



Your Vote Needed: Mount Vernon Group Elections in January

Members of the Mount Vernon Group (residents of Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church, eastern Fairfax County and eastern Prince William County) are eligible to vote in the annual election to select members of the group's Executive Committee.

This year we have five candidates for four open positions. After reading the candidate statements below, please use our [online ballot](#) to cast your vote.

If you would like to receive a ballot by U.S. mail, contact Bruce Parker at 827 Fontaine St., Alexandria, VA 22302-3610, 703-549-5792, bruce@chesdata.com.

The deadline for voting is January 8, 2016.

[Jenny Abel](#) | [Will Driscoll](#) | [Rick Keller](#) | [Pat Soriano](#) | [Rob Swennes](#)

Jenny Abel:

I have served on the Mount Vernon Group Executive Committee since 2006, where I currently act as the Group's treasurer and environmental education chair. I am particularly interested in local food issues, energy conservation, and educating future generations about environmental concerns. During my next term on the ExCom I am committed to working with my fellow members on projects focused on slowing the effects of climate change and getting companies like Dominion to invest more in renewable energy. I embrace the Sierra Club's model of getting members involved as volunteer activists on local, state, and national issues and welcome the opportunity to continue to serve the Club as an ExCom member.

Will Driscoll:

I ask for your vote as a lifelong environmentalist and Sierra Club member since 1996, focused on climate protection and member engagement.

Some of you may know me from the Virginia Sierra Club annual gatherings, where I have led a workshop on engaging Sierra members. To win on our issues, we need to enable our members to become involved in ways that suit them. Too often members seek to participate, only to be rebuffed by "leaders" who convey that "there is no room at the inn." Sierra national executive Dan Chu explains that some retired people see Sierra Club work as their role in life and don't want competition. I have brought together Sierra members in my zip code, found substantial untapped interest, and helped guide members to useful roles. If elected, I will continue this work.

I have also participated in state Sierra ExCom meetings, securing authority for local Sierra groups to promote solar bulk purchases.

Locally, I have attended a group ExCom meeting and learned of the many calls received from members looking to launch new initiatives.

Recently, I completed training to lead local Sierra outings, and plan to lead flatwater outings on the Potomac around Roosevelt Island.

Rick Keller:

I have been a Sierra Club member for over 30 years and active in the Mount Vernon Group since 2006. I currently serve as the Group Chair and am involved in transportation initiatives and serve on the Virginia Chapter's Legislative Committee. As Chair my role has also been to consolidate requests coming to our local Group from the state Chapter, national Club, and environmental partners and help coordinate Club activities to respond to those requests. In becoming more involved in the local and state Sierra Club activities I found that I was provided with a place where my personal commitment to a safer, healthier future could take root in environmental activism.

There is a lot of work to do and I would like to express my appreciation to local Club members for their hours of work on climate change and other issues. I look forward to continuing to expand our cadre of local activists and move the needle forward to achieve our environmental goals.

Pat Soriano:

First, thank you for joining and supporting the Sierra Club. I may not know you personally, but as members of the oldest environmental organization in the US, we have a lot in common. I know that I can go to any gathering of Sierra Club members and instantly have a lot to talk about with a shared interest in making the world a better place to live. I joined the Sierra Club in college and have continued to stay active because I think wild lands and wild animals are essential. I think that having clean air and water are critical human rights that are worth fighting for so we can have not just wild lands and animals but to preserve our planet.

I work as a financial analyst so know that many businesses, of course not the fossil fuel extraction ones, do understand that climate change is real even while they may support short-sighted politicians who don't. Mostly, I am committed to doing what I can whether at the local, state, or national level – even international level thinking of the defeat of the Keystone pipeline (yeah!). I would appreciate your vote for the Mount Vernon Group ExCom.

Rob Swennes:

I am completing my seventh two-year term as a member of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Mount Vernon Group. How time flies by! I serve as the Group's Secretary and also handle membership matters and new volunteers. I administer the Group's announcement listserv established so that the 4000+ members of the Group can get more timely reminders of upcoming Club meetings, socials and other activities.

I am active in various civic matters in Arlington. I work with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee. I have chaired the County's Transportation Committee and its Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee—a unique program to conserve and upgrade our traditional neighborhoods rather than let them deteriorate. I've also been actively engaged in trying

to gain people in the County access to the Potomac River for non-motorized recreation (rowing and paddling). However, the bulk of my time over the past 5 years has been spent establishing community-based farmers markets in the Northern Virginia area.

If reelected to the Executive Committee, I will continue to pursue these initiatives and others to improve the quality of life for all in Northern Virginia.

This content originally appeared in the December 2015 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/.