

GPUS Accreditation Subcommittee Report

RE: Complaint Form: Appeal to GPUS for Intervention in Colorado

August 23, 2018

As an introduction to the findings of this subcommittee of the GPUS Accreditation Committee, we need to provide some history of our work. In June of 2017, a complaint was filed with the GPUS Accreditation Committee and we were charged with addressing it as it falls within our bylaws.

The original group of people who received and addressed the complaint in the summer of 2017 comprised the membership of the Accreditation Committee (AC). All were unfamiliar with the complainants, the Committee to Restore Green Values, (RGV) and most were unfamiliar with the officials of the Green Party of Colorado (GPCO, or Respondents). None of us had heard details (if anything) of this complaint or knew there was a split in the GPCO.

Each of us read the complaint and subsequent documents carefully. After much thought and deliberation, we recommended conflict resolution as a means of resolving the issue. At the time of the AC's Initial Report, July 14, 2017, the AC also agreed upon the subsequent steps, including a formal request for dispute resolution leading to a proposal for disaffiliation should problems escalate.

After we did this, officials of the Green Party of Colorado (GPCO) recruited multiple people from several states to join the AC, several of whom immediately (and sometimes repeatedly) posted criticism of the committee's decision. Some others concerned about the issue or in line with the Restore Green Values (RGV) group also joined. We felt it was important not to change the composition of the sub-committee working on this issue after the rejection of conflict resolution, especially given the extensive documentation from both sides of the conflict that each of us had to read and keep up with.

It should be made clear that the AC addresses functionality in terms of the state party – not personality. The AC is not the body that facilitates dispute resolution. Our task is to find facts and determine whether there are problems warranting certain actions. Resolution must take place inside a state party or caucus.

The following actions were taken by the AC and subsequently the AC Subcommittee:

- Accepting the Complaint
- Soliciting response from the GPCO
- Reviewing each
- Conference call with each party
- Conference call with subcommittee
- Work to organize and highlight documentation
- Findings to be presented to the entire AC

The AC's First Report and Response on July 14, 2017, listed several areas of concern.

Findings: Following the GPCO state meeting on August 12, 2017, and escalation of points of concern, the AC formally requested parties go through conflict resolution on August 31, 2017. Additionally, the committee had held a conference call to address the possibility of a lack of follow through and decision to recommend disaffiliation.

The findings of this subcommittee determined that some of the allegations in the complaint against officials of the GPCO did not rise to a level of seriousness to warrant GPUS intervention or consideration of the loss of accreditation (the term disaffiliation has also been used interchangeably) for the GPCO. However, there were 3 categories of concern that did rise to the level of consideration for disaffiliation with the GPUS:

These categories are: Bylaws violations, Communication control, and Revocation of memberships or participation.

To avoid consideration of disaffiliation with the GPUS, officials of the GPCO and members of the RGV were directed to go through conflict resolution. GPCO officials' refusal to participate in conflict resolution became a fourth concern.

Documentation, including the AC's initial report, AC's request for dispute resolution, and documents pertaining to GPCO bylaws, rules and complaints may be found here: [ACC Documents](#)

Folder #0 includes a chronology of events and actions leading up to August 12, 2017; and chronology of revocations of various chapters and members of GPCO

Folder #1 includes the original complaint and documentation of communications from the AC, Respondents (GPCO) and RGV.

Folder #2 includes copies of GPCO bylaws and allegations, documentation and communications involving the GPCO state meeting of August 12, 2017

Concern: Bylaws Violations:

- Decisions made during the year were not ratified at state meeting
- Chapter /member expulsions were done in violation of bylaws procedure
- Co-chair, acting as treasurer, failed to produce a treasurer's report at the state meeting
- Office of alternate delegates to be elected to the national committee were not announced before the state meeting
- Violations having to do with the revocations of chapters and members which occurred several months later

These bylaws violations run contrary to the key value of grassroots democracy. We work to create organizations that expand the process of participatory democracy by directly including citizens in decision-making.

Bylaws are a requirement for consideration for accreditation by the GPUS. They assure the GPUS that a state party has a basic set of rules in line with the 10 key values. Bylaws include provisions on how they can be changed. If these rules are not followed it is as if there are no bylaws, therefore, the state party is not fulfilling a requirement for accreditation and risks losing it.

