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Lake County Clerk candidate Sharon Narrod is making her first run for public office. Between now and election day she will give us a regular account of what it's like to be a candidate. This is Part 1 in that series of articles.

A Candidate's Diary: Sharon Narrod, Candidate for Lake County Clerk

"Courage!"

—Answer by the Lion from the Wizard of Oz to the question, "What makes the dawn come up like thunder?"

In some ways it is a very easy decision, almost deceptively so.

For years I have been a political activist, speaking about the responsibility of being a member of a participatory democracy. I am a true believer in public service. For any of you out there who have been passionate about the issues of the day (and of days gone by), it is not too great a mental leap to say to yourself, if I was in charge, if it was up to me, and so on. Like the cowardly lion in the *Wizard of Oz*, whose

anthem "If I Were King of the Forest," masked a security born of cowardice that he would never find himself in that position, I guess I was free to opine, knowing that I would never be put to the test.

So what happened? I grew up and realized that the people running things (into the ground as it were) are my age, that I had in my possession something called experience, and that there was no great mystery to getting your name on a ballot. Even so, I hesitated. There is holding

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Tenth News

MAY 2006 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 3, Edition 5

Dan Seals Goes to Israel

by Jane Goldenberg

"Our common values of freedom and democracy will always tie us to Israel." – Dan Seals

You don't need to hire a top-notch consultant to know that Israel is a pivotal issue in the 10th Congressional District. In the decades since John Porter held the seat later won by his former staffer, Mark Kirk, some voters concerned about maintaining strong U.S. support of Israel have felt comfortable casting a vote for the Republican candidate.



What will it take to swing these voters back into the Democratic column?

Dan Seals, the Democratic Congressional candidate, appreciating that he needed to advance his first-hand awareness of the area, traveled to Israel last month, where he met with 16 people in four days to see for himself the issues and concerns of this critically important ally of the United States.

As he described the issue, he pointed out that "it's one of the few issues where Mark Kirk and I agree."

"My goal was to understand the issues impacting support for Israel and peace and stability in the region," said Seals. "So I went with the hope of meeting with politicians, regular Israelis, businessmen, diplomats, academics, journalists, folks who could give me a better perspective."

He also visited such historic sites as the Wailing Wall, Masada, and Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum.

Seals noted the successful Israeli economy – known for its innovations in biotechnology and engineering – creates opportunities for trade. He also gained a further appreciation for the difficulties inherent in establishing security.

"The first thing that hit me over the head is that the Jewish and Arab areas aren't separated by miles; they're separated by feet," he noted. "It's hard to establish a peace because it's hard to establish security."



Congressional candidate Dan Seals hears from Nehemia Dagan, a retired Brigadier General from the Israeli Defense Forces, while traveling through Israel last month.

Continued on page 5; Also see page 4

Kirk Votes For (Speaks Against) Immigration Bill

by John Hmurovic

Mark Kirk is for strict enforcement of immigration ... unless he's against it.

Is that line confusing? Well, so are Mark Kirk's positions on immigration reform, and so is his position on a number of issues when you take a closer look.

At the heart of the national debate over immigration reform is the legislation proposed by Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisconsin). Virtually everyone agrees that something needs to be done to deal with the problem of illegal aliens. According to many, however, the Sensenbrenner proposal goes too far. If, for example, a young person from another country is here on a student visa and lets her course load drop below a certain number of hours, under the Sensenbrenner bill she is subject to arrest and imprisonment. If a priest offers help to a mother and child who are here illegally, he is subject to a fine and five years of imprisonment.

Mark Kirk voted for the Sensenbrenner bill, and it passed the House by a vote of 239-182.

But now, Mark Kirk apparently feels that he voted for a flawed bill. When asked about his vote by the *Pioneer Press* he brushed aside his decision and said that "the criminal penalties provision for illegal immigrants likely will be eliminated when the final legislation is produced."

If the bill was flawed, why didn't he vote against it in the first place, instead of expecting the Senate to clean up the mess that he and his colleagues created? It's not like they didn't have a chance to improve the bill while it was in the House. In fact, Democrats wanted to introduce a number of amendments that would have improved the Sensenbrenner bill, but the Republicans, including Mark Kirk, blocked the Democratic ideas from even being considered by the House.

