

Why PDD Is the Way It Is

- PDD Founding Assumptions -

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Some Early History of Progressive Democrats for Delaware:

- May, 2003 – 1st Howard Dean “Meet-up”
- Jan, 2004 – Opening of “DE Dean HQ”
- July, 2004 – 1st meeting of PDD

The Climate At PDD’s Birth:

- Conservatives completely dominated the Republican Party and had done so since before 1980
- The Right had succeeded in demonizing liberals. “Liberal” had (almost literally) been made a dirty word.
- The conservative triumph was the result of a conscious process, well-funded and guided by a think-tank infrastructure.
- The Right had out-thought, out-strategized and out-organized the Left at every turn and was intentionally moving “The Center” of political discourse rightward.
- The Right had a “no Compromise” mentality and lots of discipline.
- The Democratic Party, led by the DLC, had responded with triangulation, crafting policies and positions in response to polling, creating the impression (possibly accurate) that it was not a party of values.
- Democrats were not proud of their liberal values and tradition in the way that Republicans were proud of their conservative roots.
- We saw Howard Dean as an antidote to a reactive Democratic approach to “leadership”.

Our Assumptions:

- Recognition that the Democratic Party, while weakened, was still an enormously influential machine that, unlike any other potential mechanism on the left, could command approximately 50% of the popular vote.
- Recognition that the left was not the power center in the Democratic Party that the Right was in the Republican Party. A mirror-image situation does not exist.

Founding Conception of PDD:

- We viewed the Democratic Party as a powerful but imperfect vehicle. We sought to change it NOT primarily through criticism, which we saw as ineffective, but through continuous replacement of conservative Democrats with more progressive Democrats.
- Our greatest single fear was that PDD might degenerate into a debating society. The Left seemed to lack the discipline of the Right. The Right understood the mechanics of political power while the left talked about it.
- We put a premium on discipline, focus, hard work and direct action in contrast to talk.
- We committed to Lakoff’s idea of promoting progressive political frames and displacing conservative ones.
- Whatever we did in the short term, we felt it was also important to take the long view.
- To encourage action and initiative, and reduce the incentive for distracting internal strategy and personality battles, we adopted an entrepreneurial culture:
“Don’t seek group support for your worthy projects. Instead, consider yourself deputized to just go ahead and do them.”
- We further sought to minimize debate about internal governance by adopting an executive “presidential primary”, rather than a more typically liberal “United Nations”, model for participation, i.e.,
“If you think PDD is on the right track, join us, but, if not, join ‘another campaign’, or take action on your own, with our blessing.”
- We invited Rebecca to serve as our Executive Director for an indefinite term.
- We consciously avoided drafting internal governance rules to help us steer clear of potentially paralyzing debate about details of our internal governance.
- We wanted PDD to be **about** its mission, not **about** itself.

PDD In Summary:

- Democratic Party is our chosen vehicle
- Preference for concrete action (over discussion/debate)
- Preference for getting liberals into positions of political power (over political criticism)
- Attention to the mechanics of advancing liberal political influence
- Take the long view
- Focus on PDD’s mission over its internal structure
- Entrepreneurship principle to promote action, a big tent, and an outlet for what might otherwise degenerate into strategy and governance debates.