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For information or to volunteer call:
847.266.VOTE (8683)

Or write to:
Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Chair, Tenth Dems
P.O. Box 523, Deerfield, IL 60015
Visit the website: www.tenthdems.org

Newsletter: newsletter@tenthdems.org

Editor: Barbara Altman

Editorial Staff: Joan Attenberg, Michael Fisher, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Ellen Beth Gill, Paul Kelly, Adrienne Kirshbaum, Leslie Lipschultz, Ross Nickow, George Rosenblit, Sharon Sanders, Steve Sheffey, Laurie Kaplan Singh

Design: Terry Jones

Distribution: Glenn Stier, Dave Du Bordieu, Cosette Winter

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Over 300 Revelers Celebrate the Inaugural in Deerfield

by Paul Kelly

Over 300 revelers of all ages partied Tuesday evening, January 20th, in Deerfield at the 10th District Presidential Inaugural Celebration, cheering the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

Hosted by the Tenth Dems, this family-friendly party had a little of everything to celebrate the Inauguration. Pastry Chef Gale Gand of Tru brought her children while volunteering her services to sweeten the event with some sweet treats. Showing that it's a true family affair, much of the music was provided by *The Big Band Sound of Deerfield*, conducted by Bob Gand, Gale's father, with vocalist Angie Lyons. The Jazz Ensemble of Highland Park High also was present to warm up the crowd. There was plenty of dancing to be had.

The room fell silent only when the Tenth Dems played back video of the Inauguration and the inaugural address. As soon

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Tenth News

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FEBRUARY 2009 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 6, Edition 2

Messages from the Mall: A Celebration of History

Photo Essay Inside, See Page 5



The new Obama administration dances onto the national stage.

by Adrienne Kirshbaum

Many of us watched every minute of the inaugural proceedings and wondered what it would be like to really be there in Washington. Fortunately, our Tenth Dems Chair, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, was on the ground in Washington that week and was happy to recount some of her experiences.

As a Presidential Elector (member of the Electoral College), Lauren received two tickets to the Inauguration. She and her husband Gregg Garmisa, who years ago met and married in Washington, arrived in the capital city on Sunday, January 18th. They got a good view of the

opening ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial from their taxi, as they made their way through heavy traffic from the airport.

Pre-inaugural events Lauren and Gregg attended included the Foreign Diplomats Ball, where ambassadors and diplomats from many locales were entertained by Grammy-nominated artists, Illinois-related gatherings, and a Senate reception at the Library of Congress.

Though most of the ticketed guests were in the standing sections, Lauren and Gregg were fortunate to witness the Inauguration from excellent seats on the Capitol lawn. However, Lauren noticed that, standing or sitting, and regardless of sight lines, everyone in the crowd seemed to share a common purpose. "There was an incredible sense of unity in the air—a joy, and a knowledge that we were not only witnessing history, but that we'd all done this together. It was quite powerful." In weather that was Chicago-style cold, the vast crowd of roughly 1.8 million people included dignitaries,



The helicopter carrying Bush away gets an enthusiastic good riddance from the crowd.

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In Defense of Partisanship

by Steve Sheffey

"In our District, we vote the person, not the party." So said the 10th District's Republican Congressman Mark Kirk in his successful bid for re-election in a Democratic-leaning district. Kirk attempted to brand himself as an independent moderate above the partisan fray, going so far as to omit his Republican affiliation from yard signs and bumper stickers. Kirk thus convinced Illinois' 10th Congressional District voters to elect a Republican at the same time they were voting for Democrats Barack Obama and Richard Durbin by margins of approximately 61 percent and 68 percent.

But as Stanley Fish points out, "voting the person rather than the party is about the dumbest thing you can do. . . . Voting the person, however attractive or impressive he or she may be, could very well get you four years of policies you detest. In other words, policy differences are party differences, and it is hard to see how you could be a responsible voter if you held your nose at a whiff of party politics." Calling oneself an independent is a nice feel-good affirmation, but we live in a two-party system where partisan politics is the only politics that matters.

