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Democrats Make More Progress in April Elections

by John Hmurovic

Republicans in the 10th Congressional District of Illinois have one more reason to be worried. Last November, despite the nationwide victory of George W. Bush, Republicans lost ground in the 10th District. In the April 2005 local elections, the trend continued.

In most local elections in the 10th, candidates do not run as Democrats or Republicans. But this year, in those where they did, Democrats made more gains. Perhaps the biggest gain was in West Deerfield Township in Lake County. Four Democrats running for Township Trustee defeated four Republican incumbents. In 2002, Democrats averaged 49 percent of the vote in West Deerfield, but by 2004 Democrats averaged 57 percent in the township, which includes parts of



Mari Barnes and Jeff Zaluda learn of their election victory. Ben Struhl, Tenth Dems intern, records vote totals.

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Tenth News

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MAY 2005 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 2, Edition 5

Nekritz Says Flooding Rises to Surface as Top Local Issue

by Jane Goldenberg

"When I was first elected and out knocking on doors, I heard more about flooding from the residents of my district than any other single local issue," said state Representative Elaine Nekritz (D-Des Plaines), whose district includes parts of Des Plaines, Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights, all impacted by the sometimes volatile Des Plaines River.

At that time, because Cook County did not have a regional authority to manage storm water, all the local municipalities were on their own. Problems arise when villages start working at cross purposes. For example, "If one village does something, they may not necessarily be concerned about what the downstream or upstream effects might be, and you can't manage storm water that way," Nekritz explained. "You've got to have a more regional approach to it."

Nekritz, along with state Senator Susan Garrett (D-Lake Forest), crafted a bill last year that tapped into the expertise at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, which has authority over sanitary sewers. The new law gives the MWRD authority over stormwater management for Cook County.

Already the MWRD has hooked up with Lake County and the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, which manages the headwaters of the Des Plaines River, to work to control flooding, according to Mike Warner, chief engineer for the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission.



State Representative Elaine Nekritz (D-Des Plaines)

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Mark Kirk's Deep, Dark Secrets

by John Hmurovic

You know Congressman Mark Kirk is a pro-choice member of a strongly anti-choice political party. You know he is mostly pro-environment, even though his party has a long history of opposing environmental laws. You know he is a supporter of gun control, even though the majority in his party is in the pocket (holster) of the National Rifle Association.

You know this because Mark Kirk wants you to know this. He sells himself to voters as a "Thoughtful, Independent Leader." What he doesn't want you to know is the truth.

How did Mark Kirk vote when the Republican Party decided that the government, not a husband, should have the final say on the very personal decision on whether to take his wife off life-support? Go to his website and try to find the answer. It's not there. Mark Kirk doesn't want you to know that he voted as GOP Majority Leader Tom DeLay told him to vote.

What is Mark Kirk's opinion on President Bush's idea to privatize Social Security? No one knows. Go to his website. All you see are broad generalities that don't address the key question of whether the system should be privatized. When asked directly about his views on the subject by Jeff Berkowitz, host of a cable interview program called *Public Affairs*, Kirk repeated the generalities posted on his website and said he was "going to reserve judgment, and keep listening to my district."

Has he held a public forum on the issue so he could hear what his constituents have to say? Some Congressmen have held as many as a dozen public forums on the issue so they can "listen to their district." Mark Kirk? Zero. Not one public forum on the issue.

Mark Kirk wants to hide on certain issues. He'll talk forever about his stance on the environment, but he will do his best to avoid any discussion of Social Security, Terri Schiavo or the fact that the right-wing has such a solid grip on the Republican Party that Mark Kirk is almost irrelevant. He votes against destroying the Alaska wilderness to drill for a limited supply of oil—it doesn't matter. The Republican leadership of the House, which he helped put into place, brushed him aside and got what they wanted.

But Kirk won't criticize his right-wing political party. Fellow Republican Congressman Christopher Shays of Connecticut said after the Terri Schiavo vote, "My party is demonstrating that they are for states' rights unless they don't like what states are doing... There are going to be repercussions from this vote. There are a number of people who feel that the government is getting involved in their personal lives in a way that scares them."

