

CLAYTON FOR CAROLINA

Platform & Plan for the Future of NCDP

Where We Are

2022 ELECTION RECAP

2022 was a challenging election cycle for Democrats up and down the ballot across North Carolina. This started with Democrats losing the United State Senate race by 134,498 votes and ended with us losing significant statewide judicial races, state legislative contests, and local campaigns from school board to county commission.

Here's the thing—**for over 3,000,000 North Carolinians, there was no Democratic candidate** running in at least one of the state-level races on their ballot.

After leaving 30 out of 120 NC House and 14 out of 50 NC Senate seats unchallenged, along with hundreds of other down-ballot races, 45 counties lost at least one Democratic elected official this year, while 74 counties shifted to the right.

We flipped just **two** seats in the State House—Diamond Staton-Williams in Cabarrus County and Ray Jeffers in Durham and Person Counties. We flipped just **one** county commissioner seat across the entire state—in Buncombe County. The current makeup of our General Assembly maintains Governor Cooper's veto power by just **one** vote in the NC State House, and it's been completely lost in the NC Senate under the GOP supermajority.

We lost a Superior Court Judge seat in Charlotte by **77 votes**. We lost our entire school board in Wilmington to anti-masker Republicans. Democrats in North Carolina lost ground nearly everywhere.

One of the NC GOP's priorities this year is redrawing our brand-new congressional districts for 2024. Pending the US Supreme Court's hearing of Moore v. Harper, NC Speaker of the House Tim Moore's case pushing the "independent state legislature" theory, NC's Republican majorities will seek to gerrymander Democrats out of our evenly Democratic and Republican 14-member US House delegation. Should the US Supreme Court rule in their favor, our GOP-controlled state legislature will have near unchecked power.

Even with all of that, **there's still plenty of opportunities for the North Carolina Democratic Party, but we must invest now**. We have to plan for both short and long term success.

Where We're Going

THE TEN YEAR ROADMAP TO TAKE BACK NORTH CAROLINA

We need to prepare for an important date: **Election Day 2030**. For Democrats to have a seat at the table when redistricting happens, we must have a plan to win back the NC General Assembly. Our job as a party is to prepare now to get us there.

After having hundreds of conversations with party leaders, elected officials and candidates, and political organizers, I believe that we need to prioritize the following objectives:

- reinvestment in local parties
- year-round presence and support
- funding a better NCDP
- engaging Democrats for the future
- messaging what matters

Reinvestment in local parties

SUPPORTING OUR COUNTY PARTIES AND LOCAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

We must invest in our people and party leaders from the ground up. This starts with contesting every election we can and organizing a Democratic party in every county, no matter how small or how difficult it may be.

County parties are the backbone of the NCDP and it's up to us to make sure that every Democrat in North Carolina has a strong, active local party and a slate of Democrats to vote for.

This year, many folks across our party in leadership roles—whether it be county, district, precinct, caucus, or auxiliary chairs—expressed concern over lack of support and training needed to effectively do their jobs for the party. Investing in people with training takes time, but our party is better served when the folks who know their communities the best are the ones trained and on the ground to do the work.

We need a formal training and onboarding process for our county party officers. Nobody should be left on their own to figure out what's required of them and what they need to do to make an impact.

We need to empower our county parties to fundraise, not unnecessarily charge them. **I support reevaluating sustaining fund dues, and training our county parties on effective fundraising methods.**

Year-round presence and support

ORGANIZING EVERY COMMUNITY BECAUSE EVERY COMMUNITY MATTERS

We must truly organize our voters, not just attempt to mobilize them. This means being active in every community and showing up when it matters. This means being present year-round, not just a few months before the election.

As a large state with a population that is spread amongst several medium-sized metropolitan areas, we face challenges with our current political geography. While Democrats earn larger vote shares in urban communities, recently we have given up on investing in rural areas. This has drastically impacted our ability to contest legislative elections and harmed our ability to win statewide elections.

The harsh reality is that, as Democrats, our current strategy takes voters for granted—especially Black and other minority voters, low-income voters, and rural voters. We have ignored several key voter groups, such as young voters (both on and off college campuses) and non-registered potential voters.

We must have year-round, community-based organizing efforts on the ground in every community across our state with three simple goals—support the local party, recruit volunteers, and regular community outreach efforts. We must ensure that our local leaders, and especially our Democratic elected officials, are doing their part to support their local party.