So we are left wondering: does Mark Kirk support the Sensenbrenner approach with its harsh enforcement of immigration policy, or does he feel that approach is a mistake?

Unfortunately, being vague is a hallmark of Mark Kirk as a congressman. How does he feel about attempts to take money away from the Social Security system and put it into the always risky stock market? Who knows? After years of national debate on the issue, he still won't make a clear statement on it. Don't believe me? Check out his website, do a Google search, read the letters he has written to constituents in response to the issue, and see if you can find a clear statement.

Does he really believe we should protect the Alaska wilderness from oil drilling? He says he does. He even points to some votes he has taken on the issue. But the key word in that last sentence is "some." In fact, he avoids any mention of his vote on March 17, 2005, when he supported a backdoor maneuver that allowed oil drilling in the Alaska wilderness. He also avoids any mention of his vote on November 19, 2005, when he blocked an attempt to strip oil drilling in Alaska from the defense spending bill.

A Washington beltway magazine, *The Hill*, recently did a personal profile of Mark Kirk in which it asked him such things as "What is the last book you have read?" (A book about the mutiny on the Bounty, in case you're wondering). It also asked, "What is your hobby?" His answer: Politics.

Maybe that's the problem. Mark Kirk is a professional politician who is very skilled at the job of getting elected. One talent he has is avoiding controversial issues (as he is doing with Social Security). But if he is forced to take a stand on a tough issue, he is also skilled at flipping in one direction to please some people, and flopping the other way to please the other side (as he did with oil drilling, and seems to be doing with immigration reform). It's a political art. But is it the trait of a good leader?

Bob Dylan once sang that "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows." True. All you need is a politician running for re-election. Want to know which way the political winds are blowing locally? Watch Mark Kirk. President Bush, who loves to call friends and acquaintances by nicknames, once called Kirk "Marky." Kirk was later quoted as saying he would prefer if the president called him "Rooster." Rooster is a better name for the congressman, because just like the rooster on a wind vane, Mark Kirk's position changes whenever he senses a shift in the political wind direction. Is that leadership? I don't think so.



Proud to be in the Opposition

by James Rosen

It's 2006 and this is not a dress rehearsal. This November, Democrats have a real opportunity to take back the House, or Senate, or both. You want to see real change in the reckless policies of the Bush Administration? Vote Democratic. Donate to a Democratic candidate. Bring up the issue of voting to restore checks and balances to a friend or neighbor. Do something. Do anything.

Republicans, I remind you, told you for years they thought government was the problem, and when they took control they proved their theory with reckless abandon. The corruption was just the cherry on top.

Alright, you say, but what would the Democrats do about Iraq? Well the first thing is to remind people that whatever happens in Iraq we should not let those who led us there be in charge when the next call to arms goes out. Sending just enough troops to fail, and without the equipment needed to protect themselves, is something Democrats should oppose. Remember, we are the opposition party. Act like it. Be proud of it.

I remember in the Clinton years the Republican House held investigations on just about anything, including the White House's Christmas card list. The Republican Congress refuses to do their oversight job on anything the Bush Administration has done but has plenty of time to subpoena professional baseball players and ask them about steroids. So, Yes! Democrats should be opposed to Congress not doing their job. Remember, we are the opposition party. Act like it! Be proud of it!

So it's an election year again and this is not a dress rehearsal. So vote. Donate. Persuade a persuadable. Put up a lawn sign. Display a bumper sticker. Show the community we are not alone out there as the opposition party.

Act like it! Be proud of it! I am.

You can read more from James Rosen on his blog, *The Daily Curmudgeon*, at <http://thedailycurmudgeon.blogspot.com>



Our Democracy is in Danger

by George Rosenblit

It's frightening! The Republicans now have control of the country, from the White House to the Congress, and we now have an imbalance in the Supreme Court toward the right. According to our Constitution, the three branches of government are supposed to provide checks and balances on each other to preserve our democracy. Instead, our Constitution is being subverted or ignored as we lose the protections of democratic principles because of the absolute power sought by our current government.

