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

Lessons Learned at Tenth Dems University by Carol Hillsberg

"Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants."

This statement by Louis Brandeis has inspired the Sunlight Foundation blog www.sunlightfoundation.com. This blog's mission is to shed light on misdeeds in Congress. It provides information on donor and lobbyist influence and Congressional "boondoggles." Moreover, the Sunlight Foundation provides links to many other light-yielding blogs, such as www.congresspedia.org, www.followthemoney.org, www.contractormisconduct.org... and the list goes on. This was just one glimpse of the more and more influential and pervasive world of blogs as presented by Ellen Beth Gill to a class of 15 attending Tenth Dems University on Saturday afternoon, August 18th.

Ellen is more than qualified to teach this offering of Tenth Dems University as she has her own blog, aptly named Ellen's Illinois Tenth Congressional District Blog (www.ellenofthetenth.blogspot.com). In her course, Ellen emphasized repeatedly that everyone has a bias, and that it's fine to be partisan, but that it is crucial to be factually correct. Thus, in her blog, Ellen goes to great lengths to disclose the chain of information that supports her opinions.

There are blog offerings on countless topics, with opinions covering the gamut from left to right. If a reader wants to know the blogger's bias, check "About Us" on the site. Buzzflash (www.buzzflash.com), for example, is a good place to start to catch up on the news from a left-leaning point of view. Google searches, on the other hand, tend to yield more conservative blogs. There are blogs that specialize in certain topics, such as military issues (www.defenselink.mil), environmental issues (www.climatecrisis.net), employment issues (www.unitedprofessionals.org), and Bill of Rights issues

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Tenth News

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Kirk's Public Statements About His Environmental Record Mislead Constituents – Again

by Mark Kraemer

When attending one of Congressman Mark Kirk's rare public forums, I'm always on the alert for misleading statements.

Regular readers of this newsletter have seen many examples of Mark Kirk's misleading public statements in the past. Kirk uses press releases and printed campaign literature sent to constituents to improve his image, and he often relies on misleading information to do so. Perhaps our congressman feels compelled to mislead the voters in his district, given the mediocre voting record he has compiled over the last seven years on issues important to his constituents. The environment is a case in point.

Environmental protection is valued in this district. Yet Mark Kirk's record is filled with anti-environmental votes. I was recently witness to one of Kirk's attempts to deceive voters about his environmental record in Congress.

The scene was a forum at the Pavilion Senior Center in Wheeling on July 28th. This forum was attended by roughly 50 senior citizens and was advertised as a "legislative update." Kirk presented a scripted discussion of a few issues and then took questions from the audience. During the question and answer segment I asked Kirk why, if the environment was as important to him as he claimed, had he voted for Bush's budget bills that actually cut funding from environmental



Kirk distorts his record on the environment before an audience of about 50 senior citizens at a forum in Wheeling on July 28th.

protection programs.

Kirk would not answer my question. Instead, he said that the environmental group League of Conservation Voters (LCV), which rates legislators, had given him a higher approval rating than Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton.

This claim provides insight into the way Kirk manipulates data to mislead his constituents.

Rather than try to explain or defend his support of Bush's anti-environmental policies, which is what he was asked to do, Kirk attempted to compare his record on the environment favorably to that of Democrat Hillary Clinton. If Kirk's record was viewed by the LCV as superior to Clinton's, the congressman apparently reasoned, then his constituents would have to conclude that Kirk's own environmental credentials were beyond reproach.

Kirk may have been hoping that no one would follow up and find the true story of his lackluster performance on the environment, as documented by LCV. If so, he was mistaken. And since Kirk held up Senator Clinton as a benchmark, I researched hers as well, as shown in the chart above.

Clearly, Kirk's lifetime record of 61 percent is in no way comparable to

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LCV approval ratings for Clinton and Kirk 2001-2006

2001:	Clinton	88%	Kirk	71%
2002:	Clinton	88%	Kirk	38%
2003:	Clinton	89%	Kirk	80%
2004:	Clinton	100%	Kirk	55%
2005:	Clinton	95%	Kirk	39%
2006:	Clinton	71%	Kirk	75%

Lifetime rating:

Clinton 90% Kirk 61%

From Vietnam to Iraq: Where is the Outrage?

by Marla Sundh

I began this article planning a simple reminiscence about the anti-war movement of the 1960s. The movement of that period was full of passion. It featured active demonstrations to pressure the government to exit the Vietnam War: A war that was going nowhere, except to the cemetery. A war that was ill-advised and poorly executed. A war crafted by an administration that made no effort to understand the country and its people, never mind having an objective that could reasonably be accomplished. A war against a country that had posed no threat to us. Sound familiar?

