

Meeting Minutes for Joint Meeting of
Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro Democratic Committees
December 11, 2018
Staunton City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER: The joint meeting was called to order by Frank Nolen, Augusta County chair; Beth Daisey, Staunton chair; and Robert Horowitz, representing Sandie Hall, Waynesboro chair at 7:02 PM.

Present: From Staunton – Beth Daisey, chair; Josh Howard, vice chair; Ken Venable, treasurer; Nancy Pyles, Secretary. **From Augusta County** – Frank Nolen, chair; John Kowal, secretary; Diane Kowal, vice chair for communications; Phyllis Rosen, treasurer. **From Waynesboro** – Robert Horowitz representing Sandie Hall, chair. Also present were Lauren Thompson, Democratic candidate for the 25th State Delegate District, Jennifer Kitchen, also Democratic candidate for the 25th State Delegate District and Christian Worth, special election Democratic candidate for the 24th State Delegate District. Joint meeting attendance estimated about 40 folks.

Frank Nolen began the meeting welcoming our candidate guests: Lauren Thompson, Jennifer Kitchen and Christian Worth. All present were asked to introduce themselves and their affiliation.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Christian Worth – December 18, 2018 special election Democratic candidate for the 24th State Delegate District. Frank Nolen introduced Christian as hailing from Kentucky who originally came to Virginia for an education. Returning to Kentucky, she practiced law until subsequently moving back to Virginia. She is an active Democrat that has worked in support of Democratic candidates.

Christian introduced herself that as a family lawyer she has learned that you solve problems listening and finding common ground to build on. She believes this to be vital in the current political environment. Her election will result in a 50-50 balance of power in the State House of Delegates. Christian sees this not as an opportunity for Democrats to keep things from happening but rather an opportunity to get things done. The 24th State Delegate District was described as Southern Augusta County, Bath County, Rockbridge County, most of Amherst County and the cities of Lexington and Buena Vista. Christian stated that she developed her platform using ideas learned while canvassing for other candidates. Called the Rural Blueprint, Christian's platform is a set of building blocks that include:

- Reliable and affordable broad band for all which is very possible using community specific plans – one size does not fit all.
- Access to healthcare
- Workforce development – working with high schools and community colleges to provide a qualified work force. Continuing education must be affordable.
- Clean energy – clean air, water and land.

Expanding the economy depends on what we have to offer perspective employers.

The floor was then open to Q&A:

Question: How is the special election being advertised? **Answer:** There was a forum that was cancelled due to weather, however, a video is in work answering pre-determined forum questions.

Question: Currently there is only one health care provider (Anthem) available which costs 1/3 more than what my daughter is paying in California and who is moving to the area. **Answer:** The General Assembly needs to address controlling medical costs in the state.

Question: Do you support non-partisan redistricting? **Answer:** YES!

Christian closed by asking for everyone to please come out and help.

Diane Kowal iterated that the Staunton/Augusta HQ will be open the upcoming weekend and offered that she brought phone banking lists to the meeting and asked for volunteers. Current effort is GOTV (Get Out the Vote) so these are Democrats being called. Diane described her experience in phone banking in the past few weeks as gratifying as so many people are happy to hear from someone as some people in the county haven't been talked to in years. And we still have quite a few people to call.

ERA Ratification – Beth Daisey introduced Jennifer Kitchen, SAW-CAN Founder & President. Jennifer invited us all to help make Virginia the 38th (and final state required) to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment and make it part of the US Constitution. “Let’s Make History”. Jennifer then introduced Kate and Tracy from **VAratifyERA.org** who came to us from Charlottesville to give a presentation on ratifying the ERA. The language of the proposed ERA amendment is simple and patterned after the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. The ERA reads: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex”. Answering the often asked question of why this amendment is important, three reasons were presented: 1) Establishes gender equality in the Constitution (not just in laws that can be easily repealed); 2) Requires judges to apply “strict scrutiny” to gender discrimination cases; 3) Gives more weight to laws that already exist.

It was pointed out that during last year’s legislative session in Richmond there were enough votes on the floor to ratify this amendment but could not get it out of committee. This upcoming session is shaping up to be the same problem. It was noted that 80% of Virginians (99% of Democrats and 60% of Republicans) favor ratification. Pressure needs to be put on the chairs of the two legislative committees involved – Kirk Cox, House Committee Chair and Tommy Norment, Senate Committee Chair – to get this out of committee and to a floor vote. All were encouraged to contact these two gentlemen and also sign the on line petition.

