

Harvesting Ideas at 1420

By Michael Kelley

Santa Fe Democrats have a bumper crop of ideas for growing the party and continued success in local, state and federal elections.

There's no question that growth would come from bringing more young voters into the fold. Given youth's fading loyalty to political parties, that means issue-oriented recruitment efforts aimed at youth.

Focusing voter registration, canvassing and the like on the city's southside, with its comparatively low election participation rate, also would enhance prospects for growth.

And how about this: County Chair Henry Roybal wants us to find ways to make elections more fun.

We need to "celebrate elections, as opposed to just seeing them as a duty," Roybal said. "Participating in elections should be something exciting and not 'Oh crap, I've got to go vote again.'"

Roybal, also an advocate for getting more involved in local down-ballot races, delivered his remarks during an idea harvesting retreat among about 40 officers, ward leaders and committee members Aug. 26 at party headquarters. With participants divided randomly into six breakout groups at the beginning of the session, the format gave everybody an opportunity to speak on keys to success.

Reporting for her group, Phyllis Bustamante, who leads the party's Community Service Program, suggested more social events to enhance community building efforts. There also is a need to partner with other organizations and expand voter registration efforts. There should be more food drives, more clothing drives, more clean-up at local parks.

"And don't be afraid to point out the ills of the other party ... Don't be afraid to talk about it," she said, referring to the string of criminal indictments lodged against the GOP's current leader.

Reporting on issues that arose at his table, Craig Hammond, a member of the Platform Committee, stressed the need for gathering data to identify what's on people's minds, whether it's gun control, inflation, the job market or whatever. "And then understand, rather than guess, what people are interested in," he said.

There is no question that "elevating reproductive health issues would be a particularly critical (issue) for many different age groups," he said.

But there are plenty of other ways that Santa Fe Democrats can continue to play a critical role in the effort to turn ideas into action and keep New Mexico blue.

“We should develop different types of messages about what the party has done so far and what it plans to do in the future,” Hammond said.

“We kind of confronted our lack of knowledge about what the issues are for different groups,” he confessed.