



# ONE PATH FORWARD

*A review of lost opportunities  
and a grass roots approach  
to reclaiming Republican cities*

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***Medford Democratic City Committee  
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## 1. Executive Summary

Pundits bemoan the "Thin Democratic Bench." From the election of Donald Trump to the popularity of Governor Baker, every ailment of our party is blamed on a lack of fighters in reserve. In America, however, this "Thin Democratic Bench" is an illusion and this illusion is especially obvious in Massachusetts.

Nonetheless, this illusion clouds a serious problem. While plenty are willing to fight for Democratic causes and plenty more believe in our platform, a lingering alienation exists between our party and Massachusetts Democrats. Many desire an open dialogue with their party, yet, most Democrats in our state are only called upon to elect favored candidates or drop checks into coffers. People quit when ignored. We must give our base a message stronger than: *vote, give, and go away until the next election.*

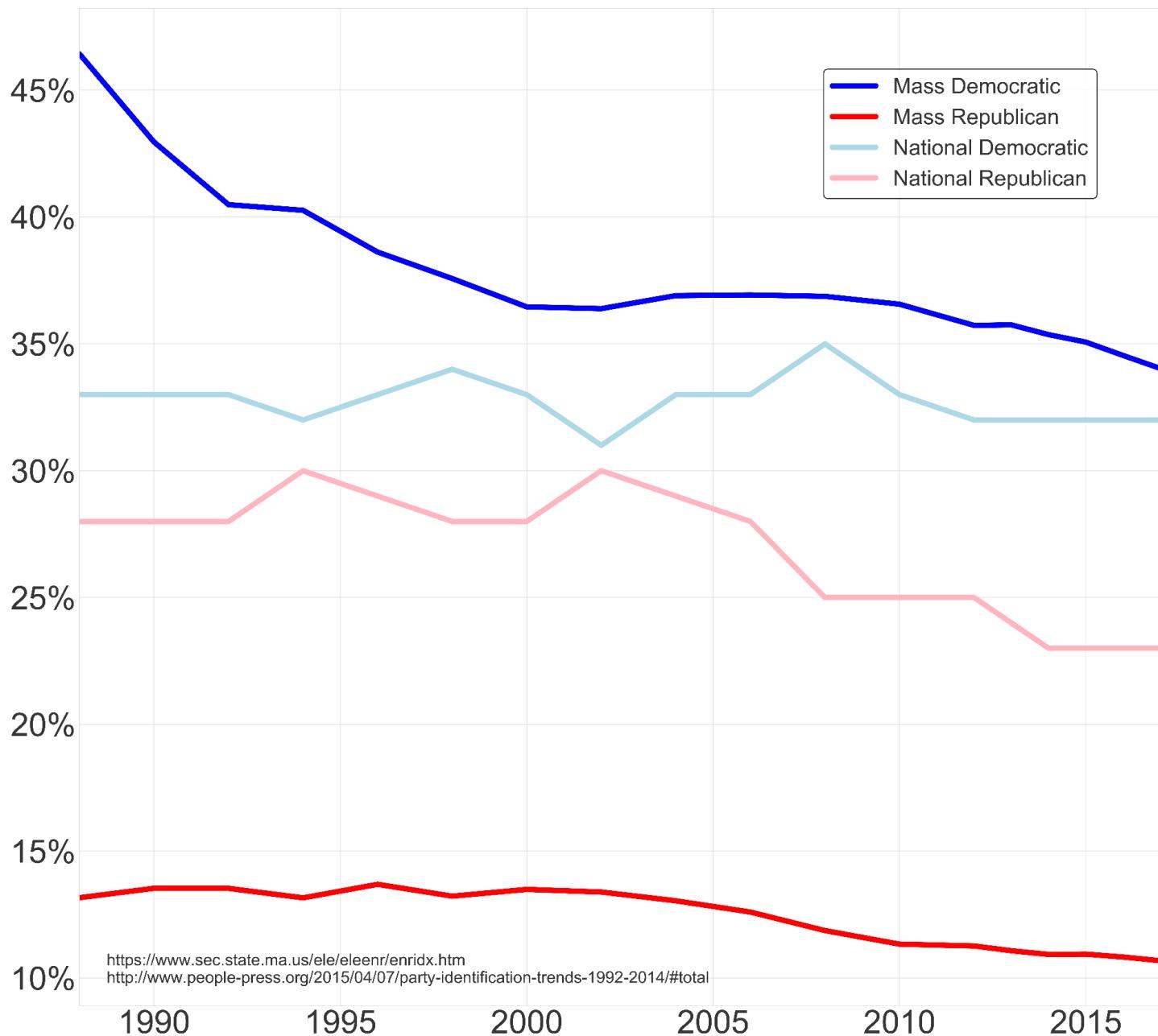
Unwatered roots shrivel. Starting with our convention this summer, the State Democratic Committee must facilitate participation at every level for our party to thrive.

