

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District
2022 Democratic Convention
Resolutions Committee Report
March 5, 2022**

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**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Condemns the Right-Wing, Dark Money-Funded, Republican Agenda to Dismantle Public Education,
Divert Public Education Funding to Private Education Management, and
Eliminate Critical Thinking and Evidence-based Curricula from America's Public Schools**

Whereas,

GOP leaders have for decades sought to dismantle public education by reducing public support to facilitate moving public funds from public to for-profit schools.

Rather than focusing explicitly on promoting privatization, the coordinated, right-wing, special-interest-bankrolled, decades-long effort has established such schemes as the annual "National School Choice Week" event and deployed "parent" groups such as "Moms for Liberty," "Parents Defending Education" and the "Independent Women's Forum" to make it appear that there is wide opposition to public school policies. Their current tactics are to attack public schools by opposing masking policies, remote learning, and evidence-based curricula; harassing school board members, administrators, and staff; and threatening to burn books. "School choice" is rooted in efforts to keep schools segregated by race, class, and disability.

Truthout wrote, "*Shock Doctrine* author Naomi Klein predicted in March 2020 that COVID-19 presented an ideal opportunity for 'disaster capitalism,' a tactic pushed by school privatizers in the wake of the last financial crisis. She identified the global pandemic as a 'shock,' or disruptive event that global elites often use to introduce free-market 'solutions' that redistribute wealth upwards." Vindicating Klein's prediction, since the pandemic, a Koch-funded group produced an "Opportunity on Crisis" report listing numerous school privatization schemes.

Education is a multibillion-dollar market, and the private sector is eager to get its hands on those dollars. Shrinking public education also furthers the overarching Republican Party goal of drastically reducing the public sector overall. Privatization also significantly undermines teacher unions, thereby reducing the voice and power of teachers to affect the terms and conditions of their workplace. Unions are also a strong and active part of the Democratic base and hobbling them hobbles their capacity to support Democrats.

Corporate-focused extreme-right Republican leaders want to censor, control, and narrow the exposure of most students to the broad knowledge base that would enable them to analyze, understand and accurately evaluate, and manage the forces that affect their lives. They want to consign the masses of America's children to for-profit, unregulated, unaccredited, tax-funded "schools," with large classes of inexperienced staff or digital platforms with no teachers at all, designed to supply a less-educated, malleable citizenry and subservient labor pool. Meanwhile, the children of the financial and corporate elite are to be taught a broad, rich curriculum in small classes led by experienced teachers in exclusive private schools.

Preparing people for democratic citizenship was a major reason for the creation of public schools. The Founding Fathers maintained that the success of American democracy would depend on the competency of its citizens and that preserving democracy would require an educated population that could understand political and social issues, participate wisely in civic life, and resist tyrants. Early leaders proposed the creation of a more formal and unified system of publicly funded schools.

Thomas Jefferson wrote: "*Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.*" Jefferson further explained: "*The object is to bring into action that mass of talents which lies buried in poverty in every country, for want of the means of development, and thus give activity to a mass of mind, which, in proportion to our population, shall be double or treble of what it is in most countries.*"

In the 1830s, Massachusetts legislator Horace Mann advocated for the creation of public schools that would be universally available to all children, free of charge, and funded by the state. He emphasized that a public investment in education would benefit the whole nation by preparing students to obtain jobs that will strengthen the nation's economic position and promote cohesion across social classes. Proponents later reasoned that public schools would not serve as a unifying force if private schools drew off substantial numbers of students, resources, and parental support from the most advantaged groups. To succeed, a system of common schooling would require children from all social classes, and educating children from different religious, and European ethnic backgrounds in the same schools would also help them learn to get along. Despite its founding ideals, throughout the historical development of early public

education, there was discrimination against access for girls, children of color, new immigrants, minority religious groups, children with disabilities and others. However, the founding rationale has guided the evolution of the public-school mission to promoting equity of access to all in the mid-20th century, addressing social needs after WW II and ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education in the 21st century.

The original reasons for public schools — preparing people for jobs and citizenship, unifying a diverse population, and promoting equity—remain relevant and urgent today. The Republican agenda to dismantle public education will reverse all of these.

Newly elected Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin is facilitating this ongoing right-wing scheme of school privatization and blocking of evidenced-based curricula with his executive orders allowing parents to opt out of mask mandates in Virginia schools, and ending "the use of divisive concepts, including critical race theory, in public education." Meanwhile, Virginia's Democratic legislators are introducing and protecting legislation that supports and promotes public schools with enriched and broad curricula to prepare students for citizenship and work in the 21st century.

Most American parents, students, and teachers do not agree with this privatization and curricula-limiting scheme, and many are standing up for schools that protect kids' health, teach the truth, and promote equality for all. Our democracy requires informed citizens. Public education enables its citizens to develop their full potential, which enables our democracy to flourish. It enables individuals to learn and grow and creates a successful and prosperous society.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention:

1. Calls on local, state, and federal officials, within the purview of their offices and roles, to:

a. Investigate, expose, and prosecute all individuals and groups who deploy intimidation tactics, threats of violence and violence against school board members, administrators, teachers, and others;

b. Initiate a public campaign, including forums, social and other media, etc., to highlight the historical compact establishing universal primary and secondary public education as a necessity to prepare an informed citizenry for their role in a democracy; illuminate the accomplishments of many decades of public education and the benefit to our country's democracy; and provide a platform for people, including doctors, scientists, business leaders, and religious leaders, to relate their stories of the public school teachers who were instrumental in their success;

c. Increase funding and support for public schools and educator, administrator, and staff compensation; and

d. Introduce legislation and support an enriched, broad, public-school curricula for all students in liberal arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and career and technical education.

2. Commends:

a. Those local Virginia jurisdiction supervisors, councilpersons, school officials and parents who are continuing to comply with CDC guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic; and

b. Officials at all levels, including democratically elected school boards, who implement and parents who support an enriched, broad, public-school curricula for all students in liberal arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and career and technical education.

3. Urges all other local Virginia jurisdiction supervisors, councilpersons, and school officials to comply with CDC guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Calls on grassroots activists and organizations to launch a campaign to expose the right-wing, special-interest-funded, Republican agenda to dismantle public education, divert public education tax dollars to private management of public schools, and to eliminate critical thinking and evidence-based curricula from America's public schools.

