

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF MARK EDELSON ON BEHALF OF HB 160 - ELECTION  
LAW – PARTY AND ELECTED PUBLIC OFFICES – PROHIBITION

My name is Mark Edelson and I am the Vice Chair of the Democratic State Central Committee for Legislative District 46. I am also a candidate for the House of Delegates – District 46.

A successful Democracy depends on access and power being diffused among the many, not clutched in the hands of the few. By way of background on the purpose of the Democratic State Central Committee (DSCC): it is to elevate younger, community driven, diverse political talent; and be the grassroots organizing and voter engagement arm of the Democratic Party; it is NOT simply to serve as club for insiders and their family members and cronies. When we allow elected officials to also serve on the DSCC we erode the very purpose of the committee itself, resulting in clear conflicts of interest b/c officeholders exert undue influence on vacancy appointment process and wield power to serve their own interests and those of their friends and family members rather than their constituents.

As someone that has served and continues to serve on DSCC, I have seen this process play out first-hand: it results in elected officials who don't actually do the work or grassroots organizing on the DSCC – rather they just hold onto their seat and wait for a vacancy to occur in the House or the Senate. Because they have the name recognition of already being an elected official their never get unseated on the DSCC and it prevents younger, newer, more diverse voices from getting elected. Then when a vacancy occurs, the elected officials use the disproportionate power that they hold in the vacancy process to ensure that their cronies get appointed to vacant seats, whether that individual has the right qualities or qualifications or not. Given the number of vacancies that occur, this is a substantial impediment to the healthy functioning of the party, the very purpose of the DSCC, and representative democracy itself.

As we have also seen recently that the only way to curb this rampant problem is via legislative action at the state level and I commend Delegate Boyce for sponsoring this legislation again and am honored to submit testimony on its behalf. I would also note that I am not running to retain my seat on the DSCC. We wouldn't let someone serve on city/county council at the same time as serving in general assembly – this should be no different.

Sincerely,



Mark Edelson