

Democrat

The Newsletter of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee

August 2016 Volume 3, Issue 6

Perspectives: DNC 2016

From Politicians to Khizr Khan, Electric!

By Stephen L. Spitz, At-Large Sanders Delegate

The DNC in Philly was at once an amazing, exhilarating, exhausting, and stressful experience. I was honored and proud to represent the grassroots people throughout Virginia who supported Senator Bernie Sanders. Bernie raised many important substantive issues during his campaign, many of which were incorporated into the Democratic Party platform. He inspired a new generation of young people. I viewed my primary responsibility as representing both Senator Sanders and the people who elected me as a delegate.

I was very pleased that the Virginia delegation had the best seats in the house, front and center. It was a wonderful moment when I received a text message from my father—who will be 95 years old on August 20—stating, "Just saw you on TV! Congratulations!" It was also a fine moment when Senator Sanders, in his speech on the first night of the convention, referred to his opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and at that moment, Sandra Klassen and I stood up, displayed our *No TPP* signs, and then Bernie pointed to the signs and gave us a smile and a thumbs up! One of my objectives, which was successful, was to deliver letters signed by numerous delegates about the TPP and other subjects personally to all five of our elected Demo-

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History Made!

By Kate Spears, Clinton Delegate

Last month I was honored to be a Hillary Clinton delegate from the 8th CD at the 2016 National Convention. For those who, like me until last month, have never been to a national convention, here is a first-timer's impressions.

Along with the televised evening sessions, there were daily delegation breakfasts where credentials were distributed and we heard from guest speakers, including Alison Lundergan Grimes, Kentucky Secretary of State, who ran for the Senate against Mitch McConnell. The late mornings and early afternoons were filled with caucus meetings (Black, Women's, Hispanic, etc.). But there was so much more than this clinical view!

Each day the convention was gaveled in about 4 pm and adjourned for the day after 11 pm. Speakers (well-known and not-so-much) addressed the delegates each day—from politicians and entertainers (Al Franken counts as both, IMHO), to experts in their field, to those who simply had a story to share about how Hillary had moved them. It was words of the lesser-known speakers that often moved me the most. Musical talent from Paul Simon to Alicia Keys, Carole King to Katy Perry, and numerous others, got us up and singing even when the schedule was beginning to take its toll.

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Message from the FCDC Chairman *Sue Langley*

On July 23, 2016, the Democratic National Convention came together in Philadelphia, the birthplace of the Constitution of the original 13 United States of America. The Democratic National Convention made history in Denver in 2008, when Barack Obama became the first African American to be nominated by a national political party as their candidate for President. It made history a second time in Charlotte in 2012, when Obama was nominated to run for re-election. The third time the Convention made history, July 26, 2016, we nominated Hillary Clinton as our party's candidate for President, the first for any woman.

The contrast with the Republican Convention in Cleveland the previous week could not have been greater. Their negative, even scowling view of America posed dangers for our economy and our national security. Their view was in stark opposition to the Democrats' depiction of a country whose diversity was on display in nearly every screen shot, depicting our elected officials from every level of government, the delegates, and the guests attending the convention. Eight years of Obama administration accomplishments were celebrated, from rescuing the nation from a disastrous economic collapse, to 15 million new private-sector jobs created over the past 77 continuous months. A future Clinton administration promises even more good news, because we are indeed stronger together.

Bernie Sanders gave a strong and genuine endorsement of Hillary Clinton, ending his quest for the nomination with a motion to make the vote on her nomination unanimous. His endorsement has already united his supporters with those for Hillary behind a unified effort to retain the White House this fall. While Republican elected officials defect with public rebukes of their candidate, Democrats are proudly and firmly resolved to elect Hillary Clinton, particularly to prevent Donald Trump from ever being an occupant of the White House.





Capitol Hill Update

Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA-11)

Since coming to Congress in 2009, I've lost count of the number of times I've gone to the House floor to observe a moment of silence for the victims of a mass shooting. Aurora, Sandy Hook, Charleston, Orlando, and Dallas have gone from being places on a map to searing memories for our nation. Time and again after a mass shooting, House Republicans have offered their thoughts and prayers, and then refused to hold a single vote on gun safety measures.