5. Calls on grassroots activists, organizations, community and faith groups, parents, and the public to support increased funding for public schools and educator, administrator, and staff compensation, and to support an enriched, broad, public-school curricula for all students in liberal arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and career and technical education.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Endorses Reexamining and Rebalancing the Allocation of
Taxpayer-Funded Services, Jobs, and Contracts Between the Public and Private Sectors**

Whereas,

Republican Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan initiated strategies to move many government activities from the public sector to the private sector to reduce regulations and, thereby, accountability, to weaken the power of labor in negotiations with both government and private employers, and to increase private-sector revenue. In his 1988 budget, Reagan proposed shifting some postal functions to private companies, outsourcing management of minimum-security prisons, selling off government loans, and even selling Amtrak.

These efforts have continued under Republican and Democratic administrations. Between 1987 and 2001, the number of inmates being held in private prisons increased from almost none to almost 125,000 and increased another 56% by 2013. Private contractors comprised approximately half of the U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan and Iraq during those military efforts in the 2000s. Many social services, including some education, health care, childcare, and unemployment, are largely outsourced through over 200,000 contracts to over 33,000 private U.S. businesses. While we look at the U.S. federal government as the country's largest employer, more than three times the number of direct federal employees work for private federal contractors.

This transfer of public funds delivering public goods into private for-profit hands has contributed to unprecedented inequality of the distribution of the fruits of labor, failure to meet the challenges of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, and high levels of social division. Traditionally, public funds support the provision of common goods such as access to roads and transportation infrastructure, utilities such as water and sewer, health and wellness resources, and other basic needs. Increasingly, federal, state, and local governments outsource these common goods to private contractors for the lowest cost possible. To ensure enough revenue to maintain a profit margin, these private contractors add the multiple unnecessary costs inherent in such profit-driven systems, often narrowing the scope and quality of services or charging user fees. Private health and wellness providers focus on servicing high-volume, high-wealth areas at the expense of less populous and poorer regions, providing care to those who are easy to access and can afford higher rates, leaving less fortunate communities without service. Toll roads provide easy access to high-quality infrastructure for those who can afford them, leaving others stalled on clogged, crumbling highways. Refusing to raise taxes on individuals with increasing wealth prevents governments' ability to provide basic common needs to the poorest communities, further widening the inequality gap.

The notion of the common good as the foundation of the American dream has been increasingly replaced by greed and the incentivization of corporate and personal wealth accumulation. It is past time to review and rebalance the allocation of taxpayer-funded services, jobs, and contracts between public and private entities.

The preamble to the Bill of Rights established that a key goal and requirement of we the people was to promote the general welfare. Americans pay taxes to provide for the general welfare and should receive such public services as reliable, affordable postal service to all parts of the country; quality affordable healthcare; an incarceration system that strives to rehabilitate offenders and reduce its overall population; excellent public primary, secondary schools and education, and post-secondary higher education for all members of the community, including affordable college and vocational education; safe transportation infrastructure that minimizes congestion and climate impacts; expanded public transportation; decent housing for all income levels; economical, reliable access to the Internet for all citizens; a retirement that assures a basic level of

comfort in old age; and a balance between employer power and fair compensation and treatment of employees. These goals are not being adequately met because of the government's increasing over-reliance on the private sector of our economy, whose profit maximization mission frequently conflicts with promoting the general welfare when delivering public goods and services.

Rebalancing the allocation of taxpayer-funded services, jobs, and contracts between the public and private sectors of the economy is essential. The growth in economic inequality has also been exacerbated by tax cuts and provisions that move the burden from those who have most benefited from the shift to reduced government services and regulations to those who have been negatively affected by that shift.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention endorses:

1. Replacing Postmaster Louis DeJoy, whose private-sector benefit-driven policies have severely damaged the quality of postal service; maintaining the Postal Service monopoly on first class mail; reintroducing postal banking and other services that private businesses generally fail to provide for rural and underserved urban areas;
2. Commending Rep. Gerry Connolly for cosponsoring and the US House of Representatives for passing H.R. 3076, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021-2022 that reverses pre-funding of the pensions and healthcare obligation; and Senator Tim Kaine for cosponsoring the Senate companion bill, S. 1720;
3. Passing S. 1720, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021-2022;
4. Moving to a not-for-profit, single-payer, universal healthcare system such as Medicare for All;
5. Phasing out the private prison industry and prisons located far from prisoners' homes, and repurposing rural prisons to rural community support centers, including improved health facilities and social services;
6. Providing educational public funding only for public schools;
7. Reducing traffic congestion not by relying on building private for-profit infrastructure such as toll roads but by:
 - a. Funding public transit improvements; and
 - b. Providing improved Internet access for remote work.
8. Increasing subsidies for climate-change mitigation and resiliency infrastructure;
9. Allowing and encouraging states and localities to build public telecommunications infrastructure where there is no or limited existing service;
10. Funding public community college and vocational higher education for in-state students instead of relying on subsidized loan programs;
11. Expanding Davis-Bacon-Act mandates for equivalent pay and benefits in existing and any future government contracts with the private sector;
12. Reviewing and initiating strategies to reverse current and eliminate future private-sector-outsourced government-supported activities;
13. Fully funding and expanding social security through measures such as increasing the maximum income for which Social Security payments are required (the Cap); and
14. Changing taxation policy to fund the previous endorsements by:
 - a. Closing major loopholes such as carried interest;
 - b. Expanding IRS audit capabilities and focusing them on wealthy taxpayers;
 - c. Eliminating the rate spread between labor and capital gains; and
 - d. Raising corporate tax rates (ideally in conjunction with other countries) and tax rates on wealthy taxpayers.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Calls on the Biden Administration to Stop the Trump Era Scheme
To Fully Privatize Medicare
By Transferring Traditional Medicare Enrollees to Wall Street-Managed Direct Contracting Entities
Without Beneficiaries' Consent or a Vote or Oversight of Congress**

Whereas,

A little-known Trump-era pilot program, Direct Contracting (DC), a scheme to funnel patients from publicly managed Traditional Medicare to a private model without the consent of seniors or people with disabilities or a vote or oversight of Congress, is being accelerated. The program must be stopped now to prevent the wholesale privatization of Traditional Medicare.

Traditional Medicare is a single-payer system, meaning that the government holds all the funds in a single pool (the Medicare Trust Fund) from which it pays medical practitioners for services rendered. The practitioner simply bills the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and is paid. This is the simplest and most efficient payment system for medical services. Currently, a majority of seniors choose Traditional Medicare over for-profit Medicare Advantage (MA).

