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

# Opportunities for Change Communities Can Believe In

by Marla Sundh

President Obama's inauguration was a milestone in many ways—the fulfillment of Dr. King's dream, the movement of progressive views to a prominent spot on the national forum. And one other thing: a new emphasis on taking action in our own communities.

There are so many challenges before us, from creating sources of renewable energy, to providing affordable healthcare, to growing the economy once more. Is there any wonder that the enthusiasm is contagious? There is an unprecedented need and desire to stay active and involved to face these challenges and fix what we have the power to fix.

In communities all over the 10th District, individuals and small groups are looking at the performance of local governments and are finding many opportunities for change. Opportunities abound in our communities to provide social services, exercise sound fiscal management, and create transportation systems that focus on green technology.

"I want to bring transparency to township government," says Sam Flint, candidate for Vernon Township Supervisor and head of the first-ever slate of Democrats to run for Vernon Township government.

Democrats are also running slates in Northfield Township, Wheeling Township, Moraine

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# Tenth News

MARCH 2009

Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter

Volume 6, Edition 3

## Spread the Word

by Steve Sheffey

It took the Chicago Cubs 100 years to reach the century mark in futility, but in less than a decade, Mark Kirk is on his way to matching the Cubs' streak. The Cubs have gone 100 years without winning a World Series, and the nonpartisan website [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us) reports that Kirk has sponsored 88 bills since Jan 3, 2001, 84 of which haven't made it out of committee and ZERO of which have become law. I haven't spent a day in Congress and I've successfully sponsored as many bills as Mark Kirk has.

But how many people know that? If you are reading this newsletter, and you are reading this article, you obviously care. The problem is that too many of us share what we know only with like-minded people—and then we wonder why so many people voted for Obama, Durbin, and Kirk. It doesn't make sense to us, but it makes sense to them, because they see Obama, Durbin, and Kirk as cut from the same cloth.

I was amazed during the last campaign at how few letters to the editor I saw. I continue to be amazed at how many emails I receive that are sent to people who are looking for facts to confirm rather than challenge their opinions.

The advantage of letters to the editor is that the letters section is read



by a broad cross-section of the community. If you don't like what your congressman is doing, don't keep it to yourself, and don't complain to your like-minded friends. Instead, write a letter to the editor. Or send an email to people who won't necessarily agree with you, but who might respect your viewpoint. If you can read, you can write. At least do this: Resolve that once every 60 days, you will send a letter to the editor of your local paper and that you will "reply to all" if you get an email you disagree with.

A basic principle of persuasion is that the side that gets its narrative out first is the side that generally prevails, especially if it can inoculate its audience against what the other side is likely to say. Kirk has a huge advantage. He's already been there, and he's established a moderate, independent image. People tend to disregard facts at odds with their perception of the world, which means that it's not enough to present a fact here and a fact there.

We need to repeatedly emphasize the truth: Kirk votes Republican more than nine out of ten times; and he supports an agenda that is not moderate, but far right. It's important to remind people about Kirk's votes against equal pay for women (Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the Paycheck Fairness Act) and his vote in favor of

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# Our New Green Governor

by George Rosenblit

Governor Patrick Quinn is green? Yes. In two ways.

First, it's true that Pat Quinn was lieutenant governor for nearly seven years, from March 2002 to January 2009. However, in all that time, he was not really connected to the Office of the Governor except by title. On December 14, 2008, when David Gregory asked Quinn on NBC's *Meet the Press* about his relationship with Governor Blagojevich, he said, "Well, he's a bit isolated. I tried to talk to the governor, but the last time I spoke to him was in August of 2007. I think one of the problems is the governor did sort of seal himself off from all the statewide officials... Attorney General Madigan and myself and many others..." (Ref. Gregory, David, 2008-12-14. *Meet the Press* transcript for Dec. 14, 2008. MSNBC.) So, in terms of being groomed for the number one slot in any way, that did not happen. It's fair to say that most lieutenant governors are not groomed, and so it could be said that Quinn is "green" to the top job.

