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*The opinions expressed are those of the writers, and not necessarily endorsed by Tenth Dems*

## George McGovern Addresses His Kind of People at Tenth Dems Fundraiser

*Ross Nickow, State Sen. Dan Kotowski Honored*

*by John Hmurovic*

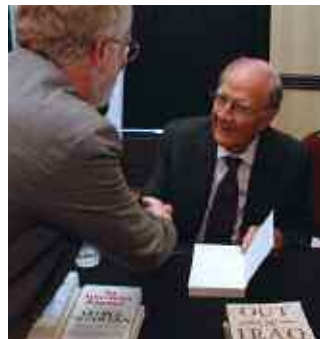
One of George McGovern's daughters asked him why he had agreed to come to the 10th District of Illinois to give a speech. He replied, "They are my kind of people."

Over 200 supporters of the Tenth Dems gathered at the Hyatt Deerfield on July 28th to meet the 1972 Democratic presidential nominee; and, judging from the response he received, they certainly were "his kind of people."

McGovern said that he is often asked what he would do if he was running for president today. Having just turned 85, he said that he is not a candidate, but if he was he would campaign on ten points. Proving to be as proudly liberal today as he was in 1972, he said he favors compre-

hensive healthcare for all, government-paid higher education for all qualified students, public financing of presidential elections, and an energy program built on conservation and alternative energy sources, as well as development of the best passenger rail service in the world. He would pay for it all by withdrawing American troops from Iraq in six months, reducing American defense spending by five percent annually for the next ten years, and canceling the Bush tax cuts. He would balance the federal budget.

But most of all, the man who was defeated in 1972 by Richard Nixon said he would do what



*Sen. McGovern signs copies of his book following his inspiring speech at Tenth Dems' annual fundraiser.*

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# Tenth News

AUGUST 2007 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 4, Edition 8

[www.tenthdems.org](http://www.tenthdems.org)

## What Ever Happened to Gun Control?

### Tenth Dems U Prof Discusses Debut Course and Tells Her Story

*by Jennifer Bishop*

Rarely does the level of public discourse and thoughtful discussion of important political issues get better than it was on the first night of the Tenth Dems Summer Issues University. On July 16th, a program called "What Ever Happened To Gun Control?" brought a diverse panel of experts before an appreciative crowd at the Northbrook Public Library.

The issue of gun violence has been profoundly personal and important to me ever since my sister Nancy Bishop Langert, her husband Richard, and their unborn child were murdered in Winnetka in 1990. A 16-year-old junior at New Trier High School, whose only motive was that he wanted to see what it would feel like to shoot someone, shot my brother-in-law point blank in the back of his head with a .357 magnum and then turned the gun on my beautiful 25-year-old pregnant sister. He shot her directly in the abdomen as she begged for the life of her baby, and then he fled, leaving her there to die slowly. Her last act of life was to pull herself over to her husband and trace a heart and a "u" in the blood - "I love you." Their murders rocked the usually peaceful North Shore, and I was left with the absolute realization in the ensuing years that I would do all that I could to prevent the violence that had killed them and so many others in our communities each year.

I volunteered for years in various organizations while teaching high school. I finally took up the work full time two years ago when I became the field director in Illinois for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. I was very grateful that the Tenth Dems gave



*John Hmurovic introduces moderator Jennifer Bishop and panelists Gurnee Police Chief Bob Jones, Cook County Board member Hon. Larry Suffredin, and Northbrook resident Bill Jenkins at TDU's first class, a discussion of gun control.*

this issue the thorough exploration that it deserved with a Tenth Dems U course, and as an active member of Tenth Dems and the New Trier Dems I was proud to host this program.

Joining me on July 16th was a prestigious panel that included Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin, a leading voice for sensible gun laws in the state; Gurnee Police Chief Bob Jones, former president of the Illinois Chiefs of Police and active in firearms legislation with the International Association of Chiefs; Thom

*continued on page 4*

# Tenth Dems Gather to View Michael Moore's *SiCKO* and Discuss of Healthcare

by Carol Hillsberg

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane." Martin Luther King, Jr., not Michael Moore, made this stirring statement, the essence of which is reflected in Moore's documentary film, *SiCKO*. It's interesting that in portraying the failings of the U.S. healthcare system, Michael Moore's latest documentary is less controversial than its predecessors. This is so, according to Moore, because the healthcare crisis is the number one domestic issue in the U.S. Moore also believes that this film may end up being more subversive than his previous documentaries, because it appeals to all kinds of people, not just the admirers of his ideology.



