

Welcome to the Email version of our newsletter. Forward a copy to a friend and encourage them to email us and add their names to our list.

SAVE THESE DATES:

MAY 12TH --
SPECIAL MONTHLY MEETING 7:00 PM
RICHLAND COUNTY BOARD ROOM COURTHOUSE
AUTHOR BILL CHRISTOFFERSON
GUEST SPEAKER

JUNE 9TH --
SPECIAL MONTHLY MEETING 7:00 PM
ROCKBRIDGE PARK
PIE PARTY!

JUNE 12TH --
STATE CONVENTION
IN GREEN BAY



THE "WHO ARE WE?" ISSUE

After a long successful campaign year, the off year in politics often becomes a time to "step back" from party politics. This is understandable albeit frustrating to party leadership. So, the off-season so to speak becomes a wonderful time to define ourselves as a party. There are many activities going on this spring and summer that do just that. The Richland Democrats recently had a special meeting to begin to do strategic planning on where we are and where we want to be in the future. Judy Spring of Sauk County was gracious enough to offer her superb facilitation skills to help us through the process. The executive committee and any other members who are interested will be meeting on the last Thursday of May to continue the process.

The Third Congressional District held its convention this past April 18th. One of the activities of the convention is for Counties to submit resolutions that will go to the State Convention on June 12th to be voted upon and used to create our State Party Platform. On page four and five of this newsletter are the ten top vote-getting resolutions in the 3rd CD. It is a wonderful tool to see just where Democratic members hold their values.

The next meeting of the Richland County Democrats will present two speakers who speak to our Party values as well. The following article invites you to hear dignitaries Bill Christofferson and Mike Tate at our next regular meeting. Please make an effort to attend. It is always wonderful to have a large crowd when we bring in speakers.

Enjoy the warmer weather and this month's newsletter

MAY 12 BEGINS FORWARD FORUM SERIES

The May 12th meeting of the RC Dems will be held in the Courthouse Board Room at 7PM. This meeting marks the first installment of **forward forum**, a series of lectures and discussions of topics relevant to our group's development.

The evening's guests will be Mike Tate, candidate for the DPW chairmanship, and Bill Christofferson, author of "The Man from Clear Lake: Earth Day founder Senator Gaylord Nelson". We will have a chance to discuss the legacy of the past and the direction of the future.

Those interested in spending more time with our guests should come to Fiesta Fe for a "Dutch Treat" meal at 5:30. Please RSVP me to make sure we get a sufficiently large table (549 3401 or tcrofton@countyspeed.com).

June's meeting will be held on the second Tuesday in Rockbridge Park at 7PM and will be a pie party! If you don't bring a pie, at least bring a fork!

We are trying to bring fun, discussion on topics of interest, and visions of greater things to our organization (new people too). Please come along and help us grow.

Tom Crofton
Richland County Democratic Party Chair

"Gee, you mean putting offenders in a sensory deprived cell doesn't straighten them out? It just makes them a little crazier. Who would have thought? -- This Bleeding Heart Liberal for one!"

LET ME OUT OF HERE! - THE POLITICS OF PRISONS

Editorial by Will Buros

A headline on the May 8th Wisconsin Public Radio morning State news noted that State Republicans declared that plans for any early release or changes in the prison parole and sentencing systems will place Wisconsin Citizens at risk for their safety. The report just rattled my cage! I'm getting old enough to remember that one of the issues on which the Republican Party rode into office a few decades ago was that the 'Bleeding Heart Liberals' were soft on criminals, and it would be up to the Republicans to get "tough" on crime. Undeniably, it was an issue that resonated with the public, and it helped Republicans get elected. Once elected they did in fact change the laws to make "time mean time," "three strikes and you're out," waiving minors into adult court, and the list goes on. The tenor of the changes took away the discretion previously held by "those Liberal" Judges, probation and parole officers and prison wardens to make decisions to release offenders early for good behavior and other reasons. The Republicans got their way. Let's not forget that they did govern the State for the past two decades. What makes me want to scream, "Let me out of this debate!" is the fact that, by *all* objective analyses, these programs have been a colossal failure.

When the tool of a positive incentive of early release was removed from the toolbox of Judges, wardens, and probation and parole officers, good things did not happen. It seems logical that if we keep criminals off the streets then we will be safer. Yet, there is strong evidence that keeping criminals in prison longer does not make them less likely to commit crimes once their time has been served. Rather the prison environment itself makes them even more dangerous. Without the promise of early release due to good rehabilitation progress and behavior, prison management has suffered. Remember, with positive incentives no longer in place, the Super Max prison was created to "help" control the prison population as a "time-out" center that is so terrible that the fear of being sent there will keep the prison population in line. Time has shown this hasn't worked. Gee, you mean putting offenders in a sensory deprived cell doesn't straighten them out? It just makes them a little crazier. Who would have thought? -- This Bleeding Heart Liberal for one!

