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Big Oil Owns Republican Lawmakers

by Gary Lukens

I find it reprehensible that our GOP-dominated congress rejected a plan to repeal the horrendous tax breaks given to oil companies. Instead of taxing Big Oil as it should be taxed, this over-lobbied group of politicians has proposed giving us \$100 toward buying gas.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't our government borrowing from Peter to pay Paul? The money given to us in gas rebates is essentially ours to begin with. I have a better idea – why not make the fat cats at Big Oil pay for that \$100 out of their own pockets. After all, this year and last year have been boom years for profits.

It doesn't take a genius to realize oil companies have Republicans in their back pocket. Each year Big Oil gives millions to Republicans, while Democrats get the leftover crumbs. With friends in high places (see President Bush), Big Oil has created an oligarchy that dictates the financial fortunes of millions of Americans.

Moreover, everyone seems to be hurting from higher gas prices but Big Oil. With President Bush suspending environmental rules concerning refineries and transportation, the environment will certainly feel the impact. More toxins will find their way into our lakes and rivers – not to mention the atmosphere – which obviously will create problems our children will have to deal with later on.

Then there's the proposed suspension of the federal gas tax. I don't see how this could cause anything but a chain reaction of more problems. Federal, state, and civic governments need that money to build, maintain and fix roads. I'm not one to applaud taxes, but it

Democracy in Action

The American Experiment Is Fueled By Volunteers

by Sharon Narrod

On any given night (or day for that matter) during the political season, you can find candidates willing to talk to you about who they are and why they are running. For some, "political season" is an oxymoron. Either you have just finished a race, are gearing up for a race, considering a race or running a race. Most people don't pay



attention until several weeks before an election. In truth, many people don't pay attention even then.

As a candidate, it is simply impossible to accomplish all that needs to be done without a campaign "staff." You

A Candidate's Diary
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 2 in that series of articles.

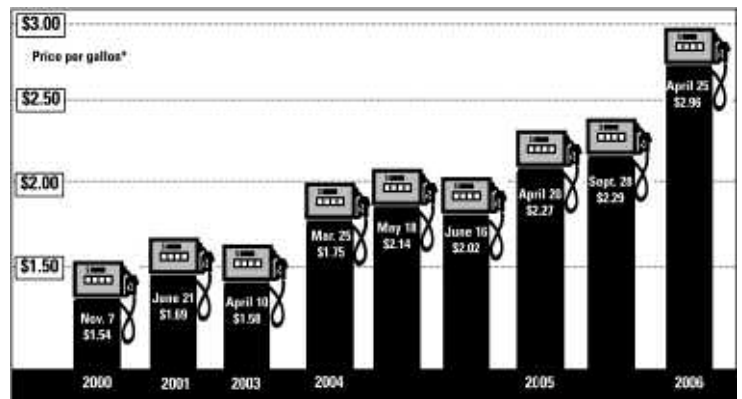
need people to stuff envelopes, plant lawn signs, make phone calls, create websites, check facts, schedule events and create a calendar. This is not a complete list by any means. For me, the issue becomes the attractiveness of my particular campaign. It doesn't have the aura of a federal race (think "West Wing"), and there is no glamour. Most of the time, you wind up doing the volunteer work along with your volunteers.

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Tenth News

JUNE 2006 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 3, Edition 6



Mark Kirk has backed George Bush's policy of giving Big Oil everything it wants. Has the Bush/Kirk policy worked? Here is the average price of regular gas in the Chicago area since Bush and Kirk were first elected. For more details on Kirk's support of Big Oil, go to www.tenthdems.org

would seem silly to remove it just because oil companies raise the price of gas. Once again Big Oil assaults the American consumer, yet emerges from the ruins unscathed.

And speaking of the American consumer, the final showdown will come from our response. Will Americans alter their driving habits and become more frugal at the pump? Will Americans buy smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles? Of course not!

So a message to the Republican lawmakers who voted against taxing Big Oil in a responsible manner: We can't be bought with a hundred bucks of our own money. Your elected days are numbered.

We voters have an agenda that doesn't involve paid vacations sponsored by lobbyists. We voters have an agenda that involves responsible government. We voters want our country back!

Come November, you'll find out just how serious we voters are.