The immediacy and size of the anti-war movement was fueled by young Americans' refusal to fight in a war that had no meaning to American families. (Remember "HELL NO, WE WON'T GO"?) It was easier to gain support for vigorous protest when there was a real chance that you'd have to go fight that war; the existence of the draft was unquestionably a huge force for anti-war organization in the '60s.



name just a few. Before the internet became the predominant means of communication, people had to come together in person to meet, discuss, and plan. They had to stand next to one another shoulder to shoulder. That's not happening today, and the movement lacks energy because of it.

It is also more evident that mainstream media now focus on spectacle and entertainment. This has contributed to the weakness of the anti-war movement, as coverage of organized events is rare to

nonexistent. When I watch television news programs and listen to 20 minutes on John Edwards' haircut, or Hillary Clinton's cleavage, I think we are in trouble indeed. Even newspapers frequently prefer the sensational story, as evidenced by how much I, for one, know about Anna Nicole Smith.

As members of Tenth District Democrats, we can take great pride in our organization's superior programming (TDU, for example) to educate people about the issues behind the catch phrases.

Then and now: Protesting the Vietnam War draft in San Francisco in 1967; protesting the Iraq war in Washington, D.C., in 2007.

When the Democratic Party regained control of Congress in last November's election, many of us expected the victory to result in an immediate timetable for the end of the Iraq War. This has not occurred, because 51 percent is obviously not enough to overcome the votes and vetoes of the Bush administration.

There must be more of an effort to reach across race, political party, gender, and class boundaries among opponents of this disastrous war. Attempts must be made to reach into the traditional Republican base and bring them into the movement to tilt the balance.

Who is the face of the anti-war movement today? Michael Moore? Cindy Sheehan? The anti-war movement of the '60s had charismatic spokespersons such as Abbie Hoffman, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesse Jackson, Tom Hayden, and others. The movement today is lacking the kind of outspoken leadership that existed at that earlier time.

The bottom line, then, as I see it, is that we must unify and regain a sense of national outrage. With the anti-war movement divided into so many sub-groups, the scope of marches and boycotts is less effective. These groups need to band together to make the civic protest larger and louder and more frequent. There is encouraging progress on this front, as the Iraq summer campaign crescendoes. In a major initiative, Americans Against Escalation of the War in Iraq has organized with other anti-war groups to apply pressure against senators and congressmen throughout the country who still support the war in order to make it politically dangerous for them to do so.

These efforts appear to be bearing fruit. As we go to press John Warner, prominent Republican Senator, has defected from the ranks of the cheerleaders for the Bush administration's war machine. If the anti-war movement can maintain the pressure, more such defections are sure to follow. Perhaps then we will be able to carry the lessons of the '60s forward to bring an end to this disastrous war.

Today? The armed services are staffed with volunteers, making the war seem distant in the minds and hearts of many Americans. Young people, who have a huge stake in the future of this country, are sadly removed from concern or responsibility. Whether the draft should be resumed is a viable question for debate.

I often reflect on how we got from there to here – how and why we have allowed ourselves to become dispirited and disheartened to the point where there is no apparent consolidated anti-war movement. Why are we not marching in the streets? Why are we not mounting demonstrations of outrage relentlessly, loudly, and often?

When the Iraq War was started, Congress and the public were rendered willing accomplices both by disingenuous fabrications and by a Republican strategy of redefining patriotism. If you didn't support the invasion of Iraq, you were labeled "unpatriotic." The administration framed all debate in those terms – in the shadow of the fear created by 9/11. In the ensuing years we have allowed the Republicans to beat us by appealing to this paranoid patriotism at every turn.

