

# TRUE BLUE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RICHLAND COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I have been thinking a lot about Burning Man lately.

Maybe you have heard of this annual event held in an uninhabited stretch of the Nevada desert?

To accommodate over sixty-thousand attendees for a week, organizers have to build a whole city, complete with enough food, water, shelter and bathrooms. Then when it's over, they take it all down. Next year they start all over from scratch.

Unfortunately, this can be the way of political campaigning. We build an enormous infrastructure – volunteers, data, yard signs and literature – all for a few crazy weeks in October, and then... we take it all down. This is where the Democratic Party has a critical job. We need to continue maintaining and growing our infrastructure between elections, so that we have a head start for 2020.

The county party just completed its Strategic Plan for the next two years. We have no intention of slowing down or downsizing this year. ~cont'd~

~March 2019~

LEGISLATIVE SPOTLIGHT: REP. KAMBRELL GARVIN



*"I consider this to be a call to public service... we all have a responsibility to leave the world a little bit better than we found it."*

*"New Day Agenda!"*

By **Kevin Eckert**

For South Carolina Rep. Kambrell Garvin, public office is a way to ensure that his people have a voice at the state house.

"I consider this to be a call to public service," Garvin said. "We each only get a certain amount of time to be on this earth, so what we do within that time is critical. I think we all have a responsibility to leave the world a little bit better than we found it."

Garvin entered the legislature with his "New Day Agenda," which focuses on improving educational access for all students, raising the minimum wage, criminal justice reform, Medicaid expansion with an advisory opinion from the voters, and an advisory opinion for a constitutional amendment that would bring gaming and gambling back to South Carolina, along with regulating and taxing those activities.

"Illegal gaming and gambling with sports games or horse betting is happening in our state, every day, whether we like it or not," he said. "My thought process is: let's go ahead and legalize, regulate and tax that gaming or gambling income. At that rate we'll be able to do a couple of different things with that money."

~cont'd~

## RCDP Launches Events Hub

Finally, tracking events is easy! There are buttons to download events into your calendar; and to share on Facebook, Twitter, or by email. To add your event, fill out a quick form on our events page: <https://richlandscdems.com/events/>

## FROM THE CHAIR, cont'd

Last year we knocked on more than 38,000 doors in Richland County and had historic levels of turnout, flipping a State Senate seat that voted for Trump in 2016. We need to keep this momentum going. We need to keep reaching out to voters to lay the groundwork for the next victories and to partner with our elected officials to advance the Democratic agenda.

Let's stop making the same mistakes. We cannot limit our contributions to election time. I urge you to rededicate yourself to fighting for Democratic values: as a donor, as a volunteer and as a citizen. We need everybody.

Learn how you can help:  
<https://richlandscdems.com>

After all, this movement is about you, the Democrats of Richland County.

Yours, **Matt Kisner, RCDP Chair**



## ~Volunteer Opportunities~

**Communications Team:** Meets monthly and includes working on newsletters, writing, editing, social media, photography and the website – plus we hope everyone will take time to amplify our messaging by sharing our content!

**Donors:** RCDP does not get any funding except from donors, so please consider a monthly gift to the cause.

**Contact:** [matt@richlandscdems.com](mailto:matt@richlandscdems.com)

## ~ Spotlight cont'd ~

Garvin's goal, for the gambling amendment, is to use that tax money to increase the salaries of state employees and to put that money towards improving the state's education system.

After receiving his degree from Winthrop University in 2013, Garvin got started in community engagement by joining the Columbia chapter of the NAACP. Education inequality inspired him to join the Teach for America program, where he taught sixth-grade science for three years in Colleton County. Afterwards, he returned to Columbia, where he enrolled in the USC School of Law. He is scheduled to receive his Juris Doctorate degree in May.

Garvin said a challenge from President Obama was his impetus to run. Obama said: "To all the young folks who are listening, if you aren't happy with what you see happening in your community, don't just complain about it. Grab a clipboard, get some signatures and run for office yourself."

When Garvin looked around his community at Obama's behest, he was unhappy with what he saw. He felt the incumbent only seemed present around election time. Garvin became inspired to run for office and knocked on 6000 doors. His hard work paid off when he won the state house race for District 77 this past November. Garvin says he will make good on his pledge to continue to work hard and intends to "do the best I can for the people I represent."