On January 6, 2009, Kirk cast his first and most important vote of the new Congress: to elect John Boehner (R-Ohio) Speaker of the House of Representatives. Kirk ran as a social moderate, a pro-choice, pro-environment, pro-gun control reformer. Yet he voted for Boehner. Boehner received zero ratings from NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the League of Conservation Voters. The National Education Association gave Boehner an F. The National Right to Life Committee gave Boehner a rating of 100, the Gun Owners of America gave Boehner a rating of 100, and the National Rifle Association gave Boehner a rating of A. That's the agenda Kirk voted for when he voted to elect Boehner Speaker of the House.

Either Kirk supports Boehner's agenda or Kirk didn't have the guts to break with his party to support what supposedly is his own agenda. Is it unreasonable to expect a Republican congressman to oppose the Republican running for Speaker of the House? Well, yes. That's why party labels matter. Voters who ignore party affiliation are as blind as those who vote solely based on party affiliation. *The Washington Post* compiled the percentage of votes on which lawmakers agreed with the position taken by a majority of his or her party members. The party voting average for all members of the House of Representatives in the 110th Congress was 89.4 percent. Only five members of Congress voted with their party fewer than eight out of ten times, and Mark Kirk was not one of them. The most "independent" member of Congress, Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), still voted with his party 74.7 percent of the time.

In the 110th Congress, with the Democrats in control, 18 of the 20 most independent members were Republicans, but in the 109th Congress, with the Republicans in control, 15 of the 20 most independent members were Democrats. The most party-line members of Congress were primarily Republicans when Republicans controlled the House, and Democrats when Democrats controlled the House. When party discipline matters, the party will enforce it; and party discipline generally matters more to the party in power. Our friend Mr. Kirk, who bragged about being the eighth most independent member of

Congress in the 110th Congress, when he "only" voted with his party slightly more than eight out of every 10 times, was number 62 in the Republican-controlled 109th Congress, voting with his party nearly nine out of every 10 times.

Can anyone seriously argue that there is little difference between the agendas of John Boehner and Nancy Pelosi? If not, it is equally fatuous to argue that party labels don't matter or that party affiliation should not be considered when voting.

Too many ideological organizations that claim to want friends on both sides of the aisle don't get it either. There are some issues—support for Israel is one example—where there is little difference between the parties, and where it therefore does make sense for single-issue pro-Israel organizations to support candidates in both parties. But on many issues, including reproductive choice and the environment, the parties strongly differ. Yet in a misguided

attempt to appear nonpartisan, certain groups go out of their way to find supportive Republicans, ignoring the reality that every Republican will vote to elect Boehner Speaker of the House and vote with fellow Republicans the vast majority of the time, a result that could not be more harmful to the causes these groups support.

There is nothing wrong with uniting behind the one party that supports your beliefs. By supporting "good" Republicans, these groups hurt their own cause by empowering a political party whose agenda is not theirs. A more effective and intellectually honest approach would oppose candidates who join parties that are ideologically opposed to the positions taken by the advocacy group. If you care about stem cell research, reproductive choice, separation of church and state, and the environment, it does not make sense to support candidates whose election will empower the Republican Party.

Some people who voted for Obama voted for Mark Kirk because they were concerned about one-party rule. But if you agree with Obama, why would you want to block progress by empowering a party diametrically opposed to what Obama stands for? James Madison explained in *Federalist No. 51* that checks and balances refer to the institutional differences between the House and the Senate, as well as the division of power between the three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The idea is that competing interests will check and balance each other, not that voters will deliberately vote against their own interests to create gridlock.

I am not advocating mindlessly supporting one party's positions over the other, or condoning behavior from one party that you would not excuse in the other party. Neither party is correct on every issue. There are some people who would vote to have the garbage picked up on Tuesday solely because they knew the Republicans supported Monday pick-up, and would switch positions if the parties switched positions. That kind of stupidity is what gives genuine partisanship a bad name.

