

Michigan's largest chartered Democratic club

Serving the Grosse Pointes, Harper Woods and Detroit's east side



Hate has no home here!

This Grosse Pointes & Harper Woods NAACP statement was issued Feb. 20, with the Grosse Pointe Democratic Club, We GP and Detroit 300.

On Feb. 15 an African-Ameri-Can resident of Grosse Pointe Park discovered her neighbor had displayed a KKK flag in a side window facing her windows. This longtime symbol of racial hatred has no place in our community. Thankfully the offensive display was taken down by the homeowner.

The fact that a KKK flag was displayed at all is deeply disturbing. Grosse Pointe Park is arguably the most diverse city in the five Grosse Pointes, and yet someone felt comfortable enough to wave their racism in their neighbor's face with the oldest symbol of white, domestic terrorism perpetuated on Black Americans for over a hundred years.

This signals a deeper challenge we must all overcome in our community. For while the response from other neighbors and people of goodwill has been overwhelmingly positive, this incident occurred after the victim reported to police she had discovered a gas can full of gasoline inserted in her covered trash bin placed next to her house. Who places a gas can, full of gas, inside a closed trash bin and for what reason? We will never know. When officers arrived, the Black neighbor says she was told there really wasn't anything they could do. Now weeks later, she didn't even want to call the Grosse Pointe Public Safety Department for help with what is clearly an attempt at ethnic intimidation by displaying the KKK flag directly at her and her family.

When any resident of any city feels like they can't turn to law enforcement for help because the issue involves race, then we have failed as a community in our responsibility to protect each other. The Grosse Pointe Park patrol force is 100 percent white and male. No person of color has ever patrolled the city streets and only one woman appears to have done so in the city's 71-year history. That fact must change. A modern, diverse police force would have a very different response to investigating acts of ethnic intimidation and potential domestic terrorism. The current search for a new director of public safety must bring forward experienced, qualified candidates of color, women and law enforcement executives with a demonstrated commitment to protecting everyone in a multiracial community.

The status quo is not acceptable any longer. We as residents of Grosse Pointe Park, members of the Grosse Pointes & Harper Woods NAACP Branch and the wider community demand our public safety departments look like the community they are sworn to protect and serve. We need all public safety departments to take all threats of ethnic intimidation and domestic terrorism against citizens more seriously. We can and must do better for all of the people, of all racial backgrounds living and working in the five Pointes. Hate and a casual attitude toward acts of hatred against African-Americans must stop now.

GREAT JOB! Now let's keep the momentum going

e did it! We took back our government, and in doing so we restored our nation's values. Even better, we took back Congress. Although our majority is razor thin, we have to take this opportunity to regain our footing and continue to assert issues important to us. And most importantly we must govern, because we face the midterm

election in just two years and cannot have a repeat of 2010.

This was not a peaceful transition, with Donald Trump raising baseless charges of election fraud and inciting violence. We saw elected Republicans and others file lawsuits with absurd claims to prevent certification of the electoral college and undermine our democracy. And we witnessed the violent uprising at the Capitol.

In response, our club enacted resolutions requesting that Harper Woods City Councilwoman Cheryl Costantino and Grosse Pointe Shores Councilman Matt Seely be censured for participating in lawsuits to subvert our democratic process.

Because of the pandemic we couldn't open a campaign office but we found ways to win. Our volunteers were energized to canvass, phone bank and get out the vote.



MDP Chair Lavora Barnes was guest speaker at our February membership meeting. President Gary Bresnehan upheld the tradition of offering our speaker a club bumper sticker — with a non-traditional promise to deliver it after Zoom meetings become a thing of the past.

The results showed in the presidential race where we had our best showing ever. Joe Biden won the city of Grosse Pointe, and overwhelmingly won Grosse Pointe Park, as Hillary Clinton did in 2016. In a significant change from 2016, Biden won Grosse Pointe Woods, and lost the Farms by only 10 votes. In Harper Woods and east Detroit precincts, he won overwhelmingly.

Those terrific results are attributable to our outreach and get-out-the-vote efforts.

Locally, we were also successful with our endorsed candidates Joe Herd, David Brumbaugh and Colleen Worden winning their races for Grosse Pointe school board. And post-election, Joe Herd was elected the first Black president of the board.