Currently, the hunger for participation outside of an election cycle is left unfulfilled. Thousands will brave the harshest winter to fight health care repeal, but when I asked dozens of protestors at a recent 2016 ACA rally, only one knew about their city Democratic committee. These protesters want to get more involved with our party, they just don't know how.

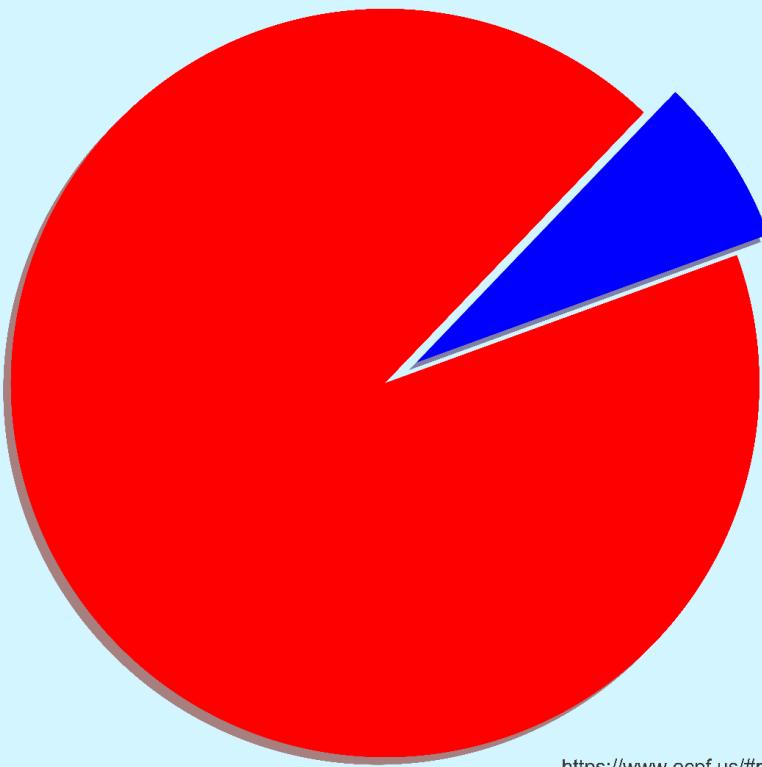
Even inside the election cycle many Democrats felt abandoned. Not a single incumbent Republican was unseated in our state legislator in 2016. In a series of interviews, Democratic challengers felt unsupported by our state party. For every one dollar the Democratic State Committee raised, the Republican Committee raised \$12.70. Most surprisingly, in late January, the state party had not reached out to these candidates after their defeats. Maybe people like Jennifer Migliore and Aaron Kanzer were not able to defeat well financed opposition, but they are hungry to work for our party. We must find a home for these activists.

With new leadership, this is an exciting time. The Massachusetts Democratic party is uniquely positioned to drive the American political conversation. However, serious challenges lie ahead. To understand the challenges, consider our past errors.

