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Culture of Conscience

by George Rosenblit

Lou Dobbs of CNN recently made a remark containing the term "Culture of Conscience" in reference to future activity of the Democratic Party. Dobbs said this contrasts with the recent "Culture of Corruption."

The Democratic Party has always had a conscience as far back as I can remember. I was eight years old when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in 1932, and I was exposed to the depression years of the 1930s. I remember the banners with "NRA" (National Recovery Act) on them in Movietone News, which played in local theaters. We also saw the banners in local parades. Even though he was personally financially secure, Roosevelt empathized with the people of our nation who were jobless, downtrodden, dirt poor. And he didn't just think about it and talk about it. He did something about it. His programs to provide job opportunities and Social Security are legendary.

I recently visited his Little White House in Warm Springs, Georgia, which is now designated a Historic Site as part of a Georgia state park. This year, 2007, is the 75th birthday of this Little White House. Roosevelt's achievements are on display with audio and visual aids. The thing that was most interesting to me was that he chatted with his neighbors in Warm Springs and the surrounding area to learn and understand their problems during the Great Depression. He drew on that information when formulating solutions to the problems of our nation at this quiet retreat in Georgia, away from the time-consuming distractions at the Oval Office in Washington, D.C.

Roosevelt set a standard for the Democratic Party for all time in many ways, and subsequent Democratic presidents have contributed. We, as citizens and voters, must take up the baton and run with it. We must have empathy for the needs of all Americans, especially the less fortunate ones. We must reach out and improve communication between legislators and

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Tenth News

www.tenthdems.org
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A Chance To Play a Part in Changing the World

by John Hmurovic

Not one of the 80 or so people who gathered in Deerfield on a frigid night last month looked much different from you or me. But in 2008, a few of them might be a part of something huge – something that could change the world.

The 80 people were attendees at the Tenth Dems Volunteer Fair. One of the people they heard speak at the event was Pete Giangreco, who is an advisor to the presidential campaign of U.S. Senator Barack Obama. The Obama campaign, Giangreco said, will be run out of Illinois, not Washington, D.C. And if it succeeds, it will be because of the help it gets from Illinois people – people just like the 80 or so in attendance at the Deerfield event.



At least 80 people lined up to sign in to the volunteer fair and to sign up for volunteer opportunities with Tenth Dems, as well as to hear speaker Pete Giangreco.

Are You Ready to Help Barack, or Hillary, or John?

Some people think it's a given that Illinois will back favorite son Barack Obama in his bid for president. Others are saying, "Not so fast." Many of us may not have chosen a candidate yet, and some of us may not even have begun to think about the presidential race. But for those who have, local groups of like-minded Democrats are forming; and they'd like us to join them.

Three presidential candidate groups supporting Clinton,

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The Obama campaign plans to lean heavily on our state's affection for its junior senator. Illinois volunteers are staffing the new campaign office in downtown Chicago, making phone calls to Democrats in Iowa, and already making plans for trips to the early primary states.

Giangreco encouraged members of the crowd to help out. Many of them may not have made up their minds about whom to support in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, but most of them have decided that they want to help Democrats get elected. That's why they came to the Tenth Dems Volunteer Fair.

The fair gave them a chance not only to hear how they can help elect

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“Barack is My Guy”

Personal Reflections on a Moment in History



by Carolyn Quinn

Postcard perfect clear sky.

I leave my camera bag, purse, and backpack in the car on purpose to have less stuff to worry about. I carry *The Audacity of Hope* and today's copy of the

Springfield Journal with Barack all over the front page. I plan to get them autographed.

Wicked cold. Makes me think twice about taking in the next breath because the frigid gasses seem downright invasive.

A Mark Twain impersonator passes by on the sidewalk as we approach the old Statehouse. Also, of course, Abe Lincoln. Both look real enough. A couple of kids hawk tee shirts and buttons. I don't buy any because the money isn't going to the Obama campaign. Plus, I don't have my purse.

Long lines at 8:30 a.m. to enter the courtyard area, and despite the biting cold, spirits are incredibly high. Nobody jostles for a better place in line. We get acquainted as we wait, and I shake many mittened hands this morning. People of different ages, backgrounds, races, regions, all pleasant and of a single group spirit. Today we share a common hope – to be able to make a difference, to make government more responsive to ordinary people's lives. Lives like our own. And we hope this guy is the one to help us make it happen.