It's frightening, because the Republican Congress has written laws without input from Democratic members who have been locked out of the process, but the Republicans have allowed lobbyists of large corporations to participate in writing legislation! And the Republican Party is responsible for a culture of corruption wherein this party in power has accepted cash, gifts, lavish vacations and the use of corporate aircraft in return for this special favor to lobbyists. This is an ethical meltdown with dire consequences.

Taxpayers, you and I, end up footing the bill. When corporations get what they want in legislation, it costs consumers more money for products and services. This legislation can also result in a reduction in product quality and environmental safety, as well as the outsourcing of product development, computer software development and product manufacture.

The result of outsourcing, in most cases, is loss of jobs, loss of pensions and loss of healthcare benefits. As well, there is a loss of leadership in innovation, which can result in future decline of new products and markets.

In this single-minded search for absolute power, our civil liberties are in peril. We must remain alert to protect our right to privacy by speaking out against unconstitutional wiretapping and spying on innocent citizens in this country.

President Bush said he is above the law and can do anything he wants to because he is commander-in-chief in time of war. But that isn't true because no person is above the law, as legal scholars have stated and as President Nixon found out.

Congress has finally shown its backbone in having hearings on the takeover of our ports in spite of Bush's threat to veto any legislation preventing the takeover. However, the United Arab Emirate's company unilaterally withdrew its acquisition program in the face of both public and congressional action. As some congressmen have stated, we must still be vigilant to see how this is handled.

Speaking of war, President Bush, once again, is pushing the theme that only he and his Republican government can protect us from attack by terrorists. In reality, the actions of the Bush-Cheney team have created terrorists where there were none, and they continue to do so.

Bush once again plans to hold the fear of an attack on American soil by terrorists over our heads to deter us from criticizing his actions and those of his party during this forthcoming election cycle. How can he intimate that only he and his governance can manage this situation when it has shown lack of forward planning and ineptness in implementation?



How can we trust our current government to protect us against any emergency? It has failed to act decisively to save lives along the Gulf Coast immediately following the Gulf Coast hurricanes. Homeland Security is still a long way from being really effective. Our ports are not adequately protected. About 95 percent of incoming cargo containers are not being inspected!

This Administration has sent our troops into Iraq with no plan to deal with the aftermath. Our very brave and loyal soldiers even now do not have enough proper body armor to save their lives.

If we do not wake up, America, and let our voices be heard on every issue that may diminish our constitutional rights, we will surely lose our right to free speech. Our loss of other democratic freedoms is sure to follow.

And what has our Congressman Kirk done to remedy these problems of outrageous relationships between congressmen and lobbyists, all the horrific consequences of outsourcing and the protection of our civil rights? Nothing that I know of.

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Dan Seals Campaign is Getting Noticed

Outraises Kirk in 1st Quarter of 2006

by John Hmurovic

No one doubts that Mark Kirk, as an incumbent congressman, is a formidable candidate as he tries for a fourth term. The people who make the laws know how to make certain that the deck is stacked in their favor. Challengers are not taken seriously until (and most don't even get to this point) they prove that they should be taken seriously. Early indications show that Dan Seals has quickly become a serious candidate.

In a political campaign, it starts and ends with money. A challenger must raise enough money to get the attention of the political insiders. For most challengers, it's a chicken-and-egg problem. You don't get noticed until you begin to raise a lot of money. But how do you raise money if your campaign isn't receiving attention? The answer: You work very hard at face-to-face politics, convincing the potential donors you meet that you can do the job and that you can run a strong campaign.

If you raise a decent amount of money in this way, the political insiders will notice. Then, when the political writers talk to the insiders, they will be told that you are someone to keep an eye on. The political writers will then begin to write about you. Other potential donors will read about you and give to your campaign. None of this is easy for a challenger to accomplish, but that's what separates the "candidates" from the "strong candidates." As the pieces of a good campaign fall into place, a serious challenge can be mounted to an incumbent. Dan Seals is rapidly moving in that direction.

Democrats in Washington Paying Attention to Seals

In some ways, political insiders are like fanatic baseball fans. Baseball fans go right to the box score in the morning newspaper and look over the numbers to see how each player did in last night's games. Political insiders bring that same zeal to looking over campaign finance reports. To them, an equivalent to someone hitting a home run or pitching nine shutout innings is a candidate who raises more money than expected. In the first quarter of 2006, Dan Seals raised a significant amount of money. He got their attention.

