



Maryland Forward Party

Introduction

April 4, 2025

Agenda

- 01 Background on Forward Party
- 02 History
- 03 Organizational Platform
- 04 Structure
- 05 2025 Goals
- 06 How best to engage?
- 07 Discussion



Our political system is broke.

Forward Party is providing a new and refreshing approach to American politics. America is now more politically divided than ever and the traditional political parties are only looking to further that divide by forcing polarizing one-size-fits-all policy platforms.

This binary approach forces us to typically vote AGAINST a candidate, or a party, rather than for someone we actually believe in.

Maryland Forward Party is breaking the mold.

The Maryland Forward Party believes in values and people, over top-down party policies, which aren't often nuanced enough to meet the needs of our communities, which are growing more diverse and more complex.

In Maryland, we think there's a broad and politically homeless demographic who are ready to move on from the extremes of traditional Party politics, which grow more radical and deliver less and less for the needs in our community. Our tent is big and our doors are welcome to all.

Not Left. Not Right. FORWARD.

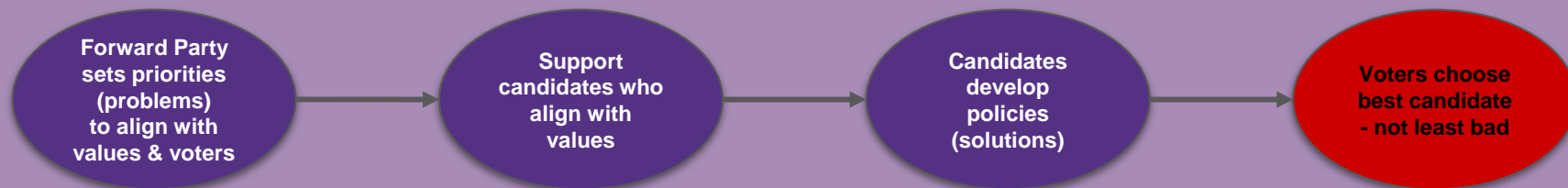
Why Forward Party?



- More unites us than divides us.
- 50% of Americans identify as independents.
- Nearly 1/3 of voters are excluded from voting in the primaries.

We're not just a new party, we're a new kind of party.

- **Values-based problem solving** instead of policy-based platforms
- We **support** Forward Democrats, Forward Republicans, and Forward Independents



Forward Party History



Andrew Yang

Forward Party was originally founded in 2021, after Yang's 2020 Presidential election campaign. The goal was to fight partisan polarization & implement electoral reforms.



Christine Todd-Whitman

Yang co-chaired the party with Christine Todd-Whitman. Together they represent a diversity of views from across the political spectrum.



Michael Wilner

On July 27, 2022 the Serve America Movement and the Renew America Movement merged with Forward, to expand the party and grow a new political coalition.

Mission Statement

The Maryland Forward Party, in association with the national Forward Party, will redefine the political processes; supporting candidates and advocating for policies which collaboratively build a Maryland where we all want to live.

Core Values

- **More Collaboration, Less Partisan Conflict**
We work to dismantle systems that suppress voter voices, divide communities, and entrench tribalism.
- **Better Governance Through Problem Solving**
We support pursuing multiple simultaneous solutions to better meet the nuanced needs of each community.
- **Protect the Rights of All People**
We oppose all acts of hatred, harassment, or discrimination that seek to marginalize, restrict, or diminish the lives of others.



Legislative Priorities

1. Ranked Choice Voting

RCV encourages candidates to appeal to more voters and ensures that winning candidates have been approved by more than 50% of the voters.

2. Single All-Candidate Primaries

Voters should be able to consider all candidates and elected officials should be allowed to disagree with their own parties without being primaried.

3. Independent Redistricting Commissions

A body separate from the legislature should define voting districts to remove bias and ensure that minority groups are fairly represented.

4. Legislative Vacancies Reform

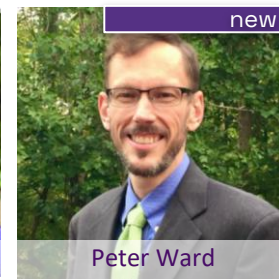
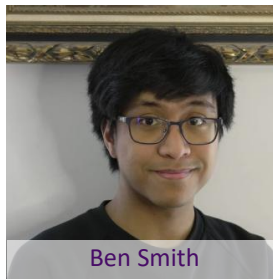
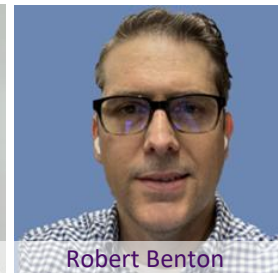
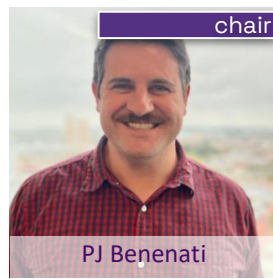
25% of our legislature was appointed, not elected. Forward supports reforms to ensure that the voters decide who will represent them.

5. Prioritized Community Issues - bottom-up solutions

We support community groups to identify the issues important to them and bring forward solutions to better address their unique needs.



