



## Where We Are

The Young Democrats of Arkansas are an impressive organization. Our current status is strong, and the potential for growth is evident. Our time is now.

### 2022 Election

Arkansas Democrats had a challenging election cycle last year, but **thanks to Young Democrats, there were bright spots in 2022**. Earle, Arkansas elected the youngest Black mayor in the country, Jaylen Smith. Michael Ankton, a student at Henderson State University, was elected Justice of the Peace in Clark County. In the same county another democratic JP was elected by five votes, and he credits a local Young Dems chapter's voter registration efforts as the reason he won. When my own campaign needed experienced canvassers, Young Dems came through the week before Election Day. Young Democrats showed up all over Arkansas to put in work that made electoral differences for our state.

### Membership

YDAR's 26+ chapters have varying levels of engagement and participation on their campuses and in their counties. The needs in each chapter are different based on region of the state, demographic makeup, and age of membership. In every chapter there is a need for **connecting current and potential members to the greater work happening in Arkansas Democratic politics**. At this time, our presence is concentrated in Central and Northwest Arkansas, and the whole state needs a YDAR presence at every level.

### Endless Potential

The **Young Democrats of Arkansas are a force** for the change our state needs. We are the largest youth political organization in Arkansas. High school students, college students, young professionals, and other Young Democrats make up a volunteer base and voting bloc with perhaps the greatest potential to significantly change the political landscape of our state. At a time when **there has never been more work to be done** to rebuild the Democratic Party of Arkansas, the Young Democrats are the difference between where we are and where we need to be.

## Where We're Going

My goals for improving YDAR fall into four main categories: Sustainability, Expansion, Experience, and Communication.

### Sustainability

Arkansas has decades of work ahead of us to see the kind of change we need in politics. The Young Democrats have a place in that work, but only if we create an organization that **prevents burnout** and keeps the long game in mind. This means creating a culture in which mental health is prioritized and no one feels alone in this collective work. Our work must be sustainable if it is to be effective.

### Expansion

A good strategy for **chartering new chapters** listens to diverse perspectives from across the state. If we want to have a presence in every part of Arkansas (and I hope we do) we have to be listening to people from all over Arkansas when they tell us what matters to them. We know our issues resonate, we just have to contextualize the message. A high school in the Delta does not have the same needs as a college in Northwest Arkansas or a group of young professionals in Mountain Home. They all need access to a YDAR chapter. The only way to achieve this is to listen to young democrats of all identities, from every level of the organization, and in as many counties as possible across Arkansas. We should start with listening, and move accordingly.

When it comes to **expanding the membership rosters of existing chapters**, no one should ever feel alone. That's why we need to provide chapters with programming resources and offer ideas to chapter leadership that fits their needs. The new appointed position of Membership Director will work to assist in this way, along with the Chair of High Schools, Chair of Colleges, and Chair of Young Professionals to remain engaged in their respective chapters.

Expansion requires strategic fundraising. Money isn't everything, but it gives us the opportunity to put our message in new places, **invest in young democrats** on the ballot, and dream big while our organization grows. If elected, I plan to revitalize former YDAR fundraising traditions while adding new plans for sustaining us financially. With a long-term vision, I will set up the organization for continued financial growth long after I leave. At the same time, individual chapters should feel empowered to fundraise toward their unique needs, and they will never be alone in that endeavor.

### Experience

The Young Democrat's experience should connect the individual to something greater than themselves. We do that by ensuring that when someone becomes involved in YDAR, they know how to participate and feel as though they belong. Further, they should be able to see how their chapter fits into the greater statewide vision of YDAR's infrastructure. Beyond that, we should be showing them how YDAR is an integral part of the vision for a better Arkansas. This experience of being connected not only keeps people engaged, **it fosters hope**, which is an essential component of social change.

### Communication

Internal communications among leaders and members of YDAR must be clear, consistent, and serve to drive us toward the goals of expanding our organization. The connectedness that will define the experience of being a Young Democrat is only as strong as the effectiveness of our communication with one another. In practical terms, this means timely notices about meetings and events, clear expectations, and following up when something needs to be addressed.

External communication is a strength of YDAR, and it will be an asset to our growth as an organization. We should be thinking outside of our usual means of reaching new audiences, and looking into specific media that reach areas where we are currently underrepresented. This will look different for colleges, high schools, and other young democrats, and each region of the state will have different opportunities. This is another place where we must bring new ideas to the table and engage folks from all as many intersections of identity and experiences as possible.

It is my personal belief that **communication will save us when other aspects are uncertain**. It's not everything, but it's a vital component of effective organizing.

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*After speaking with several Young Democrats about what they want to see from YDAR, these are the priorities that emerged. It will always be important to remain dynamic in how we're creating a better Arkansas— always changing, engaging new ideas, hearing new perspectives.*

*That starts now; I want to hear from you. If you have input, feedback, or ideas that came from reading this platform, do not hesitate to share them with me. If I missed something, I want you to tell me. I hope to have the honor to serve as YDAR President and help this organization move toward its fullest potential.*

*With Hope and Determination,  
AGS*