But in June, something remarkable happened. Civil Rights icon Congressman John Lewis said enough was enough, and led a sit-in on the floor of the House, demanding that Republicans allow a vote on gun safety legis-

lation. I stood there along with my colleagues for 25 hours as we told stories about gun violence in our districts. They told stories of comforting parents who lost a child, of EMTs and doctors on the front lines trying to save lives. They told stories of heroic police officers who gave their lives, and of trying to bring communities together after a tragedy. I spoke about Virginia Tech, and Fairfax County losing five children that dreadful day. It was, without a doubt, the most moving experience of my 23 years in public life.

Republicans tried to silence us. They turned off the cameras, so we broadcast it live on Periscope. Gun safety advocates from across the region descended on the west lawn of the Capitol to cheer us on, including many of you in FCDC.

Finally Republicans adjourned the House early rather than make their members take a vote for gun safety and against the National Rifle Association.

The sit-in is over, but our fight continues. I'd like to thank all of you who joined us that evening in solidarity, and I can't thank you enough for all of the kind words of support I've heard from you since. In 100 days, we head to the polls. The only way we are going to get meaningful gun safety reform is by electing Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine, and taking back a majority in the House and Senate. If we deliver Fairfax County for the Clinton-Kaine ticket, they'll win Virginia—and the election. If we deliver Fairfax County for me, Don Beyer, and LuAnn Bennett, we'll have three passionate advocates for gun safety in the Congress.



History Made!

By Kate Spears, Clinton Delegate

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In between, we had the opportunity to get to know the other delegates from Virginia and other states. I made a specific effort to meet as many of the Sanders delegates as I could—I didn't know many, and wanted to rectify that. I met some wonderfully committed (albeit understandably disappointed) people whom I look forward to working with in the future!

There were several moments that stood out for me. The Roll Call of each state's delegations' votes on Tuesday was a big one. I was glad that each vote was honored and acknowledged (unlike the other convention, which suppressed some roll call

votes!). Those announcing the votes were also moving—a childhood friend of Hillary Clinton's, Bernie Sanders' brother, delegations letting each candidate's supporters call out the vote. Tim Kaine brought the house down on Wednesday (OK, the Virginia delegation—sitting in the front—was shamelessly cheering him on, too!) And of course, the ultimate moment of the week was when Hillary Clinton took the stage after a heartfelt introduction by Chelsea Clinton. Tears flowed, with many women sharing the same sentiment—"I wish my mom could be here!"

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that DPVA Chair Susan

Swecker's staff went above and beyond to keep things running smoothly amidst a seemingly endless set of changes, ensuring that delegates had information in a timely fashion, along with the credentials and transportation to allow them to be where they needed be when they needed to be there. We made history in Philadelphia. As the suffragette Katherine Ruschenberger said, "The Liberty Bell announced the creation of Democracy; the Women's Liberty Bell will announce the completion of Democracy." That bell will ring again on November 8, 2016!

CWA Union President Chris Shelton to Speak at FCDC Labor Committee Annual Party September 24

By Virginia Diamond, Chair, FCDC Labor Committee

Chris Shelton, president of the Communications Workers of America, will be the keynote speaker at the FCDC Labor Committee's annual party on Saturday, September 24. He will discuss the important Verizon strike, during which the union stood strong for collective bargaining rights and middle class jobs.

The event will take place at the home of Labor Committee chair Ginny Diamond, at 1911

Virginia Avenue in McLean, from 4:30 to 8:00 pm. Dinner and drinks will be served and all are welcome. We are requesting a minimum contribution of \$15, and all funds will be given to FCDC.

Speeches will begin at about 6:00 p.m.

Since this is also Ginny's birthday party, in lieu of gifts, please make contributions to FCDC!



*Pictured:
Chris Shelton, President, Communications Workers of America*

National Affairs Committee (NAC)

Meeting with Zach Cafritz, Legislative Director, Congressman Don Beyer (VA-8)

By Barbara Levine

At its July 21, 2016, meeting, the National Affairs Committee was joined by Zach Cafritz, legislative director for Congressman Don Beyer. Cafritz discussed Beyer's focus, legislative initiatives, and goals.