Board of Directors



Building a Diverse and Talented Team

- o Plans for 2025 growth

Committees

1. **Candidates & Affiliates** - Matt Hines

- Recruitment and Support

2. **Legislative Affairs** - Lee Bradshaw & PJ Benenati

- Legislative and grassroots

3. **Outreach & Engagement** - Pete Oliver-Kruger & Ben Smith

- local priorities, volunteer coordination, network expansion, comms, fundraising

4. **Operations** - Matt Beyers & Michael O'Loughlin

- Systems, Standards, Procedures

5. **Compliance** - Shiv Gupta & Robert Benton

- Legal, Finance, Ballot Access



Candidates



Campaign Related Events

- Ashwani Meet & Greet Statewide Call
- Crooms Campaign Event
- Ashwani Virtual Meet & Greet

Win Rate 2024

12.5%

1 for 8 with:

- Janie Monier

Win Rate Total

22.2%

2 for 9 with:

- Janie Monier
- James Kole

2025/2026 Prospects

Local Races (2025)

- Prince George's County Executive, Tonya Sweat
- Frederick City Council, Annapolis City Council

County/State/Congressional Races (2026)

- Baltimore County Council

Legislative Affairs

SUPPORTING
ELECTION LAW - AFFILIATING WITH A PARTY
AND VOTING - UNAFFILIATED VOTERS

HB 1280



Bill Sponsors: Delegates Qi, Guyton, Ruth, Taveras, and Wu

Authorizing unaffiliated voters to request to affiliate with a political party at an early voting center during a primary election and vote a ballot for the voter's preferred political party.

SUPPORTING
GENERAL ASSEMBLY -
SPECIAL ELECTION TO FILL A VACANCY IN OFFICE

SB 0002



Bill Sponsors: Senator Kagan

Proposing a constitutional amendment to require that a special election be held at the same time as the regular statewide primary and general elections that are held in the second year of the term to fill a vacancy in the office of Delegate or Senator in the General Assembly if the vacancy occurs on or before the date that is 55 days before the deadline for filing certificates of candidacy for the regular statewide election.

SUPPORTING
MONTGOMERY COUNTY -
VOTING METHODS MC 9-25

HB 1094



Bill Sponsors: Montgomery County Delegation

Authorizing the Montgomery County Council to adopt, by law, a ranked-choice voting method or an approval voting method for elections for certain local offices.

SUPPORTING
RANKED-CHOICE VOTING IN CONTESTS FOR
PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION & CERTIFICATION
OF ELECTION-SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGY

HB 0215



Bill Sponsors: Delegates Fair, Feldmark, Kaufman, Lehman, Ruth, Stewart, and Terrasa

Authorizing the State Board of Elections, beginning with the 2028 statewide primary election, to use ranked-choice voting to conduct a contest for the nomination by a political party of a candidate for the office of President of the United States; requiring the State Board to adopt regulations for the review, certification, and decertification of election-supporting technology and to periodically review and evaluate election-supporting technology, etc.



Maryland Forward Party

January 31, 2025

Maryland Forward Party

PJ Benenati, Chair
(301) 606-3513
pjbenenatimdfwd@gmail.com

SB 0002:
General Assembly - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office
Position: Favorable

Dear Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Forward Party and our 6,000 Maryland supporters. Forward Party is among the fastest growing political organizations in the United States and in Maryland. Our organization is dedicated to promoting and enhancing our democracy in Maryland. We also believe that all Maryland taxpayers should have an opportunity to be heard. In Maryland there is need to reform the process for which vacancies in the General Assembly be filled.

SB 0002 is proposing a constitutional amendment to require that a special election be held at the same time as the regular statewide primary and general elections that are held in the second year of the term to fill a vacancy in the office of Delegate or Senator in the General Assembly, if the vacancy occurs on or before the date that is 55 days before the deadline for filing certificates of candidacy for the regular statewide election. The Maryland Forward Party views this Favorably.

Maryland Forward Party
<https://www.marylandforwardparty.com>

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Legislative Efforts

2024

● testified for 4 bills

2025

● testified for 18 bills
● tracked 42 bills
● 1-3 likely to pass

Forward Party

January 31, 2025

ould always be the deciding factors for which elected officials
2024 25% of the General Assembly were initially appointed to their
oted into office.

magazine.com/2024/04/09/moco-politics-in-annapolis-its-deja-vu-special-elections-legislation/

alarmingly high and indicates a likely gap in Maryland's democratic
B 0029 was overwhelmingly supported in the State Senate (43-2)
is then unable to emerge from the House Ways and Means

stitutional amendment, ensure that this democratic loophole be
re-instill this power back to Maryland voters, with the use of
lections.

PJ Benenati
Maryland Forward Party, Chair
E: pjbenenatimdfwd@gmail.com
P: 301-606-3513

Maryland Forward Party
<https://www.marylandforwardparty.com>

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Legislative Affairs

For Immediate Release
March 1, 2024

The Forward, Libertarian, and Green Parties Agree

The people of Maryland deserve greater legitimacy and confidence in our electoral system. We have inherited our way of voting from the 1700s, and other systems exist that would better represent the voter diversity across Maryland. We, the undersigned political parties from across the political spectrum in Maryland, announce our joint support for electoral reform, including Ranked Choice Voting and Independent Redistricting Commissions and will jointly advocate for immediate legislation to effect their implementation throughout the State of Maryland.