Ten years ago, the Affordable Care Act created the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) under the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to develop and test innovative payment and service-delivery models to “reduce program expenditures...while preserving or enhancing the quality of care furnished to individuals.” To achieve this goal, the Center was given \$20 billion over 20 years to meet its mandate. During that time, the Center has launched 54 models, including Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs). The vast majority of the Innovation Center’s models have not saved money, with several on pace to lose billions of dollars. Similarly, the majority of models do not show significant improvements in quality.

Despite ACOs failing to achieve the goal for which they were created, with heavy lobbying from private industry in the waning months of the Trump administration, CMMI launched Direct Contracting, which inserts a fiscal intermediary, known as a Direct Contracting Entity (DCE) between CMS and the provider. DCEs were developed as the next generation of ACOs to “manage” the care of seniors and people with disabilities who chose Traditional Medicare over commercial insurers in Medicare Advantage. CMS is mining millions of claims utilization data to find any visits that a beneficiary has with a participating DCE provider. This becomes the basis for auto-enrollment into a DCE, without the beneficiary’s knowledge or consent.

Virtually any type of company can apply to be a DCE, including commercial insurers, entrepreneurs funded by venture capital, private equity firms, and for-profit dialysis chains. Applicants are simply approved by CMS without oversight from Congress. The DCE “pilot phase” included 53 DCEs in 38 states, potentially covering 30 million Traditional Medicare beneficiaries without their knowledge or consent.

Like Medicare Advantage (MA) plans, DCEs receive funds from CMS for its aligned population of beneficiaries to provide healthcare services. And just like MA plans, DCEs will distribute taxpayer dollars from Medicare to the private insurance companies, Wall Street startups and other for-profit interests. These fiscal middlemen add the multiple unnecessary costs inherent in such profit-driven systems: administration, marketing, lobbyists, competitive CEO salaries and bonuses, and ever-increasing investor profits.

Instead of paying doctors and hospitals directly for seniors’ care like the Traditional program, Medicare gives Direct Contracting Entities (DCEs) a monthly payment to cover a defined portion of each senior’s medical expenses. DCEs are then allowed to keep what they don’t pay for in health services, a dangerous financial incentive to restrict and ration seniors’ care. While Traditional Medicare spends 98 percent of its budget on patient care, DCEs have the potential to only spend 60 percent of tax dollars on patient care and keep up to 40 percent of revenues for their own profit and overhead.

A majority of the 53 DCEs operating today are investor-owned and controlled. Virginia has three DCEs operating now.

In the winter of 2021, after discovering that the secretive DCE pilot program was proceeding, physicians representing national single-payer and other advocacy groups met with CMMI Director Liz Fowler and asked why they were using ACOs as a model for DCEs when ACOs have not been shown to save money or significantly improve outcomes. Liz Fowler agreed with their assessment but has stated that CMS’s goal is to move 100% of traditional Medicare beneficiaries into some kind

of “accountable care relationship” by 2030. If this program isn’t stopped, it will finally achieve the full privatization of Medicare sought by private industry since its creation in 1965.

Years of evidence documented from commercial Medicare Advantage (MA) plans have demonstrated that inserting a profit-seeking middleman into Medicare ends up costing taxpayers more, with fewer choices and worse or no better outcomes for seniors. DC is MA on steroids, and Wall Street investors are already preparing for a windfall. For example, San Francisco-based Clover expects to harvest a direct-contracting bonanza large enough to justify its \$1.2 billion IPO. Harvard’s Donald Berwick, MD, who served as acting CMS administrator under President Obama, believes that “the Direct Contracting model seems to have ignored the lessons learned from the experience of MA.”

On January 5, 2022, more than 50 members of Congress, including Virginia Congressmen Connolly, Beyer, and Scott, signed a letter to HHS Secretary Javier Becerra calling for the elimination of DCEs, and for all beneficiaries to be returned to the traditional Medicare model by July 1, 2022. In January 2022, the Arizona Democratic Party unanimously ratified its resolution against DCEs entitled, *The Attempt to Fully Privatize Medicare Must be Stopped*.

At a February 2, 2022, hearing held by the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Growth, Sen. Elizabeth Warren joined physicians and dozens of her House Democratic colleagues in urging the Biden administration to immediately halt Medicare DC. She said, “It is completely baffling to me that the Biden administration wants to give the same bad actors in Medicare Advantage free rein in traditional Medicare...My view is that President Biden should not permit Medicare to be handed over to corporate profiteers...Doing so is going to increase costs and put more strain on the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund. The Biden administration should shut down the Direct Contracting model.”

Congressman Connolly has stated that he will “guard against misguided efforts to weaken, privatize, or overhaul our nation’s most successful health care programs in history, Medicare and Medicaid.”

Traditional Medicare has proven its value for more than half a century. Instead of selling it off to the highest bidder, it should be strengthened, and its benefits improved and expanded to cover every American. DC is a pilot program that can and should be ended now.

Therefore, be it Resolved that the Convention:

A. Calls on:

1. Health and Human Services (HHS) and CMS to permanently end Direct Contracting by July 1, 2022; and
2. Congress to:
 - a. Hold congressional hearings on Direct Contracting;
 - b. Introduce legislation to end Direct Contracting by July 1, 2022;
 - c. Introduce legislation to protect Medicare as a not-for-profit public good; and
 - d. Implement a trial of Single-Payer Not for Profit Healthcare.

B. Commends:

1. Virginia Congresspersons Gerry Connolly, Don Beyer, and Bobby Scott for adding their signatures to Rep. Pramila Jayapal’s January 5, 2022, letter to HHS Secretary Becerra and CMS Administrator Brooks-LaSure asking that they permanently end the DCE programs and coordinate the transition of traditional Medicare beneficiaries currently in these programs back into the traditional Medicare model by July 1, 2022; and
2. The Arizona Democratic Party for unanimously ratifying its resolution against DCEs entitled, *The Attempt to Fully Privatize Medicare Must be Stopped*.