His main areas of involvement are economic and foreign policy issues. Cafritz previously worked as a legislative assistant to former Congressman Jim Moran and for President Obama's 2008 campaign.

Cafritz contrasted Donald Trump's dystopic vision of our country and his complete absence of decency with Congressman Beyer's collaborative, hopeful attitude. He characterized Beyer as an incredibly decent and kind individual.

Cafritz also pointed out that Beyer has the good fortune to represent a rather unique district, where his constituents are often former or current government employees or military personnel. He recognizes that he speaks for an informed constituency that has a greater understanding of how the system works than most lay people.

Congressman Beyer's main focus for the past year and a half has been

- environmental issues, primarily climate change;
- women's economic empowerment; and
- building a new American economy.

The Congressman played an integral part in negotiating the Iran deal. He spent a good deal of time in Switzerland, convincing the Swiss—who do not generally believe in sanctions—to accept sanctions against Iran. (Beyer served as ambassador to Switzerland and Lichtenstein, 2009–2013.)

In responding to questions from committee members, Cafritz said:

Beyer's views on TPP: This is a complicated issue, which the Congressman continues to review. He is pro free trade and believes that the program contains some excellent elements, including chapters that would have a positive effect on Northern Virginia services and intellectual properties, and requirements that other countries such as Vietnam institute protective labor laws and allow for the creation of unions. However, he recognizes that there are problems that must be resolved, including sections regarding pharmaceutical companies, which could significantly raise the cost of medications abroad.

Banking Reform: The Congressman supports the reintroduction of the Glass Steagall Act and the Financial Transactions Tax. He is working on legislation regarding corporate governance and agrees that significant tax reform is needed. Of great concern is the corporate practice of stock buy-backs, which reduce corporate capital and allow companies such as Verizon to avoid

increasing workers' wages.

Foreign Policy: Don Beyer is a big believer in robust diplomatic engagement. He understands the need to focus funding on military efforts to combat global terrorism, but believes that diplomacy plays an important part in our security. He is a strong opponent to expanding domestic surveillance.

Economic Innovation: Congressman Beyer is working with Nancy Pelosi and 20 other Democrats in Congress on Innovation Agenda 2.0, a program focusing on startups and tech companies in Virginia and nationally. This program also addresses issues concerning education, minorities, women, and support of national laboratories for research and development. Beyer will work with local universities, including George Mason, to achieve some of these goals.

Immigration Reform: Beyer joins the President in regretting that immigration reform will not have been enacted during Barack Obama's tenure. He reminds us that 40 percent of currently operating companies were founded by recent immigrants.

Gun Reform: Cafritz discussed the need to create a federal database for killings by police officers. Police departments have resisted joining a federal database, and many are so small that they do not have the facility to do so. However, our committee pointed out that these

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cratic members of Congress.

While the convention started on a very low note—the forced resignation of the DNC chair—the first day also featured a magnificent speech by Michelle Obama, and a powerful convention-wide demonstration against the TPP during the platform committee report. Despite the fact that both Senator Sanders and Secretary Clinton made clear that they oppose the TPP, the platform committee refused to explicitly oppose it in the platform.

I was on the floor from gavel to gavel for four straight days, from 3 or 4 p.m. to well after 11:00 p.m. By the time we got back to the hotel, it was usually 1 or 2 a.m. We had to attend the Virginia breakfast each morning at 8:00 a.m. to get our daily credentials, which left little time for sleep. At

the breakfasts, we heard from Senators Warner and Kaine and from Reps. Beyer, Connolly, and Scott, among others. Senator Kaine gave a moving tribute to the marvelous Joe Montano who, sadly, died in Falls Church on the first day of the convention.

The highlight of the convention for me, and for many others, it appeared, was the powerful speech of Khizr Khan of Charlottesville, pulling out his copy of the Constitution and stating that Donald Trump had sacrificed nothing and no one. The atmosphere in the convention at that moment was absolutely electric. In fact, many of the best speeches were delivered not by politicians but by the many passionate people who talked about gun safety and discrimination. I was particularly moved by the

speeches by Rev. Barber, the Moral Monday leader from North Carolina, and the "Mothers of the Movement"—mothers of African American young men who had been killed by police and others.