What did Mark Kirk say? Nothing. He voted with the Republican leadership to let the government intrude into our personal lives.

A group called Campaign for America's Future is trying to compile a tally of how much support right-wing Texas Congressman DeLay has in Congress as accusations of unethical behavior pile up against him. They asked each congressman, "Do you believe that Tom DeLay is ethically fit to serve as Majority Leader?" Shays said no. Kirk? He didn't take a stand.

Mark Kirk wants to hide because more often than not he votes with Tom DeLay than against him. Kirk's Republican Party put DeLay in power. Kirk's Republican Party is racking up the largest public debt in American history. Kirk's Republican Party is trying to end Social Security. Kirk's Republican Party is trying to force a radical Christian agenda on all Americans. No wonder he wants to keep some deep, dark secrets (his votes) from us.

Solution to the Filibuster Debate: Take Back the Congress

by George Rosenblit

In the Senate, the Republicans have 55 votes to 44 for the Democrats (plus one probable Democratic vote from Independent Senator James Jeffords of Vermont).

The filibuster rule in the Senate for over 200 years has protected minority opinions by allowing unlimited debate unless the filibuster is stopped by

"cloture," a vote of 60 out of 100 Senators. Since the Republicans have only 55 votes, they cannot stop the filibuster without five Democratic votes, which would not be forthcoming. The filibuster acts as a check on the majority.



THE PROBLEM

Senator Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tennessee) has threatened to change the Senate rules, termed the "nuclear option," whereby a simple majority, 51 votes, would be sufficient for cloture. His immediate objective is to ensure the acceptance of President Bush's most controversial ultraconservative nominees to the judiciary for lifetime appointments, with the added objective of ensuring the acceptance of Bush nominees to the Supreme Court as openings occur.

With Vice-President Cheney presiding over the Senate, Republicans could seek a ruling from the chair that it is not permissible to filibuster judicial nominees. A simple majority could then enforce that ruling.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada) has indicated that any action to bypass the time honored rule for unlimited debate would trigger a halt to most Senate activity.

Frist says that he wants to reach across the aisle in the spirit of bipartisanship, debate nominations and have up or down votes. No filibuster. Obviously, the nominee will always get 55 Republican votes to 44 Democratic votes, and Bush gets to pack the courts with his ultraconservatives. This route is unacceptable.

With regard to the Supreme Court, Chief Justice William Rehnquist is expected to retire in June due to poor health and others may create vacancies due to age. The biggest battle will take place when one of the swing voters such as Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy or liberal Justice John Stevens retire.

Continued on page 4

Some *Will...* But We *Won't* Get Fooled Again

by Ellen Gill

David Kelley was admonished by an elderly gentleman from Palatine to stop lying about the Bush Administration's proposed Social Security changes so his 40-year-old daughter could take advantage of private accounts and become a millionaire by the time she retired. April Fools? Sadly, not.

Despite the fact that any stock broker would lose his license if he made the claims the Administration makes about private accounts invested in the stock market, the man believed them. It was a reminder of what we are up against in the battle to save Social Security.

Kelley, Michael Brennan and William McNary were the speakers on that rainy April 1st night at Fremd High School in Palatine. It was the Tenth Dems "We Won't Be Fooled Again" Social Security issue forum and about 80 people filled the auditorium to listen and ask questions, and with just one exception, all were skeptical or critical of the Bush privatization plan.



Sue Walton, chair of the Palatine Township Democratic Organization, moderated the forum, which was co-sponsored by the Palatine Township Democrats, Tenth Dems, and the Eighth District Democrats and Independents.

Michael Brennan of Metro Seniors in Action began with statistics revealing the true condition of the Social Security Trust Fund and dispelling Administration claims that it will go broke by 2029. Truth be told, Brennan asserted, no one knows when the Trust Fund will need more money because no one knows what will happen to the economy in the future. However, the non-partisan congressional budget estimate is that even if we make no changes to the Social Security system, it will still be able to pay 80 percent of all benefits in 2052 and many economists give the program at least 75 more healthy years as it now stands.