Failures in Election Legitimacy

One fundamental reason for this lack of legitimacy is the inability to vote for more than one candidate. We don't know if people would be satisfied with multiple candidates, or are vehemently opposed to one or more.

"In a traditional 'first-past-the-post' system, voters may feel pressured to vote for the 'lesser of two evils' instead of their preferred candidate to avoid 'wasting' their vote. Ranked-choice voting eliminates this issue by allowing voters to rank their preferred candidates in order, without worrying about spoilers or wasted votes."

— Maryland Forward Party Principles

Voters want more options. When voters can't assert all their preferences, our elected officials are consistently selected by a minority of voters. That is not good enough because everyone will now be subjected to the choices of that leader. When the election is done, we need to know that the winners were approved by more than half of the voters.

Many voters also see the outcomes of elections as a foregone conclusion which leads to apathy in voter participation. Most elections in Maryland are decided during the primaries, making the general election just a formality. In addition, Maryland is notorious for having extremely gerrymandered legislative districts that have been crafted to allow current elected officials to choose their voters, rather than the voters choosing their elected officials.

"Voters should pick their politicians; politicians shouldn't pick their voters. End gerrymandering."

— MD Libertarian Party Platform

How Does Election Reform Create Legitimacy?

Independent Redistricting Commissions and Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) retain the concept of "one-person, one-vote" while allowing voters to register their approval of multiple candidates at the same time. Given that Maryland has voting machines capable of Ranked Choice Voting, the Maryland legislature has fewer obstacles than other states to enable this reform at all levels of government.

"[RCV] ensures that the eventual winner has majority support and allows voters to express their preferences knowing that supporting their favorite candidate will not inadvertently help their least favored candidate...and saves money by eliminating unnecessary run-off elections."

— MD Green Party "Green Solutions"

Voters are exhausted by negative campaigning. When given the chance, RCV voters demonstrate a willingness and desire to consider a wider diversity of viewpoints. As evidenced in Australia, Ireland, Alaska, Maine, and Takoma Park, RCV works. It encourages positive campaigning and civility because politicians must reach beyond their base to win over second and third choice voters. Even if the election results are the same, we need to build greater confidence in the outcomes.

Legitimacy Starting in 2024

For these reasons, the undersigned political parties, together with various local election reform advocacy organizations, have entered into an agreement to work together at the city, county, and state levels to make some form of Ranked Choice Voting available throughout the State of Maryland. We have also committed to compel the establishment of Independent Redistricting Commissions to draw district lines for future elections without partisan influence and in a way that ensures fair representation.

Election legitimacy is good for Marylanders, provides legitimacy for all political parties, and is frankly just simply more American.

Signed,

Matthew Beyers, Chair
Maryland Forward Party
<https://www.marylandforwardparty.com/>

Kyle O'Donnell, Chair
Maryland Libertarian Party
<https://www.lbm Maryland.org/>

Charlotte McCreary and Mary Rooker, Co-Chairs
Maryland Green Party
<https://www.mdgreens.org/>



On Wednesday, February 21, 2024, our chair took some time off work to go testify at the working session of the Frederick County Board of Aldermen about the Charter Review Committee Recommendations. There are **19 separate recommendations** to the Board of Aldermen by the Charter Review Committee, however, two were singled out for the testimony.

Here is the text of the testimony:

Good afternoon - My name is Matthew Beyers and I am a citizen of Frederick County and represent the Maryland Forward Party. While I live just outside the city limits, I am paying close attention to the City Charter Review as it relates to democracy and the way we do politics in Maryland.

In general, I support the recommendations of the Commission, however, I'd like to highlight my support for 2 of these recommendations.

First: **Recommendation 9 - Ranked Choice Voting.**

As a member of the Maryland Forward party, this is one of our core principles and I highly support this change to promote fairness, civility, and majority in elections. This will ensure that every elected office has a majority elected candidate. It will also encourage candidates to appeal to 2nd and 3rd choice voters beyond their base and thus increases civility in politics. And lastly, it increases fairness because all voters get to vote their conscience while still having their vote count if their preferred candidate is not the first choice. RCV currently works in Takoma Park MD and is being supported by HB 0423 to be available in Montgomery County. My team is currently supporting and promoting RCV in several other municipalities specifically New Carrollton, Laurel, Bowie, Rockville, and Annapolis. If Frederick adopts RCV, it will be a leader in a growing effort to reform elections across the state. We encourage your support for this recommendation.