## State and National Party Enrollment (1990-2016)



## 2. General Trends



<https://www.ocpf.us/#reports>

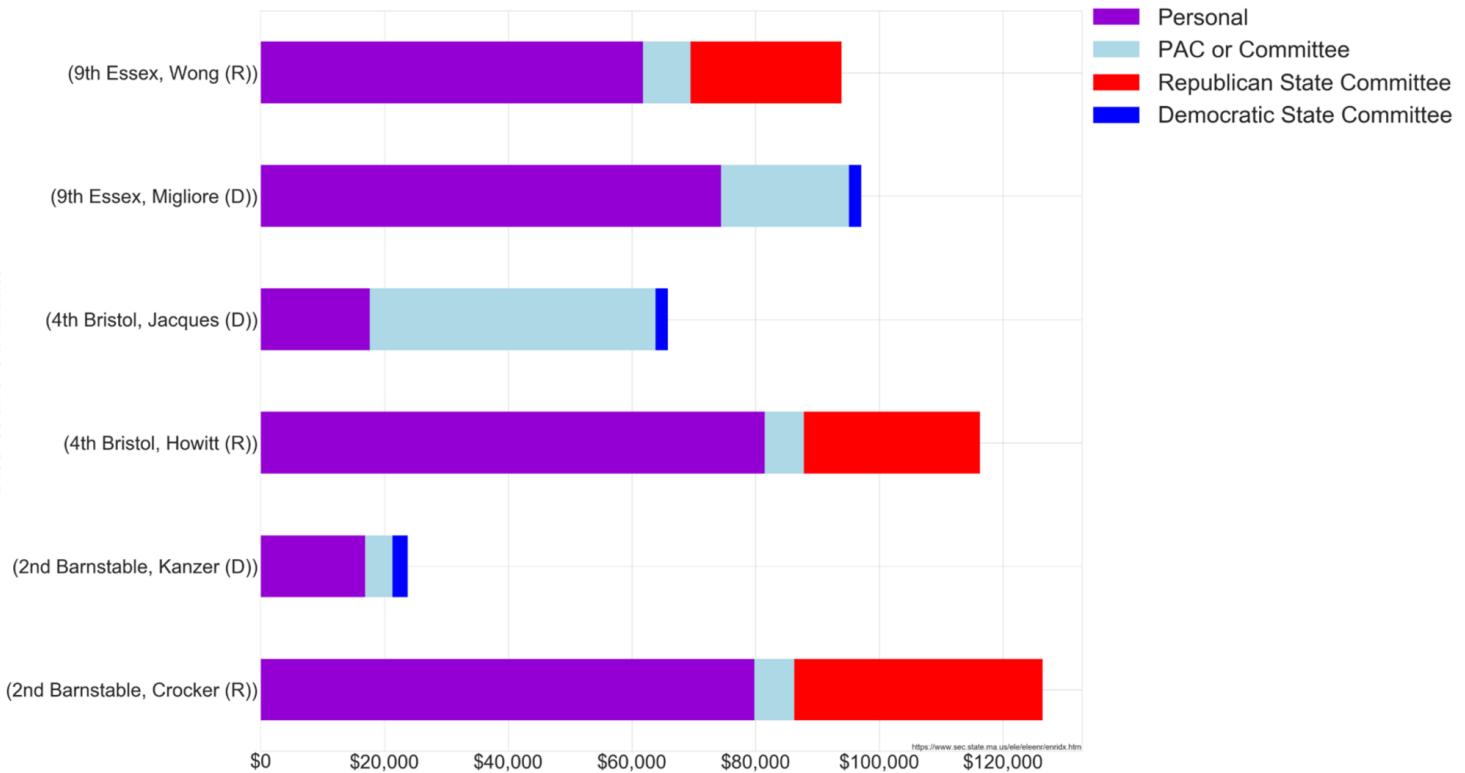
Total State Party Contributions (2015-2016)

Our party dominates the state legislator, but when reviewing the data, it is hard to consider Massachusetts a “Democratic State.” Twenty-five years ago our state was once Democratic. Now, it is more accurate to say our state is not Republican. While voter roles in our state have grown by over one and a half million, our party has not been able to capture these new voters. In 2016, Democratic enrollment approaches the national average (down 13% from 1990). Mostly, Massachusetts is unenrolled.

Nonetheless, while registered Republicans are a tiny minority in our state, their party dominates ours in terms of contributions to new candidates. For every dollar that our party gives to state candidates, the Republican State Committee donates over 12 dollars and seventy cents (Figure 2). But, our problems are beyond financial and the Republicans are doing more than donating.

## Campaign Fundraising (2015-2016)

District and Candidate



In chess, tempo is the control over the conversation of battle. An effective reply to a blunder, gains tempo. Interviews NPR conducted in Saugus late March about Donald Trump, demonstrate that our party is not contributing to the conversation about conservative policies. We have surrendered the hearts and minds of 9th Essex.

Most difficult to see in the failure of 9th Essex was any general strategy on behalf of our state party for this district. Yes, many tactics were employed to help Migliore — but how did Democrats hope to overcome Wong's support? What was the game plan? If there was a plan, it wasn't shared with our candidate. Ultimately, while Migliore put in a strong effort against an established candidate, it seems our party only gave a good-old-fashioned "go get 'em tiger" to Jennifer.