But don't you believe it. It's a blessing that Quinn is not tainted by the corrupt politics of his predecessor. He is his own man, beholden to no one except the people of Illinois. And just look at his impressive credentials. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Georgetown University in 1971 with a bachelor's degree from the School of Foreign Service, and he received a law degree from Northwestern University in 1980. He served as an aide to Gov. Dan Walker, Revenue Director in Mayor Harold Washington's administration, and Illinois State Treasurer for four years. He appears to be qualified to understand the gravity of the \$9 billion hole that Blago dug for him. Furthermore, he has been a self-starter for many years on projects of importance to our state.

Second, Quinn has been an avid supporter of a "Green Illinois" for many years. When developers wanted to cash in by building condos on prime bald eagle habitat on an island in the Illinois River, Quinn led an effort to save Plum Island, and it is now forever protected. He sided with Sierra Club and local officials against Blago's Illinois Department

of Natural Resources to stop a coal mine in an Illinois River wetland connected to Banner Marsh, a major state wildlife area. He championed homeowners in DuPage County who were not notified that their drinking water was contaminated by leaking toxic waste, and he then worked to change our laws to require notification and give Illinois EPA more authority to crack down on polluters.

As Quinn sets up his own administration, his team is working hard to set the stage for transformational change in Illinois' energy and environmental programs and policies. The Sierra Club is working with our new governor to get off to a fast start in making Illinois a leader in the new green economy. We want Illinois to help President Obama



lead the country and the world to global warming solutions by becoming a clean car state and setting state limits on greenhouse gas emissions. Illinois can focus new federal and state capital investments on transportation and energy projects that put people to work giving us cleaner air and healthier communities, and we can protect Illinois' remaining wetlands, prairies, and forests for future generations." ([http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageNavigator/PSP\\_feb09](http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageNavigator/PSP_feb09))

In 1997, I was a volunteer outreach speaker for ICPR, the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform. At an ICPR open house, I met Pat Quinn

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## We Need a Better Message

by Sharon Sanders

Democrats can never rest easy. If the Republicans are good at one thing, it's the ability to stay on message, even if that message is based on lies and misrepresentations. Their troops march right behind their leaders, John Boehner and Mitch McConnell, right-wing fanatics cloaked in pinstripe suits. Their followers never deviate from the bullet points—more tax cuts and no earmarks (which are defined as Democratic initiatives).

We Democrats, on the other hand, are broken up into many factions, sharing core values but distinct in our goals and how to achieve them. We're often found eating our own and giving endless fodder to the drooling likes of Limbaugh and Hannity—and Mark Kirk. Of course, these trickle-down free-marketers never answer any of the important questions: What will tax cuts do for the millions now jobless with no income to pay taxes in the first place? Exactly what did last year's tax cuts do for the economy? And what will more tax cuts do for our spiraling deficit except increase it?

Palin, McCain, and many others on the right are now in the process of strategizing to take over Congress in the next go-around. The name-calling and blame game is well under way with Obama in office just a month. If it's bad now, can you imagine the stalemate if their efforts to gain a foothold in Congress take hold?

The policies of the Bush administration directly caused the mess in the first place, and we can't let Republicans obscure this fact. They have the

gall to talk about a deficit out of control, as though we caused it, when, in fact, it is directly attributable to their excessive spending during the past eight years. We cannot let down our guard. President Obama said it well. "We inherited this mess." After eight years of top-down catering to the rich and the corporations, outsourcing, and no transparency or regulation, we can't be expected to fix it in one month.