So where IS the anti-war movement? The changing face of the media has contributed to the way we engage in dialogue about the war. The internet has allowed people to fight against the war from their computer work stations. There are literally hundreds of organizations operating online, such as Iraq Veterans Against the War, True Majority, United for Peace and Justice, and Moveon, to

Kirk Unmasked: Symbolic Support for Veterans Is No Substitute for Tangible Benefits



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

On March 5, Republican Congressman Mark Kirk helped introduce H.R. 634, a bipartisan bill providing for the minting and sale of special coins in honor of disabled American veterans. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin Act, which passed the House in a unanimous vote on March 15, also authorizes the use of surcharges on the coins for the construction of a memorial to veterans who became disabled while serving in the U.S. armed forces.

"I believe the time has come to recognize the sacrifices made by America's more than three million disabled veterans by building a memorial for them here in Washington, D.C.," Kirk said before the House of Representatives on March 5.

The importance of symbolic undertakings, such as commemorative coins and memorials that publicly acknowledge the extraordinary sacrifices made by U.S. veterans, cannot be overstated. But in the case of Representative Kirk – who, despite his steadfast support for the Iraq war, has failed to consistently support legislative proposals to provide tangible assistance, fair treatment, and adequate benefits to veterans and current members of the U.S. armed forces – support of the Commemorative Coin Act seems downright hypocritical. It masks Kirk's failure to support the real, concrete needs of combat veterans, as well as those of the men and women currently serving in our armed forces.



If Mark Kirk truly respected veterans and the men and women serving in the U.S. armed forces and wished to support them, why did he refuse to speak with Iraq war veteran Josh Lansdale on July

10th? And why did he vote against H. R. 3159 – a Democratic proposal to create a mandatory rest and recuperation period between deployments to Iraq? This bill passed the House on August 2 in a nearly straight party-line vote, with six Republicans joining 223 Democrats in voting for its passage. It mandates that before a member of the regular armed forces can be redeployed to Iraq, he or she must be given a period of rest at least as long as the duration of his or her most recent deployment. It similarly requires that members of the armed forces reserve be given a period of rest at least three times as long as the duration of his or her most recent deployment.

Unfortunately, H.R. 3159 isn't the only instance in which Kirk voted against the best interests of U.S. troops and veterans. According to Disabled American Veterans, Kirk voted against the interests of veterans and members of the U.S. armed forces on 10 of the 15 most important legislative proposals to come to the House floor between 2001 and 2006 (see <http://capwiz.com/dav/officials/congress/?district=10&lv=C&azip=60093&state=IL>).

On May 11, 2005, for example, Kirk voted against the Taylor amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006. This amendment would have expanded access to the military's TRICARE health insurance program to all reservist and National Guard members. He also voted against the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act in 2006.

This bill would have added veterans' healthcare funding for combat-related trauma care to support wounded troops returning to their homes, including medical and prosthetic research. Kirk has also voted for numerous Republican budgets containing significant cuts

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Kirk's Environmental Record *continued from page 1*

Clinton's lifetime rating of 90 percent. Consistent with these lifetime ratings, of the six years they served together in Congress, Kirk's record was markedly inferior to Clinton's in all but one of those years. Only in 2006, when Clinton's LCV rating plummeted to an uncharacteristic 71 percent (17 points lower than her previous lowest rating) did Kirk's rating equal or exceed hers.

But more than giving the lie to Kirk's claim of parity with Clinton, the LCV scores also demonstrate that Kirk's own environmental record is wildly inconsistent. His good years are fair at best, but his bad years – with ratings well below 50 percent – should be totally unacceptable in a district that values environmental protection. Kirk's inconsistent LCV ratings show that 10th District residents simply cannot count on Mark Kirk to cast pro-environment votes in the future.

Yet at the Wheeling forum, in front of a roomful of constituents, Kirk defended his record on the environment by claiming to have a higher LCV rating than Hillary Clinton.

Having examined Kirk's record in some detail, I can't say that I was surprised by this sort of dishonesty in his public presentation. After all, Kirk has made a habit in his printed material of misleading the public. Still, seeing this deception in person was a real eye-opener. Kirk tried

to hoodwink his constituents – without hesitation and without any apparent remorse.