Further, plans are to have a continuing presence in Richmond at the State House while the legislature is in session to show support and apply pressure to get this proposed amendment ratified. Lobbying training is available. Details can be found on the website – **VAratifyERA.org**. Jennifer Kitchen interjected that SAW-CAN is organizing carpooling to Richmond for the start of the 2019 Legislative Session and the lobby training event.

The floor was then open for questions:

Question: Will there be a challenge based on the deadline long since past? **Answer:** Probably, but all feel that any challenge can be successfully defended. Also, Mark Herring (Virginia Attorney General) has issued an opinion that ratifying the amendment now would be valid.

Question: In the past the opposition has come up with things that would result from passing this amendment like unisex bathrooms and women being drafted. What nutty things is the opposition

saying about passing the amendment now? **Answer:** Women will start running around topless and all prisons would become coed.

Question: Speaking of prisons, today women don't have access to things men do and passing this amendment might help. **Answer:** Yes, this needs to be addressed.

Question: Are there any financial issues that can be used to convince people this amendment is necessary? **Answer:** Without this amendment it is harder to win gender discrimination cases and to this point, discrimination cases concerning equal pay. Although there have been laws passed over the years providing some relief, a Constitutional Amendment would carry much more weight and the current laws can always be repealed at any time. By the way, this is in fact a family issue as so many woman now work outside the home contributing greatly to the total family income impacted by lack of equal pay.

Question: it would be nice to put this in place during 100 year anniversary of women gaining the right to vote. **Answer:** And this upcoming session represents the 400th legislative deliberations in Virginia.

Question: There was a NY Times article in May dealing with the deadline issue. **Answer:** Do not know if this particular article is up on our website but there is lots of information there about this topic.

Question: Are there other states considering ratifying the ERA this coming year? **Answer:** Virginia is the most likely but other states are Arizona, North Carolina, Florida, and Missouri. Any of these could be the 38th state to ratify.

Question: Once ratified, can an Executive Order interfere with this? **Answer:** Not with a Constitutional Amendment.

REPORT from the QUARTERLY DPVA CHAIR and CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING in RICHMOND DEC 8, 2018

Chair Report: Beth Daisey – A central topic was “nominating committees” given that in 2019 all State Delegate seats and all State Senate seats will be up for reelection. There are deadlines to meet, guidelines to follow, and paperwork to complete whether we have a Democratic candidate or not. January 2, 2019 is the first deadline for candidates to declare. Followed by a February 6, 2019 deadline for the nominating committees to decide whether to hold a caucus or primary if more than one candidate declares. Beth then made a plea that a candidate needs to step forward for the 20th State Delegate District. There were several questions from the floor:

Question: These deadlines are rapidly approaching. **Answer:** These first deadlines can be missed without big consequence but at some point as a practical matter, holding a Primary is not an option. The Virginia Board of Elections has determined June 11, 2019 as the Primary Election date if necessary. Frank Nolan made the point that the nominating committee reserves the right to reject an unsuitable candidate.

Question: Will Michelle Edwards run? **Answer:** Has said she won't run this time.

Question: How about Jennifer Lewis? **Answer:** She has already announced that she will rerun for the US 6th Congressional District seat.

This segment of the meeting concluded noting that the chair of the nominating committees comes from the area that got the most Democratic votes in the last election.

6th Congressional District Report: Robert Horowitz

Robert began by admitting that although individuals did a lot in support of the Jennifer Lewis campaign, the 6th District Committee did not. Things are changing but there is much work to do in this area. Congratulations were proffered to Staunton for the huge turnout for Jennifer and also Waynesboro for turning purple – one step closer to blue. At the meeting in Richmond, top state Democratic officials including Governor Northam offered congratulations for a job well done. Virginia is officially no longer a red state.

Four resolutions were addressed by the 6th Congressional District Committee:

- 1) Make the benediction secular – this was not adopted but sent back to committee for further consideration
- 2) Support for the ERA – adopted
- 3) Memorial for Thelma Dodson – adopted
- 4) Legislation to make voting easier – adopted

Robert then stated that we have a lot of good volunteers but need more to show up. In this last election we have proven the power of the people – Jennifer didn't lose, she started her campaign for 2020. WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE! Reiterating, the few people we had come out were great but need more.

AUDIENCE OPEN DISCUSSION

Question: Status of Staunton/Augusta County HQ space? **Answer:** The two executive committees will take this up at their next meetings and report.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM at which time the Staunton and Augusta County Democratic Committees retired to their respective business meetings.