Social Security is based on the premise that younger workers pay for their now-retired predecessors and get the money back when they retire. The system is self-funding and is the most successful government program in American history. Brennan stated that the Bush plan will drain trillions of dollars out of the system because the transition costs and the cost of paying current retirees when current workers are paying in less will have to be borrowed. "We will all pay interest on the debt so people can play in the stock market," he said, "and that shows they have the wrong priorities."

Brennan closed by reminding us of the wonderful theory of America that "we take care of each other." He was optimistic because "if we stick together, we will keep this program."



William McNary, US Action



David Kelley, Issues Director of the Kucinich for President Campaign, a certified financial planner, and Social Security Policy Board Chair of the Progressive Democrats of America asked what has happened to us that we would take a chance on this system. Comparing Bush's proposed private accounts to a group of pioneers crossing the rapids, he pointed out that some will make it, but most will not, and he concluded that the Administration just does not care.

Kelley then discussed Bush's comments that the Trust Fund does not really exist, but is make up of mere promises. He described the bonds in the fund and said that "if they tell you it is not real, they are going to rob you blind. It is about a civilized society that doesn't leave anyone behind. If there is no Social Security Trust Fund then an impeachable offense has been committed stealing from Americans."

William McNary, of Citizen Action/Illinois, closed the evening with a story about a widower with two daughters. Before the wife died, the husband promised her that the girls would go to college. The McNary girls, in fact, went to college with the help of the Social Security they received upon their mother's death. "It is about what we think is the purpose of government," he said. "The purpose of government should be to make life better for all.... The genius of Social Security is that it is universal. Everyone is touched by it. We must resist their strategy of divide and conquer.... We need a statesman in the White House and we got a salesman."



Michael Brennan, Metro Seniors in Action.

The Politics of “I’ve Got Mine”

by James Rosen

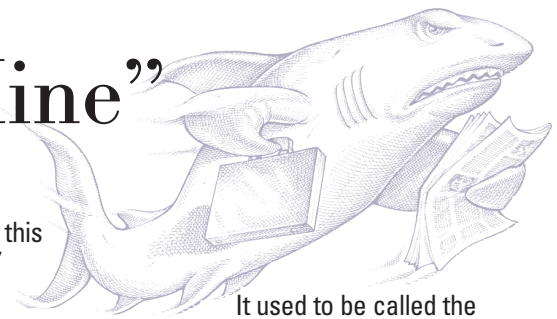
While the Republican Party, always the wordsmiths, peddle their “culture of life” to bully the nation into following their theocratic agenda, what they are really selling is the politics of “I’ve got mine.” What is that? Just what it says. “I’ve got mine so you’re on your own.”

The only ideas Republicans have is to cut taxes on wealthy Americans – cut them again – and then eliminate the Estate Tax so that Paris Hilton or Bill Gates or Warren Buffett can pass along billions of dollars in inheritance tax free.

Oh, and while we’re at it why don’t we pass a law that will make it nearly impossible for people to make a fresh start if they have to declare bankruptcy? Never mind that over 50 percent of the people who declare bankruptcy do so after an unexpected medical crisis wipes them out financially. Or that 35 percent of bankruptcies are caused by the loss of a job or similar financial problem. These are not reckless people using borrowed money for a spending spree joy ride – like the Republicans do with our national debt and budget. The bottom line is the credit card companies and banks paid for the bill and it became law. Unfortunately, people who may declare bankruptcy don’t really have a lobby to fight back.

The House Republicans were also busy recently eliminating the Estate Tax. I guess they had solved all the other problems facing the country and had some extra time on their hand to cut taxes for billionaires. The Republicans say, “You shouldn’t be taxed for dying and you shouldn’t be double taxed” to justify this bill. If that were true they might have a point. But it’s not. It’s simply, “I’ve got mine and my family should get

mine and I don’t want to pay taxes in this lifetime or the next!”