The kind of partisanship I'm advocating means standing up not only for your beliefs, but also for those who share your beliefs. Rather than apologizing for supporting one party over another, we should point out that "independence" too often means independence from rational thought and an understanding of one's own interests. There are major differences between the parties. Party labels matter, and a candidate's party affiliation is itself a position that intelligent voters should consider. Voters should hold their elected representatives accountable for the party those representatives have chosen to affiliate with, and if that's what is meant by partisanship, I'm all for it.



Republican Mark Kirk Votes Against Fair Pay for Women

Democratic Sens. Durbin, Burriss Support Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

The 111th Congress has just gotten started, but the House and the Senate already have revisited two critically important pieces of legislation aimed at ending gender discrimination in the workplace: The Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (LFPA) and the Paycheck Fairness Act (PCFA).

Both bills passed the House last year. But the LFPA was killed in a Senate filibuster led by Republicans seeking to protect corporations from a surge in discrimination lawsuits. The Paycheck Fairness Act didn't even make it to the Senate floor in 2008, as the clock ran out on the 110th Congress.

Recognizing the importance of both bills to ending pay discrimination—not only for women but also for minorities, the elderly, and disabled workers—House majority leaders put the two bills at the top of this year's legislative agenda. According to the American Association of University Women, "Passing both bills is critical to the overall goal of achieving pay equity for women." (See http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/actionpages/payequity.cfm.)

The LFPA overturns a 2007 Supreme Court decision that strictly construed a 180-day deadline on a woman's right to sue her employer for wage discrimination by making it clear that, contrary to the Supreme Court's conclusion, each new paycheck violates the law if it results "in whole or in part" from a discriminatory pay decision made in the past. The legislation essentially revives the statute of limitations each time a paycheck that violates equal pay laws is issued, giving a plaintiff more time to file charges. Former President Bush threatened to veto the bill, but President Obama is eager to sign it.

The companion Paycheck Fairness Act (PCFA) proposes to create stronger incentives for employers to follow the law and strengthens penalties for violations. It also strengthens federal outreach, education, and enforcement efforts. And it prohibits retaliation against workers who question employers' wage practices.



"Passage of both bills together is a critical step forward in our goal to close the persistent and sizeable wage gap between men and women," the AAUW says. Unfortunately, for now, the passage of only one of the bills—the LFPA—will have to do.

No thanks to 10th District Congressman Mark Kirk, the House passed both bills on January 9, LFPA with a nearly straight party line 247:171 vote and the PCFA with a 256:163 vote.

Ignoring protests from constituents and women's organizations for his 2008 opposition to the bills—and renouncing his own campaign promise of thoughtful, independent leadership—Kirk once again proved himself a typical party-line Republican committed to protecting corporate interests above the basic needs and rights of the American people. As he did last year, Kirk sided with other House Republicans seeking to protect corporations from a surge in wage discrimination lawsuits and voted against both bills (See "Kirk Unmasked: Mark Kirk Votes Against Equal Pay for Women" and "Mark Kirk Uses Misinformation and a Push Poll to Defend His Vote Against Equal Pay for Women," *Tenth News*, Sept. 2008.)

As blogger Steve Benen has noted, the Republican argument that a removal of the barriers to challenging wage discrimination will invite a surge in lawsuits—an argument Kirk embraces—misses the point. "If American workers are facing unjust wage discrimination, there should be more lawsuits—worthwhile lawsuits, challenging an injustice.

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A Pandora's Box of Healthcare Reform

by George Rosenblit

President Barack Obama has a lot of high-priority projects, and he is off to a good start. It's heartening to know that healthcare reform is near the top of his agenda, and hopefully it will be addressed within his first 100 days. It's a high priority because (1) in 2007, health spending was about \$700 billion, one fourth of total federal spending of \$2.7 trillion. (See "Obama's Unhealthy Choices," Robert J. Samuelson, *Newsweek*, Jan. 19, 2009), and (2) every citizen in this great country should have access to affordable, quality healthcare, including affordable prescription drugs.

