

THE JACKSON LEGACY IN ACTION

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First Jackson Fellow to take public office



Joe Nguyen with community members, including in the front row Jackson Leadership Fellows Stephanie Celt and Brandon Hersey

Jackson Leadership Fellow Joe Nguyen

Leadership Fellows Danielle Granatt and Michele Frix making campaign buttons

The Foundation congratulates Jackson Leadership Fellow Joe Nguyen on his decisive victory in Washington State's 34th district senate race. Joe ran an exhaustive campaign, door-belling throughout his district and helping to register new voters. The first legislator of Vietnamese heritage in Washington State and the first legislator of color in the history of the 34th, Joe is a committed activist who cares deeply about the community. We recently connected with him to learn more about how the Jackson Fellowship influenced his campaign, what the election means to him, and his future plans.

The Foundation created the Leadership Fellows Program to elevate young leaders and share Senator Jackson's values on effective public service. Joe explained that his experience as a Fellow, "heavily influenced my ability to run, but also raised my confidence through utilizing the Jackson Foundation's network." Many Jackson Fellows volunteered and supported the campaign, along with the Foundation's board and staff.

He reflected on the meaning of his victory for the Vietnamese community and other constituent groups. In his words, "For so long large portions of the community have felt ignored and helpless. Being able to recognize [a candidate] who is part of the same community and grew up

with similar experiences is huge for developing trust and respect. I think this election is one step in a whole host of things we need in order to get representation."

Joe indicated that he will focus his efforts on progressive tax reform, healthcare for all, equitable funding for education, and alleviating homelessness. "Mainly I want to partner with leaders in the community who are engaged in supporting regular working families in this state." He looks forward to implementing policies that will actually help move the needle for Washingtonians.

Using Senator Jackson's principles as compass, Joe intends to collaborate with others leaders in this space. "I hope to use the Senator's leadership principles to build a platform of trust even from legislators who may not be aligned with our ideology. We need more open and honest discussion about the issues facing our state."

The excitement around Joe's successful campaign has inspired the Fellows and they are encouraging each other to step up. Recently Jackson Fellow Andrew Lewis announced his candidacy for the Seattle City Council. The Jackson Foundation looks forward to seeing other Fellows take up the mantle of Senator Jackson's public service legacy. ■

Working together toward a democratic Russia

We had an opportunity to feature Natalia Arno, president and founder of our partner organization, the Free Russia Foundation (FRF). This U.S. – based NGO coordinates the efforts of pro-democracy Russian activists, civil society supporters, and independent media to push for positive changes in Russia. Serving as a bridge between Russian pro-democracy activists and the West, it informs Western policy makers about Russia and recommends smart long-term U.S. – Russia foreign policy.

Natalia described the impact of our partnership. Our first conference brought people together to strategize in 2016 after a time of great political disenchantment given the civil society crackdown and the Russian seizure of Crimea from Ukraine. Our conference created a safe gathering, which allowed participants to, in her words, reenergize and refocus on the struggle ahead. The group decided that the Russian pro-democracy movement should look ahead to local-level elections because federal-level elections were strictly controlled by the Kremlin, while municipal elections presented a realistic opportunity. This strategy resulted in stunning successes in local elections in 2017.

Our second conference this past May featured some of those victorious democratic players, making a strong case for the power of local politics even in a politically repressive environment. As one of the first foundations to support the Free Russia Foundation, we helped put it on the map, eventually attracting other funders.



Natalia Arno, President of the Free Russia Foundation

About her partnership with the Jackson Foundation, Natalia said, “We are very proud to be able to continue Senator Jackson’s legacy of promoting democracy and human rights. We also know that Senator Jackson strongly supported Soviet dissidents. Those of us involved with the Free Russia Foundation are the new Russian dissidents. We are actively engaged in promoting the Magnitsky Act, the ideological heir to the landmark Jackson-Vanik Amendment. We also know how Senator Jackson believed in people — ordinary people. He believed that they should have power, they should have a voice, and this is what we do. We give voice to pro-democracy Russians both domestically and internationally.”

While it is often difficult to imagine a day when democracy will flourish in Russia, the Free Russia Foundation retains the commitment and hope to keep fighting toward this end. ■



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