## 3.2 Post Mortem: 9th Essex

First time candidates rarely out fundraise incumbents, but in 9th Essex, Jenifer Migliore did just that. A cursory search of the internet shows major players, such as Elizabeth Warren and Charlie Baker, endorsed candidates from their party. However, Jenifer Migliore was left to fend for herself in terms of logistical support.



**Jenifer Migliore**

campaign. Negative adds slashed at Migliore's support. The State Republican Party not only donated almost 25,000 dollars to Wong (dwarfing the 2,000 given to Migliore), but also paid for canvassers and helped design mailers. The Republicans conducted city wide polls to identify swing voters and shared the results of those polls with Wong's campaign. The greatest aid to Wong, however, was our own party. In Saugus and Wakefield, the Democratic City Committee is weak.

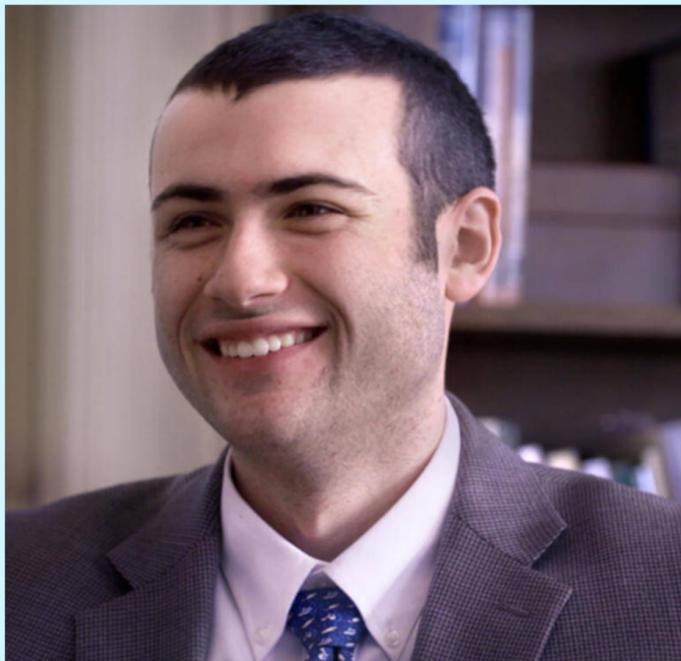
This citywide, Democratic weakness yielded bitter fruit. Donald Trump carried a blue-collar town (**a town that Democrats like Steven Angelo and Mark Falzone carried with 65% support**). Governor Baker stands tall in eyes of 9th Essex. Migliore lost a winnable election by 10 points.

Over a phone interview in December, Jenifer admitted that she had serious troubles finding a campaign manager and the Democratic Party did not help her assemble the team she needed to manage her finances. Migliore also had difficulty cutting turf on Votebuilder and designing effective mailings. She reached out to the State Committee multiple times, but felt ignored. Without effective coordination, union support wasn't enough and her campaign floundered.

The Republican State Committee, on the other hand, rallied around four term incumbent Donald Wong. Charlie Baker visited Saugus numerous times to

## 3.2 Post Mortem: 2nd Barnstable

“Go get ‘em tiger” certainly wasn’t enough for Aaron Kanzer. 2nd Barnstable is a district so blue, that the Republicans did not even run against Brian Mannal — first time candidate-winner of the 2012 Democratic primary. Hillary Clinton carried 2nd Barnstable by a whopping 60%. Yet, even in Falmouth, where Clinton garnered



**Aaron Kanzer**

over 4,000 votes over Trump, the Republicans fought for a vacant seat.

