

Gloucester Delegates attend Massachusetts State Democratic Convention, September 2019

On September 14, ten Gloucester delegates joined about 4,000 other Democrats in Springfield for the state party's political convention. These included: Karen Bell, Jeremy McKeen, Donna Soodalter-Toman, Lenore Maniaci, Mary Kingsley, Andrew Tarr, Liz Murray, Lacey Cominsky, and T.David Marro. Speakers included Senators Warren and Markey, and many of the state representatives to Congress. Most of the speeches focused on 2020 races and generating campaign support. The exhibit hall had many issue-focused organizations, including RCV and groups addressing the climate crisis.

One delegate (Donna Soodalter-Toman) commented:

It was a treat to see so many people energized by the prospect of electing people to office who truly care about others and to read the democratic platform/resolutions with which I totally concur. I lived in Springfield from 6th-10th grade and while a bit saddened to see that my high school no longer exists, it was gratifying to see the city coming back and with such diversity!

While the lines for security were long, it was well-organized. I particularly enjoyed the presentations by Elizabeth Warren—she has become truly comfortable in her own skin and is warm, inspiring, clearly focused and, as always, dedicated to improving life for all—“don’t agonize, organize!” She really does have plans!

Edward Markey spoke about his background about which I was not totally aware, a true public servant and still living his roots in Malden. His support of workers and the Green New Deal was inspiring and presents a progressive and thoughtful stance. And, since this is personal, I am very saddened to see Joe Kennedy running against him and using the age card! In this case, the age card does not work! Despite his name, which gets people excited, he had to be dragged to the table on the Green New Deal and still has not publicly come out against fossil fuels!!

Others who additionally impressed and inspired me were Suzanne Bump (articulate and very mission-driven) and, as always Maura Healy.

Resolutions Adopted

After listening to speeches for approximately 5 hours, delegates voted to adopt the resolutions submitted by the Subcommittee on Resolutions for the 2019 Action Agenda Convention of the Massachusetts Democratic Party.

Marianne Rutter and Alex Pratt were the Co-Chairs.

The following resolutions were adopted by overwhelming voice vote of approval. See link for full text: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AnWcJN_44l2lqKF_XJVuoyMjWjOjAJKp/view

- Affirming Support for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion (the ROE Act)
- Fair and Affordable Housing
- Medicare for All
- Money Out of Politics
- Increase the Safety of the Residents of the Commonwealth from the Scourge of Gun Violence
- Addressing Sexual Harassment on Beacon Hill
- Recognizing 400 Years Since African Slaves Were First Brought to the United States
- Reversing the DCCC Decision on Sanctioning Consultants
- Support of a Green New Deal
- Transparency in the Legislative Process
- Voting Reform

Following the Speakers and voting portion of the 2019 Massachusetts Democratic Convention, attendees were invited to participate in discussion groups, or breakout sessions, in a range of topics relevant to promoting the Democratic agenda, breaking down social barriers, and community & political organizing.

Breakout Sessions at the MA State Democratic Convention, September 14, 2019

The Green New Deal and a Brighter Future: Taking on Climate Change, Sustainability and Clean Energy

Notes prepared by Karen N. Bell

This panel focused on the mechanics of the Green New Deal and how we can fight for a greener future on the local, state and federal level. For more information about the Green New Deal, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_New_Deal. This explains concepts and provisions and the current status of the bill sponsored by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the House and Ed Markey in the Senate. Some environmental and scientific groups have criticized the bill for failing to include carbon offsets and nuclear power; but at this point it is more a set of principles and goals than specific legislative steps. The bill itself failed to advance in either the House or the Senate, but currently has approximately 100 co-sponsors in the House and 10 in the Senate, including presidential candidates Senators Warren, Klobuchar, Booker and Sanders.

Speakers at the Breakout Session at the Convention included:

- Senator Edward Markey – gave brief introduction
- State Senator Jamie Eldridge (listed but probably did not speak)
- Eugenia Gibbons: Director of Policy, Green Consumer Alliance
- Daniel Nicolai: District Leader, 32BJ SEIU
- Reverend Mariama: White-Hammond Pastor, New Roots AME Church
- Jon Wishnie: Partners Organizer, 350 Mass Climate Justice

The speakers encouraged the delegates who attended (probably about 150+) to attend rallies and demonstrate support for climate change activists. The Union speaker urged proponents of the Green New Deal (GND) to come up with concrete proposals for retraining workers and equip them with skills to work in new industries. Workers are often skeptical of environmentalists who propose change, and thus new renewable energy companies need to be held to account for labor practices. Communities should learn about and consider green energy municipal aggregation programs for electric power (<http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Toolkit.pdf>). Gloucester currently has a municipal aggregation program.

