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# Innovative Research on the Organizational Management Model of Grassroots Democratic Party Organizations in the Digital Intelligence Era

—A Case Study of the China Zhi Gong Party Branch at Zhaoqing University

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## ABSTRACT

Digital technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence are reshaping the structure of party governance. As grassroots organizations of the new political party system, the transformation of democratic parties' management approach not only responds to the requirements of the Digital China strategy in the field of united front work, but also directly affects the overall capacity-building of the participating parties. Taking the Zhi Gong Party branch at Zhaoqing University as a case, field research is used to identify the practical problems facing grassroots organizations in mobilization mechanisms, ideological work, support for the performance of duties, and assessment and evaluation, and to analyze the internal logic of the digital-intelligent transformation from three aspects: technical conditions, institutional environment, and actor motivations. Based on the above analysis, a management innovation framework linking four modules—digital infrastructure, member profiling, collaborative platforms, and smart assessment—is proposed, and specific optimization suggestions are put forward in light of the "Digital Zhi Gong" platform and local united front practice. It is hoped that these explorations can provide a reference for the high-quality development of grassroots democratic party organizations.

## KEYWORDS

Digital intelligence era; Democratic parties; Grassroots organizations; Management model innovation; China Zhi Gong Party

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) called for "accelerating the building of a cyber power and a digital China," and the subsequent Overall Layout Plan for the Construction of Digital China elevated the empowerment of national governance by digital technology to a strategic level [1]. Against this backdrop, the digital transformation of party governance has become an unavoidable trend. In recent years, the CPC has been the first to explore fields such as "smart party building," and for the democratic parties these experiences offer useful references for strengthening their own construction through digital means [2]. The participating parties now face a realistic and pressing question: how to seize the opportunities presented by the digital intelligence era, use technological means to solve the long-standing problems in grassroots organization building, and at the same time enhance organizational cohesion and the effectiveness of performing duties. This has become an important topic that combines theoretical depth with practical urgency.

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The China Zhi Gong Party was founded in 1925 and in 2025 has completed a full century. It now has more than 3,000 grassroots organizations nationwide and more than 70,000 members. University branches are a backbone force within the Zhi Gong Party's organizational system, and members' academic backgrounds give them a particular advantage in participating in and deliberating on state affairs. The branch at Zhaoqing University is a typical example. Established in June 2016, the branch currently has 13 members, mainly from the School of Literature and the School of Foreign Languages, most of whom are returned overseas Chinese, relatives of overseas Chinese, or intellectuals with overseas academic experience. Since its establishment, under the guidance of the United Front Work Department of the Zhaoqing Municipal Party Committee and the United Front Work Department of the Party Committee of Zhaoqing University, the branch has made many explorations, including the construction of a "Scholarly Branch," joint research, and innovation in social services. In 2024, branch members received the title of "Outstanding Member of the China Zhi Gong Party." In June 2026, the branch successfully completed its leadership transition. In fact, like most grassroots democratic party organizations in universities, the branch also encounters some long-standing problems—conflicts between party affairs and teaching and research, rather monotonous forms of activity, insufficient interaction among members, and superficial application of digital tools. These are all common difficulties.

At present, when studying the organizational building of democratic parties, most scholars focus on traditional aspects such as ideological and political guidance, the enhancement of the capacity to participate in and deliberate on state affairs, and organizational norms, while hot topics such as how digital-intelligent technologies can support grassroots organization management have only just begun to be addressed. Zhang Mingjun and Li Tianyun (2025), speaking at a macro level about new changes in party governance models in the digital intelligence era, argue that digital technology has integrated governance space, multiplied participation platforms, and made agenda-setting more dependent on algorithms [3]. Zhang Shaohua and Wang Boran (2024) turn their lens to consultative democracy in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and analyze the resistance and optimization paths encountered by democratic parties in digital practice. There are also many local cases, such as the "Digital Zhi Gong" platform, the "Zhihui Multi-Party Cooperation" scenario, and the "AI + United Front" mini-program [4]. But a close look at these results shows that attention is still concentrated on provincial and municipal platform construction, and there is almost no in-depth, empirical research at the micro level of university grassroots branches. Detailed case studies devoted to a particular party and a particular branch have yet to be seen. In view of this, the Zhi Gong Party branch at Zhaoqing University is selected as an analytical sample, combining theory and case, in an attempt to clarify three questions: In the digital intelligence era, what structural dilemmas do grassroots democratic party organizations actually face in management? What is the logic behind digital transformation? How can a new model of digital-intelligent organizational management suited to the characteristics of universities be built?