It used to be called the inheritance tax and it was a tax on the transfer of property. No different then when you sell a house the city or state taxes you for the transfer. And much of the property being transferred in estates has never been taxed as it has only appreciated over time without a taxable event, like holding a stock you never sell. Any tax seems unfair if you look at it closely enough. Have you really looked at your phone, cable or hotel bill? How about your plane tickets or rental car bill or toll booth charges? The fact is government needs money to run and it seems reasonable to ask those who can pay (and in the case of stock passed down through generations, i.e. those who have never paid) to contribute to that endeavor. Want to see a country with no taxes and no tax revenues? It’s called Afghanistan. No roads, no schools, no defense, no tax revenues, no nothing. A country run by the politics of “I’ve got mine” is a bleak place for all but those who can afford it.

Now let me be clear. I personally aspire to make enough money to be covered by the Estate Tax. But even if that happened it would not be my philosophy that “I’ve got health care, I’ve got college tuition covered, I’ve got a nice house, I’ve got a nice car, I’ve got low taxes, I’ve got mine and the rest of you are on your own!” Unfortunately that is the philosophy of the Republican Party. They are not going to change the way they govern but we can try to change who governs.

April Elections

Continued from page 1

Deerfield, Bannockburn, Highland Park, Lake Forest, Lincolnshire, and Riverwoods. The four trustee candidates nearly equaled that percentage, even though they ran against four incumbents.

Democrat Richard Hyde handily won re-election as mayor of Waukegan with 67 percent of the vote against his Republican challenger, and North Chicago Alderman Valerie DeVost defeated an Independent challenger by receiving 64 percent.

The only race where Republicans defeated Democrats in a direct contest was in Palatine Township in Cook County, but even there the Democrats chipped away at a Republican stronghold just by showing up. Republicans have controlled township government in Palatine for decades. This was the first year Democrats fielded opposition candidates, and Supervisor candidate Sue Walton won a very respectable 46 percent of the vote in her loss...which was two



Harold Rafson congratulates his daughter-in-law, Cynthia Plouche, Moraine Township Trustee-elect.

percentage points better than John Kerry achieved in Palatine in 2004.

Democrats also won control of township government in Moraine Township for the first time. Six of seven candidates on a Democratic slate won against an opposing slate and a handful of Independent candidates. It was the first time that candidates ran as Democrats for Moraine Township offices.

As in 2004, Democratic candidates in the 10th District won several offices that were held by Republicans, while Democratic incumbents did not lose a single seat to a Republican challenger.

Filibuster

Continued from page 2

Remember that decisions by the Supreme Court can turn back the clock on prior progressive legislation as well as further future conservative agendas, and that these Justices have lifetime appointments!

With a Republican President in the White House, a totally Republican Congress with extremists to do his bidding, and an ultraconservative Supreme Court to reverse over 40 years of progress on civil rights and other advances on behalf of average American children, workers and the elderly, the separation of powers and our system of checks and balances go down the drain.

THE SOLUTION

The Republican legislators have demonstrated an abuse of power in rejecting honest debate, squelching opposition to their agenda with misleading rhetoric, using misleading titles on legislation to mask the true intent, showing no empathy for the needs and ambitions of our citizens, engaging in unethical practices such as contracting for fake reporting and siding with big business regardless of the effect on large segments of our population, and passing regressive legislation with impunity.

There is only one solution this impasse—TAKE BACK THE CONGRESS!!!

Tenth Dems Buttons— Unique, and Potentially Valuable

by Ross Nickow

In the summer and fall of 2004, during the frantic months leading up to the November election, a walk down the streets of almost any city in the United States might have revealed political buttons pinned to shirts, backpacks, hats, sweaters or purses, anywhere a 1 1/2 to 3-inch circle could fit. Americans wanted their views seen and many hoped buttons could be a starting point for conversations during which they could advocate for their favorite candidates and issues.