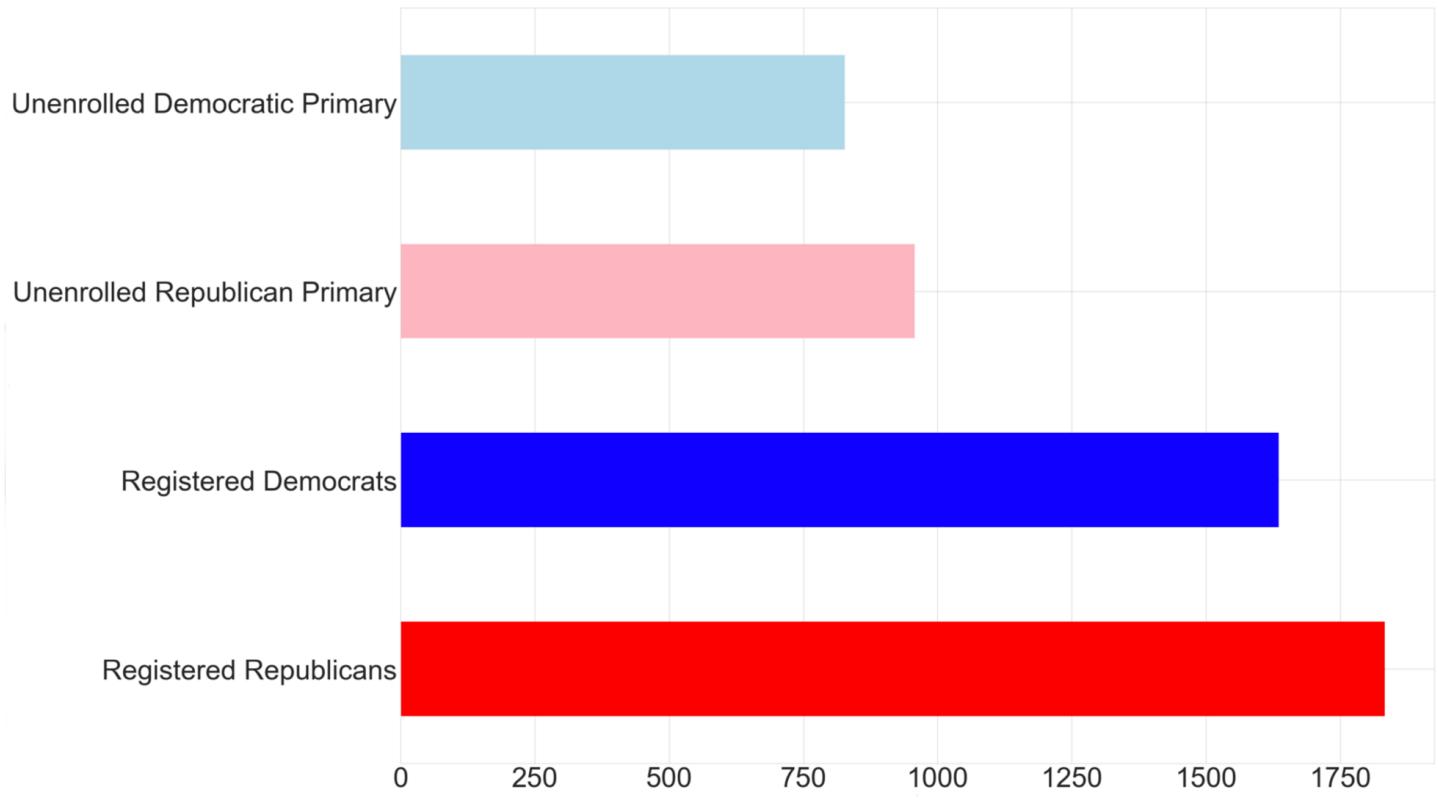
The Republicans awarded William Crocker, their first time candidate for state representative, over 40,000 dollars to defeat Kanzer. Our party could only find 2,000 dollars. Aaron was absolutely demolished in terms of fundraising (see fig.) and he wasn’t given a list of donors, volunteers, or campaign managers. Kanzer was a novice and needed help, but no one at the Boston Democratic office took responsibility for guiding his campaign or helping him overcome negative

advertisements. All in all, Aaron found only one volunteer for his campaign. According to him, the only meeting he had with state officials focused more on the evils of Donald Trump rather than the nuts and bolts of campaigning.

Aaron’s loss is no mystery. He was defeated in every single modality of his campaign. Like Migliore, Kanzer called the Democratic party multiple times to sound the alarm. Yet, his alarm fell to deaf ears. Hard problems require hard analysis. At best, the Democratic State Committee ignored Aaron. At worst, we simply took 2nd Barnstable for granted. Hubris alone is not enough to win.

Beyond Hubris, what is most dangerous for Democrats is the historical lesson in 2nd Barnstable and 9th Essex. Why would an observant politician ever fight along side a Democratic party who set Aaron out to dry?