In This Fight Together: Spotlighting the Work of Coalitions and Allies *No one should march alone-- meet our partners in the fight for Democratic values including women's rights advocates, labor leaders and others to learn how we can best support one another.*

- **Speakers:**
 - State Representative Liz Malia
 - Darlene Lombos: Executive Director, Community Labor United
 - Rebecca Hart-Holder: Executive Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts
 - Willie Bodrick: Associate Pastor, Twelfth Baptist Church

Notes prepared by Lacey Rose Cominsky

I attended this session because coordinating the efforts of many grassroots activist groups has been a desire and a challenge for so many concerned citizens since the beginning of organized political resistance to the Trump presidency.

The speakers all had experiences and expertise to share from their trials and successes in political & community organizing. A moderator opened the floor to questions from participants, and chose a panelist with relevant experience to respond.

The main principle that each panelist emphasized was that by supporting other progressive and collective-organizing groups in their mission(s), outreach, and lobbying work, we can collectively lift each other up and advance our own larger cause. It was also pointed out that perceived "divisions" between and amongst grass-roots groups were often based on misconceptions, cultural misunderstandings, and even inherent bias. We were encouraged to work through these misperceptions in our organizing and to ACTIVELY break down divisions and barriers---instead focusing on the mutual good of combining forces and hopefully being able to understand and discuss the sources and origins of perceived divisions, towards the end of greater solidarity.

A secondary, but more tangible, principle discussed had to do with finding meaningful and working intersections between movements for social, economic, and environmental justice. Importance was placed on engaging groups and communities outside of the assumed groups of customary allies in order to do the work of real coalition building. Examples such as engaging faith-based organizations and specific church congregations for support and resource-sharing struck me as especially relevant. Also emphasized was the need to show up in support of union workers in contract negotiations and strikes and inviting union members to share perspectives on legislative priorities.

The discussion was lovely, informed, and heartfelt with Democrats from across the board asking meaningful questions regarding "Fighting back, and fighting forward," in ways that build our Party and our partnerships in stronger ways to yield more beneficial results for all. It was truly a privilege to be present for the sharing and discussion of tangible and inspiring wisdom from successful campaigners and community organizers in Massachusetts.

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This panel focused on ways to organize similar and diverse groups around a common cause, providing examples of work that they each had done. The attendants were very involved, asking many questions about how this work could be replicated and/or benchmarked for other mission-driven causes.

Speakers at the Breakout Session were:

- State Representative Liz Malia
- Darlene Lombos: Executive Director, Community Labor United
- Rebecca Hart-Holder: Executive Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts
- Willie Bodrick: Associate Pastor, Twelfth Baptist Church

Notes Prepared by Donna Soodalter-Toman

One question came from a Caucasian woman from the Vineyard who asked how best to work with and speak with people of color and how not to sound superior when offering help and money. I thought Pastor, Willie Bodrick's (only 31 years old!) answer was point on. He spoke of history and (I paraphrase) that one can't expect to be trusted just because they offer. For too long, the choice as to what is needed has not been up to those in need but by those who believe they know what is needed. He spoke about approaching things differently and to be patient, among other advice.

The discussion of labor getting together with those not supporting unions was addressed brilliantly by Darleen Lombos and Rebecca Hart Holder in that there needs to be a reason for different, sometimes opposing groups to come together. They spoke of needing to find

something in common that all can get behind and go from there. Rebecca who has been tirelessly working on the Roe Act has brought together 70 different groups! Even the church is involved and while there may be disagreement in some areas (abortion for example), it is clear that there is a total lack of equality for women's rights by income and race and that this is an issue all can support!

What is very clear is that building coalitions takes time, perseverance, patience and consistency. When asked about what to do given the emergent nature of so many issues and so little time, suggestions were made to seek out those who are working on these issues and join in; help get people out to vote; help with registering voters, etc. What is most important is to do something!!

