Greens spring forward in 2019 elections

Sixteen of 33 Greens elected in local Spring races

By Mike Feinstein, California

Greens are often known as “thinking globally and acting locally.” In Spring 2019, many Greens acted locally by running for municipal and county office, with almost half of them winning elections, including eight of nine incumbent Greens who ran for re-election in their local governments.

In Illinois, environmental scientist and Alderman Peter Schwartzman (Galesburg, population 31,000) was re-elected to his third consecutive term on the City Council. In Wisconsin, Barbara Dahlgren was re-elected to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress from Milwaukee County in a two round-run-off after the first round ended in a tie. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress is a statewide statutory advisory body to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin’s natural resources for present and future generations. Interviewed by Milwaukee's National Public Radio station on election night, Dahlgren said her campaign “really want to keep public spaces public and keep as much land open to the public as possible. The other thing is that I am still in favor now is science-based techniques to figure out how to manage the land and the resources.”

With an affordable housing crisis raging across the country, three Greens were elected to three Housing Authority seats, including incumbents Annie Chambers to the Baltimore Housing Authority in Maryland and Edward Tar Larner, to Concord Housing Authority in Massachusetts.

In Missouri, Ed Williamson was elected as a write-in candidate for the Board of Trustees, Health Board. An Associate Professor of Education at Drury University School of Education and Child Development, Williamson filed as a write-in after being approached by community members after no one filed for the seat.

In Los Angeles, eight out of 12 Green candidates for Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils were elected. Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles are advisory to the City Council on issues like development, homelessness and emergency preparedness, and are similar bodies to Advisory Neighborhood Councils in Washington, DC, and to Planning Groups in the City and the County of San Diego.

Since 2003, at least 47 Greens have won Neighborhood Council seats, with many others appointed to vacancies. Offices like these are especially important entry points for Greens in local government, in cities where city council and county supervisor districts are very large and populous.

In 2011, Peter Schwartzman was elected to his first four-year term on the Galesburg City Council—finishing first of three candidates and defeating a local favorite (retiree of the Fire Department). In 2015, Schwartzman had one challenger. This year he ran unopposed— and all in a city where all the rest of the city council seats are held by members that are generally political conservatives. Schwartzman knows I am liberal, honest, approachable, empathetic, visionary and hard working,” Schwartzman told Green Pages after his re-election. In his first term, Schwartzman convinced his city council colleagues to place a renewable energy aggregation option on the ballot. Passed by the residents, this has led to the City buying 100% renewable energy on behalf of its residents and municipal facilities, and already saving $5 million over six years. In his second term, Schwartzman led a successful effort for the City to take advantage of its new state renewable energy subsidy program to establish a large-scale solar array that will provide the City all the electricity necessary to send its aquifer water (from 30-miles away) to city residents. This energy has historically cost Galesburg approximately $400 million a year, but this solar shift is expected to conservatively save the City several million dollars over the next twenty-five years. Because of Schwartzman’s actions, there are additional plans to install two more large scale solar arrays to provide power to the City Government’s operations, and to local hospital, colleges and residents.

And what is the historical context for Galesburg, that they are accepting of his green ideas? “Galesburg has a long history,” explains Schwartzman. Located 30 miles east of the Mississippi River and 180 miles southwest of Chicago, Europeans moved into the area in 1830, and the nation was summarily removed after the Black Hawk War of 1832. Knox College began in 1837, almost a century before the city incorporated. Galesburg has a progressive history as it was a destination for former slaves (on an Underground Railroad pathway) and Galesburgers member of the American Civil War. Schwartzman told Green Pages after his re-election. In his first term, Schwartzman convinced his city council colleagues to place a renewable energy aggregation option on the ballot. Passed by the residents, this has led to the City buying 100% renewable energy on behalf of its residents and municipal facilities, and already saving $5 million over six years. In his second term, Schwartzman led a successful effort for the City to take advantage of its new state renewable energy subsidy program to establish a large-scale solar array that will provide the City all the electricity necessary to send its aquifer water (from 30-miles away) to city residents. This energy has historically cost Galesburg approximately $400 million a year, but this solar shift is expected to conservatively save the City several million dollars over the next twenty-five years. Because of Schwartzman’s actions, there are additional plans to install two more large scale solar arrays to provide power to the City Government’s operations, and to local hospital, colleges and residents.

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Better align private markets, merely increasing subsidies to private firms to build renewable energy systems, and endless scale emergency mobilization. The federal government transformed a quarter of US manufacturing capacity during the war in order to turn industry on a dime to build the “Arsenal of Democracy.” This time factors must be put into the hands of workers and communities, not into the hands of the global elite to maximize their profits. The Greens would fund the GND by diverting at least 50 percent of the military budget, as well as with health care savings from the elimination of fossil fuels, a progressive carbon tax, and other taxes on the super-rich as needed. The Greens would turn our current Offense Department into a true Defense Department, and transform the manufacture of weapons into Green production including wind turbines, solar panels and energy efficiency technology. A $250 billion military budget would still leave us the US as the world’s largest military spender. Eight of the 10 biggest military spenders are US allies. It is the poor—both at home and abroad—who are the principal victims of the climate change driven by the industrial polluter nations. As the leading historic polluter, the US has a moral obligation to redirect substantial funds to cut global warming and assist the poor in surviving it.

Greens are rightly encouraged by the outpouring of public support for a GND. Now the survival of the Earth may depend on having this policy implemented to its full scope and urgency. To do so, a Green political uprising is needed. As the Democratic establish-ment, with the help of corporate media, shows no interest in turning our current Offense Department into a true Defense Department, and transforming the manufacture of weapons into Green production including wind turbines, solar panels and energy efficiency technology. A $250 billion military budget would still leave us the US as the world’s largest military spender. Eight of the 10 biggest military spenders are US allies. It is the poor—both at home and abroad—who are the principal victims of the climate change driven by the industrial polluter nations. As the leading historic polluter, the US has a moral obligation to redirect substantial funds to cut global warming and assist the poor in surviving it.

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