To control costs, every element of cost must be critically examined. Frequently mentioned among these are high administrative costs, excessive paperwork, marketing expenses, and excessive emergency room use. Yet, Samuelson goes on to say that the major element of healthcare cost is the demand for use of expensive high technology techniques and services such as knee and hip replacements as well as CT scans (I would add MRI scans). And doctors' and patients' choices to use this expensive technology are difficult to control.

President Obama has stated the objective of improving computerization of medical records. It's true that this would help reduce administrative costs to some extent, but in terms of reducing overall health costs the contribution would be small. It's just the tip of the iceberg.

Ultimately, the overriding issue is the need for every citizen in this great country to have access to affordable, quality healthcare. And this means that our major national objective must be a universal healthcare system. This can be accomplished via existing and expanded managed care programs or a new single-payer program similar to Medicare.

Managed Care

Health maintenance organizations (HMOs), insurance companies, and other for-profit providers offer a variety of healthcare plans. They currently have a virtual lock on the market. The problem is that these organizations are "gatekeepers" that control access to healthcare. They have a conflict of interest between maximizing profits to satisfy shareholders and providing quality care to patients on a timely basis when it is needed. There are many horror stories of care being denied even in life-threatening situations, to one who purchased a valid plan and paid required premiums.

Recently, two hospitals accused UnitedHealth, the second largest private payer in the U.S., of operating a "rogue business plan" designed to avoid paying clients' medical bills. For example, the suit alleges that patients were falsely told that Flushing Hospital was "not a network provider" so UnitedHealth did not pay the full network rate.

The consulting firm McKinsey & Company recently released an

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Revelers Celebrate *continued from page 1*

as the video concluded, though, the crowd cheered passionately. We finally were able to pop open the bottles, throw handfuls of confetti, laugh, sing, shout with joy, and believe again in the wisdom of the American people to get back on the right path.

"What Barack Obama urged in his address is the fact that the real work begins now," said John Hmurovic, Vice Chair of the Tenth Congressional District Democrats. "So tonight is a night to celebrate, and tomorrow is the morning we need to roll up our sleeves and get to work. There are plenty of opportunities to make a difference."

Photos, courtesy of indie-cine.com:

Top: Over 300 revelers filled the room at the Deerfield Hyatt.

2nd row left: County Board Member Anne Bassi, Nancie Blatt, Stephanie Blatt Kiddle.

2nd row right: Sam Piro, Chair, Tenth for Obama; Adrienne Kirshbaum; Hon. Barbara La Piana; Pat Wilder.

3rd row: John Hmurovic, Vice Chair, Tenth Dems; State Rep. Karen May; State Sen. Susan Garrett; Amy Parker.

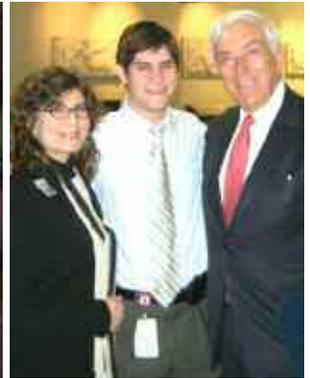
Bottom: State Rep. Julie Hamos, Hon. Dan Pierce, State Rep. Karen May.



President Obama, Tenth Dems Knew You When...



Barack Obama was the Keynote Speaker for our Tenth Dems Fundraiser in 2004, and Michelle has also been a featured Tenth Dems speaker. Above left: 2004 pre-Election Day rally at the Northbrook Renaissance Hotel, co-sponsored by Tenth Dems; above right: 2006 pre-Election Day rally at the Waukegan Airport



Messages from the Mall

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celebrities, and ordinary people who had come from all over the world just to witness this momentous event.

There were 10 Official Balls held on Inauguration night. The hottest ticket was the Obama Home States Ball (Illinois and Hawaii). Lauren and Gregg were there to watch Barack and Michelle dance, mingle with friends new and old, and hear an A-list lineup of great performers, featuring Jack Johnston, a well-known singer; the Don Cagen Orchestra; and Common, a multiple Grammy-awarded hip-hop artist. Lauren reports that dancing to Common was one of her favorite parts of the trip.

