

To: Members of the State Democratic Executive Committee and County Chairs

From: Current and Former Members of the Texas Democratic Party Staff

Date: December 8, 2020

Subject: Open Letter in Support of our Executive Director Manny Garcia and Deputy Executive Director Cliff Walker

To the Members of the SDEC and County Chairs,

The days and weeks following the election have been tough on all of us, for a number of reasons. Much like everyone else, we were disappointed in the election results of November 3. They were not what we had expected, nor were they what we had worked so hard to achieve. Though wins are the obvious metric of success in an election, we held our gains made in 2016 and 2018 and made significant progress in key areas. Our work helped advance the Democratic Party infrastructure in Texas, which future generations will build off of.

Every election, there is an introspective analysis done to understand what happened and how we can improve our methods. Though the election did not go in our favor, we were excited to share with the SDEC the other successes we had in all of our programs during the post-election meeting and discuss how we could build upon them to move our Party forward. Prior to that meeting, however, we were informed of a letter that Chairman Hinojosa received from a few SDEC members that had what were some valid criticisms and accountability measures. Chairman Hinojosa agreed, without contention, to many of those items. However, there were some claims that we, the undersigned, dispute. **Namely, we support and greatly appreciate the leadership of Manny Garcia and Cliff Walker, and disagree with the select SDEC members' narrow and one-sided depiction of the Texas Democratic Party's work in the 2020 election.**

In the letter and during the SDEC meeting on December 5, it was mentioned that some members of the SDEC spoke to current and former staff members of the Texas Democratic Party about office culture and how they were treated by certain staff members. All of the undersigned below stand in full solidarity with those who did not receive the proper support and treatment from their managers and were subjected to toxic work environments. **That is not how Texas Democratic Party staff should be treated, and we stand in full support of them.** As a result, those staff members successfully formed a union that established protective measures for some staff. Chair Hinojosa, Manny Garcia, and Cliff Walker supported the union and improved the HR process for all union members. The signers of this letter are neither members of the union, nor were we approached to join the union as it was being established.

That being said, theirs was not the experience of the majority of staff and does not speak to the office culture at the Texas Democratic Party as a whole. **No one in the undersigned group was contacted by the signers of the SDEC letter to speak about their experience or the culture at the Texas Democratic Party prior to the drafting of the letter.** The Texas Democratic Party is a place where staff are entrusted with running their programs and managing their teams in a way that is productive, innovative, and supportive. This culture began at the

very top, led by Manny Garcia and Cliff Walker, and extended all the way down to our paid intern program.

We were encouraged to be innovative in our strategies, and creative in our pursuits. Manny and Cliff pushed us to embrace the remote world we now live in and gave us the tools and the space to build our programs, evidenced by the successes we achieved throughout the election cycle:

- Supported 830 campaigns and 152 county parties with state-of-the-art data services, including detailed daily reports and continuously updating targets to enable unprecedented precision in voter contact;
- Hosted the largest virtual state Democratic Convention in the country using innovative online fundraising methods; reaching nearly one million impressions online and engaging over 11,000 delegates who participated in over 300 electronic elections for party positions from National Delegates to SDEC;
- Operated a massive voter protection program that included: a year-round Voter Assistance Hotline, providing voting information to tens of thousands of Texans across the state and assisted other state parties with their Hotline programs; recruiting hundreds of poll workers; and educating voters about their rights and providing Democratic stakeholders accurate, accessible voting information to share with their voters;
- Recruited an army of tens of thousands of dedicated volunteers that made 24 million calls and sent 38 million texts to Texans;
- Registered hundreds of thousands of Texans with innovative new programs in the face of COVID-19;
- Ran a training academy to build the bench of the next generation of campaign staffers in Texas, graduating 110 participants across 2 cohorts, including 71% of participants who identified as BIPOC and 61% who identified as female; provided robust online learning platform to over 7,000 users;
- Targeted more than 2.4 million Texas voters online, with an audience composed of at least 85% POC and 57% women;
- Built the first state party-owned model, which proved to be the most accurate partisanship model available in 2020, according to third party validation. We leveraged the insights of this model to optimize voter contact efficiency across Texas;
- Provided wrap-around services for campaigns and county parties, including one-on-one support, tactical training, and strategic advice on voter contact and fundraising;
- Ran digital programs that were nationally recognized for generating engaging content and for our success in raising over \$5 million in 2020;
- Earned over 58,000 press hits this cycle -- **more than double any other state party in the country** -- totalling over \$104 million in earned media; and
- Built a digital events production shop that raised over \$800,000 throughout the cycle.

There were so many more successes and programs that we ran as well. **We were able to do all of this because of the vision and leadership exhibited by Manny and Cliff and the trust they placed in us to redefine the role of State Parties in shaping the political narrative.**

Some members of the SDEC also expressed feeling misled by Party leadership about how the election was going to go. Election results are the easiest metric to point to, and in that regard, Texas performed the way the rest of the nation did, despite not receiving the same level of funding. We further narrowed the gap at the presidential level, held the line downballot, and made strategic gains in judicial and county races. Not every battleground state can say the same thing.

We believe it is important to consider not just the outcome, but the tremendous programmatic progress we achieved this cycle. Every election, turning Texas blue is considered a reach. Because of how much we believed in our voters, volunteers, and the infrastructure we were building, we knew we were a battleground state and it was time we were treated as such. As a result, local, state, and national organizations -- including the presidential campaign -- spent millions of dollars in Texas, an unprecedented level of investment. Republicans, caught by surprise seeing Texas' competitiveness, also diverted millions of dollars away from other states to defend themselves up and down the ballot. In the end, we were not alone; many other state legislatures that were Democratic targets also did not flip. After the election, the National Conference of State Legislatures [wrote that](#) "this was the first time since 1946 that so few state legislative chambers changed hands." Most Democrats in state legislatures across the country lost seats. Thanks to the tireless work of the Texas Democratic Party and allies, we held steady. Even going by the metrics, we finished 11,000 votes shy of flipping the Texas House out of more than 11 million votes cast.

We are proud of the work we did and the hours that we put in to carry out Manny and Cliff's vision. At the end of the day, while the election results were not what we wanted, we did what a state Democratic Party was supposed to do: we expanded our electorate through innovative methods; saw the highest increase in voter turnout since 1992; supported county parties and candidates with messaging and organizing resources, data, training, and volunteer recruitment; had conversations with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) voters who had never been contacted by a campaign before; and continued building the infrastructure that is needed for us to turn Texas blue in the coming years. All of this was achieved in the middle of a global pandemic without a statewide Democratic elected official to be the face of our Party.

During the SDEC meeting on December 5, staff twice expressed a willingness to speak to the Internal Review Committee that had been formed during the meeting, but did not receive a response. **We, the undersigned, therefore, are formally requesting to speak to the Internal Review Committee of the SDEC about our experience, observations, and answer any questions they may have about it. For any further follow-up on this request please contact Rose Clouston at Rose@txdemocrats.org.**

There are a lot of hard feelings and disappointments about the results of this election. We must be clear-headed and do an analysis of what went wrong, not only in Texas, but for down-ballot Democrats across the nation. Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa has already committed to doing this type of review. Any letter making demands based primarily on election results is short-sighted and will not solve the structural challenges Democrats face in Texas or across the nation. We

can solve these challenges, but only if we are able to work together. In no way, shape, or form should any one or two individuals be held solely responsible for the results. We must come together and look ahead if we are to turn Texas blue in 2022.

Signed,

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Rose Clouston

Voter Protection Director

Sheamanti Haque

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