The convention was very well produced. I was delighted that Paul Simon sang, directly in front of me, his great song *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. After he finished, I leaned over and told Rep. Bobby Scott that I would not have been able to get through my first year of law school without that song! It was also a special moment to sing along with Carole King.

It was also quite an experience to hear from the current President, the former President, and, hopefully, the future President and Vice-President!

Meeting with Zach Cafritz, Legislative Director, Congressman Don Beyer (VA-8)

By *Barbara Levine*

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days, anyone with a smart phone can join a database. Cafritz explained that the NRA has imposed such restrictions on gun laws that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) is prohibited by law from maintaining an inventory on guns in gun stores. Further, ATF cannot investigate

whether all of the guns listed in a gun store are accounted for. Thus there is no way to know whether any of these guns have been stolen or are being sold under the table. The Senate has refused to confirm President Obama's nominee for ATF director, so there is no director in place. Likewise, the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention used to track gun deaths as a public health hazard, but the Republicans pushed legislation that has prohibited all such research.

War of the Words: The Radical Right's Political Correctness

By Jim McCarthy

In the July issue of *The Democrat*, I reported my anger at the fact that conservatives and Republicans had co-opted, actually purloined, political principles that are also shared by some of us non-believer Democrats and democrats. It subsequently dawned upon me that this phenomenon was also being played out in a war of words, sometimes called political correctness. The radical right has been snatching words, phrases, and language to pre-empt us others in political dialogue like a weird sequel to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Anger resurged as I realized the stealth of the manipulation.

In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Newspeak* made its debut, a language where words and ideas were not what they seemed on their face and, sometimes, meant exactly the opposite. "Don't you see that the whole aim of *Newspeak* is to narrow the range of thought?" Orwell wrote. This objective fits snugly with the way in which paleo-conservatives, having hijacked the Republican Party, utilize linguistic warfare to shape political dialogue and debate. C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape* advised his protégé Wormwood: People don't "think of doctrines as primarily 'true' or 'false'... Jargon, not argument, is your best ally.... Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong, or stark, or courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about." Sound familiar?

While eschewing political correctness, Donald Trump encourages and solicits followers to employ "radical Islamic terrorists" to characterize ISIS. As if this term and only this term will deter the enemy from the battlefield. After all, what does ISIS know about "sticks and stones?" Recall when you first heard about

"death panels," another emotion-laden and insidious term originated to indict the Affordable Care Act. Once again, truth and fact were victims since the ACA actually provided for voluntary panels to counsel on end-of-life care, advance directives, and living wills. The phrase was invented in 2009 by one paleocon and popularized by two other Tea Party cons, Michele Bachmann and Sarah Palin.

The paleocons also have employed "death tax" to attack the centuries-old principle of taxation on the transfer of estate assets. At present, the threshold exemption for the estate tax is \$10.9 million. Notwithstanding, radical rightists characterize the tax as "theft," "a seizure," "hated by the general public," and a "favorite of government." In fact, the estate tax, originating in English common law, is a means to ensure that real property was returned to productive economical use and not merely passed along an inheritance chain in perpetuity.

It's unfortunate that Democrats and democrats seem inured to this linguistic dragooning; perhaps, because skirmishes with "welfare queens" were not too painful. One commentator observed that the right has assumed ownership of the words "freedom" and "liberty" to the exclusion of the left. Others trace the onset of current linguistic warfare to President Reagan's characterization of government as the enemy of the people. This phenomenon has manifested itself in the apparent reluctance of Democrats to chant "USA" at political gatherings—but which they did at the Democratic National Convention.

Newspeak recently emerged in Kansas which, as many well know, is the incubator for paleo-conservative experimentation with small government, reduced taxes, and Trump-

style populism to corrupt civil discussion concerning public education. The righties and Tea Partiers have begun to call public education "government schools," which will, in course, morph into "gummint schools," an appellation at once more pejorative and insidious. No more of that progressive "public education" namby-pamby, fuzzy-headed liberal stuff. The strategic objective in Kansas is to increase the acceptance of charter schools as a bulwark against government.