Could the 10th District ever have a representative who plays straight with constituents and who consistently votes pro-environment? Certainly we could. We already have such representatives; Illinois Democratic Senators Dick Durbin and Barack Obama have consistently used their votes in Congress to support policies that protect the environment. Durbin's lifetime score from LCV is a solid 82 percent, and Obama's is a phenomenal 96 percent.

Unlike Mark Kirk, Dick Durbin and Barack Obama don't have to mislead voters about their records – both of them have shown their commitment to protecting the environment time and time again. Democrats Durbin and Obama set the gold standard for environmental representation in Congress.

Imagine a congressman from the 10th District who shared our Democratic senators' consistent commitment to environmental issues. Mark Kirk will never be that congressman. His record proves it. The only way we can have a 10th District congressman with a consistent and genuine commitment to protecting the environment is to elect a Democrat to the House of Representatives. This is exactly what we should do in November of 2008.

Tenth Dems U September 2007 Class Schedule

Register today at www.TenthDemsU.org

Pro-Israel Politics in the 10th District

Date: Thursday, September 6, 7:00 p.m.

Location: Highland Park Community House, 1991 Sheridan Road, Highland Park

Instructor: Steve Sheffey, Pro-Israel and Democratic activist

Some say that no Congressional candidate can win in the 10th District if he or she is not perceived as pro-Israel. But what does it mean to be pro-Israel? In this course, Steve Sheffey will examine that question and why this issue is so important. The course will also explore pro-Israel institutions and the role pro-Israel politics plays in the 10th District.

Steve Sheffey has been active in both politics and the Jewish community. For seven years he served on the Board of Directors of CityPAC, a pro-Israel political action committee, including two years as its president. He has been active in the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the National Jewish Democratic Council, and various Jewish communal organizations. He ran as a delegate pledged to Tom Harkin in 1992 and has long been active in the Democratic Party. The views he will present in this class are solely his own and do not necessarily represent the views of any organizations with which he has been associated.

CSI: Lake County: Real Crimes, Real Stories

Date: Monday, September 17, 7:00 p.m.

Location: UAW Region 4 Hall, 680 Barclay Boulevard, Vernon Hills

Instructors: Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran and Lake County Coroner Richard Keller

For those of you who don't watch television, "CSI" stands for "Crime Scene Investigation," and is the name of a top-rated network show. Whether it's the violent underworld of Las Vegas, Miami, or New York, the crimes on "CSI" are bloody and grotesque, but the investigators are smart and hard-working – and most of them just happen to be very good-looking.

But what is the world of criminal investigation really like? What obstacles do law enforcers and investigators face, not in the TV world, but in our world right here in Lake County? This class will be taught by two men who know, Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran and Lake County Coroner Richard Keller. They will talk about the issues they face on a regular basis, such as the realities of budgets, the complexities of following proper procedures, and the many reasons why they can't wrap up every case in an hour, commercials included. They also will share real stories about some of the most unusual cases they've come across in the course of their duties.

Join them for this class, and for an inside look at the real issues facing those who are working every day to solve real crimes, right here in our community.

What's Next for Liberal Talk Radio?

Find Out from the Founders of Air America

Date: Tuesday, September 25, 7:00 p.m.

Location: Gorton Community Center, 400 E. Illinois Road, Lake Forest

Instructors: Sheldon and Anita Drobny, Founders of Air America Radio and Nova M Radio

Liberals love it! That's the message from liberal talk radio stations like WCPT (AM 850) in Chicago, as well as from loyal listeners of Air America Radio. But conservatives have had a long head start on talk radio, and they are still way ahead of the liberal radio talkers in influencing our nation's political debate. So, how do we catch up?

Shelly and Anita Drobny of Highland Park are liberal talk radio pioneers. As founders of Air America and Nova M Radio, they not only have a unique perspective on where liberal talk radio has been, but also have ideas on where it needs to go from here. They will cover these topics, and more, in this course on Liberal Talk Radio and will welcome your thoughts and ideas in a classroom discussion.

I Think I Want to Run For Office – Now What?

Date: Sunday, September 30, 2:00 p.m.

