



Millennials in Politics: The Experience of the Montgomery County Young Democrats and Looking Forward to the Next Five Years

By Michael DeLong

President

Basic Facts About the Montgomery County Young Democrats

- A group of young Democrats ages 14-35
- Founded back in the early 2000s
- Goals include
 - Electing Democrats up and down the ballot
 - Advocating for issues that especially impact young people—good jobs and wages, education, student loan debt, housing, immigrant rights
 - Getting young people involved in politics—education, organization, advocacy, running for office
 - Networking and connections—helping young people get work in politics
 - Working on longer-term issues

History and Other Facts

- Quickly became involved in past campaigns for marriage equality and a \$15 per hour minimum wage
- Door knocking, phone banking, and other campaign work
- MCYD does not endorse candidates, but we do take stands on issues
- Past presidents include Nik Sushka, Dave Kunes, William Roberts
- Elected officials have been quite supportive
- Are a chapter of the Young Democrats of Maryland

Monthly Meetings



- Usually held on third Tuesday of every month
- Members discuss topics, organize, assign tasks, and hear from speakers
- Meetings could be informal debates, panels, workshops, trainings on how to advocate or run for office

Advocacy and Legislative Work



- Annual Lobby Day every February in Annapolis
- Testify and submit written testimony in support of bills
- Touch base with legislators about their priorities and what we should be aware of
- Often oriented around specific issues

Membership Events and Socials



moco young Dems

 **ALUMNI DAY**

ice cream social
Saturday, May 21, 2022
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm



RSVP HERE!
bit.ly/mcyd-alum

Acorn Urban Park
8075 Newell Street Silver Spring

For more information on speakers, food, & other updates, go to fb.me/e/3cCc2u5rw

Membership Events and Socials (continued)

- Being involved in politics should be fun
- Events are needed for people to kick back and relax
- Guests and networking
- Members get discounts to these events, and sometimes MCYD picks up the tab
- Events include happy hours, picnics, ice cream socials

Paint the County Blue



- Annual fundraiser taking place in September of each year
- Food, drinks, awards
- Tickets are \$20 for member, \$25 for non-members
- Goal is to raise at least several thousand dollars
- Past hosts: Senator Will Smith, Councilmember Gabe Albornoz



What Does MCYD Do With That Money?

- Pays for renting spaces to hold monthly meetings, forums, and other events
- Donations to worthy causes, such as:
 - \$250 to strike fund for Starbucks workers attempting to unionize
 - \$500 to high school students' project to promote compost and reduce food waste
 - \$500 to Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee
 - \$500 to Maryland Democratic Party
 - \$500 to Brooke Codes Hackathon
 - Reimbursements for campaign expenses in general election

Young Democrats Working in Politics

- Members of the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee
- Legislative assistants/chiefs of staff in Annapolis
- Staff members for the Montgomery County Council
- Congressional staffers on Capitol Hill
- Assistant to County Executive
- MCYD works to find jobs, put in a good word for our members, and help them get more experience

MoCo Young Democrats Alumni



Issue # 1: Paid Family and Medical Leave



Testimony of Montgomery County Young Democrats to House Economic Matters Committee In Support of HB 8 – Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)

February 15th, 2022
Favorable

The Montgomery County Young Democrats (MCYD) urge the House Economic Matters Committee to support [HB 8](#), also known as the Time to Care Act, which would establish a paid family and medical leave program that would provide up to twelve weeks of leave and replace a substantial share of workers' wages. This bill would help Maryland families, benefit businesses, and ensure that people can care for their loved ones in times of need.

MCYD is an organization of young Democrats ages 14-35 that offers a voice for young people who live, work, or go to school in Montgomery County, and who seek progressive change in order to secure a just and stable future for all of the county and state's residents.

Starting on January 1, 2023, the Time to Care Act creates an insurance pool into which workers and their employers make contributions, an 0.75% contribution from each paycheck. This pool would be used to fund up to twelve weeks of leave for Maryland employees if they need to take time off to care for their newly born children, family members with serious health conditions or disabilities, military family members, or to care for themselves. The bill would replace a substantial share of workers' wages.

MCYD urges that paid family leave apply equally to all working people regardless of gender, and reflect an inclusive definition of family. Low income workers should also receive a larger percentage of their income to make it affordable for them to take time off. And all workers must receive protection against the threat of losing their jobs for taking time off.

- Testified in support of paid family and medical leave bill-HB 8
- Kept stressing paid leave for years
- Contacted legislators numerous times and demanded they co-sponsor the bill
- After the bill was passed, urged 50/50 contributions from employers and employees alike

Issue # 2: Family Prosperity Act and Tax Credits

- Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr alerted us
- Testified and supported HB 547-Family Prosperity Act-expanding Maryland's child tax credit and extending earned income tax credit
- Permanently extends the Earned Income Tax Credit and removes \$530 cap for adults without qualifying kids
- Covers all taxpayers who have children aged six and under who have an income of \$15,000 or less (up from \$6,000)
- Will lift at least 34,000 Maryland children out of poverty

Issue # 3: Student Loan Debt

- Held a forum on student loan debt with Delegate Vaughn Stewart, Persis Yu from National Consumer Law Center, Rep. John Sarbanes
- Maryland now has tax credit for people with big student loan debt
- Bill making Maryland mental health professionals in schools eligible for up to \$30,000 in student debt relief
- But issue is primarily federal—state can only tinker around edges

Recent Issues

- Urged County Council to support rent stabilization bill 16-23-wrote letter, testified at hearing, and are keeping up pressure
- \$15 per hour minimum wage-pleased that implementation was sped up, disappointed that it wasn't indexed to inflation
- Preventing gun violence-SB 1-bans guns from being carried or worn in public accommodations like polling places, restaurants, hotels, theaters
- Jaelynn's Law-strengthens child access prevention laws and encourages safe storage of guns
- Cannabis legalization and abortion access

Climate Change Is Especially Important to Young People



- Climate change is a major threat
- Maryland has over 3,000 miles of shoreline
- 72% of Marylanders live or work along the coast
- Need green energy
- Need mitigation measures
- Need to stop greenhouse gas emissions

Advantages of Young People in Politics

- Hardworking and eager to put in hours
- Often idealistic and determined to help others
- Fresh perspectives—not stifled by what John Stuart Mill called “the despotism of custom”
- Familiar with current technology
- Experience with current issues and problems

Obstacles to Young People Getting Involved

- Inconvenient timing of events
- Young people tend to be more transient
- Lack of knowledge about state and local politics
- Apathy and cynicism—sometimes acts as self-fulfilling prophecy
- Lack of knowledge about the Montgomery County Young Democrats and Democratic Party in general

The Next Five Years-Our Thoughts

- Democracy is in crisis and needs strengthening
- Bipartisanship doesn't mean much to most young people
 - No memory of a time when Democrats and Republicans worked together
 - Democrats are now moderate to liberal, Republicans are very right wing
 - Trump is what MCYD thinks of when Republicans come to mind
- Think long-term and advocate for major change—tinkering around the edges isn't enough
- **More young people in politics!**

Ways to Grow MoCo Young Democrats

- Send curious and interested young people our way-connect them with us
- Contacts on college campuses
- Social media, tabling at events, holding meetings
- Show young people that the Democratic Party cares about their priorities—affordable education, good jobs and wages, student loan debt, health care, preventing gun violence—and have results
- **Give them meaningful actions to take!**

Ways Young Democrats Can Help You

- Volunteering on campaigns and at events
- Feedback on various policies
- Idealism and thinking outside the box
- Direct action