Tenth News Editor Barbara Altman won the raffle for the *SiCKO* poster.

healthcare expert, Kennedy recounted his personal struggles with the American healthcare system as the father of an autistic child.

Moore believes that the U.S. healthcare system is broken and that the greed of the insurance companies and the pharmaceutical companies is what is preventing the system from being fixed. In the first half of the movie he makes this point very convincingly by telling the stories of a cross-section of people, most with health insurance, who are denied benefits and therefore face physical and financial ruin. He also shows disgraceful scenes of the poor and uninsured enduring interminable waits for medical attention in inner-city emergency rooms while their conditions deteriorate, even to the point of death.

Among the most ironic cases depicted are those of several heroes of 9/11 who, suffering physically and emotionally from their experiences at Ground Zero, were refused benefits by their insurers, with devastating results. In perhaps the most controversial part of the film, Moore takes these rescue workers to Cuba where they receive the needed medical treatment at no cost. Moore also travels to Canada, France, and Great Britain and demonstrates how these nations' universal healthcare systems work



Healthcare expert Chris Kennedy leads the discussion.

More than 50 million Americans have no health insurance, and even those who do have insurance cannot be sure that it will be there when needed. The nearly 200 who attended a sold-out fundraiser for the Tenth Dems on July 1 gleaned these disturbing truths after viewing *SiCKO* at the Renaissance Theatre in Highland Park. The event included dinner at Michael's, followed by a discussion of the American healthcare crisis led by Christopher Kennedy. A lawyer and



Hungry Tenth Dems file into Michael's after viewing *SiCKO*.

to the benefit of both the patients and the healthcare providers. In a statement that resonates, a former member of the British parliament explained that the British universal healthcare system grew from the post-World War II belief that "if we can find the money to kill people, we can find the money to help people."

## Reflections on *SiCKO* and the 2008 Elections

by Lee Goodman

I recently saw Michael Moore's new film, *SiCKO*. Using interviews with actual victims of the U.S. healthcare industry, it shows how people have suffered because they live in the only industrialized country in the world that does not make sure people can get help when they need it. One man in the film lost a finger when doctors refused to sew it back on because he couldn't afford to pay them as much money as they were demanding. They threw his finger away. A woman whose doctor told her she had cancer was told by her insurance company that the doctor must be wrong because she was too young to have cancer. A man died because his insurance company wouldn't pay for the treatment he needed. And my personal favorite story, because the same exact thing happened to me, was that of the woman who was in an accident and later was told that her insurance company wouldn't pay for her ambulance ride to the emergency room because she hadn't had it pre-approved.

Anyone who has ever dealt with a health insurance company will understand what this movie is saying and will agree with it. Republican, Democrat, Independent, Green – it doesn't matter. Everyone in America knows firsthand why we should have national healthcare. Everyone except the people who can make it happen – our congressmen and our senators. They are the only ones who think we shouldn't have what the people in England and France and Canada and even Cuba have.

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During the post-viewing discussion at Michael's, state Representative Karen May noted that Governor Blagojevich has a plan to expand healthcare coverage but the stalemate in Springfield is over how to fund the governor's plan for universal healthcare in Illinois. This observation evoked what may be at the heart of Michael Moore's message. As Moore stated in an interview with Mary Houlihan of the *Chicago Sun Times*, "The key to a solution [for the healthcare crisis in the United States] is removing money from the political system. Otherwise it's always going to be hard to get laws passed that benefit the people, not the corporations." In Moore's view, citizens will have to demand universal healthcare because politicians will not do it on their own.

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# Kirk Unmasked: Kirk in Step With the Bush-Cheney Line on the Iraq War

*This is the third in an ongoing series of reports on Mark Kirk's voting record in the 110th Congress*

Recent issues of this newsletter have highlighted Republican Congressman Mark Kirk's practice of voting the Democratic position on certain high-profile final House votes once the measure is sure to pass, but only hours, if not minutes, after casting less visible procedural votes designed to delay or prevent passage of the identical legislation. This tactic allows Kirk to have his cake and eat it, too. That is, he endeavors to appear to support policies that are important to his constituents while in reality supporting the Republican Bush-Cheney agenda that his constituents reject.

