



**Democrats Abroad SA (DASA) Annual General Meeting  
Monday 11 March 2024  
7:00 PM (Zoom)**

**MINUTES**

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**Members in Attendance**

Liz O'Leary (Chair)  
Courtney Jeanpierre (Secretary)  
Tiffany Jackson-Zunker (Member at Large)  
Jonathan Ross  
Hana Ross  
Eve Thompson  
Jill Greenberg  
Khary Dickerson  
Clara Priester  
Leila Akahloun  
Jennie Tsekwa  
Barbara Ludman  
Ricardo Gressel  
Tanya Cruz Teller  
Tracy Whitfield  
Chris Whitfield  
Tiwana Merritt (\*Not reg member-yet)  
Brad Jackson  
Monique Griffith  
Michael Finley

**1. Attendance & Quorum (Courtney)**

Attendees exceeded quorum requirements of 15 members just past 7pm and the meeting began after a few minutes of informal discussion while attendance was recorded (Approx 7:16 pm). Courtney Jeanpierre recorded attendance.

**2. Welcome and Agenda (Liz)**

- a. Liz welcomed members, thanked them for attending and celebrated having exceeded the quorum.

- b. Liz reviewed the agenda and noted that informal conversation would follow closure of the AGM agenda for those who were able to say on.

- 1. Attendance & Quorum
- 2. Welcome and Agenda
- 3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
- 4. Chair's Report
- 5. Treasurer's Report
- 6. Other Business
- 7. Thanks and Closure

### **3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting (Courtney)**

- a. Courtney called for the approval of the Minutes from the 29 March 2023 AGM which were approved and seconded by Barbara Ludman and Christopher Whitfield. There were no objections.

### **4. Chair's Report**

- a. Liz shared screen with her slide presentation of the Chair's Report.
- b. *Prepared text of the report is attached below.*

### **5. Treasurer's Report (Tiffany – Member at Large)**

- a. Tiffany opened by mentioning the thanks being shared in the chat and thanked Liz for her work as the Chair.
- b. She noted that we are a small Exco and had made a decision to prioritise other aspects of our work rather than fundraising. She explained that funds were now being managed at the global level. Donations were welcome but would go through the website and Tiffany referred attendees to the QR code shared on screen and the link in the chat.
- c. She reported that the R1345 petty cash that had been received from previous year donations was used in administrative and event costs including yesterday's GPP & Family Day event.
- d. No funds have come into DASA during the year, and we have not had other expenses (\*other than what we as Exco/volunteers cover).
- e. We are volunteer driven and there will be upcoming events and costs, so donations and in-kind contributions are encouraged.

### **6. Other Business (Liz)**

- a. Liz thanked Tiffany and called for any other business to be raised.
- b. No other business was tabled.

### **7. Thanks and Closure (Liz)**

- a. Liz thanked everyone for attending and invited those available to stay online for informal discussion on voter outreach.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40pm.

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## **Informal discussion around voter outreach followed closure of the AGM for those who were able to stay on.**

Discussion touched on avenues to reach people and how to motivate them to vote.

- Click this link to confirm/update your membership – ensure you're a member of DASA
- How do we motivate people to vote
- How can people not realise the importance of voting right now?
- Need to look at younger people and language they'll respond to
- Asking Americans we meet if they vote – rather than going straight to asking if they're Democrats – if we're uncomfortable / unsure of their affiliation (sad that it's come to that level of division)
- We all have agency
- Voting is a privilege, responsibility, power – least we can do to make things better. Some of our parents/members previously didn't have voting rights
- AISJ
- Be creative on how we reach people and attract their attention
- Social Media – keep our eyes out for people who can assist us
- Let 1000 flowers bloom - try multiple routes and approaches
- People respond to those they know and trust (word of mouth, directly contacting friends and family, providing members with text/tools they can use)
- AmCham
- Could do a VFA nonpartisan event
- Go to the upcoming online US Consulate Open House on 19 March and share VFA/DASA
- Noted the energy yesterday when several of us were together. Energy is raised, people are interested in getting involved and volunteering when we gather – need to keep trying to get people together.

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## **Prepared Text of Chair's Report (From AGM Agenda) – E O'Leary**

When I was preparing the Chair's report for the previous 12 months I realised the significant amount of building, planning and preparation that has gone into it, at both local and global levels.

And particularly since Democrats Abroad is a volunteer-led, global organisation, I've honestly been astounded by the time, skills and work that so many people put into it. To our Exco, volunteers and all of you who have contributed in any way – let me start by saying THANK YOU!

As they say, we've been preparing for this moment. This may not be the inspiring, hope fuelled days of 2008 when DASA was first formed to support President Obama's election - and its slightly different than the rage and anger driven 2020 election but we are certainly once again approaching one of the most important elections of our lifetime – maybe the

most important in terms of securing our country's future! So - once again – we need all hands on deck and every vote!

Last March Courtney Jeanpierre and I were the only people to run for DASA's Executive Committee. And Tiffany joined the Exco from the beginning of July. We won't get into detail about Exco roles tonight and we'll just touch on volunteer roles but if you're interested in getting more involved please get in touch so we can discuss it further. The Exco is all volunteer and without paid staff the work falls on all of us. We need people with the time and interest in doing the work, especially during a Presidential election year but our terms will also end next March and we'd like to have people with some DASA experience who will run for Chair and all offices then.

