

UUSJ Defending Our Democracy Board Report September 23, 2020

The DRD Task Group meets on the third Wednesday of the month online from 3:00 – 4:30 pm ET

Current Active Members: Fred Van Deusen, convener, First Parish in Concord, MA; Pablo DeJesús, UUSJ Executive Director; Donna Scheidt, Greensboro, NC; David Shilton, UU Church of Arlington, VA; Suzan Chastain, UU Church of Arlington, VA; Ursula Scott, River Road, Bethesda, MD; Martha Ades, UU Congregation of Fairfax, VA; David Delk, Portland, OR; Rev. Earl Koteen, Berkeley, CA; Julia Sayles, UU Church of Arlington, VA

Ex Officio Members: Bob Denniston, Board Chair, and Lavona Grow, UU Church of Arlington, VA - participate as appropriate and as invited.

This report primarily covers the period since the last board report on June 6, 2020.

Advocacy Work

[Action Alert: Secure Our Vote](#). Ongoing until action is taken. Urge our Senators to provide \$3.6 billion for free, fair, safe, and secure elections — and support the United States Postal Service! A functioning Postal Service is critical for safe vote-by-mail elections.

Advocacy for June (Senate) Actions due by 3pmET June 18, 2020 – Secure Our Vote! Urge your Senators to provide \$4 billion for free, fair, safe, and secure elections — and support the United States Postal Service. [Link to the June WHWN Handout](#) with topic details, sample letter, and letter submission details. Due to the pandemic, we are not hand-delivering letters as we did prior to April.

[UU the Vote 2020](#) program support

DRD has been working with the UUA and our own congregations to support the UU the Vote program. At the end of last year we developed a series of UU the Vote webpages to help [UUs mobilize for the 2020 elections](#). In March the COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on these efforts, basically bringing to a halt any planned in-person activities such as setting up voter registration tables in other states.

Working with Kelsey Cowger, Reeb Project/UUSJ Voting Campaign Organizer, we have adopted several different approaches for reaching voters in other locations including sending postcards, phone banking and text banking. To support this effort we created a new page on the UUSJ website: [Engaging in Voter Mobilization](#).

Recent Meetings

At our June meeting we met with Kelsey Cowger, and discussed her plans to implement a non-partisan voter mobilization campaign in selected states in the Mid-Atlantic region including PA, VA, NC. Since

June she has been helping congregations mobilize around these issues with a focus on Reclaim Our Vote postcards.

We met again in August to share the various UU the Vote activities that our congregations were doing and learn what Kelsey was planning. We discussed ways that we could better communicate about the various actions Kelsey is supporting. We also discussed the planned transition of Lavona's moving on to other interests and Pablo becoming more involved in the group's work.

In September we agreed to re-schedule our meetings to better meet Pablo's schedule. We will now meet on the third Wednesday of the month from 3:00 – 4:30pm ET, Noon – 1:30pm PT. At the meeting we received an update from Kelsey on her activities, and showed the group the new UUSJ webpage [Engaging in Voter Mobilization](#).

Scenario Planning & Capacity Building

At the September meeting we also had a discussion about the future work of the group post-election. Pablo reminded us that work for this election can continue to play on with future issues and elections, and that we need to have a discussion at our next meeting about what we will do if Trump wins and what we will do if Biden wins. We agreed to talk at our next meeting about the potential agenda for UUSJ action and how we can leverage congregants and motivate action.

Kelsey had some thoughts for us to consider given that both she and the UUA organizers will be leaving their UU the Vote organizing jobs in November. It is critical that volunteers step up and funding be found to keep up a sustainable presence regarding civic engagement and voter mobilization (hoping that DRD fills this role).

- How do you widen the circle of leadership for these activities?
- She considers DRD itself a leadership circle (i.e., at the ready for national-level activity, or being able to engage others, etc.).
- How can we help sustain inter-congregational connection and activity?

Future Plans

We will be discussing the future work of the group after the election, and how we can be most effective in carrying it out.