In the Tenth Congressional District of Illinois the buttons proudly worn by many Democrats were unique. The buttons seen on this page were created, designed and distributed exclusively by the Tenth Congressional District Democrats. Each button displayed an original design and was produced in limited quantities by a union manufacturer.

First introduced last summer, these buttons quickly became collectors' items. Three members of the Tenth Dems Administrative Committee—Dottie Palumbo and John Hmurovic, both longtime button collectors, and Carol Jones, a graphic designer—created exclusive buttons for the Tenth Dems.

The Tenth Dems' button collection has been displayed around the country at conventions of the American Political Item Collectors (APIC). The buttons have been sold and traded in Wisconsin, New York, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Arizona, Texas and Minnesota. "There are many people out there who are very seriously into buttons," observed Dottie Palumbo.

One Tenth Dems button, a 3-inch diameter button featuring the images of John Kerry and John Edwards along with that of then Illinois candidate and now U.S. Senator Barack Obama, was sold to a collector on eBay for \$86. Many people are hoarding Obama campaign buttons in hopes that their value rises along with his political career.

"Very few political organizations create and sell their own buttons, anymore," said Hmurovic, who started collecting buttons as part of a Cub Scout project when he was eight years old. "Buttons used to be produced by political campaigns to promote candidates. Today, most buttons are made by vendors. A vendor makes buttons for Democrats and Republicans. He doesn't care about promoting a candidate. He just wants to make money. That's what makes the Tenth Dems buttons unique, and more valuable to collectors."

The main purpose of the Tenth Dems buttons was to get the Democratic message out in a very visible way—candidates' names, faces and issues were carried around the 10th District and beyond by passionate constituents.

In addition, the funds raised from button sales were used to support local campaigns and the work of Tenth Dems. Selling from \$2 to \$5 each, buttons continue to be a fundraising tool for Tenth Dems.

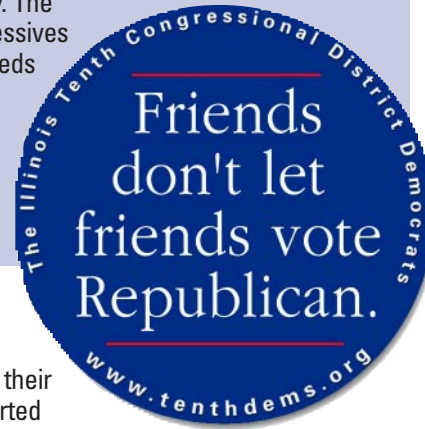
Anyone who would like to learn more about availability of Tenth Dems buttons and button orders may e-mail DDPButtons@aol.com. Several new buttons are currently on sale and are certain to become collectors' items, with more planned as the 2006 election approaches. The latest buttons feature slogans about Social Security, religion and a "blue" frame of mind. There is also a button that reads, simply and succinctly: REPUBLICANS: UNCHECKED AND UNBALANCED.

Enter The Tenth Dems Button Contest

With many political and social issues dividing the nation and the mid-term elections around the corner, the Tenth Congressional District Democrats are prepared to produce a new line of buttons to reflect the Democratic mindset...and we need your help.

Submit a slogan idea or design to Tenth Dems at DDPButtons@aol.com and you might soon find it being worn on clothing and accessories around the 10th District and beyond. If your idea is chosen, you will receive a six-inch, one-of-a-kind, prototype button with your slogan printed on it, recognition in the Tenth Dems Newsletter, and the right to brag to family and friends that you have helped spread the word that our government could...and should...do better. Submit just a slogan or feel free to design a button with graphics. All entries will be considered.

Slogans for buttons are most effective when they are clever and concise—usually five to six words. Topics can range from the environment to education, from civil liberties to religion or any of the political and social issues being debated throughout the district, country and world. Issues can have local or national implications. Please avoid profanity. Be passionate, thoughtful or funny. The message of Progressives and Democrats needs to be spread and buttons are an effective way of getting the message out.



Tenth Dems top button sales-producers Sharon Narrod, Dottie Palumbo and Ellen Gill.