The people at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) are political

insiders. When they noticed how much he had raised they started talking about it. In a recent news release the DCCC included Seals in a short list of Democratic candidates who "are not only competitive with their opponents, (but) are outraising their GOP counterparts." In the first quarter of 2006, Seals outraised Congressman Mark Kirk by \$26,000. Kirk still has a substantial cash advantage from money raised in previous campaigns, but as the DCCC notes, it's clear that Seals has "momentum going into the 2nd quarter of 2006."

If you want to learn more about Dan Seals' position on issues, or to donate to his campaign, go to his website at www.dansealsforcongress.com

Newspapers Begin to Write About the Campaign

The newspapers then began to notice. *Daily Herald* political reporter Eric Krol recently wrote that Dan Seals is beginning to earn the attention that comes to a strong candidate. "With the 6th and 8th Congressional District contests dominating news coverage," Krol wrote, "another potential sleeper of a suburban congressional race is flying under the radar. In the 10th Congressional District, Democrat Dan Seals quietly has raised a decent amount of money in a short period of time. His campaign finance report filed this month shows him with \$374,000 raised so far and \$245,000 in the bank to start April. Not too shabby for a guy who got in late. Early reviews indicate that Seals... seems to be the strongest candidate the Democrats have fielded since then-state Rep. Lauren Beth Gash lost the open seat in 2000."

Gash barely lost that seat, receiving 49 percent of the vote in her race against Kirk. Since then, the district has become even more Democratic, with John Kerry receiving 53 percent of the vote here in 2004. A strong Democratic candidate can win in the 10th

District. More people are beginning to think that Dan Seals may be that candidate.

Political Blogs Begin to Pay Attention

The buzz about Seals has also begun to spread to the political blogs. Markos Moulitsas Zúniga of the nationally known *Daily Kos* was in the 10th District recently and wrote after his visit that he "heard more than one person call Dan Seals 'the next Obama.'" And although the Seals race hasn't garnered the attention of two other local Congressional races... Tammy Duckworth (District 6) or Melissa Bean (District 8)... "the locals think this one can be a stealth winner."

The Bottom Line

Money is a part of politics. With it, the Seals campaign can get out the truth about Mark Kirk's voting record. Kirk, who claims to be a moderate Republican, has been a strong backer of the Administration's policies in Iraq from the start (and continues to be today). He has gone along with the Bush Administration's reckless tax cutting and spending policies. In fact, he has been a reliable vote for every major program of the Bush Administration. He is far from being a "thoughtful, independent leader," as he likes to portray himself in his campaign material. He has been nothing more than a rubber stamp for George W. Bush.

Kirk has done a good job of keeping his votes out of the public eye. Did you know, for example, that he believes the government, not a spouse, should decide on medical matters for a family? He voted for the government to take control of the Terry Schiavo case in Florida last year. Even on those rare occasions when he doesn't support the right-wing Bush policies, his presence on the Republican side of the aisle helps give the GOP control of Congress, which allows them to push through their ultra-conservative agenda.

A strong campaign by Dan Seals will let voters know about Kirk's voting record. With enough money, Dan Seals can also get out his own positions on the issues, which will show that he is much more in touch with this district than Mark Kirk. Early indications are, we will have a good race for Congress in the 10th District.

Dan Seals in Israel, *continued from page 1*

Seals said he was told by retired Brig. Gen. Nehemia Dagan of the Israeli Defense Forces that, "Everybody has their own truth."

Foremost among Israelis' concerns is keeping their families safe, Seals noted. Dagan told Seals that Israel has pursued the strategy of unilateral disengagement rather than negotiation because the Palestinians haven't been able to enforce agreements. This was the case before Hamas – a sponsor of terrorist activity in Israel – gained political control of the Palestinian parliament, Dagan nod.

Jerusalem Post Editor-in-Chief David Horowitz and political reporter Gil Hoffman, told Seals that they were skeptical that Hamas could ever really change and accept the State of Israel's existence, one of the points the United States insists upon before releasing about \$300 million in foreign aid.

What Israelis hope for is that Hamas will concentrate its efforts on the welfare of its people, while only paying lip service to its oft-stated goal to destroy the State of Israel, Seals said.