## 2. THE INEVITABLE LOGIC OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC PARTY ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL INTELLIGENCE ERA

(1) Technological logic: digital-intelligent technology reshaping the underlying architecture of organizational operation

The continuous integration of technologies—mobile Internet, big data, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing—is reshaping the basic rules of organizational operation [5]. Over the past decade or so, the Zhi Gong Party's membership has grown from 40,000 to more than 70,000, and this growth has posed new challenges to the precision and responsiveness of management. Traditional methods can hardly cope with such dynamic and detailed management demands. As digital-intelligent technologies begin to intervene, organizational operation is no longer bound by geographical space:

mobile terminals allow members to participate in activities anytime and anywhere, and data analysis tools help us clearly portray each person's behavioral trajectory and interest preferences. Intelligent algorithms hand a large amount of tedious routine work to machines, freeing up more manpower. Cloud computing enables cross-regional collaboration, a convenience that was previously unimaginable. Fundamentally, management logic is shifting from "relying on experience" to "relying on data." Decision-making has changed—we no longer rely only on vague impressions but on traceable and verifiable behavioral data. The central authorities explicitly require "continuously improving the scientific, institutionalized, and standardized level of organizational work," which in essence reflects an expectation of, and a direction for, technological empowerment.

(2) Institutional logic: the inherent requirements of building the new political party system

The multi-party cooperation system is a core arrangement of Chinese politics, and whether this system can operate effectively ultimately depends on the organizational health of its participants [6]. In 2024, the CPC revised the Regulations on United Front Work, making more systematic provisions on the building of the ranks of non-party representative figures [7]. Whether grassroots democratic party organizations can operate smoothly determines whether the multi-party cooperation system can truly be implemented at the grassroots level. Judging from actual conditions, digital-intelligent methods have indeed alleviated the information asymmetry that grassroots organizations have struggled with for years. With digital information-sharing platforms in place, members can learn about policy developments and participation channels more quickly and are more likely to receive feedback on results. Another point is that quantitative assessment tools have brought new changes—many "soft requirements" that could not be measured before can now be converted into specific, operable indicators. In this way, organizations are no longer vague when guiding and motivating members; they have clear standards and bases.

(3) Actor logic: the realistic call of changes in the characteristics of university member groups

Members of democratic parties in universities have several distinct characteristics: a high level of knowledge, high academic degrees and professional titles, active thinking, and working time that is often fragmented [8]. Take the Zhaoqing University branch: its situation is quite representative—there is no strict office-hour requirement, teaching and research pressures are heavy, and members are scattered across different schools. This combination makes the traditional approach of "fixed time, fixed place, fixed content" increasingly unworkable. In the survey, nearly 80% (79.8%) of members said that the biggest problem is that their own work and party activities always conflict in time. Under such circumstances, opening up more flexible and inclusive forms of participation through technological means is directly related to the cohesion and mobilizing capacity of grassroots organizations.

Taking the Zhi Gong Party branch at Zhaoqing University as an example, the structural characteristics of the members of a university Zhi Gong Party branch can be clearly seen (see Table 1). In terms of professional titles, senior titles (full professor and associate professor) together account for 61%, with associate professors the largest group at 46%. This branch is a typical highly educated group. In terms of age, the backbone is evident: young and middle-aged members aged 36 to 55 account for 55% and constitute the core of professional work. Members aged 35 and below account for 15%, continuously injecting vitality into the branch. In terms of education, doctoral and master's degree holders each account for 38%, totaling 76%. This structural composition gives the branch a strong talent base for advancing the digital-intelligent transformation. Members' information literacy is generally high, and some members specialize in research on computer science, data science, and educational technology, which can bring professional support to platform construction. Of course, such a background also raises members' standards when using digital tools: they have stricter requirements for functional experience and content quality and place more expectations on the platform.

