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OPINION

Progressives want Dem votes scored

Thursday, May 29, 2003

"What people want is very simple. They want an America that is as good as its promise." is the opening statement of the Massachusetts Democratic Party's platform. Following this quote is a series of values that elected members of the party are expected to honor and uphold. Unfortunately, many of our elected Democratic leaders do not espouse these largely progressive values and as a result, a group of Somerville activists has come together to challenge the party to be as good as its own promise by adopting the "Platform Accountability Resolution" at the Democratic Issues Convention in Lowell on June 7.

Our group, the Progressive Democrats of Somerville, is primarily made up of elected delegates and add-ons to the Issues Convention. We formed this group because we shared a common frustration with the Democratic Party's move to the right - a move that may have played a role in our party's inability to elect a strong governor in the commonwealth for three successive terms. In addition, this move to the right contradicts the party platform and compromises our party's expressed mission as the Party of the People.

Together we determined that the party itself must start holding its members accountable to its stated mission. "The Platform Accountability Resolution," endorsed by delegates from Cambridge, Waltham, the Berkshires, Boston and Newton, outlines three specific and particularly egregious examples where Democrats did not act like Democrats in the House of Representatives. We used these examples as evidence that something is wrong when a platform's preamble states "The Democratic Party demands responsibility and accountability from candidates and officials using its name" yet the party does nothing to ensure this.

Our resolution calls upon the Democratic Party to publish a yearly scorecard that would let registered Democrats and the general public know who in the Massachusetts legislature voted like a true Democrat, and who did not. The adoption of this resolution will shed light on the issues that distinguish the Democratic Party from the Republican Party, a distinction that has become blurred as the party has moved farther away from its stated mission. Perhaps most importantly, though, the utilization of a scorecard based on clearly stated

OPINION

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values in the platform will reduce the cynicism the general public feels towards politicians who are not as good as their words. In turn, this will help us to better attract new voters and activists to the party and help us reverse the trend among core Democratic voters - women, working people, African-Americans, immigrants, the young - to remain unenrolled.

Our credibility as the Party of the People depends entirely upon our consistent practice of our core principles and values. As such, the adoption of this resolution at the convention will provide a fundamental first step towards ensuring we remain true to our founding mission. Its adoption will guarantee that what the people want - a consistent, honest, and representative Democratic Party - is answered not only in the words of our platform, but in the actions of our elected officials.

Rebekah Gewirtz of Hall Avenue is a legislative aide at the State House. Marty Martinez of Broadway is currently a candidate for Ward 7 alderman.

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