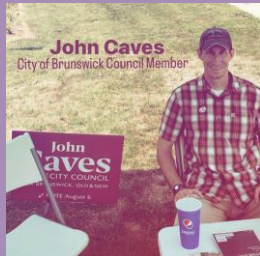
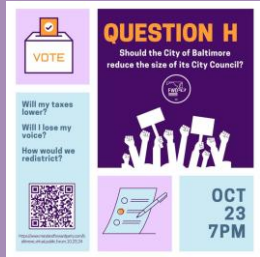
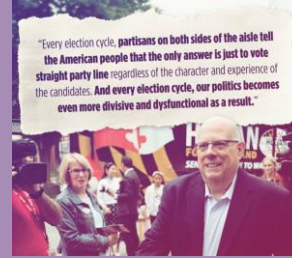
Second: **Recommendation 10 - Primaries.**

Non-partisan primaries, where all candidates for an office run in a single primary regardless of party affiliation, is a core principle of the Maryland Forward Party. We would prefer to see the idea of a top-4/top-5 candidate selection from this single primary. The recommendation for semi-open primaries, while not my ideal solution, is a step in the right direction because it involves non-affiliated voters in the primary process and does not require them to switch party affiliation to vote. This is critical because the majority of our voting process is done in the primary system, resulting in a winnowing down of a sea of candidates to a few to run in the general election. Unfortunately, the current primary system is only attended by about 13% of registered voters selecting those candidates and those voters tend to be the most polarized voters and this results in polarized candidates. Involving independent voters in the primary process should result in more moderate candidates with more general appeal to all voters and should lower the tribalism of our current political system. HB 0257 is currently supporting this concept as well and we encourage your support for this recommendation.

Legislative Affairs



Outreach & Engagement: Communications Team



262 Social Media Posts

- Instagram
 - 1,094 followers - 2023
 - 1,418 followers - 2024 - 23% growth
- Twitter
 - 630 followers - 2023
 - 849 followers - 2024 - 26% growth
- Content
 - Voting/Election Reform - 87 (33%)
 - Political Polarization / More Choices - 62 (24%)
 - Forward Events Promotion - 42 (16%)
 - Candidates - 40 (15%)
 - Forward Brand Recognition/Expansion - 35 (13%)
 - Holiday's - 13 (5%)
 - Pro-democracy / Anti-Maga - 13 (5%)

Other Communication Platforms

- Newsletter
- Website
- Press Releases
- Blogs / Articles



Outreach & Engagement: Events



2023 events

31

2024 events

69

2025 events

19 (4/4/2025)

- Statewide/Town Hall/All-Volunteer Meetings - 18
- Festivals
 - Howard County Fairgrounds Motorcycle Bike Show
 - Maryland Kennel Club Dog Show
 - 2024 Olney Days
 - Primary Day Canvassing
 - Annapolis Pride Fest 2024
 - Rockville Pride 2024
 - Baltimore Pride 2024 Street Team - Sunday
 - Frederick Pride Fest 2024
 - Montgomery County Pride in the Plaza
 - Hagerstown Pride 2024
 - National Night Out - Frederick
 - National Night Out - Accokeek
 - Hey Cousin Culture Fest
 - Greenbelt Labor Day Festival 2024
 - UMD Back To School
 - Accokeek Community Day
 - Frederick In the Streets
 - Pigtown Festival 2024
 - Laurel Pride
 - Potomac Day
 - Election Day Canvassing x2
- Book Club - 3
- Social Events - 5
- Primary Day Trainings - 6
- PEP
 - Board PEP Talk
 - Statewide Call PEP
 - Baltimore Virtual Public Forum 10/23/24
- Legislative Networking Sessions - 2

Outreach & Engagement: Local Priorities (PEP Talks)

QUESTION H

Should the City of Baltimore reduce the size of its City Council?



VIRTUAL FORUM

Come join us for an interactive forum, where together we will prioritize the issues.

Hosted by the
Maryland Forward Party



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OCT 23 7PM


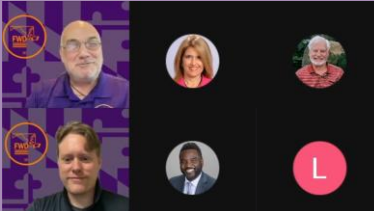


PEP TALK

Town Hall Meeting
Maryland Forward Party
June 30, 2024

Maryland Town Hall Prioritized Epic Problems:
Prompt: "What problems should the MD Forward Party, and our endorsed candidates, work towards solving?"

1. Unaffiliated voters in Maryland are excluded from the full primary process
2. We are not necessarily getting to choose from the best qualified candidates
3. Political gerrymandering promotes extreme positions and discourages candidates who are a) responsible to the voters and b) want to seriously govern.

PRIORITIZED PROBLEMS

1. **Lawrence:** "Question H further concentrates power amongst elites and further removes it from the working class, further diluting grassroots community access to power."
2. **Judy:** "The city has insufficient infrastructure and resources for democratic participation and civic engagement. This is a problem that exists now, and will be worse if Question H passes."
3. **Zoe:** "Balance of constituent services and transformative legislation."
4. **Lela:** "People in the diverse communities in Baltimore City may not get the help they need from their council person and city government to solve their problems."
5. **Evie:** "Council members should be more part-time and connected to their community and less professional elected officials."
6. **Jessica:** "With Baltimore's population steadily declining, the cost of the City Council in taxpayer dollars is way out of balance when compared to delivering the results our city desperately needs."