Unfortunately, with their control of segments of the media, Republicans have the power to twist minds with the sound byte, Fox (non-)News convincing a sizable portion of the population that our horrendous problems started with the Democratic Congress. But it wasn't until after Bush came into office that the interest-only balloon and no-doc mortgages became prevalent. They were incredibly bad ways to write mortgages and a key cause of this mess we're in, along with the immoral excesses of the banks that sold these toxic entities as AAA investments. How do you possibly give a mortgage to people who won't state their income? There could be no other outcome than failure. And those appointed to government regulatory positions by Bush were either former leaders of their industries or fervent deregulators, giving the green light to the financial industry for just about anything it wanted to do to make a profit. Oversight was not in their lexicon.

And where is Mark Kirk in all this? He's holding Town Hall Meetings expounding the right-wing message, talking about tax cuts and "fiscal responsibility," and apparently getting ready to run for Obama's Senate seat as he blames the President for partisanship and taking our country down the road of ruin. Mr. Kirk is so typical of the hypocrisy of the political right. He talks about balancing the budget, yet sees no problem

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# Mark Kirk Opposes the Economic Recovery Legislation – Like Every Other Republican Congressman



Ignoring President Obama's earnest, urgent pleas to help the American people overcome the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and defying his own campaign slogan of *thoughtful, independent leadership*, 10th District Congressman Mark Kirk joined one hundred percent of House Republicans in self-righteously opposing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

On January 28, Kirk voted against the first version of the stimulus plan. On February 13, he twice voted against the conference report (a reconciliation of the House and Senate versions of the bill), first in favor of a motion to recommit (that is, to send the bill back to committee) and ultimately against the law's passage. In public statements intended to justify these party-line votes, Kirk often used erroneous data to criticize President Obama's economic stimulus package and to suggest it would prove ineffective.

To lay the groundwork, prior to these votes, on January 22, Kirk sent an e-mail to constituents inviting them to join him in opposing President Obama's economic stimulus bill. "Should we borrow \$2 Trillion to Spend on a Stimulus Bill? Congress Thinks So, How About You?" his e-mail message's subject line announced.

Kirk concluded his constituent e-mail by repeating the claim that the stimulus bill would add \$2 trillion to the U.S. national debt—an erroneous sum. In fact, the final bill has been estimated to cost about \$787 billion—not much more than the sum used to bail out teetering banks in September. Kirk supported the bank bailout.

Following the February 13 straight party-line House vote on the stimulus bill, Kirk led Republican efforts to encourage states to refuse stimulus money. "Pretty much never getting anything passed in his entire career, [Kirk] pushed and managed to get an amendment into the stimulus bill that would have made it virtually impossible for Illinois to use [the stimulus money] had Blagojevich remained governor," noted Tenth Dem blogger Ellen Beth Gill on February 22. (<http://ellenofthetenth.blogspot.com/>)

In so vigorously opposing the president's economic stimulus plan, Kirk demonstrated a shocking lack of compassion for Americans bearing

the brunt of the current economic crisis—a crisis he played a key role in creating. He also proved—yet again—his willingness to overlook the basic needs of vulnerable citizens for the sake of his party, the special interests it represents (big banks, big pharma, and big oil, to name a few); and, of course, his own political career. "[The majority of] Republicans want to make sure that President Obama's economic programs don't work. They want to see unemployment rise and people out on the streets because they think they need economic carnage to jumpstart their failing political careers," Gill said in her February 22 blog.

The great irony, of course, is that the Republican Party's leaders—Mark Kirk chief among them—who now oppose solutions to the current economic crisis, helped create the crisis through their steadfast support of irresponsible and corrupt Bush administration policies. They favored waging an expensive war in Iraq while simultaneously cutting taxes on the wealthiest Americans. After voting to relax financial rules safeguarding our financial system, and to oppose legislative proposals to stem the fallout of the mortgage crisis (see [http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0806\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0806_nl.pdf)), Kirk and his Republican colleagues in the House united in their across-the-board opposition to the stimulus package.