Kirk has repeatedly employed this tactic in the 110th Congress, flip-flopping on a host of legislative initiatives, including Democratic proposals to increase the minimum wage, to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 commission, and to require the federal government to negotiate Medicare prescription drug prices. (See "Do you Know How Your Congressman Votes?," *Tenth News*, June 2007 and "Kirk Votes Both Ways on the 9/11 Commission Recommendations and Student Loans," *Tenth News*, July 2007.)

But one issue on which Kirk has made no effort to cast votes that would obscure in any way his allegiance to the Bush administration is the Iraq war. On this critical issue, he has remained steadfast in his full support of the administration's agenda and continues to vote openly and consistently in favor of its discredited stay-the-course policy.

On May 24, Kirk voted against the supplemental appropriations bill (H.R.1591) that included a timeline for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq. Then, on July 12, he voted against the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act (H.R. 2956). This bill, which aims to end U.S. involvement in the Iraq war, passed the House in a nearly straight party-line vote (only four Republicans voted yes while ten Democrats voted no). Sponsored by Armed Services Committee



Chairman Ike Skelton, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act requires the president to begin reducing the number of U.S. troops serving in Iraq within 120 days and to withdraw most troops by April 1, 2008. It also states that Congress's 2002 authorization was for the use of force against an Iraqi government that threatened the United States and that the new Iraqi government is not a threat and must be responsible for Iraq's future.

President Bush has promised to veto this or any other bill that sets a deadline for troop withdrawal. Kirk, by saying no to the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, made it clear that he would not vote to override such a veto.

Earlier this year, Kirk led a group of so-called moderate Republicans who met with President Bush to vocalize their concern about the growing negative impact of the war on their own reelection prospects. But Kirk has never publicly stated a position on the war to his constituents. His website continues to fail to address this critical issue (although it does note that he is co-chairman of the bipartisan Iran Working Group which serves to educate members of Congress about Iran's nuclear ambitions, Iran's influence in Iraq, and women's rights in Iran).

This past month, when approached at an event by a veteran of the Iraq war and asked to explain his position, Kirk turned his back and walked away, refusing to acknowledge the veteran's presence. The encounter was captured on video and can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEFGmOWqHqA>. This episode, coupled with Kirk's voting record, says more than any position paper ever could about the 10th District Congressman's position on the war – and his lack of commitment to honoring the men and women who have been fighting it.

## Why We're in Iraq *by George Rosenblit*

The current administration is in deep denial if it can look at the progress we have made in Iraq and see anything other than absolute failure. Al Qaeda has recovered to its pre-September 11 strength. Six years after 9/11, Osama bin Laden is still alive and his organization is still training terrorists with impunity on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, as well as in other areas. From shortly after our invasion of Iraq, our presence has continued to generate terrorists where previously there were none. And now, Sunni and Shia are killing each other in increasing numbers to the point of genocide. If this isn't civil war, what is?

What a waste of manpower and money! Over 3,600 men and women of our armed forces dead; more than were killed by Al Qaeda on 9/11. Over 26,000 casualties. And hundreds of billions of dollars of debt that will burden us, our children, and our grandchildren. And now we're right back where we started.

Anyone who can look at those facts and say, "This is not the real debate," or insist that progress is being made, is either denying the reality of our situation or attempting to conceal it. One is as dangerous as the other.

So, what is the real reason Bush and Cheney wanted us to invade and now to remain in Iraq as an occupying power? The truth appears

to be in an obscure clause in the current Iraq War Supplemental Spending Bill, which demands that the Iraqi Parliament pass the "Iraq Oil Law." The Associated Press reported on March 13 that the United States had initially counted on financing Iraq's post-invasion reconstruction with the oil revenues from Iraqi oil production. Thus the truth appears to be bared, but not quite. Read on.

Although the primary purpose of this proposed law is to divide oil revenues among Sunni, Shia, and Kurds, it also stipulates that 70 percent of Iraq's known oil reserves and all future oil discoveries would be privatized, primarily for the benefit of U.S. oil companies.

The people of Iraq oppose this law, as they should, saying they will not allow an occupying force to steal their most valuable natural resource. Hundreds took to the streets in Basra under the leadership of the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions. But the Iraqi Parliament continues to face intense pressure by the Bush administration to pass the Oil Law. Its adoption is one of the benchmarks imposed by the U.S. for the Iraqis to meet in order to receive continued reconstruction aid.