C. Urges Virginia Congresspersons Gerry Connolly, Don Beyer, and Bobby Scott to:

1. Persist in meeting with HHS Secy. Becerra and CMS Administrator Brooks-LaSure to discuss how to stop the expansion of these Direct Contracting models and oversee the sunset of these programs;
2. Advocate vigorously and publicly to end DCEs and protect traditional Medicare; and
3. Urge their fellow Congresspersons to join in ending DCEs.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Urges Completion of a Two Decade Government Mission
To Offer All Americans Secure Lifetime Health Records**

Whereas,

Americans' health records are scattered, incomplete, and poorly organized. This requires us to reenter basic information every time we are treated by a different medical facility. It impacts our care because a new doctor or hospital may not have easy access to our current medications, our past lab and radiology results (x-rays, CT scans, MRIs), and insights into our previous treatment. Clinical trials are costly and inefficient because it is difficult to find patients with specific conditions to request their participation for clinical trials. It is hard to determine the results of different approaches to treatment because they are not easily compared across treated patients. Delays in moving significant symptom data to public health authorities have slowed the discovery and control of outbreaks of infectious diseases, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

These problems were targeted by the US and French governments in 2004. In the United States, President Bush "outlined a plan to ensure that most Americans have electronic health records within the next 10 years." France initiated a program to provide each French resident a "digital health record that ... allows you to share the [record] with the health professionals of your choice, who need the information for your care." This spring, after almost two decades, France will have 65 million secure health records for all its citizens who want one and the United States will have almost none.

Under President Obama, key legislation and implementing policies laid the groundwork for creating secure digital health records. The HITECH Act provided \$28B in subsidies for doctors and hospitals to move from paper to electronic health records (EHRs). While this effort was largely successful, the resulting electronic records were not easily exchanged among providers – an individual's data remained scattered. State and regional health information exchanges, also created with federal subsidies, met with limited success in moving data among providers and typically did not provide records to individuals. The bipartisan 21st Century Cures Act, passed at the end of the Obama administration, was designed to cure these problems.

The Cures Act finally assured individuals' access to their health information. Hospitals, doctors, and health information exchanges must allow individuals electronic access to their health records "with the goal of offering patients access to their electronic health information in a single, longitudinal format that is easy to understand, secure, and may be updated automatically." Unfortunately, the first Cures Act in 2016 left out important improvements.

Most health information exchanges still try to collect an individual's scattered records each time a health care provider asks for them. This doesn't create a lasting record, and doesn't support research (including clinical trials), public health, and social services. An exception is the Delaware Health Information Network, which both creates a permanent record and provides the same access to individuals as to providers.

Once there are standardized lifetime records held by health information exchanges under patient control, the costs associated with clinical trials can be substantially lowered, effective care practices can be more easily identified, public health information can be provided immediately, and individuals can be connected to social services and care management activities.

Because there are no shareable, lifetime health records, identifying appropriate participants for clinical trials for new drugs is a major part of the trial's cost. With health records stored in health information exchanges, individuals could be efficiently notified of new trials relevant to their conditions and respond electronically if they wished to participate.

Good, shareable data would also support other research activities, such as discovering the most effective treatment practices and hidden long-term drug effects not easily discoverable in clinical trials.

Better integration of comprehensive health records with public health activities could allow faster response to infectious disease outbreaks and identification of other public health needs.

Finally, comprehensive records under user control allows individuals to identify and integrate support from other agencies and nonprofit social services into their care.

The 2021 H.R. 6000 Cures Act 2.0 provides an opportunity to build upon the original Cures Act.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention:

1. Commends the Delaware Health Information Network for its unique development and maintenance of individual, secure health records for all state residents who want one in accordance with the 21st Century Cures Act;
2. Urges the Virginia General Assembly to authorize and fund a capability for Virginia residents equivalent to the Delaware Health Information Network;
3. Commends Reps. Connolly and Beyer for their support of the 21st Century Cures Act and sponsorship of the H.R. 6000 Cures Act 2.0;
4. Recommends amending H.R. 6000 to:
 - a. Directly support health information exchanges in implementing the patient-controlled, standard, secure, longitudinal records called for in the 21st Century Cures Act;
 - b. Request a study for redesign of the drug development process, leveraging the availability of shareable, secure lifetime health records; and
 - c. Evaluate the French My Health Space approach to providing not just lifetime health records, but other essential related health services for individuals, such as secure health messaging, certified applications for their individual conditions, and continuity of care support, including appointment management.
5. Recommends continued, targeted, federal support for the development of the standards and processes necessary to use these health records for treatment, public health and research and funding of any necessary infrastructure such as provider directories.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Condemns the Republican Party's Voter Subversion Efforts and
Urges Virginia's Democratic Congressional Delegation to Protect the Sanctity of Our Elections**

Whereas,

The promulgation of the Big Lie encourages Republicans with majorities in state legislatures to enact laws not only making it harder for traditionally Democratic communities to vote, but also to allow Republican officials control over the administration of elections and authority over final election results, and to convince impartial election officials to leave their posts for fear of making simple mistakes. Members of extremist groups are running for specific state and local offices that they perceive to have the power to influence election results.

In Georgia, S.B. 202, enacted in March 2021, enables the partisan State Election Board to remove local election officials with a simple majority vote. The Board is using this legislation to "investigate" and prospectively replace the entire Fulton County election board (which oversees elections in the Atlanta area) with the state board's own appointees. S.B. 202 also permits any registered voter in Georgia to challenge the eligibility of any other registered voter. In an effort to remove Democrats from voter rolls and to potentially disqualify legitimate votes cast by those voters, outside groups have used the law to challenge large numbers of Democratic voters.

In Arkansas, S.B. 644, enacted in April 2021, gives a special legislative committee the power to investigate election officials and refer them to the State Board of Elections and recommend specific actions for the board to take, including removal or censure, even for assisting a voter to properly cast their ballot. The board is then empowered to assume the responsibility of administering the county's elections for itself. Other laws enacted in 2021 in Arkansas removed certain administrative functions from locally elected clerks and gave those functions to county election boards, which are controlled by the majority party in the state. Similar measures have been attempted in other state legislatures. Fortunately, at the date of this convention, few have been passed and signed into law. However, efforts to pass such laws continue in many states.

In Texas, S.B. 1, enacted in September 2021, places significant constraints on election officials' abilities to minimize disruptions and voter harassment from authorized "watchers," and subjects officials to civil and criminal penalties should they be found to "prevent or obstruct from the performance of the watcher's duties." The law permits watchers to be close enough to "see and hear any election activity," which watchers could use to justify following voters or similar intimidation tactics. S.B. 1 also makes it a crime for early voting officials to solicit any individual to apply for an early voting ballot by mail. A similar provision in the law further makes it a crime (labeled "Vote Harvesting") to compensate someone or to receive compensation for encouraging eligible voters to vote by mail. Specifically, it is illegal under this law for a paid campaign representative or paid representative of any partisan organization to provide an application for a ballot by mail to any voter. Laws like Texas' S.B. 1 will have a substantial chilling effect on election officials and grassroots campaigns, further concentrating power in the hands of the anti-democratic loyalists.

