

Celebrating the Life of Eric W. Russ

WHEREAS the Virginia Young Democrats, along with the broader Democratic community, have lost a cherished and steadfast leader with the passing of Eric W. Russ;

WHEREAS Eric W. Russ was a passionate and unyielding advocate for LGBTQ+ rights, public education, the arts and entertainment, and children living with cardiovascular disease;

WHEREAS Eric W. Russ served with distinction on the Executive Board of the Roanoke Young Democrats, dedicating his time, energy, and vision to the advancement of the organization and its values;

WHEREAS Eric W. Russ was a founding member of the Roanoke Common Sense organization, tirelessly working to promote rational discourse and progressive change in our community;

WHEREAS Eric W. Russ was a vocal proponent of providing safe, inclusive spaces for youth to gather, connect, and grow;

WHEREAS Eric W. Russ' unwavering enthusiasm, boundless energy, and commitment to creating a more just and equitable world left an unforgettable mark on all who were fortunate enough to know him;

WHEREAS Eric W. Russ leaves behind a lasting legacy of advocacy for marginalized communities, tireless dedication to progressive change, and an enduring impact on the Roanoke community and beyond;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats and the Roanoke Young Democrats, in recognition of Eric W. Russ' extraordinary contributions, do hereby honor his memory by:

1. Expressing our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and all who were impacted by his life and work;
2. Acknowledging and celebrating his contributions to the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights, public education, the arts, and support for children with cardiovascular disease;
3. Committing ourselves to continue his work of fostering inclusivity, justice, and equality for all, particularly the marginalized communities he so passionately supported;
4. Honoring his legacy by remaining steadfast in our dedication to the causes that mattered most to him, ensuring that his spirit of advocacy and compassion lives on in our efforts;
5. Continuing the annual Roanoke Young Democrat's "Young at Heart" fundraiser for children with cardiovascular disease in his honor, as a lasting reminder of his vision and commitment to a better world.

Celebrating the Life of Marquise Sterling Hunt

WHEREAS Marquise Sterling Hunt was born on July 24th, 1998 in the city of Chesapeake, Virginia;

WHEREAS Marquise Hunt relocated to the city of Portsmouth, Virginia, matriculating through Portsmouth Public Schools, and graduated from Churchland High School;

WHEREAS Marquise Hunt earned a Bachelor of Science as a double major from Tougaloo College;

WHEREAS, Marquise Hunt departed this life on January 16th, 2025;

WHEREAS Marquise Hunt was a tireless community leader and public advocate, who committed his life to serving the community through any means necessary, including partnering with organizations to motivate, engage, and encourage others;

WHEREAS Marquise Hunt pledged to eradicate injustice wherever it may have existed, and fought for the most marginalized of our society to not simply survive, but to thrive;

WHEREAS, Marquise Hunt served the Commonwealth of Virginia as a staffer in the Virginia General Assembly, blazing a path forward in continued public service;

WHEREAS Marquise Hunt's legacy spans beyond VAYD, and extends to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People both in Virginia and in Mississippi, The Emmett Till Legacy Foundation (of which he is a founder), his church family, and so many other organizations committed to ensuring a just society;

WHEREAS, His memory will be cherished by his parents, his siblings, and countless people across the country and the world; now, therefore, be it

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats formally notes and recognizes the tremendous loss to the world in the loss of our member, Marquise Sterling Hunt.

**Commending DPVA Chair Susan Swecker for a Decade of
Service to the Democratic Party of Virginia**

WHEREAS Susan Reid Swecker was elected as chair of the Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA) in March of 2015; and

WHEREAS Chairwoman Swecker was elected to a full term as chair in 2018 and reelected as chair of the Democratic Party in 2022; and

WHEREAS Chairwoman Swecker was the longest serving chair in the history of DPVA; and

WHEREAS Chairwoman Swecker stepped down from this position after being appointed to be a DNC at-large Member by the chair of the Democratic National Committee, Ken Martin; and