What this all means is that Bush and Cheney are intent on giving away Iraqi oil to private U.S. oil companies, and we, the tax-paying citizens of the United States, are expected to pay for the reconstruction, as well as for the costs of this ill-advised war, which Congressional analysts say is nearing a half-trillion dollars.

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# Tenth Dems University Opens Its Doors...Figuratively Speaking

by John Hmurovic

**Studemus. Laboramus. Vicimus.**

**We study. We work. We win.**

That's the motto of Tenth Dems University, our area's newest way for you to learn more about politics, government, and the issues that affect our lives. Tenth Dems U opened its doors this past month.

Well, not really. We don't actually have doors. Tenth Dems U is not your typical bricks-and-mortar school. We don't have a campus. We're bringing our courses to venues close to where you live, holding them in libraries, community halls, and a variety of other locations across the 10th Congressional District.

In July, we kicked off TDU with four courses, one in Northbrook, another in Highland Park, a third in Winnetka, and a fourth in Deerfield. This month, we are offering four more courses, and we'll head out to Arlington Heights, Lincolnshire, and Glencoe, as well as back to Deerfield.

Although we don't have a campus, we do have top-notch instructors. In July, we were honored to have a course taught by a former Congressman, federal court judge, and legal counsel to the President of the United States. Amazingly, all those titles were held by one man, Hon. Abner Mikva, who used to represent the 10th District in Congress. He taught a TDU class on "How to Win an Election in the 10th District." This month, we're honored to have another expert office-holder, veteran Lake County Board member Carol Spielman, who will explain the workings of county government.

Other Tenth Dems U instructors may not be widely known elected officials, but all are experts in their fields, from long-time leaders in the prevention of gun violence (Jennifer Bishop), or in opposing American military intervention in Iraq (David Borris), to experts in hands-on political skills like getting out the vote on election day (political consultant Steve Sadin), finding and using political information on the internet (political researcher Ellen Gill), and starting up a political blog (Illinois blogger Carl Nyberg).

All the July courses were well-attended, and some of those who



*Hon. Abner Mikva presides over one of Tenth Dems U's inaugural classes, How to Win an Election in the 10th District. Attendance at this and other July classes was impressive, evidence of Tenth Dems' thirst for knowledge.*

showed up are on their way to earning the first degrees that will be awarded by Tenth Dems University. If you attend five courses, we will award you an Associate's Degree in 10th District Politics. Completion of ten courses earns you a Bachelor's Degree. If you finish 20 courses, you will be awarded a Master's Degree, and completion of 30 courses will make you a Doctor of 10th District Politics. We are planning a graduation event next summer to award degrees.

So, be the first in your precinct to earn a degree. Go to [www.TenthDemsU.org](http://www.TenthDemsU.org) on a regular basis to see what courses are being offered; new ones are added every month. Classes are free, and open to all. Register today at [www.TenthDemsU.org](http://www.TenthDemsU.org).

**Studemus. The first step is to study.**

**Laboramus. Then we work.**

**Vicimus. Only then do we win.**

**Tenth Dems U. Be a part of it.**

## Gun Control *continued from page 1*

Mannard, executive director of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence ([www.ichv.org](http://www.ichv.org)); and Northfield resident Bill Jenkins, author of *What to Do When the Police Leave: A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss*, who became a reluctant expert on the gun industry after his son was shot and killed.

More than 30,000 people lose their lives to gun violence each year in the United States, almost half of them from homicides. No other nation in the world endures close to comparable levels of gun violence. There is a total disconnect in our country from the staggering size of these numbers, and a lack of political awareness. Much of the public accepts this level of violence as "normal" and something we just have to live with. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Most countries have easily figured out what is necessary to diminish gun violence: performing universal background checks on every gun transaction to prevent prohibited purchasers from getting guns too easily, limiting the access of civilians to military-type weapons, and furnishing law enforcement leaders the tools they need to combat the trafficking of street guns.

Why is the United States so different when it comes to high levels of gun violence? The Tenth Dems University suggested some answers

to this question. A huge and highly profit-oriented gun manufacturing industry feeds millions and millions of dollars to the gun lobby, mostly embodied in the National Rifle Association. That money ends up in the hands of those sent to our Congress and our state legislatures, who are then all too happy to pass laws easing the gun market and tying the hands of law enforcement. As panelist Bill Jenkins said of the fervor of the extremist leaders of the NRA, who are often out of touch with even the values of their own rank-and-file members, the gun lobby fights very hard because it has something tangible to lose – profits. In contrast, those of us trying to reduce the violence have only something intangible to gain.