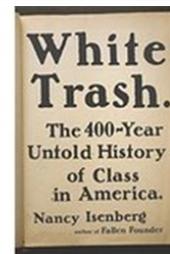
Keep in mind that the objective of this linguistic warfare has been nationalized by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) through many state legislatures reflecting Tea Party priorities. For example, the abortion reform laws authored by ALEC are couched in terms of advancing women's health and safety, while voting requirement statutes purport to eliminate fraud. Fortunately, several federal courts have pierced this fraudulent *Newspeak* and overturned multiple phony attempts by Republican-dominated state legislatures to fool voters.

Newspeak likewise greases the diatribe of the NRA: Guns make us all safe, an oxymoron parroted by Trump advocating guns in night clubs and in school-free zones. "Gummint libraries," "gummint universities," "gummint taxes," "gummint parks," "gummint identification," "gummint police," "gummint firefighters," "gummint roads," and, ultimately, "gummint gummint." All may become future epithets in the propaganda war for political dominance and manipulation or narrowing of thought in discourse. It makes me angry, and should make you angry as well.

Book Review

White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America by Nancy Isenberg

Reviewed by Jim McCarthy



Fans of American history who appreciate the view of iconoclasts like Howard Zinn and Eric Foner will enjoy *White Trash*, which persuasively and skillfully traces the role of class consciousness in our country.

From the earliest pronouncements and writings of colonial leaders and the founding fathers, the author demonstrates the expression of class in America by way of property ownership as a qualification to vote to poll taxes and, later, to urban migration dynamics. Her discourses on the way in which popular culture—TV shows, films, music idols—reflects class perceptions is intriguing.

However well-researched this volume (and the footnotes are many and helpful), it does not represent the proposition that class consciousness in America established or created a dependent relationship between the undercurrent of popular belief in class and formal national or government laws or policies founded on class. This is not to say that there existed no relationship.

Commonwealth citizens should find, as did this reader, the section on Virginia's participation in eugenics and sterilization of women disturbing, especially as the experimentation was not ended until 1979. Moreover, Virginia's Racial Integrity and Eugenical Sterilization acts of 1924 gave rise to *Buck v. Bell*, the SCOTUS case which, in an opinion by Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1927, upheld the state's forced sterilization of

women, as well as *Loving v. Virginia*, decided by SCOTUS in 1967.

There is much to recommend to economists and policy planners here to develop responses to persistent poverty; but, then, as the author maintains, poverty and class are not synonymous. Some may read Isenberg's work as a refutation of American exceptionalism, but, ironically, her views sharpen appreciation for exceptionalism. For example, the existence of an "unalienable" right that all are created equal while slavery and indentured servitude persisted requires overcoming cognitive dissonance. It may suffice to say that *White Trash* [somewhat of a misnomer] denies the existence of class structure in our nation while acknowledging that class has operated to cause us to fail to see clearly the function class has played in social and political progress.

In the Epilogue, Isenberg asserts that our political leaders are ". . . anything but ordinary people after they are elected" despite campaigning wearing blue jeans, Bubba caps, and camouflage. "Disguising that fact is the real camouflage that distorts the actual class nature of state power," she concludes.

Among the more obvious dissonant facts informing this perception are those of women's suffrage, voting rights, school desegregation, and the several other Constitutional amendments advancing basic freedoms. Our history in this respect is not one of a natural

evolution of those rights, nor are these rights borne solely of enlightenment from government or societal leadership. All required political campaigning and years of civil struggle.

Isenberg also theorizes that class was utilized as propaganda with soldiers in the Civil War: "Confederates had to shield themselves from the odious charge of treason by fighting to preserve a core American identity that nineteenth century northerners had corrupted." Slaves were born servants and raising them up by making them soldiers disrupted the entire class structure, an essential rationale for the war, the author observes when toward the end of the war Confederate military strategists suggested conscription of slaves.

It is not easy to reconcile the persuasive and meticulously documented analyses by the author with our more popular appreciation of the leaders of our nation and American exceptionalism. Perhaps that is to the good. In today's world, the wink-wink, nod-nod capacity to engage in anti-exceptional conduct makes reform all the more difficult. When crypto-conservative organizations with names such as the Center for Equal Opportunity aggressively advocate against affirmative action, felon voting, and in favor of "facially neutral" statutes that promote racial, class, and economic barriers, the debate requires constant vigilance.