Seals' own position, as stated in his policy paper on his website, is that the United States "must isolate Hamas and make it clear to them that they will be international pariahs until they change their stated goals and activities."

Seals did not meet with any Palestinians on this trip, but plans to in the future. "I think if you want to have a complete picture, you need to talk to all sides," he explained.

It is clear that Israel and many Jewish ideals – particularly Tikkun Olam, the idea that we all have an obligation to our



Dan Seals at the Western Wall on his recent visit to Israel.

communities and that we're all connected – hold a fascination for Seals, who attended a JCC (Jewish Community Center) camp as a kid. And he says he looks forward to his next trip to Israel.

For more information about Seals position on Israel, go to dansealsforcongress.com.

The Unreported

Air War

by Annette Jacobson

A small news headline in the Washington Post late last year, "U.S. Air Strikes Take Toll on Civilians," revealed that there is an ongoing air war in Iraq, and it is largely being waged without publicity or major reporting, except in scattered and short military announcements. Air strikes by the US military in Iraq have surged, jumping this year to nearly five times the average monthly rate from earlier last year.

Though it receives little coverage in the U.S. media, the Air Force, Marines, and Navy have flown thousands of missions in support of ground offensives in Iraq. Independent journalist Dahr Jamail, in a published article in mid-December, quoted figures provided by Central Command Air Force's public affairs office showing that the number of air missions including air support grew from 1,111 in September 2005 alone to 1,492 in December. The numbers in January and February were progressively higher still. U.S. and Coalition aircraft carry out the attacks daily, using frontline Air Force and Navy fighters as well as Marine attack planes and unmanned Predator aircraft armed with Hellfire missiles.

The Pentagon claims that "Every precaution is taken to protect innocent Iraqi civilians, facilities and infrastructure," and that 70 percent of all munitions used are "precision-



guided." This statement (sounding so benign)

does not, or course, describe the devastation they cause in the urban areas they naturally cause.

The ordnance used ranges in explosive power from 250 to 2,000 pounds. As reported by Dahr Jamail, "The 2,000 pound bomb has the capacity to blast a crater in a concrete street 70 feet in diameter and 30 feet deep, has a blast radius of 110 feet within which human beings will die, while fragmentation from the bomb casing can achieve velocities up to 9,000 feet a second and reach areas over 3,000 feet from the detonation site."

The bombing runs are usually in densely inhabited areas of cities and towns where much of the resistance is said to be located. It's obvious that people living within the range of detonation will be killed or severely injured.

It has been over three years since the start of the American-led invasion of Iraq. The estimates of Iraqi civilians killed range all the way from 30,000 (George Bush) to 250,000 (various independent and professional observers). The numbers of



injured in hospital wards and neighborhoods are two to three times those numbers and overwhelmingly are innocent civilians.

The recent talk from Washington mentions withdrawing some

troops, particularly around election time. Because there is little reporting about the air war, the public is led to assume that a reduction of troop levels will mean a drop in air actions as well.

But the report by Seymour Hersh in the *New Yorker* states: "A key element in the drawdown plans not mentioned in the President's public statements is that the departing American troops will be replaced by (increased) American air power." One is left to wonder how much more devastation can be sustained by the Iraqi people more than already caused by the current level of bombing, particularly now in the towns in the western Anbar province and the Euphrates River Valley.

And, as Hersh states, "As yet neither Congress nor the public has engaged in a significant discussion or debate about the air war." Nor, I would add, about a bombing policy resulting in the collective punitive treatment of civilian populations.

The major U.S. news media are not widely reporting on the extent of the urban bombardment, nor the horrendous consequences for the people who suffer under it.

Sharon Narrod, *Continued from page 1*

political office and there is running for political office. Doing the former well is what gets you free press and a shot at re-election, doing the latter well is a job in and of itself.

That was the part that had me hesitant. It's not hubris to say that I know that I can do the job well (and better) than the current officeholder. But, could I run the race, raise the money, and fire up an efficient and enthusiastic campaign? It's a work in progress. Could I let go (at least temporarily) of the things I enjoy to do for something so unknown? And most of all, could I stand being a politician?