Now, I can't fault Republicans for trying something different. Change can be good. What is criminal is the fact that, now, after decades of prisons busting our State coffers without any evidence of helping to provide solutions or achieve the promised outcomes, now, when changing our prisons and sentencing systems to programs that have historically been better and more cost effective, now, when the State is at a time of budgetary crisis, the Republicans have the unmitigated temerity to boast that if Democrats have their way, citizens won't be safe. AHHAGG! Let me out of here! I hope people recognize that this type of political fear mongering is why the Republican Party has been relegated to minority naysayer status and no longer is allowed to *pretend* to govern responsibly.

Thoughts On Ending Torture

There was an excellent discussion of torture on Bill Moyer's Journal Friday night, May 1st. I agree with Bruce Fein that Obama should make a decision to either pardon Bush and Cheney for their law-breaking policies on "enhanced interrogation techniques," a euphemism for torture, or prosecute them. In either case an independent review panel should be set up as was done, finally, after the 9-11 catastrophe. This would give the American and world public the opportunity to learn all the details behind the decisions to proceed down the dark path to the torture scenario. Only then would people be in a position to make an intelligent decision about who did what and why they did it, and whether it hurt or helped America's cause in the so-called war on terror.

I agree with Obama's position that resorting to the "enhanced techniques" was not necessary because the information sought after could have been obtained in a more humane, civilized way. He reminds us that Winston Churchill even in the darkest days of the German bombardment of England refused to resort to torture of prisoners because he understood that such an action would corrode the moral fabric of British society. I happen to believe that fear mongering is the main reason many Americans have come to accept torture as a necessary technique for obtaining vital information. And fear mongering creates a vicious circle: if we were to be attacked again, it would be because we didn't torture. That is a lose-lose way of thinking. My hope is that the fear mongering stops and people base their decisions on torture on the facts that, hopefully, will be laid before them.

Guest Editorial by Jerry McConoughey, Richland Democratic Member

"I happen to believe that fear mongering is the main reason many Americans have come to accept torture as a necessary technique for obtaining vital information."
McConoughey.

VINEHOUT INTRODUCES RURAL SCHOOL PLANS

State Senator Kathleen Vinehout recently introduced a Rural Schools Initiative. The plan bites off a piece of the School Finance Network's reform proposal and would directly address the funding for rural districts and those with declining enrollment.

Vinehout states, "Dramatically declining enrollment can be softened by adjusting the impact over two years. Small but necessary schools can be assisted through changes in scarcity aid. This direct assistance, which I fought to create in the last state budget, makes a big difference in helping rural schools balance their budgets.

Finally, we proposed special transportation aid for districts transporting students 12 miles or more.

Our rural schools have long since cut the fat. They are down to the bone and still cutting. Essential courses and activities face elimination.

Adopting the Rural Schools Initiative will help rural schools across the state survive while we finish the work of more comprehensive school funding reform.

As one man from Pepin said, 'We have got to start somewhere and we have got to start right now.'"

Got ideas about school funding reform? Let me know! Contact me at (877) 763-6636 (toll free); or write: State Capitol; P.O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882 or email Sen.Vinehout@legis.wisconsin.gov.

WHERE THE 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT STANDS...

THE TEN RESOLUTIONS THAT WILL GO TO THE STATE CONVENTION

UNIVERSAL NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE

WHEREAS, nearly 50 million Americans lack health insurance and millions of others have inadequate coverage;

WHEREAS, approximately half of all U. S. bankruptcies are caused by exorbitant medical costs;

WHEREAS, the U. S. is the only developed nation in the world without government-sponsored universal health insurance;

WHEREAS, the private insurance model is designed to generate profits by insuring the relatively healthy, forcing the unhealthy into the ranks of the uninsured or government-funded programs;

THEREFORE, RESOLVED, the DPW supports adopting a national universal health insurance system that includes medical care, preventive care, dental care, and prescription drugs at significant savings.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ADVERTISING REFORM

WHEREAS, drug-advertising laws have been altered to permit the marketing of prescription drugs to the public;

WHEREAS, the cost of advertising exceeds the cost of corporate research for new drugs, and is one third of the drug's cost;

WHEREAS, drugs that require a physician's prescriptions are being advertised in public forums, undermining the physician's professional judgment;

WHEREAS brand name medications place unnecessary pressure on health care providers in order to avoid potential lawsuits;

THEREFORE, RESOLVED, that the DPW supports prohibiting such advertising to consumers AND revising tax law to remove deductibility of prescription drug advertising.

GLOBAL WARMING

WHEREAS, global warming is a scientifically proven threat to the planet, endangering the public's health and welfare with negative impacts on the nation's economy and the environment;

WHEREAS, energy efficiency, conservation and development of alternative energy can provide economic and health benefits for local communities while generating jobs in development, manufacturing, and installation of new technologies;

BE IT RESOLVED that the DPW supports climate change mitigation strategies including capping carbon emissions, promoting sustainable growth and energy conservation, enacting a corporate carbon tax, further supporting the Governor's Task Force on Energy Efficiency, and adopting the Kyoto Protocol.

