will result in almost nothing in terms of prosecution. You can still train to be a poll observer. Our next training for the county is Oct. 16 at 7 p.m. See the calendar.

- D. M. Zermeno: Please register for the Latino Caucus meeting Thursday, September 26 at 7 p.m.
- E. R. Meneses, API Caucus: We had our first-ever multi-caucus postcard party to support Missy Cotter Smasel, I would like to thank Black, Latino, Jewish, and Arab [American] Caucus co-chairs and over 40 volunteers who came.
- F. A. Woolen, State and Local Affairs: Mike Signer, the chair of Dranesville, will be talking about housing policy. For the Black Caucus, I want to thank folks who helped sponsor our table at the Kennedy-King Dinner. We were proud to be a primary sponsor.
- G. S. Klassen, National Affairs: We're having October 17 at 7 p.m. by Zoom a National Affairs Forum entitled How Trump's Project 2025 Will Hurt YOU. We have some terrific speakers, including Yale's Professor Jason Stanley, an expert on fascism. Progressive campaign calls are stressing motivation and enthusiasm, which we hope this will do. The chair of chairs of DPVA, Tina Winkler, sent our invitation to all the committees in Virginia to co-sponsor.
- H. I. Varkonyi, Jewish Caucus: I want to thank those who participated in the Multi-Caucus Postcard Party and the Arab-American Caucus for the Unity Potluck. At our last meeting, we had Del. Marcus Simon who gave us a good overview of where and how Jewish voters are expected to vote. Oct. 14 we will have Sen. Hashmi address us and talk about the things she has been doing as chair of the Education and Health Committee, as well as her goal to be lieutenant governor next year.
- I. N. Samaniego, Diversity and Outreach: Last week the Harris Campaign launched Latinos Unidos. I want to thank the Jewish and Arab Caucuses for inviting me to the Unity Potluck. Before all the caucuses were created, I was the Arab Caucus and the Jewish Caucus.
- J. M. Saleh, Arab-American Caucus: The Arab-American Caucus participated in the Unity Potluck and the Multi-Caucus Postcard Party, and we had a blast. This evening, we hosted a Meet and Greet with Sen. Ghazala Hashmi, who got out of her comfort zone to make a difference by running for office.

VIII. Announcements

- A. A. Woolen: On September 30, the League of Women Voters is hosting a debate or candidate forum for CDs-11 and 10. We will have Gerry Connolly, Mike Van Meter, Suhas Subramanyam, and Mike Clancy.
- B. M. Singh, CD-11: CD-11 Committee is taking outreach seriously. We had Hispanic Outreach Month, and we had a successful, amazing event last week. On October 13, we will celebrate our sixth Diwali (festival of lights) at Aroma Indian Restaurant. Please do come. Our guest of honor will be Congressman Connolly.
- C. C. Ambrose, elector: Event for Eugene Vindman on Thursday in Franconia. It's on the calendar.



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- D. T. Walker: I spent a few days in Trump country, reaching out to Democrats there. When we lose less in those areas, we win. If people are interested in doing canvassing in other parts of Virginia, where it's desperately needed, contact BrandonHurner@gmail.com
- E. N. Hall, Mason: Mason District fundraiser will be held at Holly Hazard's house with 90s music this Saturday. It will be fun. It is a time to dance.
- F. M. Godbold, Finance: First, I am giving the Almost Autumn Annual Event for Supervisor Kathy Smith, who has been a great Democrat representing Sully. It is a low-cost fundraiser at my house October 5. If you are a canvasser, prove that you've done your packet, and you get in for free. Second, there will be a vice-presidential debate party at the Sully District Government Center October 1.
- G. D. Simon: I have questions that affect everyone that is working at tables for early voting right now. A. Yohai: I will follow up with you and everyone in Precinct Ops privately.
- H. J. McBride: First, I was on the Hill today advocating for Ukraine aid. It will expire on the 30th if it doesn't get included in a spending deal. Please contact Congress and the White House. Second, I put in some links about how to support Vindman. The only poll had him up one point, so it's very close. They don't have a ton of volunteers. That might be our tightest race in the state.
- I. K. Hayes Pollard: If you want a Harris/Walz sign, we are getting more in later this week. Email or call me if you want one.
- J. J. Poje: October 14 we'll be vigiling against gun violence in front of the National Rifle Association, which will soon go out of business.
- K. A. Yohai: We have more signs at the FCDC office, and they will be delivered to you if you order online.

IX. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Katie Metres Akbar, recording secretary