WHEREAS Chairwoman Swecker led DPVA through 2 Gubernatorial elections, 3 State Senate Campaigns, 3 Senatorial Elections, 3 Presidential elections, 4 House of Delegates elections, 5 Congressional elections, countless local elections, and even more special elections; and

WHEREAS under her leadership, Virginia Democrats won all electoral votes for Hillary Clinton in 2016, won all 3 statewide elections in 2017, flipped 3 Congressional Seats in 2018, to win the first Democratic Trifecta in Virginia in 2019, won electoral votes for President Joe Biden in 2020 & Vice President Kamala Harris in 2024, and returned majorities to the House of Delegates and State Senate in 2023; and

WHEREAS during her tenure, the party expanded from four full-time staff and an annual operating budget of under \$1 million to 15 unionized full-time staff members and a budget of over \$3 million; and

WHEREAS Chairwoman Swecker has been a great partner to the Virginia Young Democrats as chair and helped incorporate VAYD onto the State Central Committee, helping increase the total number of votes for on the State Central Committee;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats congratulate Chairwoman Susan Swecker on an amazing decade of service and hope to continue to work upon the foundation that she built in the Democratic Party of Virginia.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats implore their members to follow Susan's example in her dedication to the success of the Democratic Party in Virginia with the Democratic Party of Virginia and nationally with the Democratic National Committee.

Honoring Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton's Excellence in Public Service

WHEREAS the members of the Virginia Young Democrats wish to honor the exemplary public service of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton; and

WHEREAS Congresswoman Wexton has been an outstanding leader in Virginia, first as Loudoun's Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney, then as a State Senator, and as a U.S. Congresswoman since her historic victory in 2018; and

WHEREAS Congresswoman Wexton's advocacy for LGBTQIA+ civil rights, gun safety reform, and affordable healthcare has had far-reaching impacts on the lives of every Virginian; and

WHEREAS Congresswoman Wexton has served as an inspiring model for strong women acting on their policy convictions; and

WHEREAS Congresswoman Wexton's bravery and courageous disclosure of her Progressive Supranuclear Palsy diagnosis has served as a beacon of inspiration for everyone whose life has been touched by this disease;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats lauds the remarkable and dedicated service of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, expressing deep gratitude for her unwavering commitment to the people of the 10th Congressional District and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats applaud Congresswoman Wexton's instrumental role in advancing crucial legislation for LGBTQIA+ civil rights, commonsense gun safety reform, and accessible healthcare for all. Her dedication to these causes has not only improved the lives of Virginians but has set a standard for progressive and compassionate policymaking.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Virginia Young Democrats extends its heartfelt appreciation to Congresswoman Wexton for her courage in sharing her personal journey with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. By raising awareness and fostering understanding, she has become a symbol of resilience, offering hope and inspiration to those facing similar challenges.

Calling for the Release of Mahmoud Khalil and other Unjustly Detained Activists

WHEREAS the U.S. Constitution guarantees due process and equal protection under the law, yet the federal government, under an increasingly authoritarian administration, has engaged in the unlawful detention of Mahmoud Khalil and others for their political beliefs and activism;

And

WHEREAS the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has wrongfully detained Mahmoud Khalil and others in a clear violation of civil rights and liberties¹, disregarding legal norms and due process; and

WHEREAS the detention of Mahmoud Khalil and others represents a broader pattern of political suppression, disproportionately targeting pro-Palestinian activists and other dissenting voices in a manner inconsistent with democratic values; and

WHEREAS the Trump administration, through ICE and related agencies, has demonstrated a willingness to systematically engage in unjust detainments and deportations, often based on racial, religious, and political discrimination, setting a dangerous precedent for the erosion of civil liberties; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we call on the Virginia Young Democrats (VAYD) to formally demand that ICE and the federal government immediately release Mahmoud Khalil and others from their unlawful and politically motivated detention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VAYD and its members publicly affirm their support for progressive causes and opposition to authoritarian overreach, pledging to take further actions to resist unjust policies that target activists for their political beliefs.

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