

October 13, 2025

Evelyn Brady, Chair

Delaware Democratic Committee

Vis Email

RE: Jeff Balk

Dear Chairwoman Brady:

As leaders of the Sussex County Democratic Committee, we are writing to you in support of our subdivision chair Jeff Balk, and by reference other citizens who committed transgressions in their past, were convicted of crimes, served their entire sentences, and became a part of The American Dream-having a second chance in life in order to become contributing members of our society.

Criminal Justice reform is not only a current issue championed by many in our Party, it also is at the foundation of justice in America. In the late 18th century Western Europe still had a system where those convicted of crimes were executed or just locked away. In the early years of our republic, reformers sought another way. Religious leaders believed that convicted people should serve time *in penitence* for their transgressions- they were sent to *penitentiaries*. Later thinkers argued that these people needed to learn how to become productive members of our society, they fought for prison reform- *Reformatories*. This issue is still with us and, in recent years, our Party has advocated restoring full rights to those who have completed all conditions of their sentences. We are blessed with many productive citizens who had serious transgressions when young and became important contributors to our society- this includes members of Congress and even judges. If the convicted were to have their errors follow them the rest of their lives, it would be impossible for them to succeed. That is why so many believe in Second Chances.

We respect your position of state chair of our Party, and we respect your right to do what you believe is best for the Party. We also know that there is no basis for the Democratic Party to remove a subdivision chair who committed a crime before they sought Party office, let alone someone who committed that crime nearly four decades ago. Nor is there anything in the Party Rules, at any level, that requires a candidate for Party office to reveal past transgressions.

Our support for Jeff is not just because he represents the rejuvenated and united Sussex County Democratic Party, but also because Jeff Balk has been a model citizen since he moved to Delaware decades ago. Jeff has owned two successful businesses in Rehoboth and is the principal of Rehoboth Beach's public radio station. He is a model citizen and an example of what people who commit serious offenses in their earlier lives can achieve if they work hard and are given a fair shot by society.

More selfishly, we believe Jeff is a large part of the recent growth and electoral success of the Sussex Democratic Party. His leadership of the 14th Representative District sets the example of what can be achieved. His efforts and fundraising ability are a large part of our retaining the 14th RD State House District in 2024, and creating a coalition that enabled the flipping of the 20th RD House seat and the 6th District Senate seat in 2022, retaining all three seats in 2024, flipping the 3rd District County Council seat in 2024, and winning the 20th RD Special Election this year. Under Jeff's leadership we are well on our way to flipping additional seats in 2026 and beyond. We need Jeff.

We ask you to withdraw your demands for Jeff's resignation, and encourage those who are aligned with you to do the same. We look forward to working with you and the State Party to achieve victories in coming elections. However, though we respect your leadership, for all the reasons stated above, the leadership of the Sussex Party have no intention of abandoning our chair. Jeff Balk is a "second chance" success story and a positive example of what those who commit serious transgressions can achieve if given the opportunity and support.

Respectfully,

Loretta Benson, First Vice-Chair and RD 36 Chair

Tim Garrahan, Second Vice-Chair

Valencia Hayes, Treasurer

Harry Gold, Recording Secretary

Michael Weiss, Corresponding Secretary

Mitch Crane, Parliamentarian

Joe Sakaduski, At-Large

Dick Byrne, RD 14 Acting Chair

Sue Nyden, RD 20 Chair

Jane Hovington, RD 37 Chair

Margaret Reyes, RD 38 Chair

Hunter Hastings, RD 39 Chair

Chris Calio, RD 40 Chair

Brad Conner, RD 41 Chair