“Mediocre” Kirk Tries to Divert Attention from Congressional Failures

by John Hmurovic

Republican Congressman Mark Kirk took a major step forward this past month with his strategy to win re-election. He unveiled what he calls his “Suburban Agenda,” a plan to focus this campaign on local issues and divert attention from the failures of his Republican Congress.

Kirk's attempt to avoid any discussion of national issues was criticized at a news conference attended by nine elected local officials. The news conference was held just a day before a nonpartisan national group gave him a rating that can only be described as “mediocre” for his performance as a congressman.

State Senator Susan Garrett, state Representatives Julie Hamos, Karen May, Elaine Nekritz and Eddie Washington, and two township and two village officials from 10th District communities wondered why Kirk was proposing federal intervention in local matters. His proposal calls on Congress to take control of a number of tasks now being handled by the state and local government in such areas as tracking pedophiles, controlling which websites young people view at school and fighting suburban gangs.

Northbrook village trustee Todd Heller said what surprised him about Kirk's plan was that the Republican Party, which has traditionally been in favor of local and state control was “now the party of federalizing and nationalizing.”

Kirk announced his plan after taking a poll to find out what issues were on the minds of voters in such areas as suburban Cleveland and Philadelphia, and after running it by White House political director Karl Rove.

“We don't need a poll, or Karl Rove, to tell us what is important to the suburbs for education,” said Rep. Nekritz. She said she hears it all the time from talking with parents and school board members in her district.

Sen. Garrett suggested that Kirk might want to try a similar approach, rather than rely on polling. “We invite him to host town hall meetings to hear firsthand from constituents what is really on their minds.” Over the past two years, Kirk has



State Sen. Susan Garrett speaks at a recent news conference, with Northbrook Village Trustee Todd Heller to the left in this photo, and state Reps. Karen May, Julie Hamos, and Deerfield Village Trustee Michelle Feldman to the right.

held no town hall forums open to all residents, as his predecessor John Porter used to do, and as many other congressmen regularly do.

Rep. May agreed, saying Kirk is trying to add a new layer of federal bureaucracy while ignoring the fact that state and local officials are already focused on local problems. “We are leading the way,” she said, “and we're waiting for the federal government to catch up.”

Rep. Eddie Washington acted surprised with Kirk's sudden interest in local issues, since he has offered little support for what is already being done. “He has never reached out to me,” Washington said.

Everyone agreed that the problems addressed by Kirk's shell game need to be addressed together by all levels of government and the community. So why is Kirk suddenly focusing on local issues usually not the domain of the federal government? According to Rep. Hamos, he's doing it because he's trying to dodge the negative polls that show that Congress has done a miserable job since he took office after the 2000 election. But the approach found in Kirk's Suburban

Agenda, she said, “is “nothing new, does not reflect much of a grand vision for America, and will not succeed in diverting attention from the failures of Congress.”

Kirk will almost certainly also avoid any mention of a survey done by Knowlegis, a company that provides software for government relations professionals. It rated every congressman on how much influence they have and how much success they've had in getting legislation passed.

Overall, it ranked Mark Kirk as 227th out of 438 congressmen, a little below the middle of the pack. He did no better within his own party, ranking 181st out of 232 Republicans.

Kirk can't even blame seniority for his mediocre rating, since he also ranks in the middle of the pack (23rd out of 44) of congressmen elected in 2000.

Out of 438 congressmen who are rated, Kirk ranks 252nd in influence, and 212th in his success rate in getting legislation enacted.

As he has displayed in abundance for six years now, Mark Kirk is mediocre. At best.

Liberty Under Law: **Separate Branches**, **Balanced Powers**

by Ellen Gill

Are the powers of the executive, legislative and judiciary balanced? The Chicago Bar Association recently held a panel discussion entitled "Liberty Under Law: Separate Branches, Balanced Powers," the American Bar Association chosen theme for Law Week.

CBA President Michael Hyman said he didn't buy the premise. Hyman does not believe that the separation or balance exists or ever existed. The balance, to him, always tipped to the executive and legislative branches. He ended his introduction with a famous quote by Judge Learned Hand:

Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.

Then, Hyman introduced the panel: Thomas R. Fitzgerald, Illinois Supreme Court; Charles P. Kocoras, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court; Abner J. Mikva, former White House counsel and former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia; Carol Ronen, Illinois State Senator; Ilana Diamond Rovner, U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals; Mary Jane Theis, Illinois Appellate Court; Judy Biggert, U.S. Representative, 13th District; and the surprise last minute guest, Senator Dick Durbin; and the moderator of the event, noted law professor and television personality Arthur Miller.