Chief Jones described the gun lobby as the farthest right-wing fringe imaginable and used this month's battle in the U.S. Congress on the Tiahrt Amendment to the appropriations bill as the perfect example of what this group is capable of doing to protect gun industry profits. Chief Jones was particularly concerned about the way the Tiahrt legislation would prohibit law enforcement from using and sharing crime gun trace data to track the flow of illegal guns and identify those few bad dealers responsible for most of the crime guns. Kansas Republican Todd Tiahrt, who is sponsoring the amendment, openly admitted that the NRA actually wrote the amendment that de-funds public access to information vital to public safety.

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# Tenth Dems U August 2007 Class Schedule

## America's Military Misadventure in Iraq: How did we get there? What has been accomplished and at what cost?

**Date:** Thursday, August 9, 7:00 p.m.

**Location:** Arlington Heights Public Library, 500 N. Dunton Avenue, Arlington Hts.

**Instructor:** David Borris, North Suburban Peace Initiative

Anyone who's looked into the issue of the Iraq war knows that the situation is entangled in enormously complicated threads of history, money, revenge, economics, American mistakes, and corruption. David Borris of the North Suburban Peace Initiative will bring you the facts to give you a better understanding of what's going on.

The course will begin with an overview of Iraqi history from the formation of modern Iraq, to the rise of Saddam Hussein, to the United States' initial support of Saddam, to Gulf War I and the subsequent weapons inspections. The course will also examine the U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002 and the political philosophy that gave it birth and eventually led to the war; and will look at differences and ongoing debates over pre-emptive and preventative war.

The course will then examine the colossal blunders that have followed the wake of the U.S. invasion and the costs of the war — financial loss, human suffering, destabilization of the region, and damage to America's image around the world. The course also will address the unprecedented level of privatization of the U.S. military and the war profiteering that has ensued.

At the end of the class, students will be given a chance to engage in a discussion of where we go from our current situation and the consequences of various courses of action.

## Experts, Liars, and Campaign Spies: Political Opinion on the Internet

**Date:** Saturday, August 18, 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** Deerfield, Specific Site To Be Determined

**Instructor:** Ellen Beth Gill, Attorney, Political Activist and Operator of Ellen's Tenth Congressional District Blog

In July, Ellen Beth Gill taught students the best places on the internet to research important governmental and political facts and data. This month Ellen will be your guide to another gold mine of potential political knowledge that lies in the words of online opinion writers. There are more varied and numerous opinions, analyses, and speculations to be found online than any other place, but figuring out what's useful or accurate can be very difficult.

Ellen, one of the leading political bloggers in the 10th Congressional District, can show you what you need to know. In this course she will focus on where you can look to find what opinionated experts, pundits, or ordinary people are saying about the various laws, bills, and cases that are before our legislatures and courts. More important, Ellen will teach you how to verify or discredit the information, and where to find reliable sources on various topics.

## Using Blogs to Win Votes

**Date:** Saturday, August 25, 3:00 p.m.

**Location:** Glencoe Public Library, 320 Park Avenue, Glencoe

**Instructor:** Carl Nyberg, Political Blogger/Journalist

A few years ago, the word "blog" (a website that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals and usually has links to comments on specific postings) wasn't even in the dictionary. Now, every serious political campaign office rigorously monitors developments in the world of blogs, and CNN even has its own political reporter devoted to covering the work of online bloggers. The most influential aspect of blogging is that anyone can do it! If you ever thought about being a part of the political blog community, this course is a good place to start.

In this course, political blogger Carl Nyberg, who runs the blog *Prairie State Blue* and contributes to *Daily Kos*, will take a look at the role blogs play as media outlets, as conduits for ideas, and in the creation of social and political networks. The course will also explain and demonstrate how blogs are used to advance campaigns, how blogs can focus attention on an opponent's weak spots, and the limits of using blogs for campaigning.

Course participants will be asked to do a little light reading before attending the course and are encouraged to submit questions in advance. After the class, all are invited to meet for discussion and networking at a local restaurant.