Townies are proud to host the announcement of Obama's presidential bid. Way proud. Travelers are thrilled to be here. We share stories about how far we've come, how early we started out this morning, also with a sense of pride. We share a personal investment in the hope that we can reclaim America.

Debbie Ross from Lincoln, Illinois, sings *The Star Spangled Banner* and my friend Sam says she is the same woman who sang at his wedding.

Barack offers himself up as a vehicle today. Why do we hope Barack is the one to help us effect change in the overall political climate? All along he has been listening to the stories of ordinary people – listening carefully enough to remember our stories, to pass them on, to tie the stories together with a meaningful thread of who we are, what our challenges are, and how we try so hard against so many obstacles. He must have heard people who are like me, because when he tells their stories, it sounds like he is telling my story and getting the gist of why I work so hard to keep my head afloat in an



Jan Schakowsky serves as moderator at the UIC Obama announcement rally.

economy that doesn't appear to put much value on my hard work. He gets how I work so hard, what the challenges are like, and the kinds of things our government could do that would make me feel more like I was getting a decent shake at the American dream. But that's not all. Barack has spoken against the war in Iraq all along. Today he proposes a date we should have our military out of there.

The crowd is quiet. Not me. I'm whooping and hollering. But I am one of ten thousand, and I go unnoticed by all but the people right around me. And then he describes how we must take care of all our returning vets, and the entire crowd is whooping and hollering with me. He proposes that we bring unions back into power, enough to take care of laborers. He proposes that we give teachers the resources and money they deserve. He proposes that we make college education more affordable, and there is an ocean of approval moving all around the lawn. The twenty-somethings and the fifty-somethings



Obama addresses the enthusiastic crowd at the UIC rally.

are in complete agreement about this one.

And he speaks to us as a generation. Not separate generations in clusters, but as though we in the audience are all one generation, the generation that can step up to the plate, roll up our sleeves, and fix what's wrong with today's government.

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An Infusion of Hope

by Adrienne Kirshbaum

Want the perfect antidote for the mid-winter blahs? Try a Barack Obama rally. You'll get an infusion of hope.

I went to the Obama '08 announcement rally at the UIC Pavilion on Sunday, February 11. I was part of a large, diverse, and very enthusiastic crowd. We waited patiently for the main event, and while we waited we were entertained by the UIC Pep Band and a spirited gospel choir. We sat through introductions, a few speeches, and then Obama arrived. The crowd was ready to explode, and it did!

The warmth of Obama's reception was impressive. So was his performance. He was funny and charming as he outlined the issues he would address as a presidential candidate. He even handled a small protest quite deftly. I haven't felt this much charisma since John F. Kennedy ran for president.

Outside the Pavilion was a cold February dusk. Inside was the dawn of a promising campaign.

On Democracy, Caucuses, and Willow Road

by Jane Goldenberg

While we may gnash our teeth about the goings-on in Washington, with its partisanship and incumbent security plans, some of us political watchers are equally frustrated by what we observe in our local governments, where caucuses were established to do away with partisanship long ago.

The caucus system was supposed to fix everything, so citizens could come together in town meetings, agree on the important issues, select a good slate of candidates to push forward the “right” positions, then sit back and relax until the next biennial meeting.

If only it were that simple. Problems crop up when we don’t agree and intensify for some of the more important issues – such as the recent brouhaha over the Winnetka School Board, spurred by a controversial principal selection, and the looming fight (or latest battle) over the widening of Willow Road.

The caucus system may serve as an efficient screening device for selecting only well-qualified candidates, but the system also can serve to screen out any opposition to the establishment positions. This means a small, self-selected body can control a town. And when the caucus has no term limits, as is the case in Northfield, this body can control the town in perpetuity.

So when the caucus has a platform that says “widening (Willow Road) to four or more lanes is not a viable alternative,” no one will be slated to the Village Board who favors a compromise or has at least been publicly caught saying so.

Hence, we have a situation in Northfield where the caucus chose not to re-slate current Trustee Barbara Moore, who has become somewhat of the local transportation expert over the years. Instead the caucus chose three candidates who’ve declared their support for the platform – of course.

This is nothing new. More than 30 years ago, in 1976, a story in *Illinois Issues* pointed out: “Caucuses have been known to reject a qualified candidate because he spoke out strongly on a highly controversial local concern.”