## Rehoboth Voters in 2016



### **3.3 Post Mortem: 4th Bristol**

Unlike the Migliore and Kanzer, Paul Jacques had a plan from day one of his campaign. He was going to run with the unions — who totaled almost three quarters of his fundraising. Nonetheless, he lacked significant support from either his town or state parties. Hillary Clinton carried Seekonk, but repeated attempts to even locate a city committee chair failed. Calls to the chairs of Norton and Swansea were unreturned. It seems the Republican party rules 4th Bristol by default. Lacking in local ground support, Jacques was viewed by many as a carpetbagger.

Raymond M. Olivier does his best to organize Rehoboth, but he feels mostly ignored by the state Democratic establishment. What is more striking about speaking with him is his sense of desperation. “Paul was doomed from the start,” was a refrain I heard from multiple members of the Rehoboth town committee. Lacking in guidance from Boston, Rehoboth Democrats suffer under crushing morale.

What is so frustrating about 4th Bristol is that a series of random phone interviews do not justify 4th Bristol as a strong Howitt district. Many super voters in 4th Bristol do not even know their Republican incumbent’s name. More voters in Swansea chose Clinton than Howitt. Kennedy carried Rehoboth by 500 votes. Howitt’s secret is his base.

A similar base for Democrats in “conservative” Rehoboth is already available. Comparing registered Republicans and Democrats who voted in 2016 with unenrolled voters who chose the respective party in the primary shows a slim lead for Republicans (figure 4). Have we become so soft that even the slightest disadvantage is unsurmountable?

Unless the state party can activate the one thousand, six hundred thirty-five registered Democrats who voted in Rehoboth 2016, 2018 will likely be another challenging year for our party in 4th Bristol. Yet, consider these registered Democrats in Rehoboth. With only 198 more registered Republicans than Democrats, we are not looking at a blood-red city in Texas: we are looking at our future.

## 4 Looking Ahead



Three different districts with three very different candidates; all share two common themes. First, these districts did not have strong city committees representing Democrats. The State Democratic Committee ought focus on rebuilding participation in these districts outside of the election cycle. Second, coordination between campaigns and our State Democratic Party was poor. With Donald Trump mucking around the White house, outrage burns in our hearts. Without proper leadership, however, energy dissipates.

Under the direction of Paul Donato, Medford Democrats have formulated a four point approach to reinvigorate the Massachusetts base. This approach starts with our convention. At one time, Medford didn't bother with the convention. In 2015, only two members of our city committee attended the state convention. By 2016, we increased that number to twelve. Our city is working hard to increase interest in our state convention, but we need to send them to an event. This year, we hope to send thirty delegates to the convention. With so many novice delegates, many in our city committee do not know what to expect from an "issues convention," but are excited. Here are some ways to fuel the buzz....

## **5 The Convention: One Path Forward**

**One: A vivid guide to our convention would rouse excitement among delegates regardless of political experience.** This guide should be linked to engaging videos and online chat rooms to help answer any questions among our base. Included in the pamphlet, platform and other party meetings should be clearly scheduled. Plain white “calls to the convention” may be informative, but bland pages have trouble competing in a cross-platform world exploding with color.

**Two: clear, attainable goals need to be communicated to every ward in every city in Massachusetts.** These goals, tailor made for each community, should be transmitted at the convention to officers of their city committee. For example, how many new members should Seekonk work to find? What resources could the Democratic State committee offer Barnstable? How can active Democratic strongholds such as Somerville help cities struggling under a “Republican backlash?” How can every town generate momentum to overwhelm the Baker campaign?

**Three: we need to open lines of communication between average delegates and party officials at our convention.** Last year, I was shocked to find that we didn’t even have an official, advertised twitter hashtag. Certainly, speeches are rousing, but people are hungry to act. Every delegate must know exactly what the party expects in 2018. Every delegate should have a responsibility to move our party forward.

**Four: volunteer activities need reach beyond phone banks, door knocking, and donations.** Obviously, traditional campaigning will maintain its significance, but we must find ways to help professionals donate their skills. A shy data-scientist may not be able to knock on doors, but he can cook a monstrous python script to analyze voter trends. A single mother of two may not be capable of donating more than ten bucks, but she sure can hold a killer bake sale for Democrats. A doctor could write to pressure her republican state representative. An app, using principles of “gamification,” should be available for state Democrats, leveraging activists natural desires for contribution and achievement. Whether though an app or a checklist, activities grow beyond their contribution; when people donate time, they become invested.