

Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution
11/17/2024 General Assembly

The session opened with a reminder of the principles on which FCCPR was founded, and amplified the critique that Bernie Sanders made in the Boston Globe on 11/10/24: “Either you stand with the powerful oligarchy of our country, or you stand with the working class. You can’t represent both. In my view, the Democrats lost this election because they ignored the justified anger of working-class America and became the defenders of a rigged economic and political system.”

We gathered to assess and organize. The discussion among the 75 people fell into three main categories: Approach, Concerns and Actions

APPROACH

Be kind to ourselves and each other
Take care of yourself and seek out community
Remember our history of being an army of fighters (Pipeline, Shays Rebellion, etc.)
Celebrate our victories
Focus on Economic Issues. Housing, Medicare for All and a more transparent Legislature.
Government is not the enemy; corporations and billionaires are.
Build alliances and coalitions
Repossess the American flag

Share resources and communications in our communities
Make Massachusetts an example of what works

CONCERNS

- Social Security
- Issues for the disabled
- Housing
- Medicaid
- Food stamps
- Media and especially new media now dominated by right
- Department of Education
- Climate change
- Attacks on vulnerable immigrants
- Electoral college
- Reproductive rights and health care – in state and cross state
- Energy – forests threatened; sand mining for fracking
- Money in politics and elections

ACTIONS

- Get connected. Know people locally and in your neighborhood. Do skills identification. Build connections and community; mutual aid
- Share solutions among towns
- When Trump voters hear Bernie’s message, it is enough to get them on board. But must do it in a neighborly way, and not in a condescending way. Be ready to exploit backlash when Trump screws over workers; Farmer Glen knows neighboring farmers for Trump reliant on migrant workers, an opportunity when the Trump coalition splinters.

- Build alliances with other groups, including youth and minorities, locally and statewide

Support/Protect Vulnerable Populations

- Ally with immigrant communities: contact Greenfield social service groups to understand better Greenfield's immigrant population including children in the schools: Community Action, Service Net, Board of Health, Center for New Americans and do a census of organizations re immigrants. In Greenfield: Days Inn – 45 families of immigrants who are not being well served. Speak with local officials to say we won't tolerate this. Non-cooperation with ICE, including having meetings with Mayor City Council and others (sheriff, District Attorney, police), Go to raids. Reinforce sanctuary city status for Greenfield, establish for others.
- Connect with local and regional organizations struggling against racism: Black Lives Matter, Racial Justice Rising, etc. Create Homework Centers in low-cost housing communities as a way to engage with people who are struggling.
- Continue and expand our work around reproductive rights, Medicare for All
- Support UMass protesters against Gaza genocide

Deepen generational base

Figure out how to attract young people. Participate in River Valley Dem-Socialists of America, set up a monthly table at Greenfield Community College, asking "what are your concerns?" Guest lecture at a GCC Poly-Sci class. Continue alliance with Young Feminist Party of Amherst.

Communications and media:

-Build communications systems. Town listservs, Next Door, town newsletters, etc, local means of communication, serve as mutual aid mechanisms, Rapid Response, communication to meet young people online, Facebook, Bluesky, Signal groups; (a progressive rich MA man may buy), TikTok, Shoestring News (maybe write for it), column in the Recorder, other media outlets, voice and visibility for alternative news.

-Combat misinformation/disinformation (books have fiction/non-fiction categorization).

Electeds and officials:

-Find out what vulnerabilities federal, state and local officials are aware of, how they plan to protect and safeguard, and what we should unite on our asks/demands. How will we/they respond to new national restrictions? How will the State take over Federal services that will be shredded? Ask Governor Healey: what state's response will be for local police and state militia regarding immigrants? ICE is Federal, can she stop them? Make an appointment with Mayor, City Council, police re: concerns: Active cooperation vs passive tolerance of violence; Mental health; non-cooperation with police. Look at history and renew this idea. Ask them about gun/use of force policy

-Ensure enactment of Q1 and Q2; Dignity Alliance (bills re wheelchair repair), fight for Ranked Choice Voting

Build On/Celebrate Our Positives

- Hold fun social gatherings with food and music where children are welcome!
- Mutual aid is happening– e.g. ResilientGreenfield.org; Village Neighbors (in Wendell, New Salem, Shutesbury and Leverett), Next Door, Common Good,
- Groups of groups. FCCPR is a member of Our Revolution MA (ORMA), a member of Mass. Progressive Action Organizing Committee (MPAOC) (statewide coalition) and a chapter of the Indivisible Mass. Coalition which is a part of national Indivisible and is a member of Mass-Care, the single-payer coalition.
- Connect with community land trusts, Climate Action Now (January party), Parasol Patrol (protecting/celebrating LGBTQIA, rainboworganizingwesternma@yahoo.com).
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Strengthening FCCPR

- FCCPR vision: a multi-issue coalition/working groups – put “new urgency” into action.
- Strengthening internal and external FCCPR communications, including website (we have 2 new volunteers) and dynamic social media presence; updated list of contacts.
- FCCPR organization: revitalize our task forces (create new ones; Have a 350Mass node) and recruit to the Coordinating Committee.
- Newsletter: create short biographies of activists in our area.
- Hold another gathering soon
- Training, speakers, etc.
 - Nonviolence direct action training; Direct action – one issue at a time – offense and defense – have to do both;
 - Group facilitation techniques – learn and model
 - Invite speakers about civil rights – i.e. Hispanic, Black, migrants
 - Organize cross-racial organizing
- FCCPR could sell small US flags for purchase and fundraising (repossess our flag!)