Options: 2H and 1H, 1H and 2H, 2H and 3H, 3H and 2H, 3H and 4H, 4H and 3H, 4H and 5H, 5H and 4H, 5H and 6H, 6H and 5H, 6H and 7H, 7H and 6H, 7H and 8H, 8H and 7H, 8H and 9H, 9H and 8H, 9H and 10H, 10H and 9H, 10H and 11H, 11H and 10H, 11H and 12H, 12H and 11H, 12H and 13H, 13H and 12H, 13H and 14H, 14H and 13H, 14H and 15H, 15H and 14H, 15H and 16H, 16H and 15H, 16H and 17H, 17H and 16H, 17H and 18H, 18H and 17H, 18H and 19H, 19H and 18H, 19H and 20H, 20H and 19H, 20H and 21H, 21H and 20H, 21H and 22H, 22H and 21H, 22H and 23H, 23H and 22H, 23H and 24H, 24H and 23H, 24H and 25H, 25H and 24H, 25H and 26H, 26H and 25H, 26H and 27H, 27H and 26H, 27H and 28H, 28H and 27H, 28H and 29H, 29H and 28H, 29H and 30H, 30H and 29H, 30H and 31H, 31H and 30H, 31H and 32H, 32H and 31H, 32H and 33H, 33H and 32H, 33H and 34H, 34H and 33H, 34H and 35H, 35H and 34H, 35H and 36H, 36H and 35H, 36H and 37H, 37H and 36H, 37H and 38H, 38H and 37H, 38H and 39H, 39H and 38H, 39H and 40H, 40H and 39H, 40H and 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Outreach & Engagement: Forward Communities



Rural



Suburban



Urban



Educators



Faith Communities



Federal Workers



Immigrant Residents



LGBTQ+



Parents & Guardians

Outreach & Engagement: Forward Communities



Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups



Seniors



Small Businesses



Specialty Aled



Unions & Professional Associations



Veterans & Veteran Families



Women



Young Voters

The Goal

Provide better Representation for our Communities

Solution

Gain & Maintain Ballot Access

Challenge

Signature Collection is either slow or expensive

Approach

Phase 1

Build a Maintainable Network

Phase 2

Fundraise for Petition Collection, through the Network

Phase 3

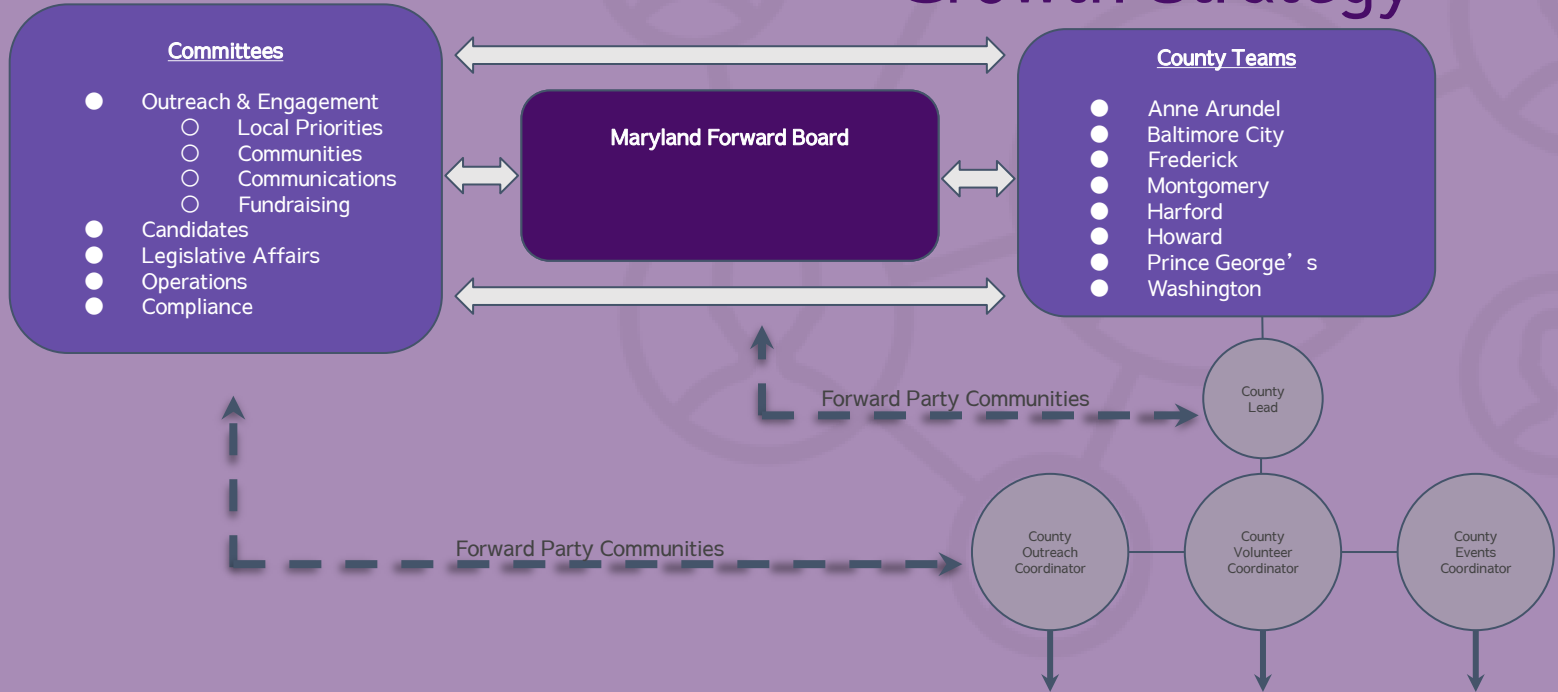
Bolster Engagement across the Network, to Maintain Ballot Access