## Your Hidden Government: The Power of Lake County

**Date:** Monday, August 27, 7:00 p.m.

**Location:** Vernon Area Public Library, 300 Olde Half Day Road, Lincolnshire

**Instructor:** Carol Spielman, Lake County Board Member

Most political textbooks will discuss the three most commonly perceived levels of government in America — federal, state, and municipal. Most of the same textbooks will ignore a fourth, less known, yet significantly powerful tier of government in the federal system: county government. In Cook County, the power of the county is obvious, and the county board president is both prominent and influential. In Lake County, on the other hand, residents often don't know that their county government exists or what it does. We can do better. After all, the county population is about 720,000 and the budget in 2007 is \$425,000,000.

If you want to learn more about how this important part of government works, this course is for you. Longtime Lake County Board member Carol Spielman, a former political science instructor who specialized in American government, will touch on the constitutional foundation of county government and briefly cover the structure, political history, intergovernmental relations, interest groups, campaigns and elections, policies, and bureaucracy. There will be an open discussion and (she promises) lots of fun.

**Register today at [www.TenthDemsU.org](http://www.TenthDemsU.org)**

## Gun Control continued from page 4

Thom Mannard described well the reasons why those who care about the gun issue should be glad they live in Illinois, a state with a supportive climate that has already passed legislation, like closing the gun show loophole, that has resulted in lower gun homicides. Larry Suffredin spoke eloquently about the wrong-headed thinking concerning the politics around the gun issue and updated the group on the many common-sense proposals in Springfield that could actually save lives and make a real difference. And I shared my experience in the 2006 elections with the Brady Campaign and helped to debunk a myth about the effectiveness of politicians running on the gun issue. Polling data shows the vast majority of the American public, including gun owners, support background checks, an assault weapons ban, and regulating illegal gun trafficking. Ninety-five percent of the Brady Campaign's endorsed candidates won last fall, and less than half of the NRA's nationally endorsed candidates were elected.

There are several bills pending in Springfield that suburban and

outlying legislators need to hear from you on, such as a statewide ban on assault weapons, limits on bulk handgun purchases, and state licensing of gun dealers. All the panelists encouraged audience members to help raise the profile of the costs of gun violence.

This course got Tenth Dems University off to a dynamic start, and we look forward to more of these events that promise to be a valuable resource for informed voters, candidates, and grassroots organizers.

## Why We're in Iraq continued from page 3

Once again, our leaders in Washington have spoken with forked tongue, and the true reason for the lies and obfuscation that have prevailed since the start of the invasion of Iraq has come to light. How can we the people and our Congress stand for this rape of Iraq on behalf of U.S. oil companies and at the expense of American lives? Shame on Bush and Cheney!

I am outraged at this travesty, as every American should be. It's time to leave Iraq now before more lives are lost for no good purpose.

# CONSERVATION ALERT: *Water, Essential to Life, But in Bottles?*

by *Donnie R. Dann*

How often does your day pass without seeing someone carrying around a bottle of drinking water? The Beverage Marketing Corporation reports U. S. bottled water sales increases of 60 percent since 2001, to almost \$11 billion. Americans will drink some 30 billion single serving bottles of water this year.



What are the factors driving this explosive growth, and should we really be shunning old-fashioned tap water to satisfy our thirst from bottles? In some third world countries where many people lack access to safe drinking water and millions die every year from diseases linked to tainted water, clean bottled water is essential to health. However, in the United States the story is very different.

The Environmental Protection Agency sets standards for avoiding contaminants in drinking water under the authority of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Municipal water suppliers may not provide water that doesn't meet these standards. If you are drinking bottled water because you think that it is purer, safer than community water, or better for your health, you are probably not getting your money's worth. The purity standards for bottled water, set by the Food and Drug Administration, are no higher than those applied to tap water. In fact in some instances they are lower or less rigorous.

In 1999, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) studied 103 brands of bottled water and determined that one-third failed to comply with industry-set standards. NRDC further said that an

estimated 25 percent or more of bottled water is really just tap water in a bottle – sometimes further treated, sometimes not.

These are some of the other problems with bottled water:

- The plastic bottles are mostly made from a polyethylene resin known as PET, which is petroleum (fossil fuel) based, the manufacture of which releases air pollutants, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and carbon dioxide, all of which contribute to global warming.
- Although conscientious consumers increasingly recycle, most plastic water bottles (an estimated 2 million tons) end up in landfills or as roadside litter. Eleven states require deposits and return refunds, but these typically apply to bottled beer and carbonated beverages only.
- Excessive withdrawal of natural mineral or spring water to produce bottled water has threatened local streams and groundwater.
- Unlike tap water, bottled water normally contains no fluoride, proven to prevent dental carries.
- Whereas tap water is distributed through an energy efficient infrastructure, transporting bottled water long distances involves burning significant amounts of fossil fuels.