Where anti-democratic forces are unable to achieve their goals directly through legislation, they turn to aggression and intimidation to force dedicated, impartial election officials to quit serving their communities, leaving vacancies to create administrative vacuums that prevent the work from being done, or to leave a vacancy available for anti-democratic loyalists to fill. A Brennan Center survey of election officials conducted in 2021 noted that one in three felt unsafe in their jobs and one in five were concerned about death threats. This has contributed to an exodus of election officials throughout the country.

Anti-democratic forces are taking advantage of these vacancies to infiltrate elections at the precinct level. A nationwide campaign to recruit Big Lie devotees to serve in administrative roles in upcoming elections has resulted in at least 8,500 new Republican precinct officers across 65 key counties in the U.S. In Pennsylvania, most local election administrators are nominally elected, but traditionally these positions go uncontested and

frequently have no candidates. However, there has been a surge of Republican candidates filling these positions after a recruiting campaign from the anti-democratic group “Audit the Vote PA.”

Republican candidates for statewide offices such as secretary of state are pledging loyalty to the anti-democratic Big Lie doctrine, promising to initiate investigations into election results, send alternative slates of presidential electors to Congress, promote “aggressive poll watching,” and refuse to certify elections when they disagree with the results. These candidates have formed the “Coalition of America First secretary of state candidates” trying to take over authority for election results in key states such as Nevada, Georgia, Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, with additional efforts in California and Colorado. These are not devoted public servants. They are insurgent extremists working to undermine democracy in the United States as part of the greater anti-democratic insurrection under way through state legislatures to eradicate impartial election administrators and install sympathetic hyper-partisans to run local elections.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention:

1. Condemns all efforts to undermine our democracy, and urges all Democratic elected officials to expose such efforts;
2. Urges the Virginia Democratic congressional delegation to introduce and advocate for legislation that prohibits partisan removal of nonpartisan election administrators at the state level, protects our trusted local election officials, and prohibits partisans from directly subverting election results;
3. Urges the 117th Congress to pass H.R. 350, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2021;
4. Urges the US Justice Department to aggressively investigate election subversion efforts, including threats made against election officials;
5. Urges the Democratic members of the Virginia General Assembly to identify and expose any subversion efforts from Republican state legislators or any members of the new governor’s administration;
6. Asks the media to aggressively investigate and expose Republican corruption, individual and party; and
7. Asks the DNC and all state and local Democratic parties to recruit, fund, train, and support Democratic candidates for election official positions.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Endorses Reforms to Preserve and Enhance Our Democracy**

Whereas,

The United States is the world's longest surviving democracy. Throughout its history, our country has faced numerous threats to the republic and its liberties and has met the moment on those occasions by making the changes necessary to persist. Today, again, we face substantial challenges and obstacles endangering liberty for all and must again be prepared to make the changes necessary to preserve and enhance democracy in America.

Redistricting. The purpose of redistricting every ten years is intended to ensure fair and equal representation for all people at every level of government. In most jurisdictions, redistricting is directly controlled by the very legislators elected to represent the affected districts. This leads to (1) incumbents manipulating district boundaries to virtually guarantee re-election and/or (2) majority parties manipulating district boundaries to virtually guarantee maintaining their majority in future elections, based on demographics. In jurisdictions that allow partisan lawmakers to draw partisan districts, elections are mostly futile, and voters' voices are ignored. Taking this power out of the hands of partisan legislators and establishing citizen-led nonpartisan redistricting commissions to draw district lines every ten years will yield fairer representative districts and restore electoral power to voters.

Campaign Finance. In the wake of the *Citizens United* ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010, political contributions from wealthy individuals and large corporations have skyrocketed. Super PACs take in millions from donors with minimal disclosure requirements and can spend directly on behalf of candidates, influencing voters through aggressive television and print advertising, micro-targeted social media content, and a large paid campaign staff. The ability of wealthy funders to finance entire campaigns through the undisclosed donor money of PACs allows them to wield a significant influence over their chosen candidates without voters knowing the candidates are beholden to those donors. While candidates and PACs are prohibited from intentionally accepting funds from and yielding influence to foreign actors, there are very few restrictions on domestic actors and no oversight or consideration of possible foreign interests in multinational corporate donations. Despite the current unfortunate reality of campaign contributions being considered a form of political speech protected under the First Amendment, enhanced disclosure requirements, stronger enforcement of the prohibition of cooperation between PACs and candidates, public funding and matching of small individual donations to campaigns to reduce the impact of large donors, and a general commitment to full transparency in campaign spending and receipts can help balance the asymmetry between large donors and the average voter.

The Filibuster. The Framers believed in majority rule. While drafting the Constitution, the Framers carefully carved out protections from the "tyranny of the majority" where they saw it necessary. They established the Senate to provide a legislative body with equal representation for all states regardless of population, they established the Electoral College to reduce the influence of more populous states in electing a president, they established the two-thirds provisions to override vetoes and convict on impeachments, and they established the three-fourths provision to amend the Constitution. Nowhere in the Constitution, however, did they establish a requirement beyond a simple majority to pass legislation either in the House or the Senate. The filibuster has become a tool of obstruction and stifles debate by requiring 60 senators to even begin discussion on a bill. The simplest reform would be to abolish the filibuster altogether. However, those interested in protecting the minority's ability to prolong debate should support replacing the current filibuster with a rule that 60 votes are only required to end ongoing debate on a bill and only a majority vote is required on all other motions.

The Supreme Court. Lifetime appointments ensure generations of partisan ideological rulings, creating a strong incentive for both parties to collect justices at all costs. In 2016, Senate Republicans refused to accept any appointment from President Obama to fill a vacancy that arose more than eight months before the 2016 presidential election. Just four years later, they scurried to fill another vacancy when such occurred less than two months before the 2020 presidential election, all to lock in their conservative majority for decades to come. The Constitution does not establish a set quantity of justices, and Congress has changed it several times since its inception. One option is to raise the number of justices to 13, equal to the current number of Federal Circuit Courts of Appeals, as proposed in H.R. 2584, the Judiciary Act of 2021. Another, H.R. 5140, the Supreme Court Term Limits and Regular Appointments Act, creates term limits for future justices and provides a fixed number of appointments per presidential term. Such reforms would reduce the perceived value of individual Court appointments and dramatically reduce the aggressive partisan struggle to control the ideology of the Court.