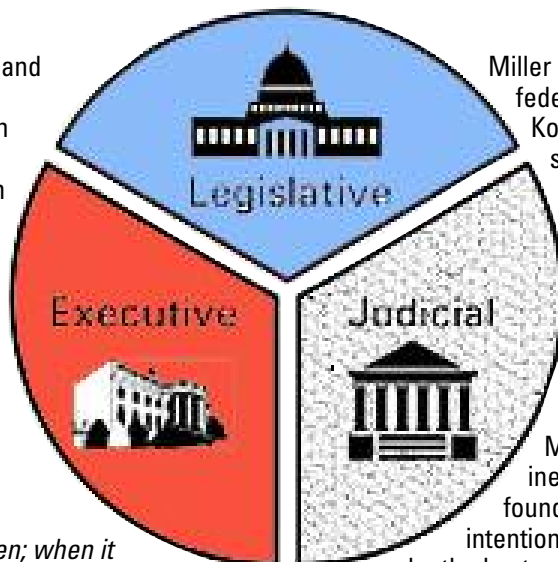
Miller described the type of discussion he wanted from the panel a bull session. So, does our system of separation of powers and checks and balances work or is Michael Hyman correct?

Judge Mikva was optimistic, taking the position that while it might not work all the time, it works when it has to on the big serious issues, citing the Dubai Ports incident as an example. "It was a done deal in the executive branch," said Mikva, "but Congress did not like it and stopped it."

Durbin was not as optimistic coming from the Senate fresh from the Roberts and Alito hearings and the past few years of unprecedented judicial striking down of legislation. Durbin noted, "Something different is happening now." He is concerned that membership in the politically charged Federalist Society is now a requirement for appointment to the federal bench.

As more evidence of attacks on separation of powers, Durbin brought up the recent law denying state court jurisdiction over class action lawsuits to slow down certification of classes. The state judges on the panel, Fitzgerald and Theis, did not really see a problem with that. They believe that the federal courts could do a good job with these cases. To Theis, it seems people do not understand how truly impartial judges are, deciding on the facts and law presented.

Judge Rovner, a Reagan appointee, pointed out that the jewel of the system of separation of powers is the lifetime appointment of federal judges keeping them free from changeable public sentiment. Kocoras agreed, remarking that the judiciary was meant to be the more stable branch unaffected by the swinging moods of the country.



Miller asked if the lifetime appointments kept the federal judiciary from being accountable. Kocoras reminded everyone that there is structural accountability as the lower courts are accountable to the higher courts that can overrule their decisions. He recalled the other side of judicial activism embodied in Frank Johnson, the famous judge of the 5th Circuit who courageously enforced the civil rights laws in the south and fought to prevent the circuit from being split to weaken those pro-civil rights decisions.

Miller ended the discussion lauding the inefficiency of the separation of powers. The founders made our system inefficient intentionally, because they understood inefficiency to be the best way to avoid autocracy.

So next time the Republicans scream about legislative or judicial inefficiency in implementing the Bush agenda, maybe we should be suspicious. Inefficiency, sparring among the branches and internal friction, as Miller concluded, "breeds the heat and light needed to keep democracy aflame."

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2006 Democratic Candidate Profiles

In the months before the election we will be taking a look at some of the Democrats on this year's ballot, beginning this month with these eight:

Julie Hamos

State Representative District 18

Residence: Evanston

District: Includes Wilmette, Winnetka, Kenilworth and Glencoe

Julie Hamos believes that government can be a catalyst for change and opportunity. She was first elected as state Representative in 1998. She currently serves as chair of the Mass Transit Committee, and



is on the Governor's Housing Task Force, Child Support Advisory Committee, the Interagency Council on Early Intervention and the Illinois Workforce Investment Board. Julie is a daughter of Holocaust survivors and escaped with her family from Hungary during the 1956 revolution. That experience taught her a lesson about courage and determination that remains the driving force behind her work as State Representative.

Patricia Horton

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner

Residence: Chicago

District: Cook County

Patricia Horton is one of three nominees for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. If elected, it would be her first term on the board. She is currently the vice president of the Madison-Western Chamber of Commerce, and a community advocate with degrees in both business and applied science.



