



Michigan Democratic Party Chair Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Candidate for Chair of the Michigan Democratic Party,

The Michigan Democratic Party is Michigan's core organization devoted to electing democrats in Michigan and to represent Michigan in congress and the White House. In the era of Trump and divided politics it is more important than ever that the leader of the MDP be someone with integrity, creative ideas, and a modern approach. With so many key issues of importance such as health care, immigration reform, climate change, police brutality, prison reform, the student loan crisis, wealth inequality and many more, we need a progressive leader that can help us win back our democracy. We can only do this if OUR democratic party operates as a collective democratic organization with absolute transparency.

The MDP Progressive Caucus, the MDP Cannabis Caucus, and the Young Democrats of Michigan have developed a joint screening and endorsement process for the MDP Chair's election on February 2nd. The following questions are split into categories which represent the values of the three MDP caucuses. If selected as our endorsed candidate, you will get 1) your name, picture, and website advertised on our website and in our social media, and 2) the potential to have our members support/volunteer for your campaign. This candidate questionnaire is due by January 5th. You can type your answers directly in this document, print it out, sign it, scan it, and then send the completed and signed questionnaire to pcyendorsements@gmail.com. You can also email us with any questions or concerns. We will be conducting in-person screenings the last week of December and the first two weeks of January.

Sincerely,

The PCY endorsement committee

Core Principles

We'd like to know where you stand on some of the most talked about progressive issues. The following issues will likely play a large role in the 2020 election and beyond. These questions only require "Yes" or "No" responses.

The following responses are my own opinions as a Democrat. As MDP Chair I would oversee a bold message of our Democratic values which are empathy, responsibility for ourselves and others and belief in the common good. All policy issues are decided through established procedures of the SCC Policy & Resolutions Committee along with SCC members, caucuses and candidates.

1. Do you support the "Fight for 15" movement to raise the minimum wage to \$15 dollars per hour? Yes
2. Do you support expanding civil rights protections to include members of the LGBTQ community? Yes
3. Do you support the Black Lives Matter movement? Yes
4. Do you support the "Green New Deal," as proposed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Sunrise Movement? I support a bold environmental agenda, but I have not studied the "Green New Deal" enough to make a decision at this point.
5. Do you support moving the US and Michigan to a single-payer, "Medicare for All" style healthcare system? Yes
6. Are you pro-choice? Yes
7. Did you support Proposal 1, which legalized marijuana in Michigan? Yes
8. Do you support expungement for those who were charged with non-violent drug offenses? Yes
9. Do you support a ban on assault weapons? Yes
10. Do you support the right of all workers, including campaign workers, to bargain collectively and to unionize? Yes

Money in the Michigan Democratic Party

1. What are your plans for fundraising? Would you support the MDP taking money through its soft-money account directly from corporations (i.e, Blue Cross Blue Shield) and fossil fuel companies such as DTE Energy, Consumers Energy, and Enbridge?

As MDP chair one of the first things I would do is develop a broader fundraising strategy leveraging new donors and reducing reliance on established organizations or lobbies. This includes: growing MDP membership to 50,000 by offering value to members; out of state fundraising, especially from blue states; small dollar monthly contributions; crowdfunding.

I would audit the current MDP spending and find ways to operate more efficiently.

Without an understanding of the current MDP revenue streams, I cannot make a determination about taking corporate money; however, I am in favor of transparency and I believe in disclosing donors.

2. (Yes / No) As Chair, would you support disclosing donors to the MDP's soft money accounts, including the 21st Century Fund?

Yes

Transparency, Diversity, and Inclusion

1. As Chair, what would you do to bridge the divide within the party?

Build the leadership team, empower local organizers, provide transparency that brings trust, share a clear vision and mission, and unify our message.

Over the past few weeks I visited Democrats across Southeast Michigan at holiday parties and multiple meetings. I made tons of phone calls to people all over the state. I spoke with hundreds of Democrats about my vision for a stronger, more inclusive party. The number one thing I heard is that they want to know the work they've done matters... that they ARE making a difference.

I'm hearing that people want to be included **at every level** and all year, not just when there are doors to knock before the election. Our leaders need to be a reflection of our membership, we need to celebrate and welcome new ideas while respecting the party's legacy. We expect our elected officials to work with colleagues from both parties to solve issues for the betterment of the people. That means we, as a party, need to build communication skills so we can disagree about the 'how' and still sit side-by-side in the fight. It is the responsibility of the MDP leadership to facilitate resolutions, so we can have a united message, not in-spite of our differences but because of the strength of our differences.

People want transparency – without a foot on the scale during primary and party elections. People want to be included in decision-making and be part of a community of Democrats, especially in red areas. In order to bridge the divide within the party I would institute transparency for party operations and provide oversight to proper communications. The MDP will be a service organization run from the bottom up, led by a political organizer who empowers local political organizers by providing resources needed to get locals elected.

2. As Chair, what would you do to increase the representation of communities that have been traditionally disenfranchised, especially young people and communities of color?

What steps would you take to increase access for members with disabilities, such as allowing absentee voting at conventions?