Beginning in Winnetka in 1915, the caucus system had noble aspirations as it became a popular way to select candidates and avoid partisan politics in several North Shore communities. How well caucuses continue to serve their communities seems to be an open question in some towns. In towns such as Winnetka, Kenilworth and Glencoe, caucuses continue to vet and select candidates to produce a slate for local elections. Other towns that use the caucus system include Lake Bluff, Lake Forest and Deerfield.

And, if local residents don’t like the slate, they can always

organize an alternative group of candidates to get on the ballot. This type of organized opposition hardly ever arises; however, just such a revolt in Wilmette in 1969 led to the end of the caucus system in that village.

In Winnetka, a recent dispute over the slating of a school board member led a local resident to file a complaint with the Illinois attorney general’s office contending the caucus violated the Open Meetings law. The controversy also led a caucus committee member to resign.

The caucus system may serve as an efficient screening device for selecting only well-qualified candidates, but the system also can serve to screen out any opposition to the establishment positions.

Winnetka’s caucus has a high level of detail in its by-laws, as well as term limits, and it has been subjected to several studies by the local League of Women Voters. A recent study of the Winnetka Caucus by the League of Women Voters of Winnetka, Northfield and Kenilworth found that most residents don’t know anything

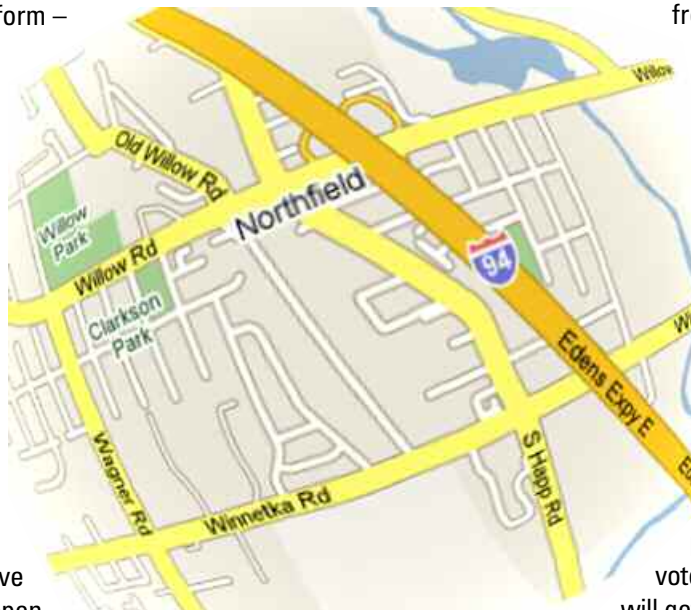
about the caucus. But that doesn’t stop people from complaining that insiders control the process. According to a recent article in the *Chicago Tribune*, the Illinois State Board of Elections had received about 100 complaints about caucuses during this election season.

From a glance through Cook County election results, only about one-third of registered voters typically come out for a local municipal election. Mostly residents tend not to get involved in local politics, and turnout is low, not only on Election Day but also at caucus meetings.