What clinched my decision? County officeholders are not considered to be high profile. In a sense that is as it should be. They provide the essential infrastructure that should go unnoticed from day to day, for the most part. So, why and how do I make people understand that it is these vital offices that should be of most concern to all of us?

The county clerk oversees elections. Sounds innocent enough, until you look at what happened in Florida, and Ohio and Hawaii and many, many other states in the last elections. That's what I did. I looked, I listened, and then I turned my attention to our own county clerk and how our vital elections were handled.

I did not like what I saw regarding Election Day shenanigans. I did not like what I heard about the behavior of some judges. And, most of all, I did not like the determination that we had a clerk who seemed to be averse to every positive piece of election legislation (Motor Voter, Early Voting).

That's when I decided to try, at least this once, to move from a posture of "if I were in charge" to "when I am in office." It was a scary decision at first. But having made it, I am committed to winning the race. It's an adventure that has given me some high and low moments; with more to come I'm sure.

The decision to run, and the support of those you need to put that decision into play, gave me my first step into the world of politics. You need the support of your party. I suppose you could go ahead, as others have done, and forge ahead on your own. But winning is about voting, and if those individuals who have the greatest amount of experience in your backyard are confident that you've made a good choice, so much the better.

I had many, many conversations with local Democratic Party leaders, as well as my larger circle of grassroots activist friends. When I told people I was going to run, did they have a look of disbelief or delight? Were they excited to help or lukewarm? The paperwork of getting your name on the ballot is the first piece of work: Filing, getting petitions signed, getting other people to get your petitions signed, helping others get their petitions signed.

As I bundled up at 5:30 a.m. on what had to be the coldest day of the winter to head out to the train station to ask commuters for their signature on my petitions, I was sooooo cold, but sooooo excited. When I had half a dozen of my supporters show up at the station along with me, I felt like Sally Fields at the Oscars ("They like me, they really like me!").

And I have been meeting many, many new people, explaining in quick time why I want to be Lake County Clerk, and most of all urging people to vote, and get others to do so. After all, this is the basis for my decision.

I genuinely love meeting new people, and I am keenly interested in hearing from others. So, although it meant being out of the house most every night up to the primary, this was the brightest part of campaigning.



State Rep, Kathy Ryg (l) with Sharon Narrod (r)

Running unopposed in the primary made election night somewhat of a non-event for me. Old habits die hard, and I was much, much more interested in the contested races around me.

Now the hard work begins in earnest. My biggest disappointment is a record low voter turnout in my county, just 22 percent. At least I can now say, when (not if) I were clerk, I am going to make it a priority to see that number go up.

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Things To Do, Places To Be!

Be certain to check with www.tenthdems.org for any additions or changes to this list, including charges or donations to attend some events.

Lake County Democracy For America Meetup

Thursday, May 4, 7:00 p.m.
Flanagan's Restaurant
3201 Buckley Road
North Chicago

Congressman John Murtha (D-Pennsylvania) in Evanston

Sunday, May 7, 3:00 p.m.
Northwestern University
Norris Student Center
Evanston



Palatine, Wheeling & Elk Grove Dems Talk Medicare Part D

Wednesday, May 10, 7:00 p.m.
La Mirage
3223 Algonquin Road
Rolling Meadows

Navigating Prescription Drug Plans

Friday, May 12, 10:00 a.m.
Waukegan Public Library
128 N. County Street
Waukegan

Comedy Benefit for Habitat for Humanity Katrina Relief with Aaron Freeman

Monday, May 15, 6:00 p.m.
Zanie's
1548 N. Wells
Chicago



Senator Joe Biden (D-Delaware) in Chicago

Monday, May 22, 5:45 p.m.
437 Rush Street
Chicago



Growing a Grassroots Group

by Carol Jones

In the months leading up to the March 21st primary, Tenth Dems decided to work with various Democratic township organizations to hold candidate forums at the township level. This was a great concept – bringing candidates before voters in every township. But as I became more familiar with the various townships in the 10th Congressional District, I became sadly aware that one township lacked a Democratic organization and had few precinct committeemen. It was my own: Shields Township, which encompasses parts of North Chicago, Knollwood, Lake Forest and all of Lake Bluff.



