

## Greens focus on more than environment

BY STACEY CARLOUGH

Senior News Editor

Ecological wisdom, social justice, nonviolence and grassroots democracy are the "four pillars" with which America joined the worldwide Green Movement in 1984. Following in the footsteps of Green parties in New Zealand and Germany, who used fervent grassroots activism to build national movements, the Green Party USA now boasts more than 236,578 registered voters in 16 states, with approximately 600 of them from Delaware.

J. Roy Cannon, representative of the Green Party for Delaware, said one goal of the party is to promote the campaign of Vivian Houghton, a Green Party candidate for Delaware attorney general. "Our goal with her campaign is not only to get her elected, but to further peoples' awareness of the Green Party to help people understand we're a values-based political party," he said.

Cannon said each election provides another opportunity for the party to express its platforms. "We have also developed positions regarding the corporate state that Delaware represents," he said. "The Democratic and Republican parties here in Delaware are under the influence of large money corporations, and there really is no voice for the people."

Particular to Delaware, Cannon said, the Green Party is focusing its energy on ending minimum sentencing laws, rebuilding the problematic combined sewer overflows in Wilmington and working toward legislation to treat substance abusers instead of incarcerating them.

Cannon said the party follows tenets outlined in "Ten Key Values," a list shared with Green parties worldwide and the broad basis for each state's local activism.

The Ten Key Values are as follows: respect for diversity, social justice, grassroots democracy, feminism, community-based economics, decentralization, ecological wisdom, nonviolence, personal and global responsibility and future focus.

In 2001, the Green Party fielded 280 candidates in 28 states, with 59 victories in offices ranging from town council to mayor. The party currently

has permanent ballot access in 24 states. Of the 164 candidates who run nationally in 2002, five have been elected to office to date.

The Green Party candidate most people recognize is Ralph Nader. While Nader did not achieve the necessary 5 percent of the popular vote to be on more equal financial footing with the two major party candidates, he did capture 2,882,897, or 2.74 percent of the national vote in the 2000 presidential election -- 8,307, or 3 percent of the votes, came from Delaware.

Unlike many states that have stringent ballot access laws, Cannon said, the Delaware Green Party faced few problems acquiring ballot status. "We were concerned in 2000 because we were brand new [in Delaware] and had to achieve the required percentage very quickly," he said. Cannon said Green Party members in Delaware are "an odd mix of advocates and activists -- people who wish to change the system vertically."

While the Green Party does have its roots in environmental concerns, Cannon said the party has grown far beyond mere environmentalism. "We feel our platform has majority approval," he said. "If most people in America were aware of our platform, they would approve of it." Since the Delaware Greens are such a new party, Cannon said they are taking things one-step at a time. "We're meeting with people and finding more and more are interested in what we have to offer," he said. "We're trying to reach out and diversify to a population who's been disenfranchised by the system."

The target of many third parties is not to win over current members of the two major parties, although that does occur, but to inspire and motivate the non-voting population of American citizens. "We're trying to show people that they have an impact," Cannon said. "The people who don't vote aren't stupid, they've just realized that it's a foregone conclusion about who's going to get elected. "We're showing people by our grassroots structure that someone like me, a political novice, can have a voice."

Dean Myerson, political coordinator for the national Green Party, said disillusionment with the two-party system fuels the Green Party's success as a viable alternative. "We're trying to convince people that we're not just a third party with a good platform," he said. "We're a viable third party, and we've got more momentum than ever in our history -- we are the only global political movement on the planet growing on every continent."

The Green Party's platform is based on a commitment "to create meaningful and enduring change" in the current U.S. political process, and includes: comprehensive campaign finance reform and the elimination or

substantial limitation of Political Action Committees and soft money contributions; a reduction in militarism and reliance on arms policies and a drastic cut to the defense budget; a universal health care system; the decriminalization of "victimless crimes," such as possession of small amounts of marijuana; full rights for gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people in regard to housing, jobs, civil marriage, benefits and child custody; a rejection of trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization extensive moves toward energy conservation and sustainable agriculture, and an "economic" system based on a combination of private businesses, decentralized democratic cooperatives and publicly-owned enterprises.

As the Green Party continues to call for a radical paradigm shift, they will inevitably be labeled as idealists, but Myerson said he does not see this as negative. "We're practical idealists," he said. "We understand that what we're looking for is not going to happen overnight, and we know as we get to each step, the goals evolve.

"It's important that just because you're practical in politics you don't lose your idealism -- idealism is where ethics and long-term visions come from."

Sophomore Anne Marie Caswell, co-president of the university's Campus Greens, said she has been a registered Green Party member for three years and encourages others to seek information on alternate parties.

"You may just be reaffirming your beliefs," she said, "but you are doing a huge disservice to yourself and the rest of America if you remain ignorant of different views."

Caswell said the Greens "challenge citizens to think outside the 'Demopublican' corporate box. "Alternative visions and perspectives are necessary to making good, informed decisions."

View the full story at:

<http://www.review.udel.edu/index.php3?section=1&article=5>



*People First In the First State  
It's About Time!*