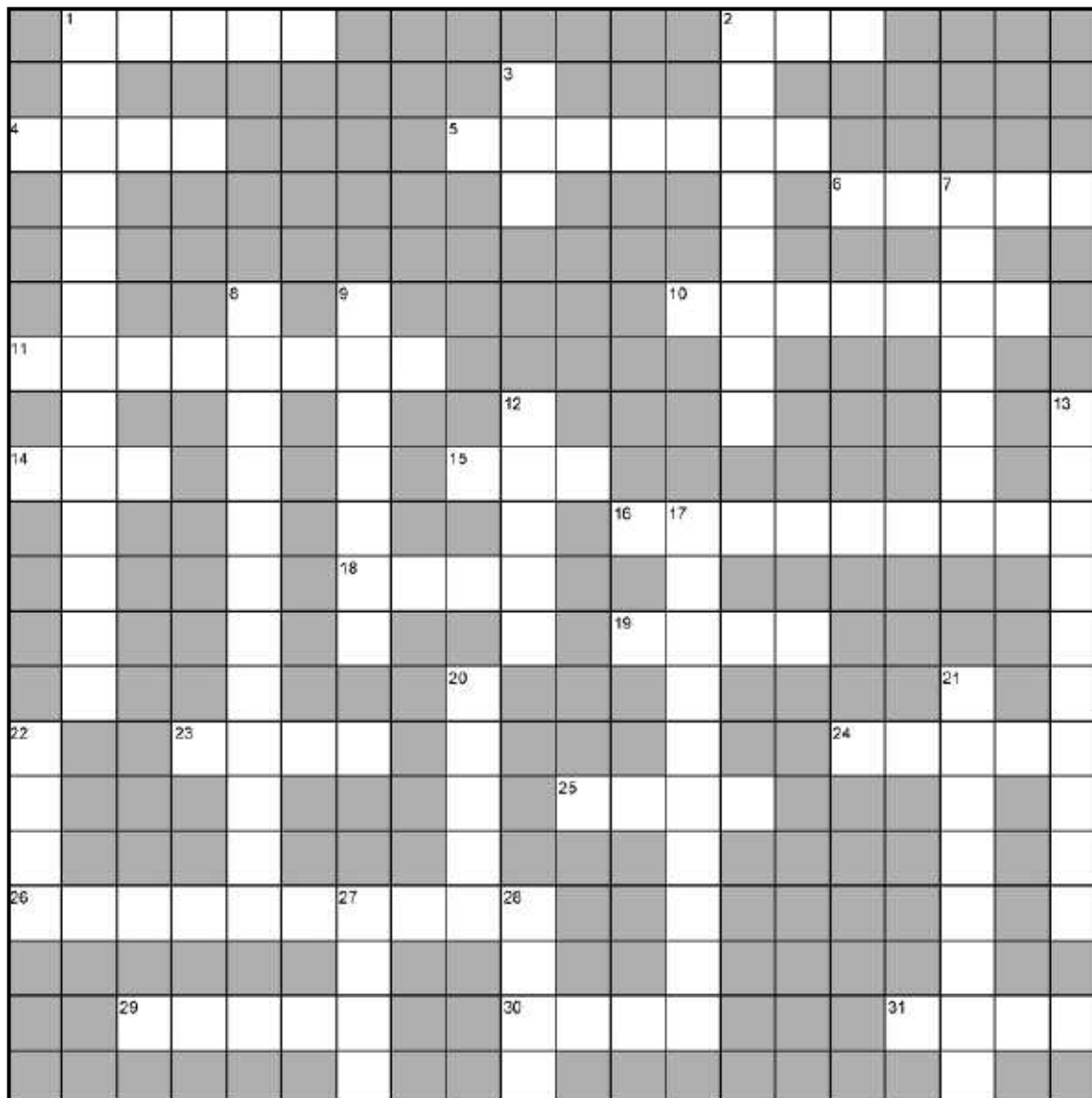
When national elections in non-presidential years have trouble attracting voters, it doesn’t seem likely that local issues will get onto most busy soccer moms’ and dads’

radar screens anytime soon. So it looks like the caucus system is here to stay in most of these towns because at least someone’s interviewing the candidates.

And people will still find time to complain about their water bill, local tax bill and, yes, Willow Road.



"Democrats Get a Clue" Created by Ross Nickow with Eclipse Crossword - www.eclipsecrossword.com



Answers will be published in next month's newsletter. For those of you who can't wait until April, check our website, tenthdems.org.

Across

1. East border of 10th District, and recently elected environmentally passionate commissioner
2. Evolved from Dean campaign
4. Hoosier Dem
5. With global, reality that Republicans are ignoring
6. Keynoted first Tenth Dems fundraiser
10. IL 29th state senator
11. With 7D, campaign tactic used by Kirk/GOP
14. Endangered political animal (acronym)
15. Gossip network with fake news
16. School filled with Seals supporters during only campaign debate, and one-time favorite son presidential candidate

18. Oldest Dem. org. in 10th District

19. Bush's next target?
23. Dem. org. with monthly discussion groups
24. GOP game to avoid responsibility
25. Dick Cheney's lesbian daughter
26. 10th District's amazing Weblog
29. Kerry, Edwards, et al.
30. Principled senator from cheese-filled state (first name)
31. Bush's Vietnam