Instead of buying bottled water to carry around, you can simply carry a reusable bottle or some other container and fill it from the tap. You can even filter the tap water, if you wish. Just take care that your refillable container is not made from PET or other plastic that can leach harmful substances or risk bacterial contamination. Polypropylene plastic #5 PP, #2 HDPE, or #4 LDPE are not known to do so and are considered safe for reuse. To learn more, visit the website for the Society of the Plastics Industry, [www.socplas.org](http://www.socplas.org).

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# *The Assault on Reason and an Assault on Democracy:*

## **The Importance of an Informed Electorate**

by Steve Sheffey

George Bernard Shaw wrote, “Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.” But in the last presidential election, the incompetent many elected the corrupt few. With Dick Cheney pulling the strings, it’s as if Montgomery Burns of *The Simpsons* is running the country. Cheney even gets away with shooting people without having to hire expensive lawyers like O.J. did. Next year, the Supreme Court probably will re-classify Pluto as a planet by a 5-4 vote, since science counts for nothing in this government. By making public policy and legislating from the bench (judicial activism by any definition), this Court has strayed from its core incompetency: deciding presidential elections.

It’s easy to joke about this administration, but its assault on democracy is no laughing matter. Al Gore’s new book, *The Assault on Reason* (The Penguin Press, New York, NY: 2007, 308 pages), details Bush’s deception regarding Iraq, the many instances where

the Bush administration simply ignores the facts (Iraq, global warming, etc.), the way Bush uses statements made during signing ceremonies to selectively (and unconstitutionally) implement provisions of laws, mass surveillance without authority, and the suspension of habeas corpus. Gore also points out that despite widespread dissatisfaction with Congress, in the four elections of the new millennium House members have been reelected 96 percent of the time.

Gore’s broader thesis is that our government is not acting according to reason and voters are not voting based on reason. Gore puts much of the blame on television and radio. The two-way communication of the printing press, where anyone could communicate relatively inexpensively, encouraged robust debate. TV and radio replaced the printing press and are one-way media. The public’s ability to talk back is limited by technology and cost. Drawing on earlier work of Edward Bernays and Walter Lippman, Gore shows how monied interests use television and radio to manufacture consent, particularly through the politics of fear.

Gore supports public financing of political campaigns, which would solve the problem of candidates spending so much time raising money and becoming beholden to contributors. But Gore points out that even with public financing, the ads themselves will continue, and thus so will the problem of manufactured consent. Gore believes that the internet can solve the problem because it is a vehicle of two-way communication free of the technological and monetary barriers inherent in television and radio.

However, Gore fails to see that the internet is an easily manipulated cesspool of misinformation. Some sites clear the air rather than fog it, but finding those sites is challenging and there is disagreement over which sites those are. Moreover, no one has time to visit all the sites, and most people tend to visit their favorites. The result is more division and polarization, as biased sources indoctrinate groups of people who do not expose themselves to differing points of view.

The challenge is not the technology, but the citizenry. We need education, starting in grade school, on the importance of being an

informed and active citizen. The democratic experiment is only about 200 years old. Critics of democracy have said it cannot work for many of the reasons playing out before our eyes. When Benjamin Franklin was asked after the Constitutional Convention whether we had a republic or a monarchy, Franklin replied “A republic, if you can keep it.” Let’s not let the Bush administration take it away.

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## **Al Gore Speaks to Crowd of 3,000 at Jewish Federation Lawyers Dinner**

by Neesa Sweet

“It’s time to steer by the stars rather than the light of every passing ship.” That was Al Gore quoting a U.S. general, as Gore spoke to an overflow crowd at the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago’s lawyers’ and government agencies’ dinner on June 6th. The lawyers



and civil servants had lots of friends. More than 3,000 people came to the Hyatt to hear the former Democratic presidential nominee, Oscar winner, Grammy star, and environmental hero. The size of the crowd necessitated two ballrooms connected by video, and Gore cheerfully moved from ballroom to ballroom, delivering his address from one and fielding questions from the other.

Gore opened with his trademark, “I’m Al Gore, and I used to be the next President of the United States.” He then segued into a high-spirited series of jokes, complete with a great imitation of Bill Clinton. Then he got serious, speaking about Iran, climate change, and the general state of politics in America. Gore talked about the need

for “forward movement towards moral goals,” and the need for truth as a force in the debate.