Despite victories, state margins were too close for comfort and show we have work to do. The national and state parties

Not in our town!

An estimated 800 people came out Feb. 21 to support JeDonna Dinges, the Park resident whose neighbor displayed a KKK flag facing her home.

They came to walk through the neighborhood while speakers took the mic, including Cynthia Douglas, president of the Grosse Pointes & Harper Woods NAACP, who said: "We are here to uproot the tree of systemic racism. ... We have been dealing with this 400-year pandemic called racism, and we cannot allow the acts of those who hinder the good works of this community!"

One way we all can help is to display the "Hate has no home here" lawn sign. Get yours at facebook.com/HHNHHGrossePointe/

To view the video of the speakers, go to https://we-gp.org/.



must examine why voters went with Trump and how we must connect with them. If we don't, they will continue to vote Republican, which could lead to defeats as the 2022 dynamics change with new districts. We must continue to be open about why and what issues caused them to not vote for Democrats, and to reestablish trust with them.

Most important, we must be able to handle the truth and reach out to meet their needs.

Barnes and Blocker re-elected

At the Michigan Dems virtual state convention Feb. 20, Lavora Barnes was reelected state party chair, and Rick Blocker was re-elected 14th Congressional District chair. We endorsed both for the outstanding jobs they have done for our party.

Several members of our club were also elected to 14th District leadership positions: Olivia Coleman, recording secretary; Harry Kalogerakos, 1st vice chair; Valerie Kindle, Ed Keelean and Greg Bowens, vice chairs; Jackie Kalogerakos and myself, State Central Committee delegates, and Colton Dale and Neil Sroka, State Central alternates. Having our members in leadership positions is important as we work with countless state and local partners toward our shared values.

Moving forward, the state party must place more resources in local organizations, and pay more attention to grassroots groups. I hope the party will provide more resources to assist clubs like ours so we can continue with our successful efforts.

Looking ahead, we'll have a full slate of meetings and events on Zoom, including the membership meeting at 7 p.m. April 14, and hopefully a picnic later in the summer. We'll also be active in local elections and recruiting candidates. (See Page 4.)

I want to thank last year's board for all their hard work, and welcome new 2021 board members. (See list on Page 5.)

I look forward to seeing all of you in 2021.

President Gary Bresnehan



Sign, sign, everywhere a sign!

Lawn signs that were tucked away after the election to conform to cities' ordinances were out loud & proud for Inauguration Day.





Biden is off to a good start

The first 100 days in office rarely define a president's legacy, but they serve as measuring sticks for effectiveness, vision and organizational management.

The first 100 days tradition dates to the 1930s, when Franklin D. Roosevelt took office just over three years into the Great Depression. The country was reeling from spiraling unemployment, bank failures and a general sense of despair.

Desperation was in the air in 1933, as FDR called on the nation to meet the crisis head-on during his March 4 inaugural address: "This nation asks for action, and action now. Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require."

Roosevelt immediately called Congress into special session and kept it there for three months. He found that the Democrats who were in control were eager to do his bidding, and even some Republicans were cooperative.

On Jan. 20, 2021, Joe Biden was sworn in after a tumultuous, violent and destabilizing transition. President Biden's challenges are different from what Roosevelt faced almost 90 years ago, but they are equally pivotal in our nation's history.

Biden's Chief of Staff Ron Klain says the president faces four overlapping crises that require immediate attention: the Covid-19 pandemic that has claimed 500,000 U.S. lives, the resulting economic downturn, climate change and a national reckoning over racial equity in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests.

It is also clear from the events on Jan. 6 that Biden also faces a challenge in magnanimously returning our country to a sense of common purpose.

On the eve of Biden's inauguration, Klain wrote a memo outlining the challenges and how the administration would quickly tackle them. It read in part, "In his first ten days in office, President-elect Biden will take decisive action to address these four crises, prevent other urgent and irreversible harms, and restore America's place in the world. ... President-elect Biden will take action — not just to reverse the gravest damages of the Trump administration — but also to start moving our country forward."

Fifty days into the Biden administration, there has been significant progress in addressing all these overlapping challenges. The president has signed more than 50 executive orders, actions and memorandums to rapidly address the coronavirus pandemic, tackle climate change, boost the economy and dismantle many of former President Donald Trump's policies.