Location: Deerfield Public Library, 920 Waukegan Road, Deerfield

Instructors: Michelle Feldman, Deerfield Village Board Member, and Jim Kirsch, Highland Park City Councilman

We see the candidates on TV, meet them knocking at our door, or wave to them as they march in our town's parade. What kind of sacrifices do these people make to run for public office?

Michelle Feldman, an elected member of the Deerfield Village Board, and Highland Park City Councilman Jim Kirsch lead this class. They will examine the difficulties and rewards of running for public office, the type of honest introspection that potential candidates need to make, and what first-time candidates should expect. They also will go over the 40 questions that are important to answer before "taking the leap" and will discuss the first steps candidates should take once they have decided to do so.

This is a perfect class for anyone thinking about running for any elected position – or for the significant other of a potential candidate. By the end of this class, you should be able to do a self-assessment to determine if running for office is right for you and to find the resources to initially establish yourself as a candidate.

This is also a great class for those who have no plans to ever run for office but are curious about what candidates really go through and the impact campaigns have on their lives.



David Borris, left, addresses a large audience of attentive students at his TDU class, "America's Military Misadventure in Iraq: How did we get there? What has been accomplished and at what cost?"

Surfin' the Net *By Steve Sheffey*

In today's age of divisive politics, all Americans should be proud that strong support for Israel remains bipartisan. Last session's Republican Congress was very pro-Israel, and this session's Democratic Congress is continuing that tradition. It is troubling that 80 percent of House Republicans voted against foreign aid to Israel and that the bipartisan fight against the sale of sophisticated arms to Saudi Arabia has been waged overwhelmingly by Democrats, but it would be premature to declare that Republican support for Israel is waning. There are real differences between the parties, but Israel is not one of them.

Whether it is because they have too much time to surf the net or whether it is because they are still chagrined that Al Gore claimed he invented it, some Republicans are blaming Democrats for anti-Semitic postings on certain web sites. For example – and this is only one example – local supporters of Mark Kirk recently suggested that Democratic Congressional candidates were weak on Israel because they, like every major Democratic presidential hopeful and many other candidates, attended the YearlyKos Convention in Chicago. Their "proof" was that among the hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of posts on DailyKos, some were anti-Semitic.

Further analysis shows that some of the quotes cherry-picked by the Kirk supporters were taken out of context. Still, let's be very clear: there is anti-Semitic content, and certainly anti-Israel content, on some left-wing web sites. Anti-Semitism is a betrayal of everything the Democratic Party and the progressive movement stand for, and anyone who tolerates or excuses anti-Semitism does not deserve to be called a Democrat or a progressive.

We could play the same game and condemn Republicans for tolerating anti-Semitism in their midst, but that would be just as misleading. What if there were a convention that included people who have referred to Israel as an apartheid state, who said that the Israeli government was one of the "most evil lobbying groups in Washington," who said "f**k the Jews, they didn't vote for us anyway," and who referred to Capitol Hill as "Israeli-occupied

territory?" Well, there is such a convention. It happens every four years. It's called the Republican National Convention, and Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), former Secretary of State James Baker, and former White House speechwriter Pat Buchanan all attend. The statements above were made by these Republicans, respectively. But does the fact that Mark Kirk is a member of the same Republican Party mean that Mark Kirk condones anti-Semitism? Of course not.

Our Republican friends don't seem to mind that none of the GOP candidates for president have criticized candidate Ron Paul for his stands on Israel. They've been in debates with a known enemy of Israel, and they've remained silent on his anti-Israel positions. Debates are the perfect forum for defining differences and disagreements. That's why they are called "debates." But Republican presidential candidates stand next to Ron Paul and say nothing about his hateful comments about Israel. Does this mean that they condone his positions? According to the logic of those who seek to link the Democrats with every DailyKos blogger, it sure does.

Mark Kirk did not stand up and condemn GOP leadership when it urged a "no" vote on the foreign aid bill that included \$2.4 billion in aid for Israel. To his credit, Kirk voted for the bill, but that's all he was – just a vote. No speech in the Congressional Record when his own leaders were at fault. At a time when we needed real leadership, Kirk lost his voice. If those attacking Democratic candidates really cared about Israel, they'd be urging Mark Kirk to speak out against the Saudi arms sale and to vocally and loudly condemn GOP leadership for fighting foreign aid.