Since joining the Tenth Dems in its early stages, I came to appreciate the structure of the 10th District and the twelve townships that comprise it. Each Democratic township organization has its own individuality and approach to grassroots work. In some townships, door-to-door canvassing prior to elections is well orchestrated by precinct committeemen. In others, mass mailing projects, or phoning, work best. Some townships have successfully run their own slates of Democratic candidates in recent elections...and won!

So while other Democratic township groups were organizing their candidate forums, Stephen Morgan (another Shields resident) and I decided to have a Shields Township Democratic Candidate Forum despite the

lack of a Shields Democratic organization. Thanks to the expertise and help of Tenth Dems, it was a great success. More than 60 people participated in the forum held at Flanagan's restaurant in North Chicago on March 2.

Since then we have grown to a group of about eight people, from every part of the township. We look forward to campaigning for candidates in the November elections. We are planning an event for June 25 to meet our representatives, candidates and neighbors. If you live in Shields, watch the mail and *Tenth News* for an invitation. We will soon have a website, Shieldsdemocrats.org, and we are seeking fellow Shields residents to join in our fun! E-mail me if you are interested in helping a grassroots group grow at cjoneshouse@comcast.net.



The New Shields Democrats (l to r): Trude Roselle, Mike Pierret, Stephen Morgan, Dottie Fletcher, Nicki Snoblin, North Chicago Ald. Shaunese Teamer, Elizabeth "Joy" Guscott-Mueller. Not pictured: Carol Jones

Civil Unions Take “Marriage” out of Equation, Leave Legal Status Intact

by Mark Paul

There’s no sign the GOP plans to stop exploiting homophobia with ballot initiatives forbidding gay marriage.

Unfortunately, Democrats have been remarkably incoherent when discussing the issue, often pitching civil unions as some sort of compromise measure created specifically to satisfy the demands of the gay community.

Democrats seem to believe the virtues of gay and lesbian civil unions are self-evident to those directly affected and no explanations are necessary for anyone else. It’s the kind of identity politics that’s become so institutionalized within our party that the home page for the DNC’s website has an entire category of links to discrete “communities.”

Our incoherence hasn’t helped my gay and lesbian friends gain the legal recognition their loving relationships deserve. It gives Republicans an opportunity to play to their fundamentalist base while leaving the vast middle vaguely uncomfortable with an issue that seems to have absolutely no relevance to them.

It’s time to borrow a chapter from the GOP operations manual, the one devoted to estate taxes. Republicans don’t regard this issue as satisfying the demands of the inherited wealth community. Instead, the GOP renamed it the death tax, so it speaks to the nearly universal American dream to become rich. Only a very few voters actually leave enough to be subject to an estate tax, but everyone dies.

Civil union is universal. In fact, it is the only spousal relationship recognized by the state, equally valid whether it is conducted in a church by a minister with the extended families and friends of both parties present or it is performed by a legally qualified Elvis impersonator in a Las Vegas wedding chapel at 3 a.m.

The state doesn’t care about the circumstances, and it shouldn’t care about sexual identity just as it finally learned to not care about racial identity. It’s only registering a boilerplate contract covered by a large body of black ink and case law. And until it begins requiring reproductive system tests for heterosexual couples and denying post-menopausal women the right to marry, the ability to conceive is irrelevant.



Marriage connotes a religiously sanctioned wedding, and this is the heart of the problem many voters have with gay marriage. In the back of the minds of many, in ways they’ll never articulate, the term implies that

clergy might be required to perform the ceremony in their sanctuaries or face legal sanctions like those imposed on employers and landlords found guilty of racial discrimination.

If we carefully focus on civil union, however, we can claim the religious freedom issue, building on an analogy already familiar to voters: Many clergy decline to perform interfaith weddings and do so without fearing a lawsuit. Democrats often find ourselves (correctly) defending the church-state barrier to restrict religion from the public sphere. Here’s an opportunity to defend that same wall to keep government out of sanctified space.

A number of gay and lesbian couples and their children participated this year in the annual Easter egg roll held on the White House lawn. Based on the photos that appeared in the *Washington Post*, these families were ordinary Americans, indistinguishable from the heterosexual families. There were a few protesters outside the gate claiming to have received divine guidance. They were screaming at children that they and their parents will go to hell.

On that day, at least, the Republican position only represented the extremists.

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