"I want to make it clear — there's a lot of talk, with good reason, about the number of executive orders that I have signed — I'm not making new law; I'm eliminating bad policy," Biden said, as he signed a series of actions on immigration from the Oval Office on Feb. 2. "What I'm doing is taking on the issues that ----99% of them - that the president, the last president of the United States, issued executive orders I felt were very counterproductive to our security, counterproductive to who we are as a country, particularly in the area of immigration."

Crisis compelled swift action from FDR and Biden. Today's partisan landscape requires Biden to chart a different course, but after 50 days in office, it is clear the administration has the people and policies in place to build back better.

Chris Moyer

Here's how we build on success

hen you look at results of recent national and statewide elections, it's clear the Republican stranglehold on the Grosse Pointes is over. In 2020 voters across the Grosse Pointes and Harper

Woods overwhelmingly voted for Joe Biden and Gary Peters.

But if so many of us are voting Democratic, why aren't more Democrats in our city governments? There's a simple answer. In the past, not enough Democrats have run.

In 2019 that began to change. Four GP Dems-endorsed candidates ran for their city councils. Those candidates — Kenn Gafa (GPW), Neil Sroka (GPF), Aimee Fluitt (GPP) and Vikas Relan (GPP) — won their races by focusing on community engagement and old-fashioned getting out the vote.

We have an opportunity to build on that success in 2021. There are open council and mayoral seats across the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods. Our goal is to have Democratic candidates running for all of them.

The Grosse Pointe Democratic Club has assembled a subcommittee to organize

If you've ever thought about running for office, now is the time. There are many open seats, and we have a team of people to support you.

and win these elections. We'll be plotting strategy, supporting candidates and helping get out the vote.

Why are local races important?

Having more Democrats in local government means our governments will be more likely to enact Democratic policies, lead with transparency and better represent the diversity of our communities.

In addition, we'll build a base of strong, experienced, electable candidates for county, state and national office.

Wouldn't it be great to see a new generation of Dems from Grosse Pointe elected to positions in Lansing and Washington?

If you've ever thought about running for office, now is the time. There are many open seats, and we have a team of people to support you.

How we'll help

Running for office seems challenging. It might seem like a huge time commitment. It might seem daunting. You might not know where to start. Don't worry, we're here to help.

If you're one of our endorsed candidates, we'll give you the support you'll need to win. We'll help you refine your campaign message or outline your stump speech. We'll help you plan what you need to do and when. We'll help you navigate the intricacies of campaign finance law.

And most of all, we'll help you find local volunteers who want to knock doors and tell their neighbors about you. You won't be running alone. We're all in this together.

Filing deadlines are coming up as soon as mid-April. If you've already made up your mind to run, find out more about our endorsement process at gpdems.com.

If you want to get involved helping a campaign, or if you're curious and just want to know more, contact us at communications@gpdems.com.

Jeff Greer

GP Dems drive vote shifts

The Detroit Free Press lead said it all: "If Democrats were the best-kept secret in the traditionally conservative Grosse Pointes, they are no more. This year's presidential election results drove that point home."

The story by Christina Hall ran on Page 1 on Nov. 29, 2020, with a photo by Antranik Tavitian of members holding the Grosse Pointe Democratic Club banner.

Joe Biden had won Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park and Grosse Pointe Woods, and lost by only 10 votes in the Farms.

Nobody knows if that trend will continue. Pollster Ed Sarpolus said the 2020 results could be a "one-off because it's Trump, but there is a demographic shift going on."

GP Dems 2nd VP Colton Dale told the Freep, "I do think a lot of those folks were always here, but they were not comfortable saying (they) were a Democrat."

President Gary Bresnehan recalled the reaction when we opened our first campaign

office in 2008 on Mack Avenue in Detroit. "People would say, 'I can't believe there are any Democrats in Grosse Pointe,' or something to that effect. Yes, there are a lot of Democrats in Grosse Pointe. There are more than you think."

The Freep noted that a big moment for Dems came in 2008 when Tim Bledsoe of Grosse Pointe won the 1st District state House race. No one could recall a Democrat ever winning that seat. Republican Ed Gaffney, who held the seat but couldn't run because of term limits, told the Freep in 2008 that a Bledsoe win "would be quite a conquest for the Democrats."