**Table 1.** Analysis of the Membership Structure of the Zhi Gong Party Branch at Zhaoqing University (as of October 2026)

| Dimension | Category | Number | Share |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Full professor | 2 | 15% |
| Professional title | Associate professor | 6 | 46% |
| | Intermediate | 4 | 31% |
| | Junior and below | 1 | 8% |
| | Aged 35 and below | 2 | 15% |
| Age | 36–45 | 4 | 32% |
| | 46–55 | 3 | 23% |
| | Aged 56 and above | 4 | 30% |
| | Doctorate | 5 | 38% |
| Education | Master's | 5 | 38% |
| | Bachelor's | 3 | 24% |
| Gender | Male | 5 | 39% |
| | Female | 8 | 61% |

## 3. THE PRACTICAL DILEMMAS OF THE TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT MODEL OF GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC PARTY ORGANIZATIONS

(1) Organizational mobilization dilemma: declining participation under time-space constraints

For a long time, activities organized by grassroots democratic party organizations have relied heavily on the offline, centralized approach of "fixed time, fixed place, fixed content," ... everyone squeezed into one room, reading documents, studying the guiding principles, and discussing reflections [9]. But in universities, this method is increasingly ineffective. The biggest problem is finding a common time. University teachers have no strict office-hour requirement, and their courses, research tasks, and academic activities differ greatly; merely finding a time when everyone can come requires repeated roll calls and adjustments in WeChat groups. After all this effort, often fewer than half actually show up. Then there is space. Members are already scattered across different schools and campuses, and some are on secondment or visiting appointments elsewhere, so even the physical distance of travel is a headache. The most awkward thing, in fact, is that the activities themselves are not attractive. Many people come and appear to "attend," but inwardly they remain detached—far from truly being present and participating.

(2) Information flow dilemma: vertical attenuation and horizontal fragmentation coexisting

In the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy, a document issued by the provincial committee must pass through several levels—the municipal committee, the grassroots committee, and so on—before it finally reaches the branch and its members. Each additional procedure lengthens the time, and the transmission process often goes wrong: oral relay easily omits key information, and repeated retelling at each level often adds personal interpretation, so that the original meaning is distorted. At present, many branches habitually use WeChat groups to communicate routine matters. WeChat is convenient for contact, but after all it is a chat tool, not an organizational management platform. Important messages are quickly pushed down by new messages, and when one later wants to find materials, it is laborious and time-consuming; archiving is even more difficult. Moreover, data on organizational building, publicity drafts, and the results of participation in and deliberation of state affairs are often scattered here and there: some are stored on the chairperson's personal computer, some lie in the committee members' respective folders, and some are buried in WeChat or other chat records. Each stands alone and no one integrates them, so information islands have become the norm. As a result, when higher-level authorities make inquiries, the branch often scrambles to produce a comprehensive

ledger. When members want to know the recent directions for suggestions, there is no unified and stable information entry point. The entire information flow is neither efficient nor transparent.

(3) Assessment and evaluation dilemma: absence of quantitative means and weakened incentive function

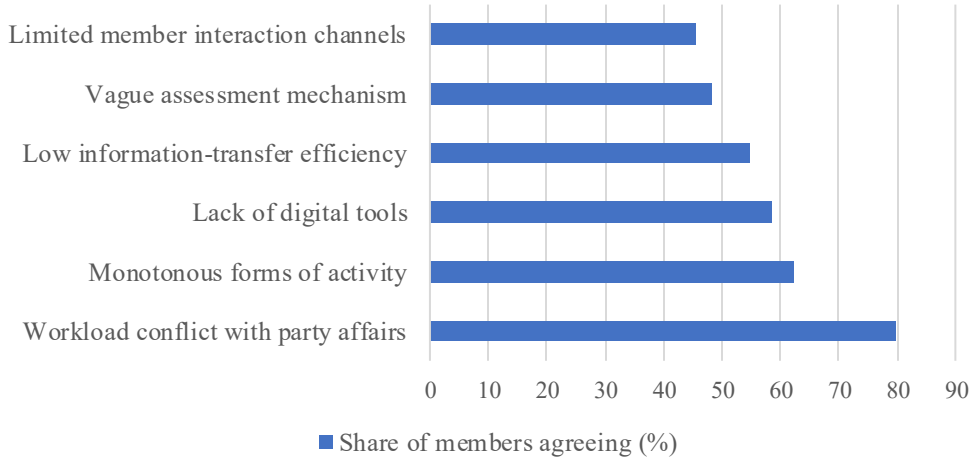



**Figure 1.** Survey of the Main Pain Points of the Traditional Management Model of Grassroots Democratic Party Organizations in Universities

