

Elections

Connecticut's Young Democratic Delegates Weigh in on DNC

— Juliann Ventura, 8.22.2024



From left to right: Corey Frate, Grace Carlos, Jennifer Croughwell and Alan Cunningham. (Received from Jennifer Croughwell and Corey Frate).

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Corey Frate, one of Connecticut's young delegates at the 2024 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, did a complete 180 when he went to vote in the 2016 presidential election.

Frake, 27, comes from a long line of Republicans in the historically conservative town of Darien. He had registered as a Republican right out of

high school. But in 2016, he found himself questioning his place in the party.

“It made me question my space to belong in the party, a party that was rapidly losing sight of competency of government and espousing that they wanted to make it so that government wasn’t this oppressive force in our lives, but doubling and tripling down on zealous cultural issues, where government was apparently supposed to be so small you could drown in a bathtub, but big enough to be in every person’s bedroom in America,” Frate said. “I couldn’t stay with that party. I switched and I didn’t go unaffiliated. I switched right to Democrat, because I knew that was the party that was reflecting my values better.”

After facing some turmoil during the last few months as President Joe Biden stepped down and Vice President Kamala Harris took over as the presumptive nominee, the Democratic Party has boasted a message of unity at this year’s convention, which is themed “For the People, For the Future.”

Frater, a first-time attendee at the convention, said that “the energy in the room is unlike anything I’ve ever been part of in my life.” He added, anecdotally, that he spoke to some delegates who had been to the convention several times and who described the energy as being “on another level.”

The energy still appeared high as Sen. Chris Murphy took the stage at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago Wednesday night, touting a **message** focused on Harris’ commitment to border security.

“Kamala Harris knows that we can be a nation of proud immigrants and we can be a nation of strong immigration laws,” said Murphy, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and chairs its subcommittee on the Near East, South Asia, Central Asia and Counterterrorism.

Murphy used his time on stage to talk up a bipartisan border bill from earlier this year that was blocked on the Senate floor by Republicans. “I was the Democratic senator who negotiated that bill to secure the border with President Biden and Vice President Harris,” he said.

Murphy, who also chairs the Homeland Security Subcommittee on the Senate Appropriations Committee, stuck to the overall message of unity. “We do not have to choose between celebrating our heritage and enforcing our laws,” he said. “The beautiful thing about America is that we can be both.”

Jennifer Croughwell, 21, another young Democratic delegate from Connecticut, said that the message of unity resonated with her. She applauded former President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama for their speeches on Tuesday night.

“The entire list of speakers, they were all very much supporting unity, and I think that was such an important message to hit, especially during this primetime moment where we’re reaching a lot of Americans right now, not just at the DNC, but back at home, and we’re kind of meeting them where they’re at,” Croughwell said. “That was such an important message, because that’s kind of like the distinction, I would say, between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.”

State Representative Corey Paris, who is also serving as a young delegate for the state, agreed. “I think that we are coming out of this far more united and as disciplined and focused as any party in the political system should be,” he said.

Delegate Grace Carlos, 24, said that hearing from women who spoke about reproductive rights was a very powerful message for her since abortion is legal in Connecticut.

“Being in a state like Connecticut, where we do have those freedoms, I don’t always hear the stories of other people, because it doesn’t happen as often in Connecticut, which I’m grateful for,” Carlos said.

Carlos said that she got emotional when Biden spoke.

“Hearing from... President Joe Biden I got emotional because it was kind of like his farewell message to us, and it was just really special to me, and I was just filled with gratitude listening to him talk,” Carlos said, adding that when Biden stepped down and Harris became the presumptive candidate, the young democrats in the state heeded the call.

"It was always a great atmosphere as far as the young Democrats' side on my end," Carlos said. "We were hearing people's concerns, but we also had trust in our party and in our leadership and in President Biden, and we were confident that he would make the best choice for not just our party, but for everyone. So we were 100% supportive of what he was going to choose to do and we were very excited that Vice President Harris is going to be our new candidate."

Paris echoed Carlos and praised Biden's leadership even amid turmoil within the party during the last few months especially.

"I think the last few months were obviously very hard for us, but I think even the reason why we are the way that we are right now, in terms of being united and committed to winning this election, is because of the leadership of President Biden and his ability to be able to step in to not only say that he was putting his candidacy aside for the good of the nation, but also because he endorsed his sitting vice president and cleared the field for her to be able to have the coordination that she certainly does deserve as the next president of the United States."

Thursday is the fourth and final day of the convention with the theme being "For our Future." Vice President Harris is expected to accept the party's nomination Thursday evening.

Julian Ventura 

 juliann.ventura@ctexaminer.com