

## **ENDORSEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Policy in effect beginning October 2009**

Pursuant to its mission, the Democratic Women's Caucus (DWC) will endorse select Democratic women who are pro-choice, progressive, and viable candidates in city, town, township, county and state assembly (house and senate) races. The DWC is neither obligated to endorse every Democratic woman candidate, nor obligated to endorse a candidate in every race. DWC support and endorsements are made on behalf of the organization and are strictly recommendations to the membership which in no manner infringe on the members' right to democratic choice.

An Endorsement Committee will recommend candidates for endorsement; a vote of the DWC membership determines candidates' endorsements.

#### **ENDORSEMENT CRITERIA:**

To be considered pro-choice and progressive, the candidate's stated positions and demonstrated record must support unrestricted freedom to choose abortion and social justice/equality for all regardless of economic status, sexual orientation, race, or gender.

To be considered viable, a candidate must demonstrate a reasonable chance of winning based on demographics, a strong campaign plan, the ability to organize campaign workers and to fundraise, a knowledge of issues and duties related to the office sought, and past history as an elected official, in a leadership role, and/or community involvement. In addition, the Endorsement Committee may consider factors unique to a particular political office or election-year situation when evaluating viability.

#### **ENDORSEMENT TIMING:**

The DWC may endorse candidates for primary and general elections. A candidate endorsed for a primary election remains endorsed for the general election that follows. However, if an endorsed candidate does not prevail in the primary election or is otherwise removed from the ballot, the DWC may endorse a different candidate for the general election. Although a candidate endorsed in one election year may or may not be endorsed in a subsequent election year, the DWC favors Democratic women incumbents who consistently support pro-choice and progressive issues.

#### **ENDORSEMENT COMMITTEE:**

In January of each election year, an Endorsement Committee shall be formed for the purpose of recommending candidates for endorsement. The Endorsement Committee shall be composed of Steering Committee members and members of the DWC who are not members of the Steering Committee.

At its January meeting, the Steering Committee will choose its representatives on the Endorsement Committee. At a February meeting of the DWC membership, nominations will be taken (both from the floor and self-nominations) for members (who are not on the Steering Committee) who wish to participate on the Endorsement Committee. The Endorsement Committee shall be made up of an odd number of members, with one more Steering Committee member than non-Steering Committee member participating. If more members are interested in serving than the requisite number, a simple ballot can be cast among meeting attendees.

Endorsement Committee participants must be current on membership dues and can neither be directly involved in a leadership role on a political campaign, nor have expressed their personal endorsement for a candidate in any race in which DWC endorsements may be determined.

#### ENDORSEMENT PROCESS:

The Endorsement Committee will contact all eligible candidates in an election cycle to invite them to apply for DWC endorsement. The Endorsement Committee will evaluate each candidate seeking DWC endorsement based on the candidate's ideology, strengths, interests, campaign structure, track record of leadership, commitment to pro-choice and progressive issues, and any other aspect that the Endorsement Committee deems relevant. The Endorsement Committee may utilize written questionnaires and/or candidate interviews to make their determination.

All candidates will be treated equally in the endorsement process, with the exception of judicial candidates who are limited by law in issues they may address during a campaign.

At a meeting in March, the membership will be issued a ballot that lists all candidates seeking endorsement in the primary election. The candidates recommended for endorsement by the Endorsement Committee will be noted on the ballot. The Endorsement Committee may recommend no candidate, one candidate or more than one candidate for a particular office. Each candidate for endorsement will have the opportunity to speak to the membership, and if time allows, answer questions. All DWC members who have paid their dues as of January 15 of the election year may vote, either in person or by proxy, on candidates for endorsement. Proxy votes will be accepted by the Secretary of the Steering Committee. Instructions on casting a proxy vote will be sent to the DWC in advance of the date of the endorsement vote. Members will vote on the endorsement of individual candidates rather than on a proposed slate of candidates. In advance of the vote, the Endorsement Committee will announce the majority margin required for a candidate to achieve the endorsement. Any candidate recommended for endorsement by the Endorsement Committee who does not achieve the votes necessary for "endorsement" by the membership at a March meeting will be "supported" by the DWC in the primary election.

If, after the primary election, the Endorsement Committee chooses to recommend a candidate for endorsement in the general election who did not receive the endorsement of the DWC membership in the primary election, the membership will be asked to vote on the recommended endorsement at a subsequent regular monthly meeting (with advanced notice). All DWC members who have paid their dues as of January 15 of the election year may vote, either in person or by proxy.

In the event that the Monroe County Democratic Party calls a caucus to fill a vacancy in an elected office, the most-recently formed Endorsement Committee will meet to determine whether to recommend a candidate for endorsement in the caucus election. If the Endorsement Committee chooses to make a recommendation, the DWC membership will be notified of such recommendation. If the Steering Committee determines that there is sufficient time, the membership will vote on the recommended endorsement at a subsequent regular monthly meeting or at a special meeting called for this purpose (with advanced notice to the DWC membership). All DWC members who have paid their dues as of January 15 of the election year may vote, either in person or by proxy.

Endorsed candidates are eligible to be considered for campaign financial assistance in advance of the primary and/or the general election. An endorsed candidate who receives funding in advance of the primary election may or may not receive funding prior to the general election. Similarly, an endorsed candidate who was not granted financial assistance prior to the primary election may be funded prior to the general election. An endorsed candidate who received funding from the DWC in a previous election cycle is not guaranteed to receive funding in a subsequent election cycle. The funding level for each candidate is at the sole discretion of the Steering Committee

**ENDORSEMENT LEVELS:**

The DWC may endorse candidates at one of the following levels:

Supported;

Endorsed; and

Endorsed with funding.

**FOLLOWING ENDORSEMENT BY MEMBERSHIP:**

The Supported Candidate:

Shall participate in DWC campaign training;

May have campaign links posted on the DWC website; and

May have email messages sent to DWC distribution lists.

The Endorsed Candidate:

Shall participate in DWC campaign training;

May use DWC endorsement in literature and press releases;

May have campaign links posted on the DWC website;

May have email messages sent to DWC distribution lists; and

Shall endeavor to use her skills and knowledge to mentor and support other candidates.

Discretionary Funding of Endorsed Candidates:

The DWC may disburse funds to an endorsed candidate's campaign committee as determined by the Steering Committee, which may consider the following in deciding for each endorsed candidate the amount, if any, of funds to contribute: the candidate's campaign finances; the exigencies specific to the candidate's race; the limitations on available DWC funds; and any other factors the Steering Committee deems relevant.

***Reviewed by the Steering Committee 9/19/09***