Restructure the executive committee to be representative of all communities, empower local political organizers, create an MDP organization farm team, and be a role model for living our values.

We need to look at the member recruitment processes and communication channels to make sure we are reaching into disenfranchised communities. We need to hold ourselves to recruitment and retention goals. This means a deliberate and intentional plan for member engagement and mentoring into leadership positions.

As a party, we need to look in the mirror and ask ourselves how we can do better at living our values. My first task will be to assess the makeup of the membership. Who are we and does our membership reflect our voter population? I've arbitrarily set a membership growth goal of 50,000 based on an assumption that we have 15,000 now. Because of the lack of transparency, we don't really know who we are, who is under-represented, and where the opportunities for improvement lay. Geez, we fought so hard to pass Promote the Vote, let's make it easier for members to vote by breaking down barriers for everyone and make it easier to vote, and to achieve a leadership role. Voting rules must be public.

We absolutely need to make ease of entry, participation and advancement a priority. Let's build a technical infrastructure that supports inclusion and engagement so that communications, including voting, can support movement politics.

The MDP Disability Caucus is working hard to make our February 2nd convention accessible. But even with all that there are some people that can't travel to convention. We must figure out a way to allow them to participate and vote. We can use technology that is readily available to make it happen.

The real question is 'Do we want to grow the Michigan Democratic Party' and I say yes, whole heartedly.

3. There is a perception that some decisions within the Democratic Party are made behind closed doors. As Chair, what systems will you create to increase the opportunity for feedback and the discussion of new ideas to improve and strengthen the Party?

This question is personal to me. In my bid for the MDP Chair position I feel the weight of the feet on my neck, as RBG said. "I ask no favor for my sex; all I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks."

In my discussions with people across the state, I know I am not alone. This is not a question of gender or race. It is about transparency, knowing the by-laws are being followed by everyone, that decision criteria is public, how decisions are made and who made them is a matter of record. We need to ask ourselves, are the right people at the table? Are all constituencies represented? It's the job of the MDP Chair to set an example, to be transparent in dealings, to provide oversight to caucus and club leaders and serve the membership. We need a simple and secure way for any member to report an abuse.

Under my leadership, we will not be the party of backroom deals, nor will the party put its foot on the scale for certain candidates or leaders. To be proud Democrats, we need to truly be a party of the people.

Vision for the Party

1. Please describe your vision for the MDP. Please describe areas where you think the Party can improve, and how.

OUR PARTY VISION

A Democratic Party presidential win, a Michigan House majority, a local candidate farm team: We need to own the loss of 2016 and deliver our Electoral College votes to our Democratic Candidate in 2020. We must deliver a Democratic State House to Governor Whitmer. We need to begin electing Democrats into local offices in every county, so we will develop a farm team as the basis for future electoral success throughout the state.

A bold, values based message: No matter where we fall on the spectrum from progressive to traditional, we share the same foundational values. As Democrats, we believe in having empathy for those around us. We believe in taking responsibility for ourselves, but also for one another. And we believe that government can be a force to promote the common good. These values are what we stand for; now, we need a bold, unifying message to help us share them and our vision with voters.

Meeting people where they are: The 2018 midterms showed how important organizing is to win elections. We can win in unexpected places when our members canvass and phone bank everywhere they can, not just in areas where we get a large percentage of the vote. We need to let local activists lead from the bottom up, not try to force fit a one-size fit all strategy. When we speak to urban, rural, and suburban voters, we learn a lot about what our citizens' want and need from us, community by community. We need to do more of this, even in off-years so we can understand the unique challenges people face based on where they live.

Leveraging our partnerships: We are so powerful when we work together. There are so many of us working in groups throughout the state, all toward the common goal of

success for Democratic candidates. We need to network more and create forums for sharing resources and knowledge. Let's collaborate, not duplicate our efforts.

Training: People within our organization have a ton of valuable knowledge and experience to share, but we need a structured and organized process for getting new candidates and activists up to speed. Also, too often our party's resources float up to the State-level candidates when we should actively support candidates up and down the ballot. We need to make quality training accessible to everyone in our party.

Transparency: Transparency is keeping our party members in the loop about the decisions we're making instead of relying on handshake deals behind the scenes. Transparency is empowering our local activists because they know what their neighborhoods and communities need. We all deserve to be part of the conversation and to trust that our leadership is making decisions that are in the best interests of our party.

OUR VALUES – United We Are Democrats

Our values are simple, but they inspire us to work together to change our society for the better and they unite us as Democrats.

- Empathy
- Responsibility for Ourselves and Each Other
- Governing for the Common Good

To discuss areas where the MDP can improve, we must start with the three functions of the party:

1. Fundraising
2. Party infrastructure
3. Support elected Democrats and Democratic candidates

My plans for fundraising were previously described and I have a long history of successful fundraising. The place for the most improvement is party infrastructure. It's critical that we update our party infrastructure throughout the State and not only in targeted areas. As a political organizer from a traditionally red area I know the value of organizing everywhere. In addition, there are economies of scale that can help us implement programs statewide. More details are listed in the Party Infrastructure section. Finally, while the MDP supports elected Democrats and Democratic candidates we can make sure that candidates who have less likelihood of winning still benefit from party resources. A stronger party can create a farm team by helping local clubs recruit and win local races.