7. With 11A, campaign tactic used by Kirk/GOP

8. Annoyance to Bush administration
9. 2005 catastrophe destroyed a city and Bush's approval rating
12. Best GOP smear to freeze Nancy Pelosi
13. Political school starting soon for Tenth Dems members
17. Bush's description of Dems, with "aiding the..."
20. On-line discussion with Group
21. Rarely seen in 10th District
22. Balm for campaign workers' feet
27. One of Mark Kirk's mentors
28. Winner of 2000 presidential election

Down

1. Republican solution to the Iraq war
2. Probable winner of 2008 congressional race
3. Spring month, or 58th District state representative

Bush Bashes the Constitution

by Ronald Altman

George Bush may have just a passing knowledge of the English language, but he clearly has a subtle understanding of the Constitution. His interpretation of the extent of executive powers and the use of presidential signing statements when he signs bills into law surreptitiously undermines the values of the Founding Fathers and the people of the United States. Despite his oath to “preserve, defend and protect the Constitution of the United States,” his administration has led a concerted attack on the separation of powers, the keystone of the system of preservation of our liberties since the 18th century.

In establishing the way a bill becomes a law, Article I states that if the President approves of a bill “he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his objections” to the house in which it originated for reconsideration and override of his veto. Thus powers are “balanced.” The executive may endeavor to correct the legislature, by veto, while the legislature, through the override by a two-thirds supermajority, may insist on the correctness of its position.

Under the doctrine of the “unitary executive” whipped up by the ultraconservatives in the Reagan White House and brought to fruition under Bush and Cheney, the powers of the President are not limited by these processes, or by the actual words of the Constitution. By issuing a signing statement that the Bush administration claims has the force of law, President Bush is attacking these constitutional principles hammer and claw. He intrudes on the legislative power under Article I by subverting the

intent of the section on veto overrides while preventing his objections as expressed in his signing statement from being reconsidered by the Congress (and perhaps being overridden). At the same time, by creating executive legislative history he asserts his power to interpret the intent of Congress, thereby usurping the power of the courts under Article III to do so.



Administrative spokesmen have suggested that the constitutional stricture that the President “shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed” authorizes signing statements and gives the executive branch the lead role in determining the wisdom and constitutionality of a bill. They use the theory of the unitary executive to argue that the opinion of the President as set forth in a signing statement carries more weight than that of the Congress as expressed in legislative history, contending that the signing statement expresses the view of an entire constitutional branch rather than that of a single senator or representative or congressional committee. The error in this interpretation is that it arrogates to the President the orchestration of lawmaking. But he is not the composer, or even the conductor; he is only the audience. He may applaud or he may boo, but he may not rewrite the music.

In *The Federalist Papers*, Madison correctly foresaw the danger of an aggressive executive undermining the liberties of the people. He noted the brilliance of the Founding Fathers’ scheme of separation of powers to avert this danger. We must be equally vigilant in protecting our liberty from an executive that strives to be as destructive of our freedoms as was that of another George 231 years ago.

Building Effective Township Organizations

Tenth Dems Regional Coordination Meeting Report

by Ilya Sheyman

On February 20, veteran volunteers from across the 10th District joined with first timers, many of whom learned about this volunteer opportunity at the February 8 Tenth Dems Volunteer Fair, to get the Tenth Dems Regional Coordination committee off to an exciting start. The Committee discussed successful strategies in vibrant township Democratic organizations and how these can be shared with newer, developing township organizations. The group agreed that every township is unique but that common strategies nevertheless can be found for recruiting membership and building effective volunteers. Next month, the committee plans to work with the Vernon Township Democrats to help develop strategies and tactics for building their organization.

The committee’s short term goal is to help develop ideas and strategies for townships at varying stages of development. The committee’s long term goal is to help establish strong township organizations across the 10th District with an established cadre of grassroots workers in each and every precinct who actively energize their neighbors’ participation in the electoral process.

The committee also discussed working with townships that would like to hold mock presidential caucuses across the 10th District. Such events would bring supporters of all candidates together while also helping to build relationships within the various townships.

Building a strong Democratic Party is a part of the Tenth Dems mission to elect Democrats in every corner of the 10th District. In 2006, Tenth Dems organized a set of Democratic township caucuses before the 2006 primary elections to introduce candidates to Democratic voters throughout the 12 townships that make up the 10th District. Tenth Dems has also worked closely with township groups to bring more volunteers into the political process. Many of those volunteers recruited by Tenth Dems have taken up leadership roles within the Democratic township organizations, and some have run as candidates (and won) for offices in their township government. Tenth Dems also has provided financial support to Democratic township groups and conducted training for grassroots volunteers.