Another issue that was addressed is how to find out what companies to support and not support. For example, people know that Home Depot, McDonald's, Papa John's... have all given heavily to the Trump campaign but there are so many more that people need to know about.

For example, Darlene stated that Fidelity, as an example, touts their support for democratic causes but, in fact, two of their board members are on the Board of the Pioneer Institute—a staunch far-right organization who supports charter schools over public education, and, per finance review, Fidelity had taken the MA pension fund and earmarked some of that money to fund charter schools! Fidelity has also lobbied to benefit from the tax breaks and invests heavily in fossil fuels. Removing funds from Fidelity could have a significant impact.

Money talks and social media is an excellent resource to make people aware of who is doing what and how to move things in a different direction.

Before being kicked out of our room (we went way over the allotted time), all agreed that “we are in the fight for our lives.”

I very much appreciate this opportunity.

Building Bridges Not Walls: Understanding the Real Facts on Immigration *Hear from lawyers, undocumented voices and others about the realities of the immigration process and learn what you can do to support our friends, family and neighbors in this fight.*

- **Speakers:**
 - State Representative Liz Miranda
 - Daniel McFadden: Staff Attorney, ACLU Massachusetts
 - Liz Goss: Principal, Goss Associates
 - Antonio Viana: Massa Viana Law
 - Natalicia Tracy: Executive Director, Brazilian Worker Center

Notes from Lenore Maniaci

The immigration panel focused on the unacceptable dehumanization of non-documented people and how to pressure our elected leaders to take steps to remedy their treatment at the border. The human rights abuses perpetrated by the Trump administration against immigrants and refugees despite their decreasing numbers in recent years helps make it clear that “the cruelty is the point.” This is another “us versus them” tactic that is designed to appeal to the president’s base.

We learned that the amount of documentation required to obtain a REAL ID designed to improve travel safety enacted post-9/11 in 2005 (just now coming into effect in 2020), requires much paperwork to establish evidence of lawful status. Consequently, many Americans may experience an increase in travel restrictions if they don’t update their paperwork and many others will only be able to receive a standard driver’s license. The REAL ID appears extremely prohibitive for many Americans let alone undocumented immigrants who may not realize that if they come to the U.S. illegally they may no longer be able to fly out with their initial home country passports given the new requirements to have a REAL ID for air travel. There are currently efforts in MA and several other states to allow undocumented immigrants to apply for driver’s licenses here with the hopes of improving vehicular safety and treatment of immigrants with different types of statuses.

Sh*t-hole Countries, Muslim Bans & 'Very Fine People': Combating Bigotry, Racism & White Supremacy in American Politics *This panel will focus on enduring racism in both American politics and policy. It will explore the historic and modern impact of racism on communities of color, white privilege, being an ally, and how we can collectively fight back against a President that promotes white supremacy.*

- **Speakers:**

- Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III
- State Representative Aaron Vega
- Framingham Mayor Yvonne Spicer
- Boston City Council President Andrea Campbell
- Boston City Councilor Michelle Wu

Notes from T. Dave Marro:

This panel, which included several persons of color, presented concerns and ideas for healing the racial divide.

Joe Kennedy noted that Massachusetts is leading in many progressive causes, but not in race relations. He ascribed this to traditional communities that remain insular.

Yvonne Spicer mentioned that Framingham has added an Officer of Diversity to its government.

Andrea Campbell encouraged the audience to become “Allies” in the struggle for equality. She suggested that we look at ourselves to discover our internal biases. She also suggested that attending racial equity training would be helpful.

Other strategies to becoming an ally were to attend events that were primarily attended by persons of color. She said “you will be welcome”. One controversial statement was that charter schools were a necessary “stop gap” until public schools in communities of color were better.

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Inclusive Economic Prosperity: Challenges and Opportunities *Hear from a panel of economic development experts about transformative approaches that can strengthen job creation and small businesses in our urban, suburban and rural communities throughout Massachusetts. Help us develop an action agenda that will narrow the racial wealth divide in the Commonwealth!*

- **Speakers:**

- Steve Grossman CEO Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and Former Chair, Democratic National Committee and Massachusetts Democratic Party
- Sheena Collier: Director of Economic Opportunity, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- Segun Idowu: Executive Director, Black Economic Council of Massachusetts
- Glynn Lloyd: Executive Director, Business Equity Initiative, Eastern Bank
- Zach Nieder: Associate Director, Initiative for a Competitive Inner City