The Media. The digital age has ushered in an era of exploding disinformation. The abuse of media technologies has made everyone vulnerable to distortion and misinformation, from fake news and deepfakes to botnets and troll farms. Social media encourages users to limit the “news” they receive to that which reinforces their preconceptions and to share that information, false or not, through their networks. As sensationalized and fabricated headlines draw more attention than the ordinary daily news, the spread of such information grows exponentially to the extent that falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than the truth. Political operatives and bad actors take advantage of this bias toward misinformation to spread viral stories and rumors about candidates and elected officials, further stacking the deck against the truth and often inciting violence. Finally, mainstream media outlets are often forced to address such widespread falsehoods, giving them more legitimacy before the viewing public. Providing fact-check warnings on news stories; adjusting sharing algorithms to give preference to accurate news accounts and more reliable news sources; eliminating deliberate fabrications, particularly deepfakes and falsely attributed accounts; regulating the use of paid advertising in social media and other media platforms to limit the spread of misinformation; and regulating media to require news sources to be labeled may reduce the stranglehold of false information on the current media environment.

Benjamin Franklin famously told a group of citizens that the Founding Fathers had created “a republic, if you can keep it.” We are approaching a moment when all Americans will need to decide whether we will commit to the reforms necessary to keep our Republic.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention:

1. Endorses the establishment of independent, nonpartisan redistricting commissions and strict redistricting regulations in all states;
2. Urges the Virginia Democratic congressional delegation to attempt to pass any and all legislation that would reduce the influence of big money donors over elections and increase transparency over campaign financing such as:
 - a. The Campaign Finance provisions of H.R. 1, the For the People Act of 2021; and
 - b. S. 443, the DISCLOSE Act of 2021;
3. Commends Senate Democrats, including Virginia Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, for voting in favor of efforts to amend the filibuster rule;
4. Encourages Democratic legislators to mount a national campaign to inform voters of the progress halted by the Republican abuse of the filibuster and to increase voter demand for changes to the filibuster;
5. Urges the Virginia Democratic congressional delegation to introduce and champion:
 - a. Any and all legislation to restore the legitimacy and integrity of the Supreme Court such as:
 - i. H.R. 2584, the Judiciary Act of 2021; and
 - ii. H.R. 5140, the Supreme Court Term Limits and Regular Appointments Act;
 - b. A 21st Century Fairness Doctrine to restore and protect fairness and accuracy in journalism as a form of public trust;
 - c. Any and all legislation to require:
 - i. Including fact-check warnings on news stories;
 - ii. Adjusting social media algorithms to give preference to accurate news accounts and more reliable news sources;
 - iii. Eliminating deliberate fabrications (particularly deepfakes and falsely attributed accounts);
 - iv. Regulating the use of paid advertising in social media and other media platforms to limit the spread of misinformation; and
 - v. Regulating media to require news sources be labeled; and
6. Endorses the mission of the group Defenders of Democracy Against Disinformation “to identify, publicly call out, and reduce financial incentives to those sources -- media, public officials, or others -- who participate in disseminating lies and disinformation to the detriment of our national well-being” and urges elected officials, organizations and the public to establish similar objectives and develop strategies and programs to implement them.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Supports Reforming the Supreme Court to
Restore Balance and Equity to the Highest Court in the Land**

Whereas,

The Supreme Court has a far-right 6-3 majority because Senate Republicans and Donald Trump hijacked two Supreme Court seats to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, dismantle voting rights, reject common-sense vaccine mandates, and enact other far-right objectives.

In 2016, then-Majority Leader Mitch McConnell maintained that the Senate could not confirm a new justice in a presidential election year and denied President Obama's nominee, Merrick Garland, a hearing and a vote. In 2017, Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch to the Court, and the Republican-controlled Senate confirmed him. Three years later, just days before the end of the 2020 presidential election, Senate Republicans confirmed Amy Coney Barrett to the Court to fill the vacancy that arose with the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

In filling the vacancies with Justices Gorsuch and Barrett, Senate Republicans both set and broke their own Supreme Court confirmation precedents, defying long-standing democratic norms.

These two seats have given the Republicans a religious, far-right majority on the Court that will affect our country for decades to come. An illegitimate, far-right Court is a threat to affordable health care and protections for pre-existing conditions, reproductive freedom, LGBTQ+ rights, labor rights, voting rights, civil rights, clean air and water, and much more.

This 6-3 majority is crucially poised to continue the GOP's effort to unravel democracy. Prior to the Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* which gutted the bipartisan Voting Rights Act, enacting voter suppression laws like S.B. 202 in Georgia would not have been possible, and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act would not be necessary. A series of decisions by this right-wing Court on campaign finance and partisan gerrymandering necessitated the critical reforms contained in the For the People Act.

The Republican politicization of the Court cannot be allowed to go unanswered.

Examples of prospective reform options include H.R. 2584, the Judiciary Act of 2021 and the Senate Companion, S. 1141, introduced by Sen. Ed Markey, that would increase the size of the Supreme Court from nine to 13 justices. Additionally, H.R. 5140, the Supreme Court Term Limits and Regular Appointments Act of 2021, introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna, would "establish staggered, 18-year terms for Supreme Court Justices and limits the Senate's advice and consent authority in relation to the appointment of Justices."

Article III, Section 1, of the Constitution empowers Congress to set the size of the Supreme Court. Congress has modified the number of justices on the seven times in our history (each time through a bill titled "the Judiciary Act"), most often to reflect a change in the number of judicial circuits that form the basic organizational structure of the federal judiciary.

Congress last changed the size of the Supreme Court with the Judiciary Act of 1869, which set the number of justices at nine, in alignment with the number of circuits in the United States at that time, but since then the number of circuits has grown to 13 and the appeals filed before the Supreme Court have skyrocketed in both number and complexity. Like the rest of the federal government, the Supreme Court

must keep up with the growth of the nation and be constituted to carry out its critical mission efficiently, effectively, and fairly.

In an era in which our democratic institutions are under stress and regular Americans feel increasingly cut out of their own country's democratic processes, our nation's highest court must evolve to preserve its ability to efficiently administer justice and maintain the confidence of the American people as a balanced court dedicated to the rule of law.