To showcase the exciting growth and development of township groups, the committee intends to use this newsletter regularly to highlight different township Democratic organizations.

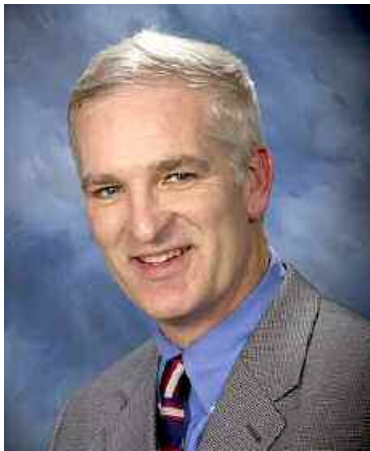
To Serve and Protect Is Not a Crazy Concept

Mark Curran's First Months as Lake County Sheriff by John Hmurovic

You have to be at least a little bit crazy to run for public office, don't you think? Elected officials rank just above used car dealers in surveys about which professions the public most respects. Politics is ranked so low that even Rodney "I Don't Get No Respect" Dangerfield would have considered it a step down.

Yet, when you see someone like Mark Curran, he doesn't look crazy. In fact, this tall, white-haired, 44-year-old from Libertyville looks...well...kind of normal. And when you find out that he has a wife, three kids under the age of ten, and a thriving law office, the first word that comes to mind to describe him might be "successful," or "fortunate," or "blessed," but certainly not "crazy."

Still, Mark Curran ran for public office in 2006. And he won. On January 1, 2007, he was sworn in as the Lake County Sheriff. What could possibly possess a seemingly sane person to do this?



Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran

Curran admits that in some ways running for sheriff, and now serving in that office, is a sacrifice. During the campaign he sacrificed time with his family, although he was happy that his children were at least old enough to come along to parades and other candidate appearances. And he was particularly fortunate, he said, to have a supportive wife.

"I worked hard for a year," he said about the campaign, which included a hotly contested

primary race for the Democratic nomination, followed by a hotly contested general election against the incumbent Lake County Sheriff. Curran won that contest with a convincing 56 percent of the vote. He said that the campaign was "not always fun," and that it was a relief when it ended, because he would never be able to continue at the pace the campaign required for another full year.

Now that he's in the sheriff's office, Curran says he hopes to achieve more of a balance between his personal and professional life, but he admits that won't be easy. "In just one month, I had something like 50 meetings, talking with people just to get a sense of what the situation is." Although he knew some Lake County Board members before the election, he's getting better acquainted

with all of them in order to establish a good working relationship.

He has also had to make a handful of personnel changes in the 550-person department that he now manages. He says there are many demands on his time in a department that runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. "Winning an election is not like winning the lottery," Curran says. "Once you win, you have to work very hard."

Both Curran's primary opponent and his general election opponent came from police backgrounds. One of the points they hit hard during their campaigns was that you needed to be a police officer to be a sheriff, and that Curran was a lawyer, not a police officer. Curran answered their arguments by saying that the job was much more than police work. Nothing he has come across in his first months has changed his mind. In fact, he may feel even more strongly about it.

Besides managing 550 employees, the sheriff is the primary negotiator in contracts with the union; and most of the department's employees are unionized. The sheriff is also responsible for a \$60-million-plus budget, and he is responsible for managing the county's jail. "I don't think," Curran said, "there is anything in the job of being a police officer that makes them more qualified to do those things than I am." He says there are aspects of the job that others in his department know better than he does, but he says what he brings to the job – a strong understanding of the important role the prosecutor plays in working with the police on law enforcement – is hugely important. Before becoming sheriff, Curran served as a Special Assistant United States Attorney, as an Assistant Illinois Attorney General, and as an Assistant Lake County State's Attorney.

So, why does a man who doesn't look or sound crazy take on such a huge task? Curran says he has always felt it was important for him to do what he could to serve his community. "Sacrifices are in many instances required as a part of being a citizen, and for the blessings and benefits that we receive from living in this country," he explained.

That doesn't sound crazy. In fact, if more politicians felt that way and performed their jobs with that thought guiding them, maybe the profession would win enough respect in the public's eye to move up a rung. Who knows? Politicians might even rise above journalists.



