



**Smith Mountain Lake Democrats**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**SML Democrats Host Online Forum for Lt Governor Candidates**

Smith Mountain Lake Democrats hosted seven candidates running to be the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor of Virginia in an online forum on March 16, 2021. Each addressed how they would best support the Governor's agenda, specifically in regard to issues facing the citizens of SW Virginia.

"Hearing each candidate individually answer the same questions was an effective way to manage such a large field of excellent candidates. Through this forum, our members will be well-informed when choosing the way forward for Virginia," said Denise Tuttle, President of SML Democrats Club.

The candidates, Adrian McClelland, Sean Perryman, Paul Goldman, Sam Rasoul, Elizabeth Guzman, Mark Levine and Hala Ayala, all felt that assuring access to high speed, affordable internet service is one of the best ways to serve this area of the state. Though they expressed various ways to accomplish this, several supported treating Broadband providers as public utilities with the ability to issue bonds and reach other funding options as means to guarantee universal coverage.

Shoring up public education in rural areas by providing universal pre-K for three and four year olds, expanding the availability of technical and trade certification options in high school and increasing public funding to make Community College affordable to more students was high on the candidates' lists of priorities for this area.

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The candidates thought it important to support various clean energy options and initiatives, including tax credits for homeowners who install solar panels and the ability to sell back excess energy produced. Efforts to reduce ongoing and possible future adverse impacts of climate change in the region were of vital interest to all.

Justice reform, including changing the practice of requiring cash bonds, increasing the ability to expunge criminal records and outlawing private prisons, was a primary goal for each of the candidates. They put forth varied ideas on how to achieve these and other changes in criminal justice.

For more specific information on the candidates' campaign positions, check out their websites.

Early and absentee voting for the Virginia Democratic Primary begins on April 23 for the June 8, 2012, election.

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