Horton has stressed the importance of fairness in the district's application process and in its awarding of business contracts to minorities and women. She also believes that the district should consider solar power in an attempt to cut energy costs.

Elaine Nekritz

State Representative District 57

Residence: Northbrook

District: Includes Northbrook, Glenview, Mount Prospect, and Des Plaines

Elaine Nekritz is in her second term in the Illinois House.

Education, health care, and the environment are the main components of her legislative agenda. Her efforts resulted in \$10.1 million in new state aid for her district's schools. She also worked to guarantee that residents receiving assistance under Illinois' pharmaceutical programs will continue to receive the same coverage under the new federal Medicare prescription drug benefit. Her legislation to protect Illinois residents from harmful pollutants found in certain flame retardants was signed into law.



Maria Pappas

Cook County Treasurer

Residence: Chicago

District: Cook County

Maria Pappas is running for her third term as County Treasurer, where her goal has been to deliver government services more efficiently. She has reduced staff by 42 percent and cut the office budget five years in a row, while providing taxpayers with hundreds of new payment locations, instituted a 24-hour Internet and phone system to serve taxpayers, and installed collections that slashed the number of tax delinquencies by half. Pappas served eight years as a County Commissioner. She has a doctorate in psychology and counseling and a law degree.



Pat Quinn

Lieutenant Governor

Residence: Chicago

District: Illinois

Pat Quinn has been an active citizen and a public official for more than a quarter century. Since 1975, he has organized grassroots petition drives that have garnered more than four million signatures for consumer protection, tax reform and giving citizens a stronger voice in government. He was elected Lt. Governor in 2002, and he is seeking his second term. As Lt. Governor, Quinn serves as a consumer and taxpayer advocate. His office also administers programs that foster a cleaner environment and support economic development in historic business districts and rural communities.



Kathy Ryg

State Representative District 59

Residence: Vernon Hills

District: Includes Vernon Hills, Lincolnshire, Wheeling, Park City, Mettawa, Indian Creek and Riverwoods

Kathy Ryg is serving her second term as state Representative.

Ryg works closely with local leaders to promote business interests in our region and to reduce traffic congestion. She worked to secure \$1.5 million dollars in additional funding for our schools and partnered with local leaders to develop the Lake County After School Coalition to promote positive youth development. She has been a strong voice in state government for seniors, children and adults with special needs, and families in distress.



Jeff Schoenberg

State Senate District 9

Residence: Evanston

District: Includes Wilmette, Winnetka, Kenilworth and portions of Glencoe, Northfield and Glenview.

For more than 16 years Jeff Schoenberg has proven to be one of Illinois' most effective legislators. He is seeking his second term in the state Senate. Schoenberg has built a reputation for tackling some of the state's most challenging and technical problems, including reform of the State Toll Highway Authority, establishing a "Rainy Day" fund for future budget deficits, spearheading efforts to capture more federal Medicaid dollars and fighting for stricter gun control measures.



Eddie Washington

State Representative District 60

Residence: Waukegan

District: Includes Waukegan and North Chicago

Eddie Washington has worked in construction, law enforcement, as a community activist, a legislative aide, and served as a trustee on the North Shore Sanitary District before being elected to the Illinois House. He is running for his third term. He was the first African-American to serve in the state legislature from Lake County. Working with the communities of Waukegan and North Chicago to promote economic development has been his priority.



National Observers Acknowledge that Seals Campaign is Gaining Momentum

by John Hmurovic

Washington insiders are beginning to notice something that many 10th District residents have already observed: Dan Seals is running a strong campaign for Congress.

In recent days, one of the nation's leading election trackers announced that Republican Mark Kirk's supposed advantage over Dan Seals is narrowing. Previously it had classified Kirk's seat as "safe" ... but no more.

The lag in awareness is not unusual. When you judge a race from 750 miles away, you can't see what's happening on the ground. You make your judgments based on past election results, fundraising numbers and national trends.

Dan Seals can't do anything about the fact that Mark Kirk won re-election by comfortable margins in 2004 and 2002. But Seals began turning heads locally when he ran a strong campaign to win the Democratic primary in March, and when people began to see that he was raising the money that's needed to wage a competitive race against an incumbent congressman.