Tenth Dems to Sponsor April Forum with Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky

 by Ross Nickow

Watch for details soon for an upcoming special forum in April with the Honorable Jan Schakowsky, sponsored by Tenth Dems. Representing the Illinois 9th District since 1998, Congresswoman Schakowsky was recently named by Speaker Nancy Pelosi to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Representative Schakowsky is also the Democratic majority's Chief Deputy Whip and a member of the Steering and Policy Committee. Currently, Congresswoman Schakowsky is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, on which she serves as

vice-chair of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection. Representative Schakowsky serves on three other subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection; the Subcommittee on Health; and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. Details of the upcoming event will be available soon on the Tenth Dems website, www.tenthdems.org, as well as in the April edition of this newsletter. Hearing impaired? Don't let that keep you from attending. Let us know at tenthdems@aol.com or (847) 266-VOTE and we will arrange an interpreter.

Change the World continued from page 1

a Democratic president, but also how they can help Democrats close to home by re-electing Dick Durbin to the U.S. Senate, electing a Democrat to the U.S. House, and electing Democrats to represent us in state and county offices.



Obama campaign advisor Pete Giangreco speaks at Tenth Dems Volunteer Fair.

Tenth Dems organized the event in order to marshal Democratic volunteers at this very early stage of the campaign. The idea is to ensure that volunteers will be organized, trained, and ready to help by the time the 2008 campaign heats up.

There are plenty of opportunities for anyone who wants to get involved.

Contact Tenth Dems if you have an interest in research, communications, writing, computers, graphic design, phone calling, volunteer management, fund raising, organization building, door-to-door campaigning, etc., etc. You are even encouraged to contact Tenth Dems if you're like most of us who come into this process not knowing how to help, but knowing that you want to do something to see our nation, our state, or our community change for the better.

The first step in playing a part in changing the world is to place a phone call to 847-266-VOTE (8683), or e-mail tenthdems@aol.com, to express your interest.

Conscience Continued from page 1

constituents. We must initiate action on the real needs of real people in our country. Legislators must listen to what is being said at the grass roots level and serve our needs and desires.

We have a great window of opportunity between now and the 2008 elections to carry that baton by strengthening our own grassroots organization, the Tenth Dems. This is an exciting time when you can learn how to make your voice heard. Believe it or not, you have the power to influence the political landscape, locally and nationally, and it all starts at home at the congressional district level. The key to success is in numbers and knowledge. Join with like-minded people and find out how to get the job done. Tenth Dems will provide the training. To join in this great adventure, call (847) 266-VOTE, or e-mail tenthdems@aol.com today.

"Barack is My Guy" Continued from page 2

Dads hold little kids up on their shoulders, to see and remember. We feel a part of history, not only because of the event that's unfolding, but also because of the shared vision of events to come, events that we believe will come because of our commitment, our work ethic, our diversified talents, and our connection to this gangly attorney who is determined to do things differently if we choose to elect him.

And it isn't just that he seems so sincere when he flashes that brilliant smile, and it isn't just that he is a powerful speaker, and it isn't just that he speaks to us of our own stories. The guy's an expert on constitutional law who says that the battle we need to fight is to make Washington, D.C., work differently. The job description of president is to uphold the Constitution. At a time when the war abroad is an unbearable travesty, and I get

the feeling we are being distracted from an attempt to undermine our Constitution, would it be good for our next president to be a constitutional expert? I don't get why there's any question of nominating anyone else.

To me, this is as clear as the sky on a postcard perfect three degree Fahrenheit day. Barack is my guy.

2008 Dem Candidates

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Edwards, and Obama, have already been formed in the 10th District by Tenth Dems members. If you want to be a part of them, call us at 847-266-VOTE (8683), or e-mail us at info@tenthdems.org and we will let them know of your interest. If you are backing one of the other announced, or expected to announce, candidates, be it Biden, Dodd, Gravel, Kucinich or Richardson, call or e-mail Tenth Dems. All it takes is a few of you to get a group started, and Tenth Dems will help you get connected with one another.

In fact, Tenth Dems will do what it can to help all the 2008 Democratic presidential contenders. We plan to let our members know about any activities that the local presidential backers want publicized. We will not only e-mail our membership about the events, but we will also post them on our website and spread the word to other Democratic groups in the area. Tenth Dems provides the best network for reaching the most active Democratic grassroots volunteers throughout the 10th District of Illinois. So contact us if you're ready to help your candidate in 2008.