For Lauren and her husband, the trip to Washington was nostalgic. They began their life together in this city, where both worked on Capitol Hill for many years, and they started to raise their family here. One of the highlights was getting to spend time with their son, Ben, who now works on the Hill himself. They walked around the Senate and House buildings, and got together with old friends they've known for decades. While this trip to the nation's capital began as a celebration of a new era in America, it also served for Lauren and Gregg as a wonderful reunion and celebration of their history as well.



LBG Goes to D.C., a Special Photo Essay

*Our own Lauren Beth Gash (LBG) shares a peek at her journey to the nation's capital with husband Gregg Garmisa to witness the Inauguration of her old colleague in the Illinois legislature, our new president, Barack Obama. **Top row, left to right:** with Gregg Garmisa, Linda Rae Sher, Lois Mills, and Jim Mills at Durbin Reception, Library of Congress; with Gregg Garmisa and Sen. Dick Durbin; with Gregg Garmisa, IL Attorney General Lisa Madigan and her husband, Pat Byrnes, at the Inaugural Ball; **Second row, left to right:** at the Foreign Diplomats Ball, Washington, D.C., January 18, 2009; with Cook Co. Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown; with Nancy Rotering and Debby Karton; with son Ben Garmisa, and U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey; **Third row, left to right:** looking at the Capitol from the D.C. Newseum; with Gregg Garmisa and IL State Sen. Dan Kotowski; watching Hip Hop Artist Common perform at Inaugural Ball; with new "friends" and seatmates at the Inauguration, actors Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks; **Fourth row, left to right:** with IL State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias and Gregg Garmisa; with Gregg Garmisa, Jennifer Bond, and State Senator Michael Bond.*

Episode 44: A New Hope

by Ellen Beth Gill

Ronald Reagan and many other Republicans thought his one-liner was hilarious:

The nine most terrifying words in the English language are:
“I’m from the government and I’m here to help.”

The thing is that many Americans over the years were very happy to hear those words, and now many more long to hear them once again.

Before we had much of a federal government to go anywhere or help anyone, oil and railroad robber barons were pretty much running the country. They replaced the slave-owning plantation owners at the top of the social heap after the Civil War. Kids and a flood of immigrants were working in sweat shops and living in tenements. The rich became richer and the poor poorer. It was called the Gilded Age, but few ever saw anything that was actually gilded.

At just about the last minute possible to assure peace and prosperity for more than just a few, the federal government woke up and started to take action. The Sherman Anti-Trust Act became law in 1890, but it didn’t have much effect until Teddy Roosevelt’s administration got the anti-trust ball rolling in 1904 through sheer force of will and a warning that, absent some reasonable regulation, the country would explode into revolution. Around the same time in our history, our markets were flooded with snake oil remedies and tainted food because no one stopped the sellers from making false claims of purity and effectiveness. No one had enough authority to stop the practice until 1912, when Congress created the Federal Trade Commission, which was setting and enforcing advertising standards by 1914.

After decades of dangerous conditions and devastating accidents, miners were given a bit of relief when the U.S. Congress passed the first federal statute governing mine safety in 1891. Coal miners continued to die in large numbers for lack of enforcement of this legislation until the Bureau of Mines was established as a new agency in the Department of the Interior in 1910.

Many states spent the better part of the 19th century trying to control child labor in dangerous sweat shops. Despite those efforts, Americans continued to see children languishing and even dying in factories until 1916, when the federal government prohibited the interstate movement of goods produced by child labor. There was some backlash as corporations sought to have these laws declared unconstitutional; but the federal government finally won out when the Fair Labor Standards Act was passed in 1936, regulating minimum working age and hours of work. Adult workers also benefitted from progressive and post-depression federal laws that increased workplace safety requirements. Companies rarely did anything to promote workplace safety when left to their own devices.