Folder #3 includes documentation of the control of communications

Concern: Communication controls:

The GPCO consolidated control of the forum under one person's control, moving it from a platform that was administrated by several people to a group selected solely by one individual. Under the new system, members were censored from using the forum, some messages or portions of messages were removed, and at least one county chapter encountered great difficulty, or was unsuccessful, in having their rightfully elected state committee delegates subscribed.

Folder #4 includes documentation regarding the AC's request for GPCO/Respondents and RGV to engage in dispute resolution. Respondents' unwillingness to engage in dispute resolution became the AC's Fourth concern.

Concern: Refusal to Participate in Conflict Resolution (ordering here follows chronological order in which the request for dispute resolution occurred during the timeline of events)

During the conference call with representatives of the GPCO/Respondents in the summer of 2017, they expressed the willingness to mediate with members of the RGV in order to resolve their conflicts. As months passed, the GPCO refused to participate, citing a nonexistent bylaw structure to handle conflicts internally. As shown by the documentation, an internal vehicle to handle conflicts was not in place. Additionally, the subcommittee finds that an internal vehicle would have been irrelevant, as the GPCO has already voided the memberships of some of the RGV associated members and therefore voided their access to an internal conflict resolution vehicle.

Folder #5 includes documentation regarding revocations of membership or participation of several individuals. These were based on the fact that the individuals had complained about violations of bylaws and procedures; and when ignored, attempted to utilize an officially sanctioned avenue for resolving the concerns.

Concern: Revocations of Participation

The GPCO/Respondents dealt with the RGV complaint by revoking the rights of participation of RGV-associated GPCO members, stating that the reason for the revocations was because they filed a grievance. This is a violation of the key value of grassroots democracy. In a democracy, many ideas and stances are entertained and considered. The substance of the complaint is immaterial to this concern. We use 10 key values to guide our work. These values may inform our platform, but they do not completely eliminate differences. The value of respecting diversity refers to respecting a diversity of ethnic and class backgrounds and experiences, as well as the ideas associated with these experiences. The members who were ousted from participation in the GPCO were recognized GP candidates, they had served the party in leadership roles, and one was voted state party co-chair by fellow members. The revocations were clearly personal attacks in retaliation to their raising the points of concern regarding bylaws violations and exclusionary practices.

Escalation of actions by GPCO/Respondents have resulted in alienation of a significant group of experienced and active members, exclusion of members from state meetings, abusive control of access to the state website discussion boards, concentration of state offices in a small group, manipulation of locals allowed to vote, violation of the letter and spirit of state bylaws, silencing and purging of members, and refusal to participate in conflict resolution in good faith. The manner and scale are unprecedented in the history of the GPUS, and will result in further difficulties and embarrassment for the national party.

After careful consideration of the documentation received by this subcommittee and the continued actions of concern taken by the GPCO/Respondents, we recommend

disaffiliation of the GPCO with the GPUS until the remedies stated below, taken from our initially reported findings, are addressed. In this case, disaffiliation is taken to mean that the GPCO will not participate or be engaged with the national GPUS until good faith actions are taken to establish the remedies requested by the AC. The GPUS National

Committee may disaffiliate a state party if it has been shown to violate the 10 key values or does not maintain the requirements to be affiliated with the GPUS.

[see: <https://gpus.org/committees/accreditation/accreditation-committee-requirements/>]

- We recommend that the GPCO delegate the administration of the Forum to members in who would be agreeable to both the complainants and the respondents. If needed, management of the forum could be delegated to someone (up to three persons) outside the state party who would be able to maintain a position of neutrality.
- We recommend future elections that preclude the possibility of top party offices being held by the same person, with full disclosure of positions open for election.
- Since members of both parties had at one time expressed the willingness to enter into conflict resolution, we recommend that the complainants and the respondents or their representatives use the tools of the national party and work with the Dispute Resolution Committee to develop a mutually respectful working relationship.
- We recommend that GPCO work fairly, in good faith, to re-instate members and chapters whose membership and participation were revoked during the previous year.
- We recommend that one or more outside observers be allowed to attend /observe upcoming GPCO Membership Meetings and operations, and report back to the Accreditation Committee as to how the use of the state bylaws and ten key values are handled, as well as the level of discourse.

Respectfully submitted,

Members of the AC Subcommittee

Joy Davis, Holly Hart, Rita Maniotis, Dee Taylor, Cyndi Norwitz, Paul Loney, John Porter, Jeff Sutter, Tamar Yager