



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on September 2, 2023

Democratic Party Reportedly in Shambles in Must-win Pennsylvania

Does the Biden camp have cause to worry about its performance in one of the most crucial states in the presidential race?

Democratic insiders are voicing concerns about the reliability of the state party amid accusations of poor financial management and issues with personnel.

As [Politico](#) reports, those who have their doubts about the state party leadership include elected officials, county chairs, state committee members, former state party employees, and even strategists.

One major cause of worry is a round of layoffs that took place in July but only recently became public.

“It’s concerning that the state party is laying people off as we’re heading into a really important Supreme Court race, which then leads into the presidential year,” Mike Mikus, a Pittsburgh-based Democratic consultant, told [Politico](#). “They’re going to have to figure out a path forward to build their own fundraising operation, and it sounds like there’s a lot of building to be done right now.”

Then there are the financial woes. Per recent campaign finance filings, one of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party’s political action committees had only \$7,500 in its bank account as of early June.

And it isn’t just state Democrats who are alarmed; the national party also has issues with the leadership of Pennsylvania Democratic Party Chairman Sharif Street, who also serves as a state senator.

As [Politico](#) notes:

The state party has also encountered disagreements with the Biden Victory Fund, a joint-fundraising committee between the Biden campaign, Democratic National Committee and state committees, as well as the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee over basic contracts that are essential to raise money and coordinate. In the end, those contracts were executed, but the process took too long in the estimation of national officials and left them frustrated.

As further evidence of the alleged disarray, the party printed out thousands of invites a week ago for a gathering of rural activists. The cards read “Vote at Polls: Election Day Tuesday November 8.”

The problem is that the election will actually be on November 7.

And on the invites for an upcoming major fundraising dinner this month, the QR code to purchase tickets was reportedly broken.

One state committee member, speaking on condition of anonymity, called the situation “amateur hour.”



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“Pennsylvania is the single biggest battleground state in the country in the presidential election, and we have a [totally] incompetent, lazy guy who has no clue what he’s doing running the state party,” said a top Democratic elected official in the state.

Even the Biden team is reportedly privately worried about the situation in the Keystone State.

The worry is understandable given what’s at stake. Pennsylvania has become one of the most watched states in presidential politics. The state, known for its high number of blue-collar workers, including miners, had a long history of voting for Democrats in presidential races.

Then in 2016, Republican Donald Trump — with his appeals to blue-collar workers, condemnation of the offshoring of American industry, and critique of globalist trade deals such as NAFTA — won Pennsylvania and other longtime blue states such as Wisconsin and Michigan.

But Biden brought Pennsylvania back into the Democrats’ corner in 2020, winning it by a slim 1.17 percent margin. Thus, both parties see Pennsylvania, with its 20 electoral votes, as a must-win on the path to 538.

For Biden, this could prove difficult if the state party doesn’t get its act together soon, with state primaries set to begin in a mere matter of months.

Moreover, the presidential race isn’t the only major contest in play. Next year will also see a Senate race in which Democratic incumbent Bob Casey, Jr. has announced his bid for reelection. And this year, there will be a race for the state Supreme Court.

The current 7-member court had a 5-2 advantage in favor of Democrats prior to the death of Justice Max Baer, a Democrat, on September 30 of last year. A Democratic win would return the state’s highest court to that status quo; a Republican win would close the gap and put the GOP only one seat away from reversing the ideological bent of the judicial branch.

Amid the criticism, party chairman Street has defended his record.

Per *Politico*:

[Street] acknowledged that it previously took too long for the state party to approve candidates’ mail pieces but said that the party had a “come-to-Jesus moment” last summer and [has] since reduced its turnaround time to under 24 hours. As for the cards with the incorrect date printed on them, he said they were not distributed to voters after Democrats noticed the error and that other cards with the accurate date were handed out at the event.

Street admitted that the state party has had disagreements with national Democratic officials and faced skepticism in general coming from Democrats in Washington, D.C. But he argued that was a byproduct of him taking a different approach to leading the party. As an example, Street said he has prioritized hiring organizers who are from Pennsylvania, which has led to clashes with some national Democrats.

The Democratic chairman further defended his track record by asserting that the state party was awarded a \$700,000 grant earlier this year by the democracyFIRST PAC, and has already received checks for significant amounts for the September fundraising dinner.

It remains to be seen whether Street’s assurances are sincere, or if the Democratic Party of Pennsylvania will crash and burn when rubber hits the road in the upcoming elections.



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