

Progressive Neighbors Membership and Process for Endorsing Process Spring of 2010 -- Final Draft A

1. Membership Definition (Please see section 1.2 for transition from the existing old status to the new.)

- 1.1. There are three levels of Progressive Neighbors Membership and general criteria for all members.
 - 1.1.1. **Membership Criteria** -- Membership is open to anyone residing in Montgomery County who is in general agreement with our Legislative Agenda and who pays \$10 annual membership dues for that calendar year.
 - 1.1.2. **General Membership** -- They are entitled to participate in open steering committee meetings and in the election of officers. Members shall be consulted and entitled to vote on all policies and endorsements made by Progressive Neighbors.
 - 1.1.3. **The Steering Committee** -- The Steering Committee will decide on the day-to-day policies and actions of Progressive Neighbors, and take other decisions not specifically assigned to the Officers. To join the Steering Committee, a member must have attended two or more meetings and be approved by a majority of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee meetings will remain open to any members who wish to attend. Agendas for meetings of the steering committee (including dates, times and places) will be sent to all Members.
 - 1.1.4. **The Officers** -- The Progressive Neighbors Steering Committee will have the following officers: Co-chairs; Recording Secretary; and Treasurer. They will have the responsibilities usually assigned to those offices and make decisions as necessary between Steering Committee meetings. Annual elections will be held for these offices in March. The Steering Committee will recommend individuals for these offices and the membership will vote on officers.
- 1.2. Transition from the Existing Old Status in May of 2010 to the Membership conditions listed in 5.1 above.
 - 1.2.1. The Current Steering Committee will be comprised of all those who have participated in the Steering Committee and have expressed interest in continuing as an active participant.
 - 1.2.2. Individuals on the mailing list (and other individuals who might be interested) will be informed of the requirements for membership. After one month from the mailing, individuals on the mailing list will not have the privileges of membership until they pay their dues.
 - 1.2.3. After the initial sign-up period, anyone who otherwise qualifies can become a member by filling out a membership application and paying their dues.
 - 1.2.4. In the interim and until the new Steering Committee is constituted, decisions will be made by the Current Steering Committee. Decisions regarding officers, policies and endorsements must be approved a two-thirds super-majority attending a Steering Committee announced at least two weeks before the meeting is held.
 - 1.2.5. Until the election in March of 2011, the individuals holding office shall remain in place.

2. Geographic Area boundaries of PN Candidate Endorsements and Ballot Initiative Recommendations

- 2.1. PN will automatically consider endorsing candidates for any elected office that has, as part of its constituency, any persons living in LD 18, 19 and 20.
 - 2.1.1. The PN Steering Committee will send out our Position Survey Questionnaires to all candidates running in the above-described elections. Those returning the surveys will be considered for endorsement.
 - 2.1.1.1. In special cases as decided by a two-thirds majority of the Steering Committee, the requirement for a returned survey can be waived (*e.g.*, for Presidential candidates).
- 2.2. On a case-by-case basis, PN will consider endorsing candidates who run for offices in Montgomery County jurisdictions that do not include any of LD 18, 19 or 20, but a request for endorsement must

be instigated by the candidate or a Steering Committee Member and approved by a two-thirds vote of the Steering Committee Members.

2.2.1. When PN receives and accepts a request for endorsement as noted above, the PN Steering Committee will send out our Position Survey Questionnaire to that candidate and to all candidates running for that office. Those returning the surveys will be considered for endorsement.

2.3. PN will automatically consider endorsing ballot initiatives that affect any persons living in LD 18, 19 and 20.

3. All Candidate Endorsements Will Be Based on Predetermined Issue-Positions and Qualities

3.1. The Steering Committee will designate individual committees to recommend Issue-Positions to be used for each individual office for which candidates are running (*e.g.*, County Council, State Senate, State House of Delegates, U.S. House of Representatives, County School Board, *etc.*). In addition the individual committees will recommend a method of estimating the candidate's adherence to each criterion. (For example, for effectiveness in office, it might be recommended that we consult our "friends" who are/would-be co-office holders with the candidate; or, for an incumbent's support of past key legislation, we might do likewise to find out how much support the candidate provided behind the scenes.)