Also working in Seals' favor is the fact that the 10th District has been trending Democratic. With 53 percent of its votes going to John Kerry in 2004, the 10th District is one of just a handful of districts across the country which elected a Republican to Congress while going for the Democratic presidential nominee. Also

helping Seals is the fact that President Bush, and his rubber-stamp Congress, are sinking in the public opinion polls.

The Cook Political Report, which calls itself "The Insider's Choice for Political Analysis," regularly updates its look at congressional races. Of the 231 seats in the House now held by Republicans, Kirk's has been moved into a category with 40 others that are considered most vulnerable. This is impressive when you consider that of the 435 seats in the U.S. House, 360 seats are not considered in play.

The main threat to Kirk has always been the growing Democratic trend in the 10th District, which not only went for Kerry in 2004, but which has also begun electing Democrats to other offices with more frequency. (There are now four Democratic state senators who represent pieces of the 10th District, as well as six state representatives.) But what knocked the Kirk campaign down a notch by Cook has been the fundraising success of the Seals campaign. He has raised enough to make this race more competitive.

The prospects look even better for Seals as his fundraising efforts continue. He announced at a Tenth Dems community forum recently that U.S. Senator Barack Obama is hosting a fundraiser on his behalf, which will be followed by another fundraiser hosted by U. S. Senator Dick Durbin.



Air America Radio host Al Franken recently interviewed Dan Seals on his nationally broadcast show.

The bottom line is that this is a good year for Democrats, in a district which is increasingly Democratic, and which has a strong candidate with growing financial support.

This is a winnable race, and more people are beginning to notice.

If you want to help the Seals campaign, you can do so by going to www.dansealsforcongress.org. You can donate on-line and/or volunteer to help.

The Dan Seals Environmental Policy

by John Hmurovic

Dan Seals says that 10th District residents “have consistently favored strong federal funding for programs that clean and protect our environment.” Apparently, that’s a message that Republican Congressman Mark Kirk hasn’t clearly received.

Kirk was given a failing grade of 39 percent from the League of Conservation Voters in their analysis of his voting record in Congress on environmental legislation.

Publicly, Kirk tries to portray himself as a friend of the environment. He says he has voted against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, for example. What he doesn’t mention is that those votes have come when the final outcome is obvious and his vote makes no difference.

On closer examination, when the votes have been close and Kirk has been given a chance to strip pro-drilling amendments from the legislation, he has consistently voted for the wishes of ExxonMobil, one of his campaign contributors. Like the shrewd career politician that he is, he gives you enough to make his story plausible, but works very hard at hiding the complete story.

As a Democrat, Dan Seals is a member of the political party that has always led the way in environmental protection. While Republicans like Kirk believe that we can drill our way out of energy problems, Democrats like Seals put more emphasis on alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power, as well as on fuel-efficient vehicles.

Rather than heed the findings of science, Republicans have ridiculed scientific findings that don’t match their support for the fossil fuel industry. If Kirk feels differently than his Republican colleagues on this (and once again his rhetoric doesn’t consistently match his voting record), he has completely failed to have any influence within his party.

A Democratic Congress, by contrast, with Dan Seals as a member, would move forward in dealing with global warming. Seals backs full funding to make renewable energy sources practical and affordable for consumer use; an increase in fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks; and a market-based cap on carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

You can learn more about Dan Seals’ environmental policy on his website, www.dansealsforcongress.com.

Sharon Narrod, *Continued from page 1*

I am fortunate to have found a “band of brothers and sisters” who have agreed to spend a portion of their lives helping me get elected. Because this is my first political race, as I move along I discover the need for more volunteers and have so far been able to find them. There’s always room for more, though (hint). I can see how easy it would be to lose sight of what your volunteers are doing or not doing in a large political organization, but at this level, we’re such a small group that it is easy to keep tabs on everything.

No matter what level of office, there is activity. Heading into “primary” season just means an enormous increase in this activity. Running for a county office does not put you at the top of the hit parade for voter recognition, so in many ways, it is a much more difficult race.

Lake County is a big county (third largest in the state after Cook and DuPage), and getting around to the entire county takes planning. Fortunately, in the run up to the primary, many Democratic organizations in conjunction with the Tenth Congressional District Democrats had candidate events. These would generally take place in the evening, and take the form of either a caucus to endorse, or a general meeting to introduce the Democratic candidates running for office. All of these meetings included candidates from the federal level to the state level to the county level. Because we all appeared together, after a while it felt like being in a road show (without the band). I loved it! Not only did I get to meet voters from all over the county, but they got to meet me.