At present, many grassroots democratic party organizations have not yet established a quantitative evaluation system that operates stably. Usually, the branch's work performance relies only on the year-end summary report and the qualitative judgment of higher-level authorities, lacking process data that can reflect daily operations. As for the assessment of individual members' performance of duties, in most cases only simple data such as attendance rates and the number of proposals are recorded, and the content is very rough. The Zhi Gong Party branch at Zhaoqing University is much the same. Without unified information-based management tools, details such as which member participated in which activities, how good the quality of proposals was, and how much time was spent on social services basically depend on the chairperson's personal memory or scattered handwritten records. In the final analysis, such information is neither complete nor often accurate. There is another key problem here: assessment results are not effectively linked with incentive measures such as intra-party awards or political arrangements. The management model is too vague, so the branch cannot promptly improve in response to its weaknesses, nor can it form a clear incentive orientation within the organization—directly affecting members' enthusiasm for participation and sense of belonging, so that their initiative naturally suffers.

Looking at the survey data in Figure 1, the problems most strongly reported are actually quite direct—nearly 80% (79.8%) of respondents feel that their own work is too busy to accommodate party affairs. Next, "monotonous forms of organizational activity" and "lack of digital tools" have approval rates of 62.3% and 58.5%, respectively. Some other problems are also striking, such as low efficiency of information transmission (54.7%), vague assessment mechanisms (48.2%), and limited channels for member interaction (45.6%). These problems are intertwined, blocking the efficiency of the traditional management model and clearly pointing to the urgent need for digital transformation.

# 4. CONSTRUCTION OF AN INNOVATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE DIGITAL-INTELLIGENT ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT MODEL

(1) Overall architecture: the "four dimensions in one" digital-intelligent management model

**Table 2.** Functional Matrix of the "Four Dimensions in One" Digital-Intelligent Management Model for Grassroots Democratic Parties

| Dimension | Core function | Key technology | Application scenario |
|---|---|---|---|
| Digital infrastructure | Platform building, data aggregation, security protection | Cloud computing, mobile Internet, blockchain | Smart party building mini-program, electronic member files |
| Precise profiling | Member tagging, demand identification, content push | Big data, user profiling, AI recommendation | Personalized learning, talent discovery and cultivation |
| Collaborative duty performance | Online deliberation, joint research, resource matching | Video conferencing, collaborative editing, knowledge graphs | Cloud consultation, cross-branch joint research |
| Smart assessment | Points management, vitality index, decision support | Data visualization, intelligent analysis | Branch assessment, member incentives, work improvement |

Drawing on the construction experience of the Zhi Gong Party's "Digital Zhi Gong" platform, the exploration of Chongqing's "Zhihui Multi-Party Cooperation" scenario, and the mature practices in the field of smart party building in universities, and targeting the three dilemmas mentioned above while taking into account the actual situation of the Zhi Gong Party branch at Zhaoqing University, an organizational management innovation framework is proposed: a four-dimensional linkage of "digital infrastructure—precise profiling—collaborative duty performance—smart assessment" (see Table 2). Guided by the value concept of "dedicating to public service and serving the country with overseas Chinese connections," this framework regards data resources as core assets and integrates technological tools into every link of the management process. Through adjustments at the mechanism level, it promotes grassroots organization management in the direction of quantification, traceability, and optimization.

