**Maplewood Statement**

The MDC believes that our role is to educate and inform voters and, most of all, provide them with a meaningful choice, not to make decisions for them. We are incredibly proud of the [ballot reform work](https://gothamist.com/news/local-nj-democrats-want-election-ballot-reform-party-bosses-are-skeptical) that we accomplished two years ago, which allowed for all local candidates, endorsed and unendorsed, to sit together on the the top of the ballot on the “county line.” Our reform even goes above and beyond the endorsement process in most counties, by allowing our committee members to endorse ALL candidates that they feel are qualified to represent the Democratic Party, not just their top choice. Since [our win with the County to make this change](https://villagegreennj.com/election/maplewood-democratic-committee-votes-to-reform-primary-ballot-process/), we have advised many Democratic municipal committees throughout the state about our work. One [Democratic municipal committee in South Jersey](https://docs.google.com/document/d/13bCjYZivyh_WLD9ROPOfs7LzHMMVxXU0hJIPVEuW0vk/edit) even copied the endorsement section of our bylaws for their own.

When we took on our ballot reform work, although it was only a few years ago, it was in a much less politically hospitable landscape than we have now with regard to “the line,” and we did this knowing that we faced considerable risk in terms of our standing and relationship within the Essex County Democratic Organization. We collaborated with Rutgers professor Julia Sass Rubin, expert witness for Kim v. Hanlon (the "line lawsuit"), and the author of many articles about the county line, including ["The Impact of New Jersey's County Line Primary Ballots On Election Outcomes, Politics, and Policy"](https://bloustein.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Rubin-2023-The-Impact-of-New-Jerseys-County-Line-Primary-Ballots-on-Election-Outcomes-Politics-and-Policy.pdf) who gave so much of her time and dedication to educate us about this issue--and whose research was indispensable in ridding our state of the county line. As she notes, "I worked closely with members of the Maplewood Democratic Municipal Committee to successfully abolish the county line for local races on the Maplewood primary ballot. This happened a few years ago, before this issue had gained prominence.They were real leaders and what they were able to achieve was incredible, especially in Essex County, where machine politics dominate and making even the smallest change is met with great resistance."

To this extent, while we know that candidates have the option to run on any slate that they want using the slogan of their choice, it is worth pointing out that any of the challengers for district leader could have come to the Maplewood Dems seeking our endorsement, and likely received it, even in districts with no vacancies.

For all offices higher than the Township Committee, the MDC does not endorse, preferring to use our platform and resources to provide information about all candidates who approach us, to help Democratic voters make an independent and informed choice on their primary ballots. For instance, we recently hosted [Senate candidate Dr. Patricia Campos-Medina](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9ej_DLnLcI) for an informational meeting that was open to all.

Our ballot reform work a few years ago is not the only time that we challenged the larger Democratic party. Just last year, we voted unanimously to pass a [resolution condemning the shameful Elections Transparency Act](https://maplewooddemocrats.org/news/b/statement-from-the-maplewood-dems-regarding-the-election-transparency-act). We are part of the Democratic Party, and not an activist organization, yet we felt that this was important enough for us to take a public position which was at odds with party leadership. And just a few months ago, prior to the “county line” being ruled unconstitutional, we passed [two resolutions](https://maplewooddemocrats.org/news/b/maplewood-democratic-committee--press-release) calling for office block ballots on all races on the Maplewood ballot, as well as a closed-vote Democratic convention in Essex County, a move which prompted our colleagues on the Montclair Democratic Committee to pass two such resolutions of their own.

Our work to bring democratic reform to Essex County and to the state continues. As mentioned in our joint statement with the South Orange Dems, we are partnering with other district leaders in South Orange, Montclair, West Orange and other towns to work toward getting a closed-vote convention in Essex County. This is no small task, and we are happy to tell you more about what our process is in greater detail, for anyone who would like to reach out. The district leaders working on this include, but certainly are not limited to, those who are being challenged: Richard Greenberg and Dean Dafis in District 7, and Gail Safian and Fred Profeta in District 8. When considering which candidates to select to vote for, we urge you to select the ones who are currently doing the work toward a more democratic and accountable Democratic Committee in Essex County, AND who have a demonstrated history of accomplishing these things. The Fair Ballot Dems’ support for office block ballots and a county convention with a closed vote process is exactly what the MDC has been pushing for for years, whether publicly or in our discussions with County leadership. We urge voters to look toward the slate that has truly been “[well ahead of the curve](https://villagegreennj.com/election/maplewood-dems-celebrate-rulings-that-throws-out-county-line/)” on the line, and has a demonstrated record of wins, along with tangible and dedicated plans for a more accountable and transparent State and County Party.