On Iran, Gore said, “Military action may not be the best alternative,” noting that he had recently met with the head of Mossad who said there were many factors underneath the surface that had to be considered in formulating a policy toward Iran.

On climate change, Gore said that global warming is a challenge to our morality. He maintained that we have to get beyond the false information provided by oil companies and other special interests. He also said that we need to counter those who want to wait for data until it is too late to take action. Gore quoted a Latin poet: “There is no path – you must make it as you walk.”

On politics, Gore noted that more than 80 percent of campaign budgets are spent on 30-second commercials. In the past, facts made a bigger difference, he pointed out. Our democracy requires a well-informed citizenry and informed debate. We need to have more discussions. “What Iraq and the climate change question have in common is that there are no robust discussions based on the best evidence,” he remarked.

He also spoke of the horrors in Darfur and the need for the world to take action. Gore then ended with an African proverb as applicable to the need for world cooperation on Darfur or global warming as it was to the evening’s fundraising goal: “If you want to go quickly, go alone – if you want to go far, go together.”

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## Fundraiser *continued from page 1*

every President of the United States swears to do when he takes the oath of office: he would preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. "If Nixon would have done that," McGovern said, "he would never have gotten into trouble." McGovern added that, in his opinion, the Bush-Cheney team has shown less respect for the Constitution, and committed more impeachable offenses, than Nixon ever did.

Before McGovern spoke, two awards were presented at the event, which was the annual fundraiser for Tenth Dems. The George Rosenblit Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Ross Nickow. Ross has been active in virtually everything that Tenth Dems does. He is a member of our Administrative Committee, but he has been instrumental in coordinating numerous Tenth Dems events, such as several movie nights and public forums. In the past, he has also coordinated yard sign distribution during the campaign season. He is an active contributor to the Tenth Dems newsletter, an excellent editor and proofreader of the newsletter and many other Tenth Dems materials. He can often be seen at events, camera in hand, taking photos for our newsletter and other publications.

The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Ross at the event by George Rosenblit, who called Ross "a fine example of what a volunteer should be." Last year was the first time that Tenth Dems named a Volunteer of the Year. Anne Wedner and George were the first to receive that honor. The award has since been named in honor of George, for his continued dedication to the Democratic Party through the work of Tenth Dems.

The second award that was presented at the event was the Abner Mikva Leadership Award. This is the first year that Tenth Dems has presented a leadership award, and the recipient was state Senator Dan Kotowski. The award recognized that "Senator Kotowski has shown true democratic leadership in providing a better environment for children and families in Illinois by his advocacy for quality education, affordable healthcare and affordable housing." It was presented to him by Jennifer Bishop, the head of the Illinois branch of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. In her remarks, she cited Senator Kotowski's efforts to find solutions to the problem of gun violence in our society, and his courage in standing up to the National Rifle Association, which she called the most powerful lobbying group in the nation.

## *Tenth Dems Gather* *continued from page 2*

In his review of *SICKO*, Tom Charity of CNN said, "But all is fair in love and Moore, and the system is sick, no question. With four times as many health lobbyists as there are congressmen, and with multimillion-dollar campaign donations at stake, the prospect of universal care seems a distant hope." However, if we ever have public financing of campaigns – as noted by Lauren Beth Gash, 10th Congressional District Committeewoman – or if more voters see this "bitterly funny, bitterly sad" movie, change is possible.

## *Reflections* *continued from page 2*

Fortunately, this movie, coming as it does on the eve of the presidential and congressional primaries, brings to the forefront the most urgent domestic issue facing our country. So as the candidates for Congress in your area ask for your vote, ask them whether they support national healthcare. And if all they have to offer is an increase in coverage for uninsured children, tell them that's not enough, because it isn't only children who need healthcare, and even insured people aren't getting the care they need. If they try to duck the question by mouthing platitudes like, "It's time we did something about healthcare," ask them what exactly they plan to do. If they tell you we can fix the problem with health savings accounts or tax incentives for employers, demand that they explain how that will make enough of a difference, because the fact is, it won't.

The two big issues in the upcoming elections will be the Iraq war and healthcare. A lot of Americans are disappointed that the Democratically-controlled Congress isn't acting fast enough to end the war. If Democratic candidates don't show genuine understanding of the healthcare mess and don't make fixing it their top priority, the Democratic Party will quickly become irrelevant to most Americans.