

When Terry Schooley announced she would not be running for re-election, Delaware Liberal bloggers speculated about who would run to replace her. I was humbled to be mentioned as a good progressive who could make a difference in the state legislature. I think there is a lot to be done there! However, I do not have such an inflated sense of self where I think it necessary that I be the one to do it. (Speaking of inflated egos, let's make the legislature a better place for whomever we send from the 23<sup>rd</sup> by electing Bryan Townsend in S.D. 11 and ousting the corrupt Tony DeLuca).

When I decided not to run for re-election for Newark City Council, I did so for a reason. My plan is to begin a Political Science PhD program in Fall 2013 (I will be applying this fall). This was not my intention when I first ran for city council. However, besides being rewarding in many ways, my time on city council was a transformative learning experience in the shortcomings of current policy making. I saw firsthand both the lack of genuine community engagement by our government and how decisions are influenced by who is and is not at the table (which mostly occurs based on their power/networks and not their legitimacy). And while I was able to see many progressive policies I put forward adopted, I was continuously frustrated with the lack of systemic change. It caused me to ponder how we can transform our communities into ones where deliberative democracy is the expectation. What causes citizens to genuinely engage versus remain distant? How can institutions (government, corporations, non-profits, etc.) be successfully encouraged to think more broadly about inclusion and their impact on society? How can we empower those whose voices have been muted and redirect those whose voices seek to corrupt? I believe that enhancing the civic capacity of underrepresented groups would lead to better policy outcomes and a more just society. I hope that delving deeply into these issues and questions will help me to become a more effective and focused advocate in making positive progressive change.

Because I hope to be going back to school in Fall 2013, I could not commit to a third two-year term on city council. I will also not be running for state representative. While the prospect of being a full-time advocate for our state and community as a state representative is intriguing, I believe the path I am purposefully taking will help me to be a stronger advocate down the line. Furthermore, there are good people who have stepped forward to run who I would be happy to send to Dover and call my representative. Multiple people running have directly impacted my activism through ally-work and have consistently supported progressive causes. It is a very unique feeling for me to be able to choose from candidates I like that share my values instead of having to choose the less worse of candidates I feel would not represent me well.

After conversations with candidates about their values and visions, I decided to help elect Claudia Bock as my representative. I will be managing her campaign and hopefully helping her to become the next state representative for the 23<sup>rd</sup> R.D.

Why Claudia Bock, you may ask? What is it about her political philosophy and leadership style that makes me tick? Below I put together my Top Ten Reasons to *Bock the Vote* in the 23<sup>rd</sup> R.D. Democratic Primary. Some may sound a bit cliché, but as it is the shoe fits. ;-)

10. I know Claudia is authentic and I can believe what she says. We need more sincerity in government.
9. We need more women, teachers, and common sense in the state legislature.
8. Claudia has a record of leadership experience and has life experiences that inform her progressive values. In no way does she let that preclude her from continuing to learn from or be inspired by others. She has competence and character, strength and humility.
7. Claudia will ensure the legislature is having necessary conversations that currently seem absent from legislative discourse (for example, expanding the Delaware Discrimination in Employment Act to protect against discrimination based on real or perceived gender identity or expression).
6. Claudia is running for the right reasons – to make a difference and work for the community.
5. Claudia is someone who actively listens and actually hears what people say. She will be a responsive representative and your conversations with her will in fact address what you say.
4. Process and good government are important to me; I know Claudia will not compromise her integrity or my values to make change happen. She will serve with moral leadership.
3. Claudia lives her values.
2. Social justice? Community empowerment? Education? Economics? I am confident Claudia shares my values.
1. Claudia will be an effective and tenacious advocate and leader on issues that matter to me and to the community.