Most people were interested in meeting and listening to the candidates for Governor or Treasurer, but there were still opportunities to speak before and after those formal presentations. At some meetings I had the opportunity to speak, at others no chance at all. The only candidates who had time were those who were in contested races. This made sense to me, although it left me

Continued on page 7



Dan Seals and state Senator Susan Garrett take audience questions about the environment at the Tenth Dems event, “Had Enough?” on May 22nd in Northbrook.

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Repeat After Me . . .

by Marla Sundh

One criticism of the Democratic Party is that there is no clear party vision. It's become a sound bite of its own – the phrase: "But what's the Democrats' message?" I hear it often.

Sometimes people recite that phrase because they've heard it so often that they have come to accept its truth. Clearly there is great dissatisfaction within the voting public; a cynicism that began in the days of Watergate and has now permeated every aspect of government. So while many voters agree that we're being led down the wrong path, they view every other path with equal distrust.

The task that lies before us, as Democrats, is how to convey with clarity the Democratic Party positions, candidates and ideas. A segment of the American public views all government officials as cut from the same cloth, without any distinctions between Democrats and Republicans. We share in the responsibility to pave the road to victory in November with insight and truth.

If you take a good look, and examine how senators and representatives vote on the issues, you will see convincing evidence that differences between the parties do exist. This information is difficult to find; never reported on TV or in the newspapers. However, the facts are there, tucked away in the hard-to-reach places of the media.

During the last national election, the Democratic platform laid out its framework. It contained such tenets as: working with peace-loving nations to eradicate terrorism as a political tool, using our alliances and the organizations established for this purpose, as opposed to unilateral military action. Other planks in the platform included investment in energy innovation and protecting consumers against price gouging. Our party didn't fail because of the fallacy of

these ideas. They were and are the right ideas. We have to remind people of them ... so they can see where we are, and where we could have been had Democratic plans been implemented. Unfortunately, many voters don't read platforms and issue papers. They are neither titillating nor provocative. The advent of reality TV and online news has created a public more interested in sound bites than analysis. Therefore, we do have our work cut out for us this fall.

There has been progress. The number of progressive grassroots political organizations such as "Move On" has grown rapidly since 2004. This presents us with considerable opportunities to get our message across.

The weekend of April 29, for example, Democrats took to the streets and neighborhoods to reach out to the voting community. The Tenth Dems is such a group. We need to keep up the pressure on our Republican opponents, and persist in encouragement of our own likely voters.

Republican-bashing is not a bad thing – if we also convey what the Democrats would do if in control. Our efforts in Washington have not stopped, though doomed to fail in the Republican-led Congress. What happened to some of these initiatives?

Democratic-sponsored bill to appropriate funds to make our ports more secure; the Republicans voted it down.

Democratic proposal to provide \$5 billion for our emergency responders to better field communications in response to natural (and other) disasters; the Republicans voted it down.

Democratic bill to make energy more affordable and sustainable through replacing foreign oil with alternative fuels; the Republicans voted it down.



Democratic bill to restore programs in vocational education and grants; The Republicans voted it down.

The majority of Democrats in Congress voted in favor of bills for which passage was prevented by the Republican majority:

- An amendment to support the health needs of our veterans and military personnel.
- Repeal extension of tax rates for capital gains and dividends.
- Easing access to inexpensive imported prescription drugs
- Raising the minimum wage
- Fighting global warming by reducing carbon emissions
- Prohibiting discrimination by employers against gays

A recent Tenth Dems meeting announcement demonstrated the urgency in simple, short phrases that voters can relate to – war in Iraq – domestic surveillance – Katrina – Social Security – tax cuts for the rich – budget deficit. ...

There are differences between the two parties. We have to work hard to distinguish those differences, and communicate them in bullet-point terms. Optimism and a positive message, simply stated and repeated, can lead us toward the desired outcome in November.

Sharon Narrod, *Continued from page 6*

feeling frustrated at times. One evening I came home and told my husband that I felt I could recite several speeches by heart, having heard them so often. In a pinch, I could fill in if someone became ill. Of course that wouldn't work, but it played into a fantasy about becoming the star of the show, when the understudy takes over for the lead actress.