- Run viable Candidates
- Engage local Priorities through PEP Talks
- Pursue Legislative Reforms and Aligned Partners

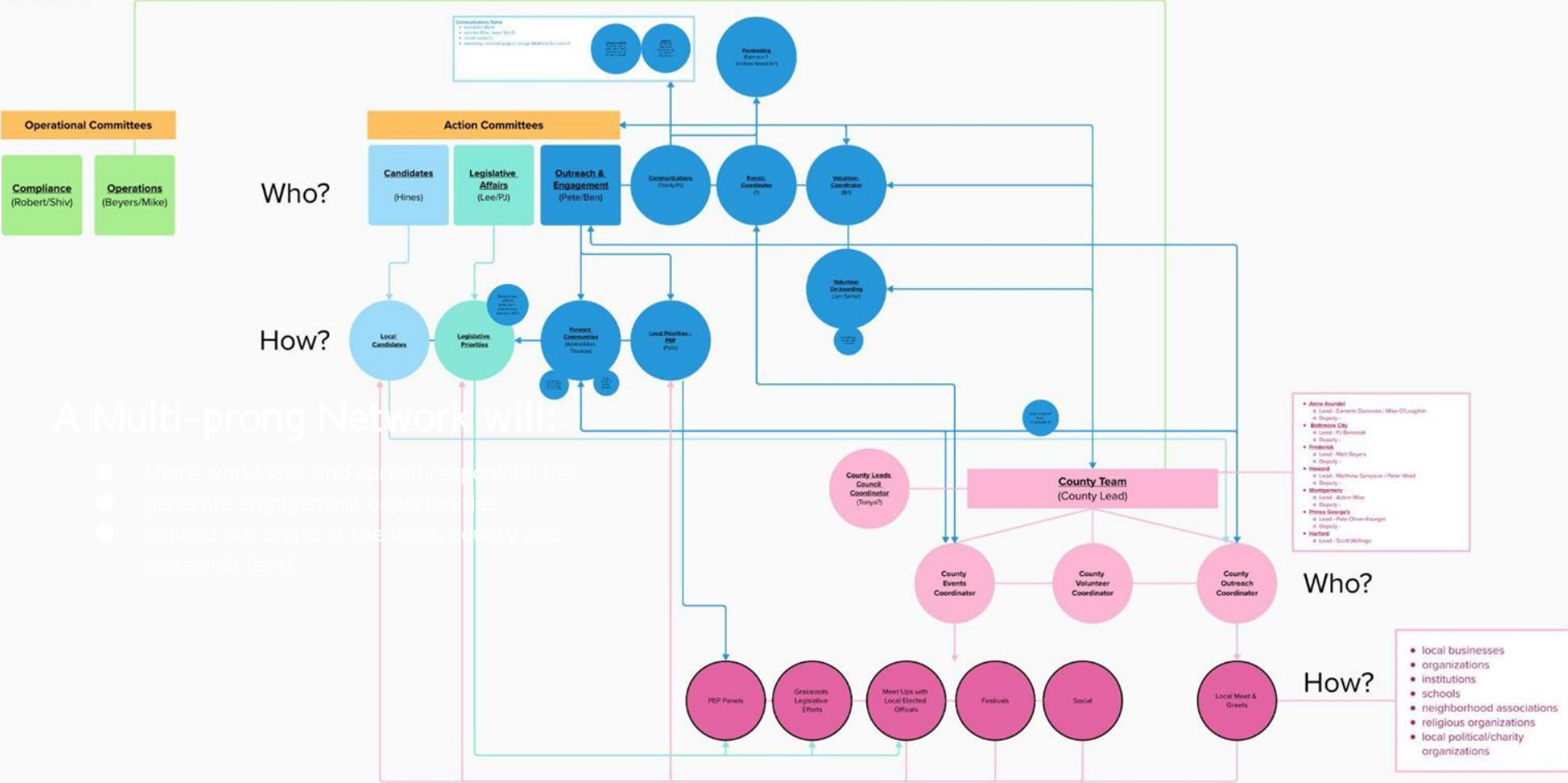
Phase 1

Build a Maintainable Network

Growth Strategy



draft: 03/13/2025



Phase 2

Fundraise for Petition Collection, through the Network

Target Total Supporter Network:
8,000

Large Audience, Small Donation Request:

- Once we hit the target Supporter Network size, we begin a coordinated LOCAL fundraising effort
- \$10 - 100 request

<u>Amount</u>	<u># People (%)</u>	<u>Total</u>
\$10	480 (6%)	\$4,800
\$20	400 (5%)	\$8,000
\$30	400 (5%)	\$12,000
\$40	240 (3%)	\$9,600
\$50	240 (3%)	\$12,000
\$60	240 (3%)	\$14,400
\$70	240 (3%)	\$16,800
\$80	160 (2%)	\$12,800
\$90	80 (1%)	\$7,200
\$100	40 (0.5%)	\$4,000