Like its predecessors, the Judiciary Act of 2021 would bolster the Supreme Court's institutional ability to fulfill its role as an independent, coequal branch under the Constitution. Establishing term limits for Supreme Court Justices and reforming the process by which justices are nominated and confirmed (such as those proposed in H.R. 5140) could help ensure the Court is more responsive to the outcomes of federal elections over time; minimize chances of excess power being concentrated in a single Justice by virtue of longevity or health; and reduce arbitrariness and unpredictability in Court appointments.

More than 100 organizations, from civil rights and pro-democracy groups to climate and immigration advocates, support Supreme Court expansion, along with a wide range of elected officials, Supreme Court experts, and activists.

Constitutional law experts and professors have publicly advocated for expansion and/or reform of the Supreme Court.

Our nation's Founders understood that the way to deal with partisan efforts to steal Supreme Court seats was to address the problem directly to undo political norm-breaking. After Thomas Jefferson was elected President, the outgoing Congress eliminated a Supreme Court seat to try to prevent him from filling it. He responded by working with his new supporters in Congress to add that seat back as soon as he took office.

The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention firmly believes in the foresight of our Founding Fathers in creating a three-branch system, complete with checks and balances.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention:

1. Urges Congress to introduce and advocate for legislation that reforms the Supreme Court to restore the balance and equity necessary for it to fulfill its role as an independent, coequal branch under the Constitution; and
2. Commends Congressman Gerry Connolly for taking action to reform the Supreme Court by cosponsoring the Judiciary Act of 2021.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Urges the United States to Reduce Reliance on Use of Force, Nuclear Weapons, and Sanctions
And to Prioritize Diplomacy and International Cooperation
As Principal Foreign and National Security Policy Tools**

Whereas,

America's continued leadership in global affairs requires that we rebuild the multilateral frameworks and coalitions damaged under the Trump administration, develop new ones, and prioritize diplomacy and international cooperation as key policy tools to meet our international challenges, particularly where those global challenges affect humankind's common interests. The United States faces a wide range of global threats such as pandemics, militarism, nuclear weapons and their proliferation, and global warming. The current global COVID-19 pandemic has killed over 900,000 Americans as of February 2022 and led to the deepest global recession since the end of World War II. The 20-year US war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the forever war, cost taxpayers over \$8 trillion from 2001 to 2021, killed at least 1 million people, and created approximately 38 million refugees. Continuing regional conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have raised the specter of potential larger conflicts, including nuclear war. Global warming is increasing the intensity and frequency of natural disasters. These are devastating threats that require de-escalation of military and economic confrontations and increased international diplomacy and cooperation.

Although the US bilateral relationship with China today is more about strategic competition than cooperation, cooperation on big transnational issues such as pandemics like COVID, climate change, and other areas of human and scientific endeavor are mutually beneficial. *The Guardian* recently reported that China has reduced its air pollution by about 33% since 2013 and has pledged to adopt stricter policies that would allow the nation to reach its carbon emissions peak before 2030 and to become carbon-neutral by 2060. China has never threatened the US homeland and is one of our largest international trading partners. The dominant paradigm is competition, not conflict, and the US should prioritize economic engagement and cooperation with China to confront global threats and avert future conflict.

A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. According to several polls, large majorities of US voters would support a "No First Use" (NFU) policy committing to never initiate a nuclear conflict. A US NFU policy would reduce the risk of a nuclear war and contribute to global stability. We currently reserve the right to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, and our current Nuclear Command and Control System, designed during the cold war, does not require a rigorous evaluation and analysis but rather provides the President with the sole authority to authorize the use of nuclear weapons. Both conditions are dangerous and must be reformed to meet 21st-century realities. According to the Congressional Budget Office, we are currently on track to spend \$630 billion on our nuclear weapons complex through Fiscal Year 2030. The Biden Administration has pursued talks with the five declared nuclear-weapon states who have stated their commitment to meet their Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, including the Article VI obligation "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." Additionally, the Congressional Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Working Group has published a letter to President Biden co-signed by 51 Senators and Representatives urging the United States to take bold steps to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons, elevate arms control, and retire Trump's new, unnecessary nuclear weapons in the Administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).

Diplomacy and international cooperation are essential to mitigate the global climate crisis. Human-induced climate change has wrought extreme weather worldwide and raised global temperatures, causing rising sea levels and natural disasters such as hurricanes Ida (2021) and Laura (2020), and rampant western wildfires, droughts, and heatwaves, which in 2020-2021 cost more than 240 billion dollars and killed almost 1,000 Americans, according to NOAA. To avoid the worst consequences

of global warming, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requires the world to collectively reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The best way to achieve net-zero carbon emissions is to keep fossil fuels in the ground and accelerate a just transition to 100% renewable energy. President Biden has issued a clean energy executive order establishing governmentwide goals to achieve a carbon pollution-free electricity sector by 2035 and net-zero emissions by 2050. Rep. Gerry Connolly is a cosponsor of H.R. 4442, the Green New Deal for Public Schools Act of 2021, which will help achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The President's Executive Order and H.R. 4442 are positive steps towards mitigating the effects of global warming and are in keeping with our international commitments per the UNFCCC.

In April 2021, President Biden declared that it was time to end the forever war. Polls reveal that a 57% majority of all voting Americans and a 69% majority of American Democratic voters support shifting funding from military to domestic priorities. Yet, even after full withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the unaudited and bloated military budget is receiving additional funds from Congress that could be used for vitally needed domestic programs, such as healthcare, housing, education, infrastructure, and transitioning to carbon-free clean energy. The application of draconian sanctions as national security policy tools instead of prioritizing diplomacy is counterproductive. Sanctions cripple food and healthcare systems, inhibit trade, and cause humanitarian crises in many countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and Venezuela. In addition, ongoing wars, blockades, and military occupations against Yemen, Gaza, and the West Bank, conducted by our allies and partly funded by the US, have resulted in large-scale humanitarian crises. Major international and Israeli human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and B'Tselem, have noted that apartheid, defined by the UN as a "regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group," is practiced by Israel, is a crime against humanity per Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and has significant negative human and economic consequences. In addition to prioritizing diplomacy and reducing use of force and sanctions as our own national policy tools, we should urge our allies to implement similar principles and require adherence as a prerequisite for receiving US aid. Rep. Gerry Connolly recently joined 37 other members of Congress in a letter urging the administration to eliminate obstacles to humanitarian aid for Afghanistan. This is a positive step toward funding and supporting US and international agencies that promote international cooperation and development, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations (UN), and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), to help alleviate these global economic and humanitarian crises.