And it was. Bledsoe won not just once, but was reelected.

Club member Greg Bowens said other reasons for the change included formation of the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods



Club members on Page 1 of the Detroit Free Press.

NAACP branch, as well as the women's, LGBTQ and Black Lives Matter marches across the Pointes.

Shannon Byrne, president of the nonpartisan, issue-based We GP, said younger families moving in "want a community that is diverse and vibrant and pro-justice. ... As the Pointes are more forward-thinking and focused on justice, I think it will continue to attract folks who think that way."

TAKE NOTE

Keep campaign momentum going

After a monumental victory for democracy in November, our GP Dems Precinct Delegates and Volunteers group took January off to celebrate and recover from an active campaign season. And now we are back at it! Join us for our monthly Third Thursday Campaign Meet Ups when we'll gather virtually from 7-8 p.m. Let's keep momentum going, continue to build grassroots power and enjoy time with friends old and new. Event link and details are available on the GP Dems Facebook page or by emailing communications@gpdems.com.

Shannon Byrne

Picnic update

Our picnic will look a little different this year since we don't know what covid restrictions will be in place. We hope to gather outside later in the summer so watch your emails and our Facebook page for more info! *Christan Keelean*

MLK Day of Action

As part of the Biden Inaugural Committee's National Day of Action on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, our club partnered with Harper Woods Mayor Valerie Kindle and Peace & Goodwill Baptist Church to provide food, essential items and gift cards to community members in need. With the help of partners including Trader Joe's, Family Foods Market, Harper Woods Helping Hands, Shonda Peterson Davis, Tenisha Collins and our members, we were able to help more than 100 local families!

Environmental justice issues source

Want to get active on environmental issues, with a particular emphasis on environmental justice, but don't have much time? Working with WeGP, the Sierra Club and others, I admin a Facebook page facebook.com/groups/gogreenGP — and a list serve for those not on Facebook. Most issues tracked are at the state and local levels and include monitoring of voting records in Lansing. Join the page or email me at MaryGPP5@gmail.com to get on the list serve.

Mary Rouleau

Evaluate climate mitigation policies

How can the average citizen evaluate competing climate bills likely to come out of Congress? En-ROADS is a quick and easy-to-use online simulation. For more information, go to climateinteractive.org/tools/ en-roads/ or contact me at jimrine22@gmail.com.

> Jim Rine, precinct delegate and Citizens' Climate Lobby volunteer

Remembering George McMullen

We lost a good friend and life member, Grosse Pointe Woods City Councilman George McMullen, on Dec. 29. I met George years ago at a fitness center and he asked about the club. As he made his rounds to various meetings, he decided that even though he didn't share our political views, he wanted to see what we were about. He was a regular at our meetings and became part of our club's family, forming many good friendships. He was involved with many organizations, and one of his proudest moments was being elected to City Council. George was a true public servant.

As we remember George moving forward, we can honor his memory by following his example and being cordial to each other even when we disagree. *Gary Bresnehan*

Grosse Pointe Democratic Club officers and executive board

President Gary Bresnehan (GP) Vice President Jackie Kalogerakos (HW) Vice President Colton Dale (GPW) Treasurer Christan Keelean (GPP) Tewonia Evans (DET)

At-large members

*Darlene Anderson (DET) Rachael Backer (GPW) **Beverly Brown (DET)** Shannon Byrne (GPF) Sandra Bucciero (GPW) Francesca Catalfio (GPF) John Clark (GPS) Olivia Coleman (DET)** Jeff Greer (GPP) Ed Keelean (GPP) Laura Kellett (GPF) *Addison Mauck (DET) Colin Moulder-McComb (GPP) Chris Moyer (GPC) Mary Rouleau (GPP) La Vern Rutledge (HW) Roland Samaroo (GPF) Aaron Tavalire (GPF) *Mimi Valentic (GPS)

Ex-officio members

Kenn Gafa (GPW) Tim Killeen (DET) Valerie Kindle (HW) Neil Sroka (GPF)

Past president

Harry Kalogerakos (HW)

Not returning: Larry Macdonald Marcia Spivey

* new member

** campaign finance compliance officer



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