2,520
(32% hit rate) **\$101,600**

Outreach Strategy

Concentrate our limited resources to Maximize our Efforts

Target Total Supporter Network:
8,000

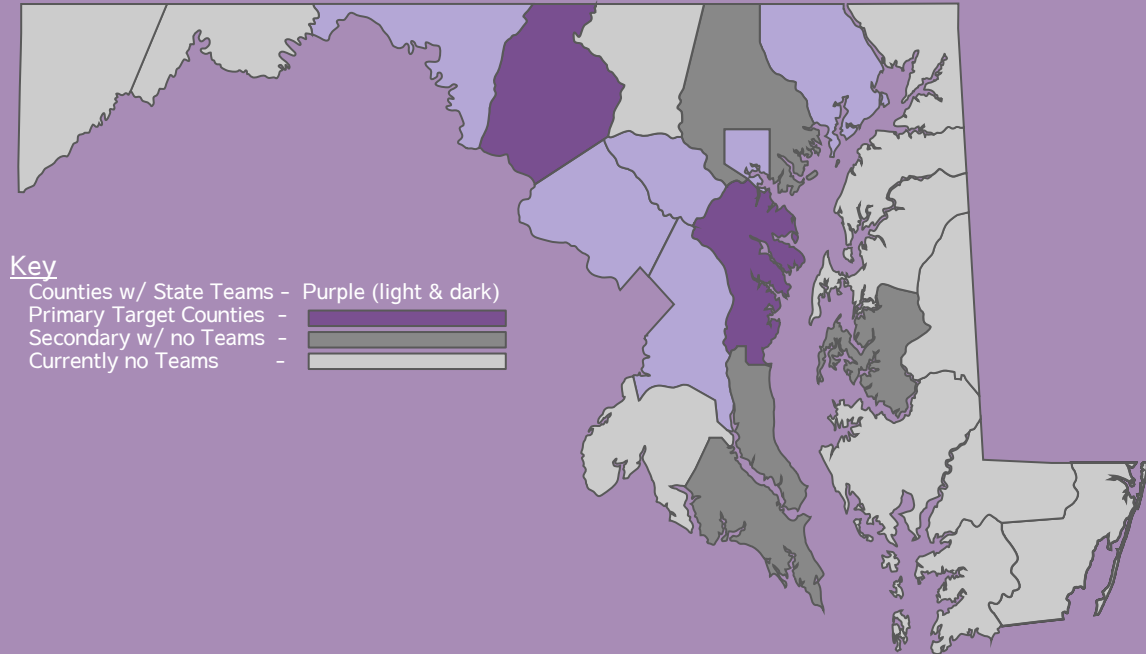
Target Counties

Primary (Harris/Hogan majorities)

Anne Arundel
Frederick

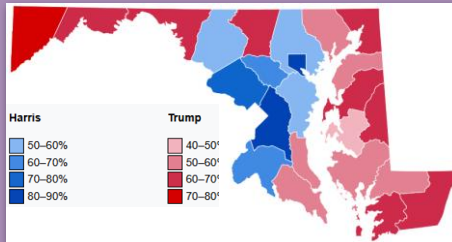
Secondary (moderate leaning)

Baltimore
Calvert
Harford
Howard
Montgomery
St Mary's
Talbot



Key

Counties w/ State Teams - Purple (light & dark)
Primary Target Counties -
Secondary w/ no Teams -
Currently no Teams -