Mobilizing Sanders Supporters for November and Beyond

By David Fishman

As the Democratic Convention has unfolded, it's clear that a range of attitudes exists among Bernie supporters toward getting on board the Clinton campaign train. The Sanders effort brought together a wide range of people:

- first time activists—often young and in university settings;
- "boomer" progressives, who've usually voted Democratic but this time are passionate;
- people of color, not part of the Clinton majority among their demographic but a sign of change for the future;
- more independent, white working class, and often less engaged voters who supported Sanders in "heartland" primaries and caucuses, motivated more by distrust of Secretary Clinton and/or by self-identification as victims of the hollowing out of the middle class and the decline of the U.S. manufacturing base.

It's understandable that keeping this coalition together and building for future victories at all levels of national, state, and local government will take time and work, both by the Sanders campaign and especially by the Clinton-Kaine campaign. It's also going to take thinking and dialogue, especially with people who have different views from one's own.

Philadelphia brought, in addition to natural feelings of pride and satisfaction for Secretary Clinton and her supporters, substantial moments of graciousness. These included the remarks of Secretary Clinton and Senator Kaine toward Bernie Sanders and his constituencies, and those of Senator Sanders toward the Clinton campaign. It also manifested continuing tensions, e.g., the DNC email

scandal, the conflicting chants of "USA, USA!" versus "No More War!", and the remarks on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, including Governor McAuliffe's unfortunate "Hillary doesn't really oppose it, and she'll change her mind after the election," quickly and appropriately rejected by the Clinton campaign.

In these circumstances, there is an obvious need for ongoing outreach, dialogue, and healing, which will take time. While media analysis will quickly turn to symbolic issues, with "the horse race" emphasis predominating, following are a few observations that I hope will meet with wide acceptance within the disparate Bernie constituencies and with understanding in Clinton leadership circles.

1. There is current majority sentiment, for the Clinton-Kaine ticket which, if well-nurtured by the Clinton campaign, will grow, if only because of opposition to Trump's obvious flaws of bigoted rhetoric, Republican economic policy leanings, prospective judicial appointments, and (to put it mildly) decision-making temperament.

2. Sentiments ranging from "Never Hillary"—based on trust issues—to lessened passion and the stay-at-home problem—especially for younger voters, first-timers, and some independents—need to be considered and dealt with, both internally among we Sanders folk and by Hillary's people in a process that should continue on through November 8.

3. Voter registration and mobilization for Democratic and progressive candidates at all levels of federal, state, and local races in 2016 and beyond is a critical priority, above all for the Clinton campaign. For all areas of domestic legislation, different

perspectives—from the primary battles over a \$15 minimum wage now or later, single-payer health insurance for all versus 55-and-up Medicare buy-in, etc.—are irrelevant absent a Democratic majority in Congress that can pass reform legislation. Moreover, it will be extraordinarily hard for a President Hillary Clinton to govern America successfully with the present opposition-minded Congress, and any attempts at "triangulation" (as sometimes practiced during the presidency of Bill Clinton) will run the risk of reinforcing suspicions about Hillary's trustworthiness. It will also risk losing both blue-collar and progressive constituencies, where the overlap of Trump and Sanders voters' economic views, perspectives about the U.S. role in the world, and hostility to a "rigged system" have created a climate very different from that of America in the 1990s.

4. Major internal Democratic Party reforms have been set in motion, including a diminished role for superdelegates and more open party primary processes on a state-by-state basis. From a Virginia-specific perspective, the selection of Senator Kaine, a superbly qualified and genuinely progressive soul, should inspire us (though on a few policy issues, such as the TPP and foreign policy approaches, his views may be seen as too conservative by many; these issues—for the top of the ticket as well—need to be addressed looking to the fall.

Those of us who weren't there have catching up to do about Philadelphia: discussing different perspectives; thinking about what needs to be done at all levels; and mobilizing, organizing, and campaigning for November. Let's get on with it!

Memories of the 2016 Democratic National Convention