You might not remember the depression, but maybe you heard your grandmother talk about the day FDR closed all the banks. My grandmother talked about that often. It created renewed security for her because it stopped all the bank runs that were plaguing the country while those in power did nothing, choosing ideology over rationality. In the aftermath of do-nothing Hooverism, Roosevelt and the Democrats in Congress set about creating new structures and standards for banking and investment. They also created a safety net in welfare and social security programs, and a stimulus program that brought jobs and a new optimism that got commerce moving again. This recovery only stalled when Roosevelt and Congress were convinced by conservatives that deficit spending on people could be dangerous. (These same conservatives never have a problem deficit spending on needless wars.)

African-American children got a chance at a better education when,

in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that separate was not equal. Real children were given the task of desegregating the schools in a terrible atmosphere of hatred when adults thought nothing of hanging around schools and beating up on children. The children assigned the task of first desegregating the schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, benefitted from Eisenhower’s deployment of the 101st Airborne to the school. I recently read Melba Patillo Beals’s account of the year she attended Little Rock’s Central High, and how one soldier, Danny, was her lifeline to at least a little bit of security. She was very happy to see Danny and his fellow soldiers and was equally devastated when they left.

Speaking of education, there are countless graduates of fine universities who would never have made it without federally insured loans and federal grants.

So who are the folks who laugh at Reagan’s one-liner and wouldn’t think of asking for federal help? Not “Joe the Plumber” (who is not Joe and not a plumber). He was glad his mom got a welfare check during hard times, knowing that money helped his family finally join the middle class.

Do you like retelling Reagan’s joke? Next time your home is destroyed, don’t bother calling FEMA. Do you think I’m joking here? Not at all. FEMA used to work. The agency was created in 1979 to handle the aftermath of nuclear attack. Once officials finally realized that was the least likely problem on our plates, FEMA began to shine. From around 1993 until just before the Bush administration with the Ronald Reagan attitude got ahold of it, FEMA was welcomed with great joy by victims of fires, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes. FEMA was also on the scene doing search and rescue after the terrorist attack in Oklahoma City. When your kid is under a pile of rubble, you have a tendency to not shrink from federal help.

For eight years the leaders of the Bush administration were bent on gutting our federal regulatory system and making Reagan’s joke true —so they could convince Americans that government is and always was the problem and appropriate our tax dollars to their own uses. So they made it true, and we found we could not rely on our federal agencies to help us. Today, executive agencies lie in ruins, flitting from crisis to crisis. Our federal judiciary has been packed with right-wing ideologues who tend to side with corporations over people, and with spying over the Constitution, further making sure government does not work for the people.

However, there is a new hope in the land with this President number 44. Despite the continuing problems in our government and in our economy, people are suddenly optimistic. I think the optimism surrounding the Obama administration is that people have a great desire for help, and a new hope that, with all the terrible problems out there, help is at hand.

I’m not saying that Americans are a bunch of lazy whiners who need help with everything. What I am saying is that some things were created by wealthy connected people and groups for which the average individual is no match, and other things simply cannot be fixed by individuals on their own. An average mom can’t inspect a peanut butter processing plant and force the owner to observe food safety standards. Even if she could, what is the owner to do when millions of average moms want to come in and inspect and each has a different standard? The average bank employee couldn’t get his bosses to take a pass on what seemed like free money and extra bonuses to them, but was really mortgage fraud of such magnitude that it brought down the economy. The average citizen of New Orleans could not evacuate all his neighbors from the city and bring in food and supplies while under water in the extreme heat of late summer. The average driver can’t inspect a bridge and force the entity that owns it to fix it. The average patient cannot prevent a pharmaceutical

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Episode 44 *continued from page 6*

company from releasing an unsafe new drug or control the prices of necessary drugs. That is why we have government. We pay taxes and elect officials, and our elected officials appoint other officials to act for us as a group for just those situations when any one of us acting alone would be impossible, or ineffective, or just wouldn't make sense.