The Role of the Chair

1. Please describe your experience and qualifications to lead the Party.

I'm a political organizer with a proven track record of organizing in a red area and turning it blue. In 2018 we flipped five seats from red to blue and I can't stop smiling! I

did that by lobbying people into action, training them, planning outreach and volunteer events and most importantly creating a Democratic community. Our success came from collaboration and empowering volunteers. I know that the things we did in Western Wayne and Oakland Counties can be done throughout the state.

I also have a long history of being an active Democrat. I'm President of the Northville Dems, the second largest club in the state. I'm also coordinator of the Western Wayne Leaders group, 2nd vice chair of the 11th Congressional District, MDP Justice Caucus Board Member, State Central Committee (SCC) member and part of the SCC Rules & Political Reform committee. I was elected a delegate to the 2016 DNC Convention and I was the 2016 Elector for the 11th Congressional District (that last one still stings).

2. As Chair, will you expand the SCC by adding officers-at-large, thus diluting the voting member of SCC district delegates? Please explain.

Expansion of the SCC is governed by the Rules and Political Reform Committee. This committee was reopened at the 12-8-18 SCC meeting. I would appoint committee members that are representative of all our constituencies and charge them with addressing the diluting of voting members of the SCC district delegates.

Party Infrastructure

1. The Democratic Party plays a critical role in providing "infrastructure" for Democratic Party candidates in Michigan via the VAN and other support services. As Chair, what projects/trainings would you undertake to strengthen the Party's infrastructure?
 - Coordinated, values messaging and training on our message
 - Statewide values messaging media campaign, distributed to members/groups to broadcast through social media, in print and digitally.
 - Digital Memberships
 - Online/in class training to members, candidates and candidate staff with certification levels to indicate proficiency
 - 'Train the trainers' program so we have local political organizers ready and able to train activists locally. They can personalize classes to be in line with their local communities.
 - VAN training and support services to help our precinct delegates do their jobs
 - Online portal for members to receive vital information, training, messaging and calls to action
 - MDP app to communicate with members
 - Best practices and resources for local clubs, county parties, district parties and caucuses
 - Assistance with PAC and compliance reporting

- MDP jobs board for campaign staff
 - Rigorous cyber security
2. There is currently a staffing crisis in Democratic politics. Every two years, candidates struggle to find enough talented staff (fundraisers, organizers, etc.) to work on their campaigns. Many races are lost as a result of this. As Chair, what will you do to address this persistent problem?
- Provide candidates and staff with a toolbox of campaign management worksheets, sample budget, team roles, project plans and digital strategies
 - Leverage and facilitate partnerships with universities and colleges
 - Training program for candidates, staff, precinct delegates and volunteers
 - Provide a qualification based on proficiency (certification or designation) for campaign staff, precinct delegates and interns to realize their potential and match to job opportunities
 - Develop a coaching/mentoring program to leverage institutional knowledge and match to creative new ideas that will bridge generational divides.
 - Strong party infrastructure will produce strong Democratic communities that will support campaigns. This will also support campaign staff
3. Many people who are active with different MDP chartered organizations are not members of the Party, despite being members of their local organizations. As Chair, what will you do to bridge the "membership gap?"

I support the autonomy of local clubs and caucus and I would allow them to be free to add to their membership and fundraise as they see fit. I support a bottom up MDP and would not support requiring local members to join the MDP. The MDP must successfully make the case for joining and offer enough value to encourage people to join our Democratic community.

Democracy in the Party

1. As Chair, what will you do in order to ensure that the rules of the MDP are properly followed, especially as it relates to proportional voting?

Yes, I would ensure that the rules of the MDP are properly followed. Currently the rules of the MDP can be found in Rules of the Michigan Democratic Party [2018], Rules for Voting and Elections in the Michigan Democratic Party and Official Calls to Convention. Proportional voting is complicated and part of MDP training will be on the MDP rules. I will have an audit procedure for discrepancies and issues that are not satisfactorily resolved by both parties would go to the appeals committee. The easiest way to ensure fairness is through transparency and having all members understand the rules.

2. (Yes / No) As Chair, would you support a proposal to change the MDP rules to allow previous MDP members whose membership has expired to re-sign up the day of a convention and vote?

Yes, within a specific period such as a year. Current bylaws require changes to membership in the MDP to be governed by the Rules and Political Reform Committee and approved by the SCC.

Candidate Information

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I, Lisa DiRado, candidate for MDP chair in the year 2019 do hereby declare that I have answered all questions truthfully, and if elected as the next chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, I will uphold these values during my tenure in office. I acknowledge the PCY committee will share my questionnaire answers to all members of the Progressive Caucus, Cannabis Caucus, and Young Dems through their email lists and websites.

Signature  Date 1/3/19