Our Republican friends are entitled to their own opinions, but not to their own facts. There is not one iota of evidence that anti-Semitic activity on the internet has any effect on the positions that the Democrats who matter – the Democrats who hold office – are taking regarding Israel. If our Republican friends spent as much time watching how Republicans vote in Congress as they do surfing the net for objectionable posts, maybe we could focus on strengthening bi-partisan support for Israel. As it is, we can be thankful that we have a Democratic majority in Congress. Let's see what we in the 10th District can do to add at least one to that majority.

Tenth Dems Ravinia Night

Three Generations of Women in Folk Music

Judy Collins • Dar Williams • Sonya Kitchell

Friday, September 7, 2007

See Three Generations of Women in Folk Music on Tenth Dems Ravinia Night. Judy Collins, Dar Williams, and Sonya Kitchell will be performing. Lawn tickets for this Friday night event are \$50 each, and include lawn chairs, a buffet dinner, fun, music, and Democratic camaraderie.

Our block of tickets may run out, so please order early by going to www.tenthdems.org. The event will be held, rain or shine.

Tickets can be picked up the night of the concert, starting at 6:30 p.m., at our table, which will be set up near the Tyler (West) Gate...look for the Tenth Dems banner. The buffet dinner will be served starting at 7:00 p.m., and the performance begins at 8:00 p.m.

For more information, e-mail us at events@tenthdems.org, or call 847-266-VOTE (8683).



Judy Collins has been performing for more than 40 years, and is probably best known for her 1967 rendition of Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now." In 1975, her version of "Send in the Clowns" won "Song of the Year" at that year's Grammy Awards show.

Dar Williams made her first recordings in the early 1990s and was a frequent opening act for Joan Baez, who recorded many of Dar's songs. Williams has lent her talents, and recorded several songs, on behalf of causes as varied as prisoner rights, gender issues, and anti-commercialism.

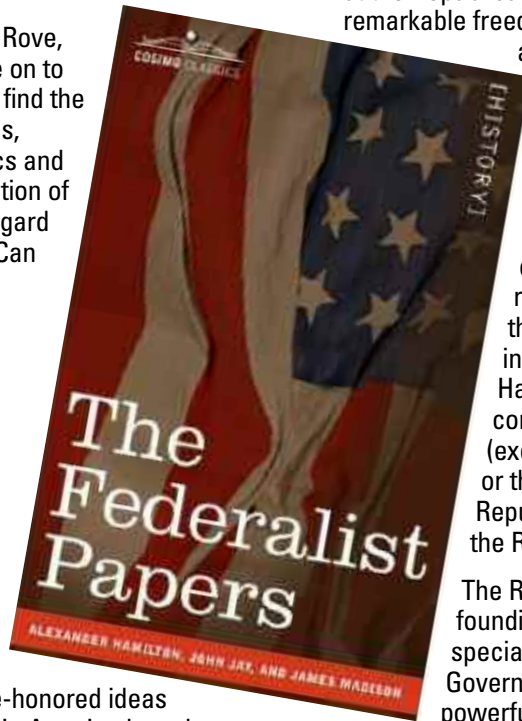
Sonya Kitchell is an 18-year-old star on the rise. Her acoustic melding of jazz, R&B, folk, and other root forms has led some critics to recognize in her singing "a warmth reminiscent of Carole King, the gossamer touch of Joni Mitchell, the soulfulness of Van Morrison, the yearning of Al Green, and the structural sophistication of Burt Bacharach, but with a sound all her own."

Polarization and Special Interests Not for Democrats

by Ron Altman

With the apparent political demise of Karl Rove, the nation and the Democratic party move on to an uncertain future. Will the 2008 election find the Democrats becoming the new Republicans, practicing the Rovian arts of wedge politics and polarization? What is the practical implication of the deviousness of the past 15 years in regard to the actual governance of the country? Can we continue on the present path without devolving into a failed state, experiencing ongoing political bloodbaths?