(2) Digital infrastructure layer: a mobile working base

The core task can be summarized as "three ones": one terminal, one platform, one database. The so-called "terminal" is the mobile entry point prepared for members. Whether a WeChat mini-program or an independent app is used, routine operations such as check-in for organizational life, online learning, proposal submission, and service records are all placed on a single interface. In this way, everyone does not have to jump back and forth between different platforms, which is much more convenient. The "platform" refers to the back-end system used by branch managers. This back end specifically handles activity publishing, personnel management, data viewing, and message pushing; basically, the repetitive information statistics and notification communication of branch committee members can be automated, saving a great deal of effort. The "database" is the basic member information database. Following the "one person, one file" approach, each member has an electronic file recording basic information, professional direction, overseas connections, and performance of duties. This not only facilitates retrieval but also makes data management more standardized. Security is equally important: hierarchical authorization and operation traceability must be implemented here to minimize the risk of leaking sensitive data.

(3) Precise profiling layer: refined ideological guidance and talent management

Based on the member database and behavioral data, a "digital profile" is generated in real time for each member, and the profile is continuously updated as his or her performance changes. The tagging system covers political status, professional fields, behavioral preferences, demand characteristics, and other aspects. In terms of ideological guidance, the system recommends more suitable learning materials according to each person's learning records and reading habits, no longer adopting a "one-size-fits-all" approach but pushing content tailored to each individual. When there is a sudden drop in login frequency or an obvious decrease in participation, the system issues a prompt directly, making it convenient for the organization to pay attention in time and hold talks. In talent discovery, the system analyzes members' professional achievements and performance of duties, mining from the data the backbones and activists who stand out in fields such as participation in and deliberation of state affairs and social services, thereby providing a strong basis for cultivation and recommendation. In service matching, the system combines each person's interests, expertise, and development needs to precisely recommend research topics, training opportunities, and so on, helping members obtain needed resources in time and making them more aware of the organization's support.

(4) Collaborative duty-performance layer: a full-chain online ecosystem for performing duties

In terms of participation in and deliberation of state affairs, things can actually be made smarter. For example, an auxiliary system can be developed to integrate proposals, policy documents, and public sentiment information accumulated over the years into a single database, making it easy for everyone to search and providing ready-made topics and materials for drafting suggestions. After suggestions are submitted, they should not be left to sink into oblivion; a closed-loop process should be adopted so that everything from submission to feedback can be tracked, allowing every suggestion to receive a response.

Organizational life can also be more flexible. Tools such as online meetings and live streaming are really practical: some people are not locally based because of teaching or secondment, but they can still participate in discussions via video. Short, quick, and small activities such as "micro party lectures" and "micro research" better fit the reality of fragmented working time among university teachers. In terms of social services, if a supply-demand platform can be built to match members' professional abilities with actual social needs, services can be more targeted. Using blockchain technology, members' service hours can be recorded in a trustworthy way, so that subsequent incentives and recognition also have a sound basis. As for overseas Chinese connections, digitalization can also help. Online platforms can be used to expand channels of contact with overseas Chinese associations and students studying abroad, making exchanges more convenient and no longer limited by geography.

(5) Smart assessment layer: a data-driven assessment and incentive mechanism

For the branch as a whole, a "vitality index" can be introduced. Rather than merely chanting empty slogans, it should bring together the quality of organizational activities, member development, results of participation in and deliberation of state affairs, and social services, and set a scoring standard so that it is clear at a glance which branches rank high and which low. In this way, everyone has a yardstick in mind and a sense of drive, and can see growth and gaps in real time. As for each member, a points system can simply be adopted. Specific matters such as theoretical study, attendance, submitting proposals, and conducting research are all converted into points that can be accumulated. With enough points, members can exchange them for learning materials, priority in activities, and so on. In this way, every effort is clearly seen and receives practical returns. Results are regularly communicated individually, and points are also linked to awards and the recommendation of backbones. The more one does, the more tangible benefits one receives. Gradually, an atmosphere of speaking with data and of recognizing those who work harder takes shape. The notion that "doing more or doing less makes no difference" will naturally be eliminated.