SAVING AND SUPPORTING THE VIABILITY OF FAMILY FARMS

WHEREAS, agriculture continues to be a strong factor in Wisconsin's economy;

WHEREAS, family farms are having difficulty earning a living wage, discouraging youth from entering farming and continuing farms in the family;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the DPW encourage legislation and programs that enhance markets, support "parity" commodity pricing, and enhance the sustainability of family farms.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

WHEREAS, campaign spending has reached absurd levels;

WHEREAS, special interest groups, PACs and the very wealthy have disproportionate advantages in electing and influencing public officials;

WHEREAS, campaign costs keep worthy candidates from running for office; and

WHEREAS, the perpetual need to raise campaign funds consumes valuable time of elected officials;

THEREFORE, RESOLVED, the DPW encourages comprehensive finance reform laws, which include public funding of campaigns, free and fair media coverage, sane caps on all categories of contributions and on campaign spending, and honest and accessible campaign funding reporting.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5: (DEMOCRATIC RESOLUTIONS)

DEMOCRATIC RESOLUTIONS CONTINUED...

IN SUPPORT OF SENTENCING REFORM

WHEREAS the number of Wisconsin citizens incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons is higher on a per capita basis than most states and;

WHEREAS Wisconsin has almost 1/3 more prison inmates than Minnesota and;

WHEREAS there is not necessarily a correlation between incarceration rates and crime rates;

Be it RESOLVED that the DPW calls for an immediate re-examination of Wisconsin's sentencing guidelines and supports Governor Doyle's plan for early release of prisoners convicted of non-violent crimes.

RESTORE 9-1-1 GRANT PROGRAM

WHEREAS the wireless 9-1-1 grant program provided money to local communities to upgrade emergency dispatch services through a small surcharge on cell phone bills and;

WHEREAS the wireless 9-1-1 grant program was allowed to expire;

Be it RESOLVED that the DPW will call on the Wisconsin legislature to renew the wireless 9-1-1 grant program to provide funding for needed upgrades for 911 centers and public safety radio communications.

HEALTH CARE FOR UNINSURED AND UNDER-INSURED

WHEREAS eighteen billion dollars from the stimulus plan has been targeted toward COBRA coverage and;

WHEREAS COBRA is a subsidy for health insurance companies;

Be it RESOLVED that the DPW urges Congress and President Obama to allow states to use the funds targeted toward COBRA to provide health benefits instead through HURTS and Badger Plus as well as other more effective programs that help the uninsured and under-insured.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE IN WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN

WHEREAS, West Central Wisconsin is recognized as the fastest growing population area in the state resulting in calls for increased transportation infrastructure.

WHEREAS, Passenger rail service is more cost efficient and environmentally sound than expanded highway systems,

WHEREAS, other regions of Wisconsin are currently under consideration for new rail service or have Amtrak service;

THEREFORE, RESOLVED, that DPW supports expanded passenger rail service in West Central Wisconsin.

FOREST LAND TAXATION POLICIES

WHEREAS the state in 2005 determined that forestland next to agriculture land with the same owner be assessed at half value.

WHEREAS the managed forest program assures the health and economic viability of forests, further reducing tax revenues.

WHEREAS in heavily forested counties both programs have accelerated purchase of forestlands by non-resident landowners markedly reducing tax revenues for public schools and county operations.

THEREFORE be it resolved that The DPW urge the legislature to change the eligibility for these programs and limit tax benefits to residents of the township and county restoring needed revenues to school systems and county governments.

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IS AUTHORIZED AND
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RICHLAND COUNTY
DEMOCRATIC
PARTY, BILL DAVIS
TREASURER.*

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:
WILL BUROS

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

SEE US AT:

[WWW.RCDEMS.ORG/
INDEX.HTM](http://WWW.RCDEMS.ORG/INDEX.HTM)



Some Health Care Solutions Start Close To Home

Within 60 days most of us will receive a \$250 check from our benevolent government. The intent is for you to spend the \$ quickly. Well I have a suggestion. The Richland Hospital Free Clinic is badly in need of funds.

A major donor notified the Free Clinic several months ago they could no longer provide financial support. This is a two edged sword: Less money and more people in need. No money goes for salaries. Prescriptions are by far the major expense.

The senate should have a majority soon. In two to three years a sensible health program should be in place. Until then dig deep in your pocket.

Richland Hospital Free Clinic: 333 E. Second St. RC

We have given and will give more.

Yours Encouragingly,
Glenn Schnadt

FEINGOLD CAMPAIGN HIRING FIELD ORGANIZERS

Senator Russ Feingold's campaign, the Feingold Senate Committee, is seeking to hire campaign field organizers to be a part of our expanding statewide grassroots efforts. Qualified applicants should expect to work long hours, be dedicated to the progressive tradition of political organizing, and have reliable and insured transportation. These initial positions will be located in the Madison and Green Bay areas. The positions will begin July 1st, 2009 and run through the November 2010 election.

Compensation is competitive and includes health benefits. Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and resume to State Field Director, Paula Zellner at zellner@russfeingold.org. Deadline for applying is Friday, May 29th.

Authorized and paid for by the Feingold Senate Committee | Daniel D. Hannula, Superior, WI, Treasurer

JOIN US...

*Remember every 2nd Tuesday of the Month
we hold our Meetings at 7:00 PM in the
Ground Floor Room of the Richland County
Courthouse*