I'm also not saying that government regulation and aid are perfect. Lots of bad things have happened under government regulation. Lots of companies evaded regulation, and lots of inspectors were probably paid off. Some things just cannot be fixed or prevented. However, it never hurts to try to prevent a disaster, or to comfort and heal someone else when disaster strikes. I guess Bush tried in his own way, but smirking just doesn't work with most problems.

A lot of Republicans will accuse me of socialism here, but it's not social- or commun- or any other type of -ism. It's just common sense. We should not and cannot let our families and our neighbors' families fall apart under some goofy theory that says Americans should not ever seek or expect help. The day that pink slip appears in the paycheck envelope, the day the worker is injured on the job, the day the bridge, construction scaffold, or mine shaft collapses, the day that

Pandora's Box *continued from page 3*

important report dissecting the reasons America spends so much more on healthcare than other wealthy nations. One major factor is that we spend \$98 billion a year in excess administrative costs, with more than half of the total accounted for by marketing and underwriting — costs that don't exist in single-payer systems. McKinsey estimates that the United States pays \$66 billion a year in excess drug costs, and overpays for medical devices like knee and hip implants, too, all because we do not bargain for lower costs. (See "The Health Care Racket," Paul Krugman, *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 2007.)

The Single Payer Option

The most logical way to reduce healthcare costs is to eliminate all HMOs, insurance companies, and other for-profit providers by permitting everyone access to a government-operated healthcare plan similar to Medicare.

As a California physician observed, "You're seeing an ever-increasing number of people starting to support a national health program. In fact, 59 percent of practicing physicians today believe that we need to have a national health program." This physician explained, "There are a lot of different types of single-payer systems—you could have purely socialized medicine. That's kind of like what England has. The government owns the hospitals, the government owns the clinics, the government finances all the health care, and all the doctors work for the government. That is truly socialized medicine, as opposed to the Canadian system, where the financing comes through their Medicare[like] program, but all the doctors are in private practice." He continued, "Until we move to a single-payer system and get rid of the profit motive in financing of health care, we will not be able to fix the problems that we have." (See "Pushing the Single-Payer Solution," Amy Goodman, *Alternet*, Apr. 25, 2008, <http://www.alternet.org/story/83420>.)

Single-payer would be funded by taxes. Most people and businesses would actually realize a decrease in their healthcare spending, as the taxes would replace premiums now paid for health insurance. The system must change to allow doctors, and not insurers, to make decisions regarding healthcare. A single-payer system also would move to change the way doctors administer care, from an emphasis on "high-tech specialized care" to one on primary care. (See "Single-payer health system best for Illinois, state lawmakers, activists say," Jonathan Bilyk, *Kane County Chronicle*, Aug. 13, 2008, <http://www.kcchronicle.com/articles/2008/08/15/news/local/doc48a51394751e6919440753.txt>.)

I believe that the Obama team understands that, ideally, a single-payer

tornado or fire destroys a home and threatens immediate safety, the day a kid gets ahold of that tainted peanut butter-filled cheese cracker, someone should be there to stop it or help in the aftermath because someone can. We work for that and pay for that help.

There are other days, good days, that might never happen without some extra help. These days include the day that kid from the wrong side of town starts college and the day that entrepreneur makes an innovation the big companies were too greedy to fund. Those days need to happen, and they need to happen here in the United States of America much more than they do now.

After years of falling for Reagan's old joke and being the butt of that joke, Americans finally understand that we need our government and our government is not some monster to be starved and drowned in a bathtub. The government is our collective will, our *e pluribus unum*, not in God we trust, but in us we trust, to help each other do better and prevent each other, and therefore ourselves, from sinking. Americans need and want a government that functions, and they need and want to be able to trust that on the day they meet real and serious trouble, some man or woman comes to them and says, "I'm from the federal government and I'm here to help." It's no joke. It's what gives us hope and the strength to continue on and even succeed in a difficult world.

healthcare system would be the best. I also believe that they don't have the political will to move that forward at this time. Instead, "Obama will likely not attempt a full overhaul of the system in his first year. They anticipate instead that the administration will focus immediately on smaller changes, such as expanding medical insurance for poor children and reining in excessive costs from private insurers. But their approach is fatally flawed," said Martha Livingston of Physicians for a National Health Program. "Because it leaves the profit-making insurance companies as major players, it can't control spiraling costs and does nothing to prevent insurers from denying care." (See "Labor's 'Medicare for All' Advocates Test Strength," Mischa Gaus, *Labor Notes*, Jan. 16, 2009, <http://www.labornotes.org/node/2032>.)

