

## **Meeting summary for MDP 2nd Congressional District Committee Monthly Meeting (03/15/2025)**

*(This summary was compiled using ZOOM AI support and is not intended to replace the official minutes of this meeting.)*

### **Quick recap**

The meeting covered a wide range of topics, including organizational matters, political strategies, and candidate recruitment. Discussions focused on improving engagement with young voters, addressing healthcare reform, and planning future events such as town halls and fundraisers. The participants emphasized the importance of teamwork, effective communication, and adapting to changing political landscapes to strengthen their party's position and better compete to defeat John Moolenaar in 2026.

### **Key Take Aways from this Meeting**

- John Helge 2<sup>nd</sup> CD Chairperson established a special search committee for identifying potential candidates to run against John Moolenaar in 2026. Ed Miller, Mark Yonkman, David Austin, and Deborah VanDyke were appointed to serve on the candidate search committee. They have been tasked to find an acceptable candidate no later than July 1, 2025.
- Michelle VanSlambrouck will be the new Chairperson of the Communication Committee and will update and maintain the Second Congressional District website and social media sites.
- County parties are urged to develop strong fundraising plans.
- Second Congressional District to organize support for candidates for all down ballot elected offices across the 19 counties.
- All county parties are challenged to schedule and hold empty chair town hall meetings in their respective counties.
  - County parties to identify 3-5 people to share personal stories about how the chaos and corruption in the current administration are causing them anxiety and stress at the empty chair town hall meetings.
  - County parties should plan to video the empty chair town hall meetings and post recordings to their social media sites and to John Moolenaar's office via email. .
- All attendees were asked to help publicize the Great Lakes Environmental Festival next Saturday March 22nd at Manistee High School.
- All attendees were encouraged to attend the empty chair town hall meeting in Greenville on Saturday March 29th at 1 PM.in the Greenville library.
- All attendees were encouraged to attend the Rural Summit in April in Sault Ste. Marie.

## **Opening Section of the Meeting**

John Helge, 2<sup>nd</sup> CD Chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed attendees, both in-person and on Zoom. He encouraged participants to stay muted unless they speak and to use the "Raise Hand" feature to be recognized. John shared a short video from the Lincoln Project and circulated a link to an on-line petition demanding that US Rep John Moolenaar hold in-person, public town hall meetings. He then led the Pledge of Allegiance and called on Ed Miller to read the indigenous land acknowledgment. The agenda was presented, and John invited additions or comments. Secretary Peggy Raddatz proceeded with a roll call of county parties and district committee members, noting the attendance from various counties and confirming a quorum.

## **Treasurer's Report**

In the meeting, John led the discussion, with Cathy Willermet expressing her excitement about her first day as 2nd CD Vice Chair. Dallas Dean provided a treasurer's report, highlighting the state account balance and the need for volunteers to help with the upcoming Texas Hold'em events. A volunteer signup sheet was passed around to group.

## **Party Standing Committee Reports**

The meeting involved discussions on various topics, including committee reports, bylaws approval, and resolutions. The Rules and Bylaws Committee was tasked with approving the bylaws, which were adopted as they were written. The Finance and Fundraising Committee discussed plans for a dinner to raise funds for the party. The Candidate Recruitment and Support Committee was also discussed, with plans to contact members for candidate recruitment. The Political Organizing Committee was mentioned, but no report was given. The Communications Committee was tasked with updating the party's website and social media presence. The Audit Committee did not have a report. The conversation ended with a discussion on what the party stands for, with a focus on social justice, economic justice, and environmental justice.

## **Featured Speaker on Upper Midwest Rural Political Shifts**

Mark Yonkman discussed the significant changes that have occurred in the past 25 years, particularly in the Upper Midwest and Yankee North. He noted that the region has become more liberal, with less homophobia and racism. Mark also mentioned that he wrote a book to address these changes and to provide a different perspective. He expressed concern about the lack of Democratic representation at a recent event, suggesting that this might be due to the changing nature of the conversation when Democrats are present. John also discussed the issue of student loans and the need for regulation in the loan program.

## **Improving Strategies for Second Congressional District**

The meeting focused on identifying successful strategies from the last election cycle and areas for improvement in the Second Congressional District. John led the discussion, encouraging participants to share their experiences. Key points included the importance of supporting county parties financially and with resources, collaborating across counties, engaging young voters, and building community around local party organizations. Participants highlighted the need to keep volunteers involved, improve communication with young adults, and continue fundraising efforts. The group also discussed the importance of being respectful and attentive to young people's ideas and engaging in community service activities to connect with voters.

## **Strategies for Political Victory and Challenges**

The group discussed strategies that worked well and areas for improvement in their political activities. They highlighted the success of writing letters to the editor and the importance of being visible in the community through events like pop-ups and parades. The participants identified several challenges, including difficulty engaging volunteers for door-to-door canvassing, potential issues with voter lists, and the need to better reach young voters. They also emphasized the importance of avoiding infighting among Democrats, improving their social media presence, and focusing on a clear strategy to defeat their political opponents.

## **Engaging Young Voters and Grassroots Fundraising**

The group discussed strategies to engage young people and improve local Democratic party effectiveness. They suggested providing childcare, transportation assistance, and making meetings accessible via Zoom. The importance of addressing issues relevant to younger demographics was emphasized. The discussion also covered fundraising challenges, with a focus on grassroots efforts rather than relying on corporate or state party donations. They stressed the need to change local mindsets by highlighting how Republican policies negatively impact communities, and the importance of engaging with local Republican elected representatives to voice constituent concerns.

## **Candidate Profile and Political Engagement**

In the meeting, John discussed the need for a change in approach and the importance of addressing certain issues. He also mentioned the need for a candidate who can effectively represent their party and engage with constituents. The team was tasked with building the perfect candidate profile. John also mentioned the need for a candidate who can handle the heat of political discussions and debates. John discussed the importance of teamwork and coalition building in political campaigns. He highlighted the need for a candidate who can build a team, coordinate efforts across different towns, and support other candidates. John also emphasized the need for a candidate who can communicate effectively, be honest and transparent, and be willing to learn and adapt. He criticized the current political climate in Washington and Lansing, stating that there is too much fighting and not enough progress. John also mentioned the need for a candidate who can connect with people on a personal level and be authentic.

## **Healthcare Reform and Political Candidate Search**

Mark Yonkman discussed the need for healthcare reform, emphasizing the importance of addressing the doctor shortage in rural areas. He proposed eliminating private for-profit insurance companies to increase doctor availability by removing them from working for private insurance companies. The team also discussed the establishment of a search committee to identify a suitable candidate for a political position. It was suggested to reach out to federal probationary workers as potential candidates. The team agreed on the need for a candidate with equity in the community and the importance of supporting the candidate with a strong team.

## **Empty Chair Town Hall Meetings**

The meeting included best practice plans for empty-chair town hall meetings and other events throughout the 19 counties of the 2nd CD. John suggests having 3-5 people prepared to share personal stories at these meetings and filming them to send to the Moolenaar's office. The group discusses the importance of having panels prepared to address different topics and including a Democrat US Representative or major Democratic politician to explain how to get politically engaged. They also plan to compile a list of people willing to share their stories prior to the event.

John announced upcoming events, including the Great Lakes Environmental Festival in Manistee on Saturday March 22nd at the Manistee High School and an empty chair town hall meeting in Greenville on Saturday March 29th at the Greenville library.