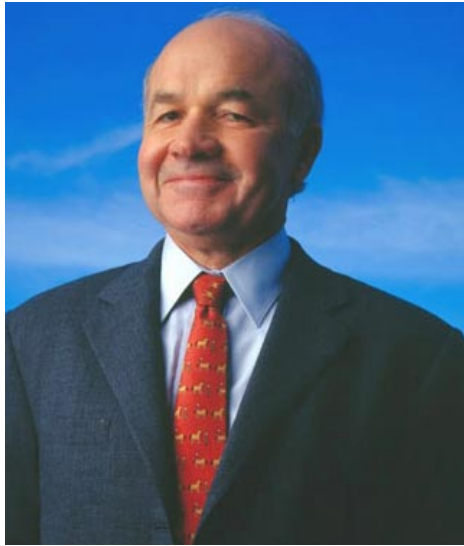
Button on page 4 also available.

Buttons shown here are prototypes, some variation in the actual order may occur.



The Tenth Dems Go to the Movies

On Sunday May 1st, the Tenth Dems will enjoy a screening of the new movie, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, about the Enron accounting scandal. The documentary tells the story of how it was not Enron alone but a network of bankers, traders and accountants who turned a blind eye to the company's clearly suspicious numbers. Highlights include footage of employees revealing unbridled greed, lust for risk-taking and guiltless cheating, all while thinking they could never be caught.



Following the movie, there will be an informal discussion at Michael's in Highland Park across from the Renaissance Theater. Movie goers can express their concerns about the culture of corporate America, which enjoys protections from the Republicans and promotes an environment conducive to these disastrous business practices.

For future movie events and other sponsored programs, please check our website regularly.
www.tenthdems.org.

Sunday Night at the Movies:

Documentary Film and Discussion for Democrats

ENRON:

The Smartest Guys in the Room

The special Sunday night showing is sponsored by
The Tenth Congressional District Democrats

Now playing at Renaissance Theater, Highland Park

Flooding *continued from page 1*

On a specific level, the MWRD will "be able to enact a county-wide ordinance that will give them the ability to issue permits," Nekritz said. "So if someone wants to build in the flood plain, they'll have to go to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and get a permit, which allows the MWRD to control growth."

Additionally, they will set up councils for each of the six or seven watersheds in Cook County. "Each of the municipalities and townships affected by that watershed will come together and develop a plan for addressing stormwater for that watershed."

The MWRD will balance all those plans and start implementing them.

Some options to control stormwater include using pumps and levies. Unfortunately, Nekritz noted, federal funds previously allocated for a levy in Mount Prospect have "been zeroed out" by President Bush.

"On the green side of this, we need to develop natural prairie areas," Nekritz said, noting that compared to Kentucky Blue Grass with two inch roots, natural prairie grass has six foot roots that can absorb a lot of rain water.

"Where we have open space, we really need to encourage people to do green infrastructure and restore the native plants around here," she emphasized.

While it may sound like an obviously winning idea, it took some legislative maneuvering to make it law, Nekritz said. "It was a big fight." The first time around, after barely passing the legislature, Governor Rod Blagojevich vetoed the bill. The legislature then overrode the veto, which took quite a few additional votes. The stumbling block for some was the tax increase to pay for the new authority.

"The Water Reclamation District now has the authority to raise its levy by a nickel per \$100,000 of assessed valuation outside the tax cap," she said, which at current evaluations, allows them to raise \$55 million.

The new law couldn't have come too soon for Nekritz.

The more the area gets built up and filled in by new construction, she said, "the water just runs off faster and faster, and gets to the rivers faster and they swell and flood. For places upstream in the 10th District, such as Gurnee that flooded last spring... if we can all work together to address the problem, it will help Gurnee in the long run as well. And we'll have more access to federal dollars. It's just a win-win all around."

Write to the Tenth Dems Newsletter

If you have a comment or thought you'd like to have included in the Tenth Dems Newsletter, email us at comments@tenthdems.org. We will gladly consider letters, articles or columns from our readers. Please include your name and phone number for verification, as well as your city of residence.



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