Federal Oversight is Mandatory

The states have not been effective in controlling premium rates. *The Seattle Post Intelligencer* reports that in Washington State, "After eight years of unregulated insurance company control over health insurance cost increases, the Legislature—concerned over double-digit annual rate rises—has returned control of health care premium increases to the state insurance commissioner..."

"A similar bill was proposed last year, but leading Democrats, with assurance from health care providers that rates wouldn't increase, killed it. But rates did increase—in some cases by as much as 40 percent. And the increases were set to a backdrop of record profits by insurance companies."

Nationwide, state oversight of the individual insurance market varies widely, and few have the power or ability to oversee that premium increases are reasonable and appropriate. (See <http://www.ourfuture.org/blog-entry/2009010423/lose-your-job-lose-your-health-insurance>.)

As the new administration moves through its agenda, universal healthcare, overseen by a federal single payer, must be a high priority.

Congress Watch *continued from page 3*

Ideally, employers would stop discriminating, as most already do, and in turn, there would be fewer lawsuits." (See <http://bastardlogic.wordpress.com/2009/01/23/ledbetter-act-passes-senate/>.)

Senate Democrats succeeded in passing the LFPFA on January 22, with a 61:36 vote. But the PCFA is still pending. According to one report, it seems unlikely that the Senate will reconsider the bill before spring. In stark contrast to the 10th District's Republican Congressman Mark Kirk, Illinois' always dependable Democratic Senator Dick Durbin, and new Democratic Senator Roland Burris, voted for the passage of both bills.

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Tenth Dems
P.O. Box 523
Deerfield, IL 60015

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Tenth Dems University Welcomes Neil Steinberg



by Adrienne Kirshbaum

There's a treasure living right here in the 10th District. His name is Neil Steinberg, and he's a very wise and funny man who has the extraordinary ability to speak extemporaneously on just about any subject. Those who have read his columns in the *Chicago Sun Times* or any one of the six books he has authored are aware of his talents. But to those of us who were not familiar with his work, his Tenth Dems University class January 8th at the Deerfield Library was a delightful surprise.

Mr. Steinberg's reputation preceded him, judging by the overflow crowd in the library lobby. The space set aside for his classroom had a limited capacity, but "Professor" Steinberg was kind enough to speak to the disappointed numbers in the lobby before he entered the class. For those fortunate enough to be inside, the wait was well worth it. He spoke for about half an hour, without notes, on a variety of subjects. Although the evening was advertised as a look back at 2008, Mr. Steinberg did not confine himself to that topic. Instead, he told us stories about some of the well-known and well-connected people he meets in his job writing four weekly columns for the *Sun Times*.

After his remarks, Mr. Steinberg asked for questions from the class. Many hands were raised, and some very provocative questions were



Neil Steinberg enthralled a crowd of overflow proportions at a January 8 session of Tenth Dems University. Another session, probably in March, is in the works.

asked. With his keen sense of humor and store of knowledge, he was able to provide answers that educated and entertained. All in attendance were sorry to hear that it was time to "wrap things up." But all would agree that this lively discussion was a wonderful beginning to a new year of classes at Tenth Dems University.

Next at Tenth Dems University...

Jerry Goldman, Northwestern Professor of Political Science presents:

The Mystique of Making Laws

Tuesday, February 24, at 7:00 P.M.

Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook

Free and Open to All

Register in advance at www.TenthDemsU.org