Karl Rove is without doubt the essential political theorist of the late 20th century. His plan for a permanent Republican majority revolved around alienation of the Democratic base from its traditional ideology, and it was remarkably successful in its time. Based on the politics of division and an appeal to fear of the other (whether with respect to race, religion, nationality, or immigration status), its success depended on two time-honored ideas and one new and dangerous one. Politics in America has always depended on an appreciation of group differences and an attempt to woo members of opposite parties to recognize their affinity to your side. Thus conservative and religious Democrats were told to ignore their ideological and economic interests in the Democratic party and join a Republican party that represented their real interests. Likewise, the Republican effort to impugn the patriotism of Democrats, however cynical, is drawn from a hoary playbook.



But the Republican Party has been revolutionarily dangerous in its remarkable freedom from plans to advance the interests of its adherents. Its sole *raison d'être* has been the accumulation of power. This was in spite of the Republican ideology that stressed the role of limited government. "Government is not the solution, government is the problem," declared Ronald Reagan in 1984. Power meant control of the massive resources of the federal treasury, an enormous piggy bank from which friends could be rewarded and enemies punished. Whether it was the \$500 billion bailout of the savings and loan industry in the eighties or the no-bid contracts for Halliburton and Blackwater in our day, social service contracts let out to faith-based organizations (exclusively conservative and exclusively Christian), or the billions in pork barrel earmarks of the last three Republican Congresses, power meant only one thing to the Republicans, and that was CASH!

The Republican Party has ignored the lessons of its founding in 1853 as an anti-slavery party, that the best special interest is to govern in the common interest. Government should benefit the commonweal and not powerful factions. As James Madison wrote in *The Federalist Papers* #10, "...a faction... (is) a number of citizens... who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." Although Madison argued that for various reasons a representative republic of continental scope dilutes and ameliorates the evil wrought by factions, he takes as a given that factions (or as they are now

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Tenth Dems Interns Planned, Organized, Worked, and Learned

by Mary Van Houten

For the fourth consecutive summer, the Tenth Congressional District Democrats offered internships to eight daring high school and college-aged students. I was very fortunate to be chosen as an intern this summer, and I am sure that I speak on behalf of all the interns when I say that this internship was one of the most edifying and rewarding experiences that we ever could have had in our budding political careers. This summer's interns included Nikhil Bhatia, a junior at the University of Illinois studying political science; Adam Didech, a freshman at Drake University; AJ Fabianczyk, a senior at Rolling Meadows High School; Scott Mason, a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying political science; Kevin Pietrick, a senior at Rolling Meadows High School; Ira Ulrich, a senior at the University of Kansas studying political science; and me, Mary Van Houten, a freshman at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Ben Struhl, a junior at Brown University majoring in writing, served as Intern Coordinator.

Devoting about 15 to 20 hours per week to Tenth Dems, my fellow interns and I helped plan and organize many different projects and events over the past few months. We engaged in fundraising, event planning, marketing, publicity, and many other administrative tasks. We worked at phone banks, marched in parades, met and worked with elected officials, wrote e-mails and made calls concerning fundraising and volunteers, researched and compiled newspaper clippings pertaining to Mark Kirk, passed out Tenth Dems fliers and brochures at farmers markets and sidewalk sales, explored legal concerns, introduced and enrolled in Tenth Dems University classes, sold hats, buttons, and other fundraising items, attended and assisted with several documentary viewings and discussions, and, of course, helped plan and run our annual fundraiser featuring George McGovern.

To make the most out of our experience, each intern was encouraged to work on projects he or she found enjoyable and also to explore new and different aspects of grassroots political organizing. We attended many informative meetings, learned about upcoming technological changes, gave our input on marketing ideas, operations, and TDU courses, helped arrange and organize volunteers, updated lists of events and lists of contacts, and worked at several different festivals and fundraisers for elected officials. We even successfully helped moved a Democratic township organization's office from one building to another.

Listing the projects and events we've assisted with does not adequately convey the wealth of knowledge and awareness that we have attained through our internships. Working in practical politics is completely different from simply learning about politics, and we have all learned first-hand the hard work and craziness that goes into true



grassroots politics. It is also gratifying to know that as the program is still improving each year, many of our individual projects and ideas will contribute to creating an even more effective program for future interns.