The economic and human costs of sanctions and military warfare are exorbitant, whereas diplomacy and international cooperation save lives and treasure. As President Biden stated in his February 2021 address to the State Department, "from the pandemic to the climate crisis to nuclear proliferation — [these challenges] will only be solved by nations working together and in common.... We must start with diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values: defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity."

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention urges our government officials to:

A. Implement policies, and introduce and pass legislation and resolutions that:

1. Reduce reliance on use of force and sanctions and refocus foreign and national security policy on global cooperation to tackle global and national security needs such as pandemics, militarism, nuclear weapons and their proliferation, and global warming;
2. Increase funding for diplomacy and international humanitarian assistance, and shift some funding from the military to diplomacy and international cooperation;
3. Re-engage in international cooperation to reduce threats posed by nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction;
4. Reduce reliance on nuclear weapons, elevate arms control, institute an NFU policy, and retire unnecessary nuclear weapons as part of the administration's Nuclear Posture Review;

5. Meet our past and current funding commitments to US and international agencies that facilitate international cooperation and development such as USAID, WHO, UN, and UNRWA;
6. Meet our international obligations to combat global warming; enhance sustainable energy generation; and reduce fossil fuel extraction and consumption -- all to achieve a carbon-pollution-free electricity sector by 2035 and net-zero emissions economy by no later than 2050;
7. End participation in and support of wars, occupations, blockades, and sanctions in such places as Afghanistan, Yemen, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea, Syria, Iraq, Gaza, and the West Bank, wasting US treasure and undermining US leadership and credibility; and
8. Oppose apartheid and become a signatory to the United Nations International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

B. Cosponsor and advocate for:

1. Rep. Gerry Connolly's H.R. 391, the Global Health Security Act of 2021, to create an Interagency Review Council to implement the Global Health Security Agenda, to address the global threat of pandemics and other infectious diseases;
2. Legislation supporting international human rights, including H.R. 2590, the Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act of 2021 and H.R. 1201, the International Human Rights Defense Act of 2021 cosponsored by Virginia Congresspersons Gerry Connolly, Don Beyer, Jennifer Wexton, Don McEachin, and Elaine Luria; and
3. H.R. 4420, the United States Commitment to Peacekeeping Act of 2021, to increase US support for UN peacekeeping efforts; and
4. Support and enact H.R. 4442, the Green New Deal for Public Schools Act of 2021, to help meet our global obligation to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

**The Virginia Eleventh Congressional District 2022 Democratic Convention
Endorses U.S. Support for Emergency Measures
To Advance a Global Vaccination Campaign against COVID-19**

Inequitable distribution and access to COVID-19 vaccines have compounded the pandemic and caused excess deaths as well as additional economic, social, and political disruption. Over 7.8 billion doses of vaccines have been administered as of November 27, 2021, yet less than one quarter of these doses were given in lower-middle-income or low-income countries, even though these countries are carrying a disproportionate burden of morbidity and mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies estimate that the mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic is over 6 times greater for developing countries than for high-income countries.

The omicron variant emerged in the last week of November 2021. Low vaccination coverage stemming from inequitable distribution has likely fueled the emergence of this variant, since it is well established that viruses have a greater likelihood of mutating in an environment where rates of vaccination are low.

The pandemic will not end until global vaccinations are available; therefore, it is crucial that we take all possible measures to ensure that vaccines are distributed equitably in all countries. Although high-income countries made significant commitments to deliver vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) initiative and others, these commitments have not yet materialized. COVAX is falling short of its forecasts for 2021, with only 537 million vaccines delivered of the 2 billion targeted.

Despite crucial steps that the Biden Administration has taken to ensure greater vaccine production, the current state of COVAX shows that we are still not doing enough. Even without boosters, reaching President Biden's goal of a 70% global vaccination rate by September 2022 would require 11 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses, many more than the United States and other wealthy countries have committed to donate in that time. Moreover, as of January 2022, the United States had only delivered 336.4 million of its promised 1.1 billion doses. Dramatically expanding global COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing is critical to meeting President Biden's goal for global vaccinations and to ending the global pandemic. These production targets will not be met if we rely solely on market forces and private, for-profit pharmaceutical companies, which have largely treated the pandemic as an opportunity for profiteering, when instead the crisis calls for global solidarity and the elevation of people and public health over profit and shareholder value. It is worth noting in this regard that US commitments on donations have been hampered by Pfizer's use of onerous contracts that inhibit receiving countries' ability to use the vaccines and has made some countries reluctant to even enter into an agreement.

In addition to stepping up the United States' own production, we must ensure that all countries have the right to produce their own vaccine supplies. This principle underpins the campaign launched by India and South Africa in 2020 to temporarily waive the World Health Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) intellectual property protection on COVID-19 vaccines. Title 28 U.S. Code Section 1498 already provides for the necessary U.S. legal authority, if invoked. Contrary to popular belief, over 100 manufacturers around the world – even in the so-called “developing countries” – have the technology and know-how to produce mRNA vaccines. The waiver would allow these manufacturers to freely collaborate and supply COVID-19 vaccines, as well as other treatments, tests, and medical tools. Doing so is essential in facilitating global access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatment, particularly for those living in the lowest income countries.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention:

A. Urges the Virginia congressional delegation to:

1. Cosponsor and advocate for the Nullifying Opportunities for Variants to Infect and Decimate (NOVID) Act (S. 1976 and HR 3778), which would dramatically expand the United States' international coronavirus prevention and vaccination efforts;
2. Support efforts of public-interest groups in their campaign to have the Biden administration invoke Section 1498 of the U.S. Code on all COVID-related technologies;

B. Calls on the Biden Administration to:

1. Invoke the Defense Production Act to mandate the transfer of mRNA vaccine technology to foreign countries given Pfizer and Moderna's refusal to act independently despite their reliance on years of publicly funded research, their use of billions of dollars in public funding through R&D and purchase contracts, and repeated requests by global health leaders and the Administration;
2. Immediately prioritize contracts for public, government-owned, and contractor-operated manufacturing models to drastically expand domestic COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, to ensure proper oversight and control over massive investments in the pandemic response, and to make vaccines available to low- and middle-income countries at reasonable prices.
3. Invoke Section 1498 of the U.S. Code on all COVID-related technologies;
4. Continue to apply all available levers of pressure on allies in Asia and Europe to support India and South Africa's proposal for a TRIPs Waiver.