# 5. PATH SELECTION FOR THE DIGITAL-INTELLIGENT TRANSFORMATION OF THE ZHI GONG PARTY BRANCH AT ZHAOQING UNIVERSITY

For the branch's digital-intelligent transformation, one should not try to grasp everything at once; it is better to proceed steadily, step by step. The first step is to lay a solid foundation. In about one year, the "Digital Zhi Gong" platform should be connected, and the information of all members should be entered into the database in a standardized way. After that, matters such as notifications, check-in, and records of organizational activities should all be handled online, and the points system should be launched at the same time. Along with this, a branch WeChat public account should be set up so that people outside can see our developments. Once these run smoothly, after another one to two years, the second stage begins. The focus is on data circulation—we connect with the university's smart campus and the city's smart united front platform, and gradually move the coordination of cross-branch research, the circulation of suggestions and proposals, and the matching of supply and demand in social services online, digitalizing each link one by one. Once the data from the first two steps have accumulated, the third stage can introduce AI assistance. For example, personalized content can be pushed according to members' learning habits, material association suggestions can be given for proposal writing, and the operational health of the branch can be automatically assessed; these functions can be launched gradually. In two to three years, the branch can truly evolve from "usable" to "easy to use."

The Zhaoqing University branch has two unique advantages. First, universities are knowledge-intensive and resource-rich. Second, the Zhi Gong Party has extensive overseas Chinese connections. These two points combined must be put to good use in the branch's transformation[10]. Academically, branch members themselves have expertise in fields such as sports science, literature, and economics. It is entirely possible to rely on this group of talents to establish online academic salons and resource libraries, centering discussions and research on practical issues of Zhaoqing's development and the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. In August 2026, the joint research on the psychological education service system conducted by the branch and the High-tech Zone branch was a good example of making such digital collaboration routine and online. Now consider the overseas Chinese advantage. Zhaoqing is itself an important hometown of overseas Chinese in the Greater Bay Area, and the branch can proactively build online contact platforms for overseas Chinese and students studying abroad, using a series of activities such as "Cloud Overseas Chinese Connection" to continuously maintain and expand external contacts. These activities provide new channels for talent introduction and cultural exchange. The previously promoted "Scholarly Branch" project is, in fact, equally suitable for extension online. Lighter approaches such as "cloud reading together" can certainly be tried to make the original brand more flexible.

Whether the transformation can go far depends not on technology but on whether the back-end mechanisms can keep up. At the organizational level, the chairperson must take the lead and designate a member familiar with information technology as the "digital committee member," and digital construction must be written into the annual work plan; it cannot be omitted. In terms of capacity, targeted training is needed: branch committee members should understand platform management, young and middle-aged members should learn to operate the tools, and special assistance should be arranged for older members so that they are not left behind. Funding should be actively sought from higher-level authorities and the university's united front work department, and cooperation can also be attempted with relevant schools on campus such as computer science. Institutional building must not be neglected: norms for platform use and detailed rules for data management must be established, and a satisfaction survey should be conducted each semester, with continuous adjustments based on everyone's feedback. Only in this way can the digital platform truly integrate into the branch's daily work and become a tool that everyone cannot do without.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

In terms of management innovation for grassroots democratic party organizations, the digital intelligence era offers unprecedented technological opportunities, providing a systematic theoretical framework for transformation: the "four dimensions in one" model of "digital infrastructure—precise profiling—collaborative duty performance—smart assessment."

For the Zhi Gong Party branch at Zhaoqing University, digital-intelligent transformation is not merely a matter of keeping pace with the times but a systematic project. The commemorative activities of the centenary of the Zhi Gong Party have strengthened consensus, and the "Digital Zhi Gong" platform is also being continuously upgraded. As Zhaoqing's digital reform deepens, the branch has the foundation and the responsibility to lead in digital-intelligent management and to explore a set of digital experience that can be replicated and promoted by grassroots university branches. In the future, artificial intelligence technology will advance by leaps and bounds. As technologies such as large language models and knowledge graphs become increasingly mature, the management of grassroots democratic party organizations is moving toward a new stage of "AI empowerment." Imagine that branch committees have intelligent assistants to share routine affairs, intelligent analysis provides precise decision-making support for participation in and deliberation of state affairs, and members around the world can even find a sense of belonging in virtual space. This is not empty fantasy; it is already under way. In this process, the branch must maintain strategic resolve, adhere to integrity and innovation, and always keep to the correct political direction, so that digital-intelligent technology truly becomes a powerful engine for improving the quality of the participating parties' construction, and contributes wisdom and strength to upholding, developing, and improving China's new political party system and to advancing Chinese-style modernization.

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