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November 13, 2008

The Honorable Howard Dean  
Chairman  
Democratic National Committee  
430 S. Capitol Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

Re: 50-State Strategy Field Staff

Dear Governor Dean:

I am a new DNC member from Virginia and I recently learned that the DNC plans to terminate, on November 30th, the 50-State Strategy field staff assigned to state Democratic parties. I understand that the program was originally scheduled to be in place only through the end of November. The DNC, however, should continue the funding for those staff members at least through January 2009, when the program can be reviewed by the new DNC leadership. **Terminating the staff members now would lead to the loss of invaluable experience and contacts should the DNC wish to restart the program in the future.** Moreover, keeping these experienced staff people in place through the Presidential transition could assist President Elect Obama's administration in building on its campaign successes. In Virginia, of course, we need this field staff as we head into a critical governor's election in 2009.

I understand that funding issues exist, and that the DNC went into some debt in the fall campaign. Twice this week, however, I received emails seeking contributions to retire that debt, and sufficient funds surely can be raised. It seems odd to send out an email acknowledging that the DNC built a "successful 50-state field program," but, at the same time, abandon that program. (I did make a donation though.)

You, of course, are well aware of the successful efforts of the 50-State Program, including its field staff, over the past four years. That success has been recognized by the DNC (as recently as last week), by the Association of State Democratic Chairs (2007), and even in an academic publication (E. Kamark, "Assessing Howard Dean's 50 State Strategy," Forum: 4:3 (2006)).

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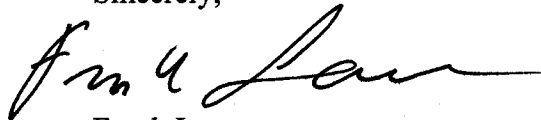
In Virginia, Democrats have seen extraordinary success over the past four years, including increasing the number of Democrats in the House of Delegates every year, winning control of the State Senate in 2007, electing Democratic United States Senators in 2006 and 2008, winning three new seats in the House of Representatives in 2008 (giving us a 6-5 Democratic majority in the House for the first time since the 1980s), and carrying Virginia for the Democratic Presidential nominee for the first time since 1964. There are many reasons for that success, but our four DNC-funded field staffers have played an important role.

In fact, these four young people, and their predecessors, have worked 24/7 and traveled to every corner of the Commonwealth; enhanced DNC and Democratic Party visibility; worked in local, state and federal campaigns; helped local committees organize, reorganize, and expand; conducted precinct operations training; coordinated regular telephone calls and meetings with local chairs; provided a liaison between local committee leaders and campaign staff; helped build the state party's technology and lists; provided technical assistance to local committees and candidates regarding use of State Party voter's list resources; recruited volunteers; registered voters; coordinated canvassing (including the neighbor-to-neighbor program); gathered intelligence and integrated local committees with State Party efforts; conducted outreach to party constituency groups and different communities, including ethnic, military, labor, faith and other groups; provided training and outreach regarding national convention and delegate selection issues; played a critical part in election protection efforts, including gathering information from local registrars; and also directly assisted the DNC when necessary.

I know that you know the importance of the 50-State field program. Not only has it helped build the Democratic Party and strengthened the Obama campaign, it has helped – and will continue to help – to bring the American people together by demonstrating that the Democratic Party, and President Obama, want to reach all Americans. Perhaps the new DNC leadership will make appropriate changes in the program. **But for now, the DNC should at least keep the current staff in place until final decisions are made next year.**

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Leone", written in a cursive style.

Frank Leone