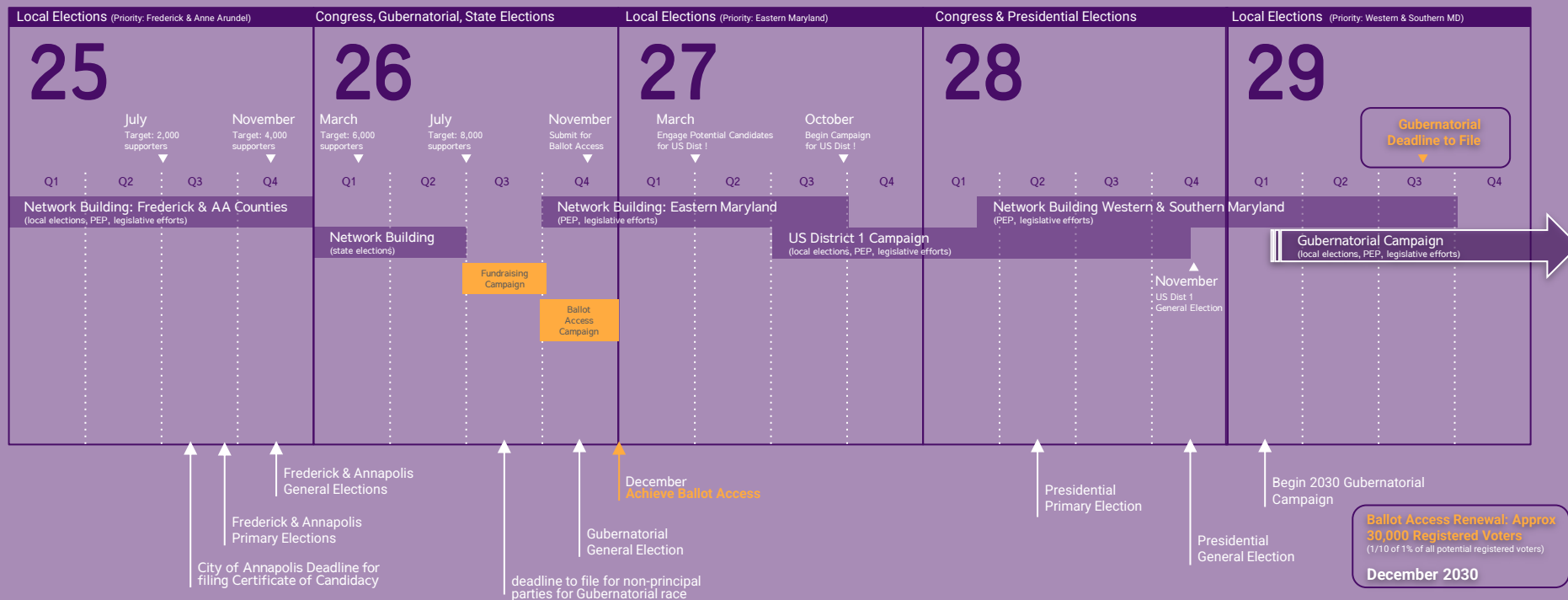


Schedule

Phase 3

Bolster Engagement across the Network, to Maintain Ballot Access

- Run viable Candidates
- Engage local Priorities through PEP Talks
- Pursue Legislative Reforms and Aligned Partners



Schedule

2025

July 28
Sept 9
Sept 16
Nov 4
Nov 4

- City of Annapolis Deadline for filing Certificate of Candidacy
- City of Frederick Primary Election
- City of Annapolis Primary Election
- City of Annapolis General Election
- City of Frederick General Election

2026

July
Aug
Sept
Nov
Nov
Nov
Dec

- Achieve 8,000 supporters and begin local fundraising campaign
- deadline to file for non-principal parties for Gubernatorial race
- Secure funds for petition collection drive
- Gubernatorial General Election
- Begin US District 1 Brand Expansion & Networking
- Submit for ballot access
- **Achieve Ballot Access**

2027

March
March
Oct

- Engage Potential Viable Candidates for US District 1
- Engage Potential Viable Candidates for local office within District 1
- Begin US District 1 Campaign

2028

March
April
May
Nov

- Begin Western & Southern MD Brand Expansion & Networking
- Begin 2030 Prepping for Gubernatorial Campaign
- **Forward Candidate MD-01 Primary Election**
- **Forward Candidate MD-01 General Election**

2030

Nov
Dec
Dec

- **Gubernatorial General Election**
- Ballot Access term expires
- Deadline for min registered voters

approx 30,000 registered Forward Party Voters (1/10 of 1% of all potential registered voters)

GROWTH



Start Small... any engagement can be scaled to meet your interests and availability

Diverse Thinking... All ideas have an opportunity to be heard

Grow as a Community... We're here to learn and grow together. Lot of shared resources within the Team

What We Can Do Right Now?

- Sign-up for the newsletter
- Support on social media
(follow, like, comment, share)
- **Engage people in your network**, in person or via social media, and encourage them to visit *marylandforwardparty.com* and register their interest
 - Simply identifying as a Forward supporter helps us build our network
 - Buy and Show off Merch
 - Explore becoming a Volunteer

Next Steps?

➤ **Build our Club**

- Build team infrastructure, priorities, goals
- Community outreach & engagement to expand the club
- Organize small meet-ups

➤ **Local Outreach & Engagement**

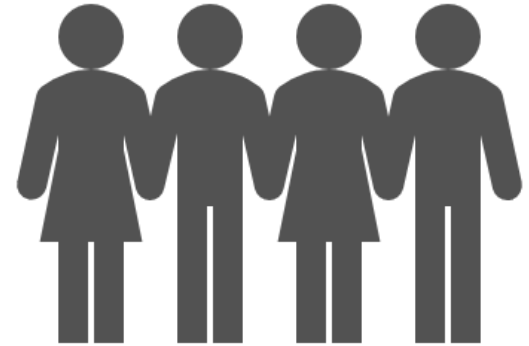
- Local outreach research - local businesses, organizations
- Impromptu tabling - grocery stores, right-of-ways, parks
- Sign up for local events - farmers markets, festivals, parades
- Connect with other senior communities

➤ **Join a Central Committee**

- Outreach & Engagement
 - Local Priorities
 - Forward Communities
 - Volunteer/Event Coordination
 - Communications Team
 - Fundraising
- Legislative Affairs
- Candidates
- Operations
- Compliance

Getting Involved As A Volunteer

- Everyone involved with the Maryland Forward Party is a volunteer
- If you would be interested in having a discussion about helping us as a volunteer, **Contact Bill Stewart:**
 - ✓ Put a note in Chat that you are interested
 - ✓ Or send an email at bills.fwd@gmail.com
 - ✓ Or text **240-461-9913**
- No sales pitch! Just a discussion of where we need more people and if any of them are of interest, an introduction to the lead person for that activity



The left half of the image features a dark purple background with several glowing, slightly curved vertical lines in a lighter purple or magenta hue. These lines create a sense of depth and movement, resembling light trails or stylized architectural elements.

Open Discussion



Discussion