3.2. Using the Committee recommendations, the Steering Committee will meet and determine the Issue-Positions and the selection process that will be used for each office under consideration. That will take place in a special meeting called for that purpose. The selection/designation of each Issue-Position and adherence estimating process requires a two-thirds super-majority. This meeting will be announced to the membership, and will be held in a location that would allow membership attendance. At the same time, a similar meeting will be scheduled approximately two weeks later and announced for the purpose of reviewing input from the membership and deciding on the final Issue-Positions.

3.2.1. The recommended Issue-Positions and processes will be Emailed to the membership for review and comment, with a request that responses be returned within one week. This will be accompanied by the announcement of the meeting where semi-final and final decisions will be made.

3.2.2. After approximately two weeks, a second Steering Committee meeting will be held to consider the responses. At that meeting responses from the membership will be considered, and changes made if a two-thirds super-majority agree with the final results. (If a two-thirds super-majority cannot agree on an Issue-Position, the Issue-Position will be dropped.) If the responses recommend changes that are so few or so minor that the meeting can be forgone and the issues resolved in Steering Committee phone or Email exchanges, and an Email will be sent to the membership cancelling the meeting, along with an explanation as to why.

3.2.3. Once the Issue-Positions are accepted they will be sent back out to the membership and posted on our website. They will also be sent to each candidate or group that is involved in our endorsement process.

3.3. To qualify for endorsement a candidate must earn the minimum "progressive" evaluation by the Steering Committee based on the afore-cited Issue-Positions and the other Qualities.

3.3.1. If no candidate for an office meets the minimum "progressive" evaluation, no candidate will be endorsed.

3.3.2. If the Steering Committee evaluates as "progressive" more candidates than there are slots available (*e.g.*, more than one for Governor, or more than four for County Council at Large), PN will endorse no candidate, but will rather publish all of the names of progressive candidates and state we find them all qualified as progressives.

3.4. The Issue-Position-sets and the other Qualities for each office will include the consideration of the following factors.

- 3.4.1. Issue Position -- Previous votes/support on "progressive issues" taken by the body of the elected office in question.
- 3.4.2. Qualities -- Support for each item on PN's Legislative Agenda, as updated for the election year in question.
- 3.4.3. Qualities -- The Candidate's personal history of overall advocacy/support for "progressive issues."
- 3.4.4. Qualities -- A judgment regarding the effect that an individual's candidacy may have on the progressive movement.
- 3.4.5. Qualities -- A judgment regarding the effectiveness the candidate currently has/will have, as an elected official in the office being sought.
- 3.4.6. Qualities -- A review of who funds the candidate's campaign, with the understanding that office-holders are beholden to their economic supporters, and that can influence future votes.
- 3.4.7. Qualities -- A judgment regarding the candidate's credibility as judged by his/her ability to mount an effective campaign -- including raising sufficient funds.
- 3.4.8. Qualities -- A judgment regarding the candidate's viability (*i.e.*, ability to win) as judged by the Steering Committee and other informed students of Maryland politics.

4. How Candidates Are Evaluated Against the Criteria

- 4.1. Getting information from and about the candidates.
 - 4.1.1. As candidates announce themselves, the subcommittees for each area will send each candidate a questionnaire eliciting their response to our Issue-Position-sets and the other Qualities.
 - 4.1.2. Where it is deemed appropriate, the subcommittees will check with other sources for background information on the candidates (for incumbents, checking with fellow office-holders; for challengers, checking with associates in other political groups).
 - 4.1.3. Where it is deemed appropriate, the subcommittees may decide to meet with a candidate to clarify any questions or issues.
 - 4.1.4. If the subcommittee feels that a candidate's response was ingenuous, the candidate will be asked for clarification. If the response remains the same, that questionable response will be sent to the entire Steering Committee by Email, with a request that anyone with knowledge of the situation respond if the claim might be accurate. If this methodology does not resolve the question in the candidate's favor, a second Email will be sent to the Steering Committee members requesting a vote as to whether to accept the candidate's claim. If a simple majority of those responding feel the candidate's answer is acceptable, it will be accepted as such.
 - 4.1.5. Each of the subcommittees will prepare a report on each of the candidates under review. It will NOT make endorsement recommendations, but will evaluate each candidate against the requirements of the Issue-Position-sets and the other Qualities. (This report will be made public after the review process is over.)
- 4.2. After the filing date for candidates has past, the Steering Committee will meet to review the candidates for each of the offices that are under consideration. If it appears that will not be possible to review all of the candidates in a single meeting, multiple meetings will be scheduled.
 - 4.2.1. In that meeting(s), the attending Steering Committee members will review how the candidates match up with the Issue-Position-sets and Quality-requirements. For each candidate, they will also decide how much weight to give each criterion. Decisions about weight and individual scores on criterion will require a two-thirds super-majority of those in attendance. The decision to endorse a candidate will require a three-fourths super-majority.
 - 4.2.1.1. The exception to this will be in cases where it appears that there are more progressive candidates than there are openings in that contest. In such cases the rules normally call for no endorsement, but rather a listing of the progressives. To be added to a list of