In order to be as effective as possible, we have to find organizers that are from the communities we're working in. Having local voices that are trained to understand politics while leveraging local relationships is crucial to the long-term sustainability of the organizing program. County party leaders should have a say in the organizer hiring process as well as helping set their organizing goals.

As a state party, our job is to make sure that the county parties have the resources they need to effectively organize their communities. We must provide training and guidance, but also physical resources like marketing materials and organizers. **No county party should be without a website, literature, signage, voter information, and other resources needed to earn votes.**

Funding a better NCDP

EXPANDING FUNDRAISING AND SEEKING NEW DONORS

A clear takeaway from this cycle is that we must diversify our funding sources as a party. In order to raise and sustain the funds for a year-round organizing program, the NCDP must start attracting grassroots donors from not only across our state, but the entire country. We

need a variety of institutional donors, grassroots givers, and large funders to carry forward our efforts to turn North Carolina blue.

It starts with hiring an Executive Director and finance team who are committed to long-term sustainable fundraising strategies. Let's take our case to donors nationwide and ask them to join us in this reinvestment.

As chair, I want to institute a "Save the South Tour" or other national effort to cross all major Democratic states to inform about and sell the Democratic vision for North Carolina. We will show how with national support and strategic investment, NCDP can successfully save our state from far-right Republicans like Mark Robinson in 2024, flip our US Senate seat in 2026, and take back the General Assembly by 2030. We can bring small dollar donors into the party by encouraging those who give directly to the DNC, DSCC, and DCCC to instead invest their money locally—into their county parties, local candidates, and our state party.

I've been in the room with large, transformational donors, and I've met countless grassroots donors. For the most part, they all want the same things. Donors want vision, enthusiasm, honesty, and—above all—to see **results**. We have to set ambitious but realistic goals that we can accomplish. We need folks to join us along the way while we hold ourselves accountable.

Money is out there, and as chair I am committed to finding it.

Engaging Democrats for the future

BUILDING A BENCH FOR EVERYTHING FROM COUNTY CHAIRS TO CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES

The purpose of the Democratic Party at the local, state, and national level is to elect Democrats. That begins with strong county parties that will help to register voters, get out the vote, and staff the polls on Election Day. That continues with giving volunteers the resources they need to win.

We need to make sure that every county party has a list of active Democrats to recruit and the knowledge to leverage Votebuilder for organizing. Building our grassroots volunteer base takes time but goes hand-in-hand in helping build the general body of a county party. As a party, we should prioritize volunteer retention year-round and better leverage the skills and diverse experience of our base.

In 2020, the DNC created a program called Organizing Corps 2020. The Organizing Corps was responsible for recruiting young people, including college seniors from across swing states, and teaching them how to become organizers for the general election. **We should bring that organizing framework to NC,** recruiting young people on college campuses, including community colleges, to get involved and help us make a difference.

We also need more people to run for office, and that takes some convincing. Running for office is hard, but the NCDP can help remove barriers. We need a “Build the Bench Program” to help increase the amount of candidates and local leaders.

With the help of county parties, we will recruit new candidates to run locally, building skills to eventually be a strong candidate for higher office. Key parts of the program will include assessing a candidate’s pathway to success, building a campaign team, managing financial filing and government compliance, and supporting candidates with quality materials and messaging guides.

Contesting every seat—from the school board to the US Senate—is a crucial part of Democrats’ path to success.

Message what matters

SPEAKING TO LOCAL NEEDS AND DELIVERING STATEWIDE

In the words of Tom Lehrer, a message needs to be in essence “something the people can hum.”

Our party’s message needs to be consistent, clear, and something people can easily go and “hum” to their communities. Currently, messaging flows from the top down; However, **we need a messaging strategy where the state is vocalizing the needs of communities rather than a political party.**

We need to stand strong on working class policy issues that are important to voters, like broadband access and closing the digital equity gap, job creation, access to hospitals and affordable care, anti-corruption, economic development, racial equity, education quality, easy pathways to citizenship, and small business assistance—and we need to empower local county parties to communicate on these issues.

North Carolina is large and diverse, with vastly different concerns in each region and each community. Empowering local messaging and then helping elevate through modern channels and materials will keep the Democratic party in touch on local issues.