Even having heard the various messages

several times, I was always impressed and exhilarated by the turnout and the reaction of the audience. Democracy in action. What makes someone come out on a miserable weather night to listen to the message, and what drives someone to keep getting out there to deliver it.

My "race" was really a non-race, because I had no Democratic opponent, so election night was more interesting to me for the

other races taking place. I spent a portion of the evening with my township friends and supporters and ended the night by going to the Dan Seals election night party. It wasn't very late when I left, because frankly I was tired and because there was nothing more to do, I decided that getting to bed at a decent hour was a good plan – especially since I didn't expect to have many more early nights in the months to come.

Mark Kirk Votes "Aye" to Continue the Republican Culture of Corruption

by George Rosenblit

Our Republican Congress voted May 3 to pass a weak GOP bill on lobbying restraints that makes no meaningful changes to the Culture of Corruption in Congress. Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-New York) stated on the floor of the House that this (Republican) leadership doesn't want reform; they blocked a host of significant amendments including 20 of 21 submitted by Democrats; and they wouldn't allow a tougher Democratic substitute on the bill to even be considered.

What is meant by "Culture of Corruption?" The Republican Congress has written many laws without input from Democratic members who have been locked out of the process, but they have allowed lobbyists of large corporations to participate in writing legislation! This party in power has created a climate of acceptance of cash, gifts, lavish vacations, and the use of corporate aircraft in return for this special favor to lobbyists.

This is an outrage because it is abundantly clear that this Congress is engaging bribery, pure and simple. It's unethical; it's immoral; and it's criminal!

It's unbelievable that they have the arrogance to ignore the ongoing Federal indictments and investigations involving lobbyist Jack Abramoff and members of Congress. They have voted to perpetuate a large scale system of bribery, openly and shamelessly.

Representative Mark Kirk was one of 209 representatives voting largely along party lines to pass this legislation (HR 4975, Roll Call 119). Instead of taking the time to listen to his constituents in open forums on this subject, he has once again shown that he is pursuing a personal agenda, displaying his own form of arrogance. He no longer needs to have his arm twisted to vote the party line. He twists the arms of others to blindly vote for or against legislation, as he is directed, in his role of Deputy Whip in the House.

The taxpayer, you and I, end up footing the bill. Why would corporations want to write legislation? They do so to make a profit at our expense. It costs consumers more money for products and services, and it can also result in a reduction in product quality and environmental safety.

The name of this legislation is "Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act." Our Republican Congress has once again used an attractive and misleading title to try to fool the American people. There is no accountability or transparency. It's a sham and it's a shame!

Dan Seals, who is opposing Kirk in the November election, stated that "to serve the best interests of its citizens, our government must be open, really transparent and truly accountable, and it must have a high standard of ethics."

By failing to meet these criteria, this Republican Congress has failed all Americans, and in addition, Kirk has failed his own 10th District. It's time for change. It's time to take back the Congress by voting for Dan Seals.

What the Editorials Say About HR 4975

The Washington Post

Their bill ... is an insult to voters who the GOP apparently believes are dumb enough to be snookered by this feint. ... The Rules Committee refused to permit votes on amendments to strengthen the measure, including proposals to establish an independent ethics office; to require lawmakers to pay full freight for chartered flights; or to double the waiting period for lawmakers to lobby their former colleagues from one year to two. Neither would the majority risk an up-or-down vote on the much more robust Democratic alternative.

The New York Times

The House Republican leaders managed a new feat of cravenness during the recent recess, hollowing out their long promised "lobbying reform" bill to meet the dictates of – who else? – Washington's power lobbyists. ... The measure buries all attempts at instituting credible ethics enforcement in the House. ... One Republican proponent had the gall to argue that we mustn't "chill" the right of lobbyists, the ultimate insiders, to petition government.

USA Today

Cushy travel paid for by private groups – a device lobbyists use to buy favors – would be banned, but only until after the election. ... Lobbyists would be barred from flying on corporate jets with members of Congress ... but nothing would prevent executives who aren't registered lobbyists from continuing to do the same thing. And nothing would alter the practice of routinely making these planes available for members' political or personal trips at deeply subsidized fares. ... The sorry record of this Congress cries out for real reform, not a toothless sham.

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