## ~ Our Opinion ~

### **RCDP Raises Awareness of Voting Problems**

By **Malcolm Fletcher**

19-Feb-2019

It is troubling that votes are not being counted accurately in South Carolina's elections because of the age and vulnerability of our present voting-machine system. During the 2018 elections, it was found that a total of 1040 ballots were left uncounted at two precincts in Richland County.<sup>1</sup>

Paper ballots are simpler and more reliable than the present electronic system. They can be read rapidly by simple stand-alone machines that are not hackable. Results from the pooled output of these machines can be obtained just as quickly as under the present system. Most importantly, results can be verified by a manual count if necessary.

Unfortunately, there are still seven states, including South Carolina, that don't give all voters the option to use paper ballots.

There is some good news, however. A bipartisan bill (H 3043) is in the works for the present session of the legislature. This would require voting machines in the state be replaced before the 2020 election with ones that provide a voter-verified paper audit trail. That would permit a manual recount to resolve future voter and candidate disputes.

As part of its commitment to ensuring fairness, the Richland County Democratic Party partnered with the South Carolina Democratic Party to monitor more than 40 precincts in the November 2018 elections.<sup>2</sup> The effort included precincts that have a history of problems. RCDP's poll monitors were well-received in some locations, but not so warmly welcomed in others.

A critical element was that monitors were not allowed in before the polls opened and therefore were not permitted to observe the set up and zeroing of the ballot machines. Some of the poll managers had difficulty obtaining printed verification of the zeroing process so that had to be provided by technicians after voting was underway.

There was an evident shortage of voter lists, which created bottlenecks at check-in. That, as well as the absence of some poll workers, produced stress at some precincts. Signage was poor at curbside voter locations, and wait times were excessive, causing a number of disabled voters to abandon the process. In several instances disabled voters' IDs were taken by poll workers and not returned for hours, effectively trapping them onsite.

A consistent negative finding was the lack of training and under-resourcing among poll workers. Significant delays were the result of a lack of available voting machines.

Breakdowns (including misaligned touch-screens) were frequent and the only recourse for the poll manager was to call in a technician, which further delayed the process. Technical staff were evidently stretched thinly and response time was slow. At one precinct, voting had to be extended 90 minutes to make technical repairs.

There was also a variance between polling places when voter registration issues emerged. Some polling officers were helpful in resolving mismatches between IDs and the voter rolls, while others simply dismissed voters whose identification did not precisely match that information. There was no effective on-the-spot remedy offered and it is unlikely that most of those turned away were able to resolve these difficulties in time to vote. Poll workers were observed discouraging provisional voting despite that being a valid option. An observer heard a poll worker telling an individual “you don’t want to do that. You’ll have to go to a hearing and everything.” Provisional paper ballots that were filled out were, in all observed instances, not properly secured after the voters left the polling place.

In summary, direct observation of the polling process in Richland County showed many difficulties which inevitably led to voters abandoning their constitutional right to vote. In addition, because of technical machine failures it is understood that over a thousand ballots that were legally cast in the county weren’t counted.

It is hoped, following the Governor’s removal of the entire Richland County Elections Board and the appointment of their replacements, that poll workers will be properly trained before the elections in 2020. Poll irregularities were also noted by the media in Charleston.<sup>3</sup> What is unknown is whether a similar pattern emerged in other cities and rural locations. It is possible that reports from RCDP’s competent observer-initiative played into Gov. McMaster’s decision to remove the entire county elections board in Richland County.

The Richland County Democratic Party is working to find solutions. After meeting with poll watchers, we compiled a report of their observations, which we shared with the Richland County Election Commission and our elected officials. RCDP Chairman Matt Kisner, has met regularly with staff at the County Election Commission and has been in discussion with the State Election Commission and elected officials.

We have a lot of work to do before 2020. To learn more about our ongoing efforts to address these issues, attend a meeting of the Legislative Action Committee. Meeting times can be found at: [richlandscdems.com](http://richlandscdems.com).

*Refs:*

- 1. Richland County Failed to Count Hundreds of November Election Ballots. Andy Shain, Post and Courier, Feb 1, 2019*
- 2. 2018 RCDP Poll Watcher Debrief, delivered to SC lawmakers and the Richland County Election Board*
- 3. Voting Machines Could See Upgrade After Complaints of Old Technology, Brad Streicher, Live 5 News Charleston, Nov 10, 2019*