I'll highlight some of the work we've been doing but will apologise as this is not overly exciting information - but being part of a global political party, and a newly reconstituted Country Committee requires quite a bit of training, long formal global meetings, regional meetings, DASA Exco meetings and considerable admin. This past year has seen a lot of meetings! And there is a lot to learn – just learning how to use NationBuilder for our website, membership database and mailing system is still a learning process after hours of training, quizzes and use! A lot of what we need to learn and do is simply time consuming.

That being said, let's move to highlights - I'd like to shine a light on some of the change that has taken place at the Global level in the past year or so because it is enabling us to be a more efficient and effective organisation and definitely benefitting smaller country committees like DASA.

The use of technology and online communications has changed rapidly since pre-COVID days – enabling countries to share with each other, for tools and resources to be developed by global and shared across countries - so we don't have to recreate the wheel, and for events to move from isolated in-person events in individual countries to the global online platform - open to all - has really created a dynamic, interesting organisation to be involved in. There is literally something of interest for everyone and something going on every day. I'll come back to some of that. I'd like to give a shoutout to the Global IT team, most of whom are women, who do incredible work basically 24/7. You'll have noticed a few months ago that the global website has also been revamped.

A new Global Executive team was elected last year. You can read more about them on the website. With new leadership always come change. From my perspective it's been positive change and we've been adapting as we go. I have great respect for our Global Chair, Martha McDevitt-Pugh.

Tiffany, our Member at Large will give our Financial Report since we don't currently have a Treasurer but I'd just like to point out that the Global Exco has done extensive work this past year to develop new banking and financial management systems and reviewing FEC (Federal Election Commission) Compliance to ensure we all operate within the guidelines. All DASA funds now run through the global accounts and donations go directly through our website.

South Africa and Kenya are the only official Country Committees on the continent. We've been involved in the Democrats Abroad Africa Committee (DAAC) which was formed after 2020 to develop engagement and represent voters on the continent, particularly in non-CC countries. DAAC was quite active in 2022 but less so recently – this is a common challenge with volunteer driven initiatives – we need people to put in the time and effort. Hopefully they'll be able to gear up ahead of November's elections.

I'll quickly mention our overall GOTV (Get Out the Vote) strategy and volunteer needs in just a minute but it really is motivating to work closely with so many Americans in SA and around the world who are all so committed to protecting our democracy, fighting to protect and expand our rights - and ensuring Americans living abroad are represented in both the Democratic National Committee as well as national and state government.

In terms of events – as you know we held our Global Presidential Primary (GPP) and Family Day in Joburg yesterday. We had about 30 people including friends and family members but only about 12 US voters, 9 who voted in person in the GPP.

We held a few online and in-person gatherings during the year but they have not been very well attended, - and we have yet to succeed in getting in-person activities going in Cape Town.

Lower participation seems to have been a global trend the past couple of years– likely linked to voter fatigue and all of us having busy schedules and too many online engagements - so for the most part we have referred people to global events. Among the most popular have been the Taxation Task Force webinars and some of the sessions hosted by the Reparations Task Team and Black Caucus. There are many excellent sessions offered by the Caucuses and this year we'll see quite a few events focused on State-specific topics and voter interest groups. We'll continue to highlight some in our newsletter each month but there are many - so we encourage you to sign up for the state teams and caucus newsletters and to keep checking the global events page on the website. This is where a lot of the advocacy work takes place.

Before we touch on plans for the coming months I'd like to mention that one of the projects we've been working on is to clean up and update our database. You'll have seen messages, emails and requests in our newsletters to update your details. We've also had Exco members and volunteers calling and contacting members and we'll continue to work on this. Databases are hard to keep updated and because DASA wasn't a formal country committee for several years, and then many left the country during COVID, it really needs some work.

I'd like to thank Tiffany, Tanya, Caroline, and Courtney for assisting with this but there's more to do. If you're willing to help please let me know.

So – let's talk briefly about 2024. We really hope we can create greater engagement this critical election year. We won't get into a detailed discussion on strategy and planning tonight but aim to start monthly sessions from April. We invite you to make voter outreach

part of your daily life and to host events online or in-person - as we work to draw potential voters in, develop our membership and ensure US Citizens in SA vote!

This is overall Democrats Abroad strategy for voter outreach – which we refer to as GOTV. We do this through volunteers, communications, Phonebanking and providing voter assistance.

As DASA we will focus on Mobilising existing members to be ready early and to help in voter outreach. We ALL need to work on finding new voters in SA and encouraging them to join DASA – because central communication is MUCH easier than keeping in touch with individuals. We'll focus on local voting information and will point those in need of state specific or more detailed assistance toward to the global state and voter assistance teams. Barbara Ludman will again serve as our voter assistance point person locally. I would also like to thank Barbara for her ongoing support and camaraderie!

I've written up and posted the first version of our Voting from South Africa guidance for 2024 on the website. We'll post the link here. The timeframes and steps related to South Africa are written out in detail in that document. You can of course request your overseas ballots (which should be done every year) on [Vote from Abroad.org](https://VoteFromAbroad.org) and find State-specific details there as well.

Most of you here have been active members and volunteers so you know the drill but we really do need to start building up as there's work to do in many areas. We've been calling for volunteers in our newsletters but not hearing much from new people. Unfortunately, many of our most active volunteers from the 2020 election cycle have left or are leaving South Africa. I've been reaching out to individual members again more in the past couple of months and we'll continue to do so.

We hope we'll be able to develop more engagement this year, being an election year.

And of course a final thank you to the Exco, our volunteers and all of you. Together we are Democrats Abroad South Africa, contributing to the global representation of Americans living abroad, and can really have an impact on this year's election.