Although this was an unpaid internship, the experiences we've shared and relationships we've established with one another and our Tenth Dems mentors have made this internship priceless. We've earned much more than any summer job could have paid. Working with intelligent and accessible mentors such as Lauren Beth Gash, John

Hmurovic, Muriel Lazar, Stan Lester, Allen Wagner, and others has been truly inspirational, and their dedication and passion for politics has been highly contagious. I am very grateful to have been involved in such an educational and enjoyable internship this summer and am confident that the skills and lessons learned here will help carry me through wherever my future endeavors in politics may lead.

Top: The 2007 Tenth Dems interns, from left to right, Scott Mason, Adam Didech, AJ Fabianczyk (seated), Ira Ulrich, Mary Van Houten, Kevin Pietrick, Ben Struhl (Intern Coordinator), and Nikhil Bhatia. Center: Interns gather around Dan Seals at a Karen May event. Bottom: Adam Didech, Scott Mason, AJ Fabianczyk, and Mary Van Houten ham it up for the camera.

Polarization not for Dems

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known, special interests) can best be controlled by multiplication and division. That is, large numbers of competing special interests will do battle and cancel each other out, since in an era before the development of two dominant political parties only a coalition of legislators could control a majority. Representatives would be able to play one faction against another to do "the

people's business." It is a pity that this scheme was never allowed to develop.

So is turnout fair play? Should Democrats act like Republicans when they are in power? Does the evil of power depend on whose ox is gored? Should the AFL-CIO and AFT receive the federal largess recently showered on their counterparts on Wall Street and in the NAM? Do consultants from the Brookings Institute and People for the American Way replace those from the Hoover Institute and Focus on the Family?

The present crop of presidential candidates raises many questions in this regard. The history of Hillary Clinton is disturbing. She has been associated with the Washington establishment and K Street lobbyists for almost 20 years. Since 2002 she has been responsible for \$2.2 billion in earmarks. Her success in New York has been based on the model of Alfonse Damato, "Senator Pothole," a man known nationwide for bringing home the bacon (read pork). John Edwards' entire career has been funded by the trial lawyers bar; 15 of his top 20 donors in 2006 were lawyers associated with large firms. And questions revolve around Barack Obama's financial dealings with local wheeler-dealer Antoin "Tony" Rezko, an equal opportunity palm greaser.

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Polarization Not for Dems *continued from page 7*

By ignoring the need to govern for all Americans, today's candidates threaten to repeat the mistakes of the present administration. We must remember the origin of our party's name: Democrats stand for rule by the people. Tactical advantage is all well and good, but we must direct the means toward the end. The Republicans have shown us that ruling without governing in the name of the people is a recipe for disaster.

What is the end of politics if not to effect change and govern for the common good? Rather than pursuing tactics for winning elections and electing Democrats, should not the party be directed at new ideas to solve the intractable problems our country is facing? How do we provide healthcare for all at a price our economy can afford? How do we insure the social safety net so that no one is left behind in the pursuit of the good life? How is the environment to be protected and its degradation reversed, both locally and globally? What is to be our posture toward the world, and how do we balance military and diplomatic initiatives to combat the forces of Islamic fundamentalism?

As Barack Obama said at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, "There is not a liberal America and a conservative America – there is the United States of America." The best response to Karl Rove's policy of division and political warfare is to declare an end to partisan politics and propose programs and goals that benefit the common good rather than the selfish interests of factions.

TDU Lessons Learned *continued from page 1*

– including Guantanamo prisoners (www.bordc.org).

Those who want to enter the blogosphere in a small way can do so by logging onto Wiki, www.wikihow.com/main-page, and editing the offerings. Wiki is a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit web page content. Wiki readers and contributors can choose from a wide variety of topics to explore.

The increasingly important and influential world of blogs can provide ample light and disinfectant for much of our political life, as long as one remembers to check the source and be vigilant in searching for the underlying factual support for all those opinions out there.

Kirk Unmasked *continued from page 3*

in veterans' benefits.

As his voting record makes strikingly clear, Mark Kirk's top priority is to support Bush administration policies – even when this means continuing to support the senseless Iraq War while failing to support the men and women fighting it.

So where does the American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin Act fit into this agenda? It is just more of the same old smoke and mirrors. Kirk creates the appearance of supporting the important causes that he actually undermines with his votes on the floor of the House of Representatives.