If you're still shopping for a candidate, here are the websites for the eight currently active Democratic candidates. Visit, compare, and see who you think will make the best replacement for George W. Bush in January 2009.



Joe Biden
JoeBiden.com



Hillary Clinton
HillaryClinton.com



Chris Dodd
ChrisDodd.com



John Edwards
JohnEdwards.com



Mike Gravel
Gravel08.us



Dennis Kucinich
Kucinich.us



Barack Obama
BarackObama.com



Bill Richardson
RichardsonForPresident.com

One Race Hangs in Balance on Low Voter Turnout

by Carol Jones

In the 2007 Lake County races the big story was low voter turnout. With a 17.54 percent turnout, most elections were decided by fewer than ten percent of registered voters. In fact, statistics show that not one candidate received more than 13 percent of registered votes. These results underline the importance of boosting turnout in all elections, especially local ones.

In North Chicago, a virtual tie vote in the Fourth Ward is up for recount. As of this printing, this race between incumbent Shaunese Teamer and challenger Bobby Allen will be decided by one or two votes. In the last election this same ward's election was decided by a coin-toss.

"These results truly represent what I feel are some of the long-term struggles in North Chicago. Unfortunately, it hasn't always been the candidates doing the most for the city who are reelected. The city can't grow without the continuity of its elected officials," commented Fourth Ward Alderman Shaunese Teamer, awaiting the recount.

One election official at the polls lamented the low voter turn-out. He attributed it to voters feeling that the elections do not affect them personally. But they do, and if this trend continues, elections will be decided by political insiders and stake-holders, not by the community these candidates strive to serve.

Watching our Rhetoric

by Steve Sheffey

One New Year's resolution we can all work on in this election cycle is restoring civility to political discourse. High-octane rhetoric is great for rallying the troops. But if our goal is to convince those on the fence to vote Democratic in 2008, we need a lower grade of fuel.

Readers of some websites and publications cannot help but come away with the impression that we think Mark Kirk can do nothing right. However, many thoughtful people look at his voting record and conclude that, based on his votes and endorsements, he must be doing at least something right. Those are the people we need to convince. We lose credibility when we portray Kirk as Darth Vader. Similarly, while there is much to legitimately criticize the Bush administration for, a policy is not necessarily wrong simply because the Bush administration supports it.

The better approach is to occasionally acknowledge where Kirk is correct and where we do not differ from him. His support for Israel is one example (he's not perfect or indispensable, but he is good on Israel), and there may be others. I'm not suggesting that we actively tout his accomplishments—he'll have plenty of money with which to do that on his own. But I am suggesting that we try not to come off as so closed-minded that we can see no good in him or the Republicans at all. We are much more persuasive if we are perceived as open-minded and willing to acknowledge strengths in our opponent's position and weaknesses in our own candidate, and then can explain why on balance our candidate is so much better.

No one admits negative advertising works on him or her, but it

clearly must work on many people, or else candidates would not engage in it. I'm not asking for an end to negative advertising. I'm talking about the more personal conversations we have with voters. The trap we must avoid is assuming that in individual conversations or e-mails to our friends we should be unrelentingly negative. Eventually, people will tune that out. A reasoned, balanced approach, one that eschews labels and name-calling, will be much more persuasive, especially in an educated district like this one.

This advice goes double should there be a Democratic primary. Any accusations made by one Democrat against another Democrat will undoubtedly be picked up by the Republicans in the general election. Let's make sure that if there is more than one Democratic candidate, we support the candidate of our choice by accentuating the positive, and not by giving our general election opponent ammunition. No one knows for sure who will run, but it is very likely that even if someone's second choice is on the Democratic ballot in November, that candidate will be preferable to Kirk. It would be a shame to contribute to a Kirk general election victory by engaging in careless rhetoric during the primary.

Finally, we should be careful when engaging in our own discussions, even when no one is lurking, to treat each other with respect and to recognize that the Democratic Party is a big tent that welcomes many viewpoints. What unites us is that we see a more active role for government in helping people who are disadvantaged at home and in conducting a moral foreign policy abroad. Let's make sure that everyone feels welcome, not by papering over disagreements, but by acknowledging our differences and discussing them in a way that promotes understanding rather than discord.

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