progressive candidates, each candidate will require a two-thirds super-majority of those in attendance. On the other hand, a decision to endorse one or more progressive candidates over other progressive candidates will require four-fifths super-majority of those in attendance.

4.2.2. These endorsement decisions will be Emailed to the membership for review and comment, with a request that responses be returned within one week. This will be accompanied by the announcement of the meeting where final decisions will be made.

4.2.2.1. In that meeting, the attending Steering Committee members will review any comments the members have submitted concerning the endorsements. If over 25% of the membership opposes an endorsement, or if the Steering Committee determines there is sufficient opposition to an endorsement, the Steering Committee will vote as to whether to go forward with the endorsement. In such cases it shall require a three-fourths super-majority of those in attendance to continue the endorsement.

4.2.2.1.1. If, prior to the meeting, less than 10% of the membership opposes an endorsement or there is no serious other questions raised about the endorsement, the final meeting may be cancelled and notice sent to membership to that effect.

4.2.3. After the decisions are made for endorsements, the following actions will be taken.

4.2.3.1. The Steering Committee will prepare a document containing the endorsement decisions, the actual endorsements, and the rational behind each of the endorsed candidates. (Where they deem appropriate, they can also provide a rational why other candidates were not endorsed.)

4.2.3.2. The membership will be sent a copy of the above document.

4.2.3.3. All candidates who submitted information will be sent a copy of the above document.

4.2.3.4. The above document will be posted on the Progressive Neighbors website.

4.2.3.5. The Steering Committee will take the appropriate steps to provide support for all of the endorsed candidates.

5. Ballot Initiative Recommendation Decisions

5.1. All ballot initiatives appearing on the ballot will be reviewed by the Steering Committee.

5.1.1. If the Steering Committee deems it the best course of action, a subcommittee will be appointed to review the initiatives and make recommendations to the Steering Committee.

5.1.2. After reviewing each initiative, the Steering Committee by a two-thirds super-majority will decide whether to support, oppose, or take no stand.

5.1.2.1. In all cases, the decision will be made only after hearing from both sides on the issue.

5.1.2.2. If a two-thirds super-majority does not decide to either support or oppose, the default decision will be to take no stand on an initiative.

5.2. After the decisions are made for endorsements, the following actions will be taken.

5.2.1. The Steering Committee will prepare a document containing the support and opposition decisions, and the rational behind each. (Where they deem appropriate, they can also provide a rational why the decision was made to remain neutral about some initiatives.)

5.2.2. The membership will be sent a copy of the above document.

5.2.3. The above document will be posted on the Progressive Neighbors website.

5.2.4. The Steering Committee will take the appropriate steps to provide support for all of the supported initiatives and opposition to all opposed initiatives.

6. Voting Secrecy

6.1. Some individuals might hesitate to participate in an open vote because they fear retribution from a winning candidate or supporters of an initiative.

- 6.1.1. The Steering Committee endorsement meetings will be announced to all Steering Committee members, but not to the general membership. These meetings will not be closed, but additional attendance will be discouraged -- especially by candidates, their representatives, and those advocating for/against initiatives. Steering Committee members will be encouraged to keep individual Steering Committee members' votes in confidence.
- 6.1.2. When mailings are sent out to the membership requesting a vote, the request will be accompanied by a promise that their individual names will not be attached to any published tally.