Many 10th District voters who marked their ballots for Barack Obama and/or Dick Durbin on November 4 also voted for Mark Kirk. Just weeks into the 111th Congress, it is already clear that these voters have gotten only two-thirds of what they expected. Unlike Kirk, Democrat Dick Durbin, the senior senator from Illinois, unwaveringly supported the president's plan for economic recovery. Our current junior senator, too, Democrat Roland Burris, regardless of the issues that threaten to curtail his already partial term, also showed himself to be a reliable supporter of President Obama's economic recovery plan.

## Better Message *continued from page 2*

with spending \$12 billion a month in Iraq. He claims he's a war veteran after serving in harm's way in Afghanistan for all of three weeks, yet he voted against giving our troops reasonable periods of rest before being redeployed to Iraq. He talks about the corruption in Illinois government, but is silent on the shenanigans of the Bush administration in sending us into a trillion dollar war based on lies. He talks about ethics, but he voted against enforcing *habeas corpus*, or honoring congressional subpoenas if you're Harriet Miers, Joshua Bolton, or Karl Rove. He may have voted for equal rights based on sexual orientation, but he voted against the rights of women in the workplace, offering the excuse that too many lawsuits would follow a law that allowed women to enforce their right to equal pay. Mr. Kirk voted for the Bush bailout (a massive giveaway to the financials and a blatant theft of American taxpayer money), but voted "no" on Mr. Obama's stimulus plan, saying it was too expensive and we couldn't possibly create more debt for our grandchildren, without regard, of course, to all the debt that was incurred under the Bush administration.

Come on now, Mr. Kirk, do you think we're all stupid?

Every one of Kirk's votes in the House needs to be communicated to the public in a clear and concise manner so that he no longer remains the illusionist that he is, but is unmasked for what he truly is—a right-wing conservative. Like most Republicans, Mr. Kirk does not vote for the middle class. It's ironic that his party, which generally presents itself as God-fearing and religious, votes against anything to help the average guy. Republicans are not particularly concerned with jobs and schools and infrastructure and a clean and healthy environment, and they have the gall to call anything that is good for our society "entitlements" or "pork." They are incapable of understanding that without a strong education system our children will not have the means of supporting themselves. They don't see that if you outsource all the jobs, the unemployed can't pay their mortgages; some may resort to crime; houses will be boarded up; families and neighborhoods will disintegrate; medical bills will increase as public health deteriorates; roads will remain unpaved; and police and fire departments will remain understaffed. This will affect all of us. No wall will be high enough to keep out the problems. Without reasonable regulation, we will all continue to be taken advantage of by those driven by greed. Our food,

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# Opportunities for Change

continued from page 1

Township, West Deerfield Township, and other locales. There are candidates seeking to bring Democratic values to bear in communities from Waukegan to Wilmette, and from Vernon Hills to Mt. Prospect.


As Karen McCormick, candidate for Northfield trustee states, "The timing is right for Democratic change in Northfield Township."

Indeed, this is a chance for ordinary citizens to do extraordinary things.

Typically, local elections don't make much of a stir with voters. Running on issues like those listed below, Democratic candidates have an unprecedented opportunity to make a difference this year.

- ✓ Transparency in government
- ✓ Responsible taxation
- ✓ Accountability to the citizens
- ✓ Campaign spending reform
- ✓ Social services assistance for the most vulnerable among us
- ✓ Policies to protect the environment
- ✓ Modernization of local transportation

As President Obama exhorted in his inaugural address, "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America." Here, in communities across the 10th Congressional District, we're trying to do just that.



An evening with Illinois Attorney General

## Lisa Madigan

Honoring the Democratic Candidates for Northfield Township:  
**Karen Nystrom, Supervisor**  
**Laura Fine, Clerk**  
**Doug Gerleman, Collector**  
**Carol Blustein, Catherine Caporusso,**  
**Karen McCormick and Mary Reynolds, Trustees**

Host Committee:  
State Senators Susan Garrett and Jeff Schoenberg,  
State Representatives Karen May and Elaine Nekritz  
Northfield Township Democratic Committeeman Mike Kreloff

Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
At the home of:  
**Mr. Jack Kaplan and Dr. Marian Macsai**  
1331 Church St., Northbrook, IL 60062

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Yes, I will attend:  Sponsor: \$1000  Host: \$500  Co-Host: \$300  
 Friend: \$150  Guest: \$60 / Couple: \$100

No, but a \$\_\_\_\_\_ contribution is enclosed

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Contributions are not tax deductible. Paid for by Democrats of Northfield Township. Printed on Recycled Paper. A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections and the Cook County Clerk is available for purchase from the State Board of Elections, Springfield, Illinois and the Cook County Clerk's Office, 89 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60601. \*Ballot box requests that respect the computer and name of the candidate of an individual who contributes over \$500.

## ★ ★ ★ Canvass, contribute, volunteer — we need your help! ★ ★ ★

The quest to turn Lake County Blue starts at the center - **Vernon Township.**



Our Democratic slate of candidates aims to overturn 32 years of one party rule - but we need your help immediately!



Canvass, contribute, volunteer - your help can bring the change we need in Vernon Township and Lake County.



Please join our effort. Contact us today!



Please contact us at:

[vernondems@aol.com](mailto:vernondems@aol.com) • [www.vernondemocratsforchange.com](http://www.vernondemocratsforchange.com)

**VOTE FOR:**  
**Sam Flint, Supervisor**  
**Peter Hopkins, Assessor**  
**Mike Lofstrom, Highway Commissioner**

**Glenn Stier, Clerk**  
**Cassie Horvath, Trustee**  
**Philip Hirsh, Trustee**  
**Marla Sundh, Trustee**  
**Akrom Hossain, Trustee**



Paid for by Vernon Democrats For Change. A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections and the County Clerk is (or will be) available for purchase from the State Board of Elections and the County Clerk, County Building, 18 N. County St., Waukegan, IL 60085. Political contributions are not tax-deductible.



# Of Elves and Fairies: *Thoughts on the American Economy*

by Terry Wrem Jones

Not long ago I was listening to a radio news bit discussing the peanut plant fiasco and identifying some of the many recalled products, including some Keebler sandwich crackers. What really got my attention, though, was the mention of Kellogg's as the parent company. "Does Kellogg's own *all* the food?" I wondered to myself. "I thought Keebler was run by Elves (or Elven-Americans, to be more politically correct) in a hollow tree.

That got me thinking about the whole economic meltdown. Not that it takes much to get one thinking about the economic mess—it hovers over every moment like an ominous cloud, and that's just for those of us who are still hanging on to our jobs. For those already set free from the confines of regular employment, the storm has already been let loose.

Back to the apparent takeover of that hollow tree by Kellogg's (do you suppose it was a hostile takeover? Did the elves fight back, throw cookies, defend their tree to the bitter end?), I've always been somewhat suspicious of the whole mergers and acquisitions thing. As is probably already quite clear, I'm no economist, don't have an MBA (but I do still own my soul...), and therefore can offer nothing resembling an expert opinion on any of this. But that doesn't stop me from having an opinion.

And my opinion is that we need to start thinking that smaller is better. Who really benefits from the economies of scale that supposedly accrue from the bigger-is-better model? My guess is that it's not the workers who end up becoming superfluous (and unemployed), and it's probably not the consumers, either, so much as it is those special folks at the very top of the food chain, as it were—the ones who are supposed to trickle their good fortune down to the rest of us.

Right. How's that been working for us, exactly?

The man who owns the small company I work for puts a lot of personal effort, and some of his profits, into international humanitarian work. One of his projects involves micro-economic initiatives in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In a nutshell, that means giving families small grants that allow them to form small business enterprises—enough money to purchase a sewing machine and start a tailoring business, for example.

We need to start doing something like that here. Not on such a tiny scale, of course, but in relative proportion to the scale of U.S. business. We need to create a climate that's more conducive to building small businesses with the thought of keeping them small, rather than with a singular focus on getting big enough to be acquired. We need to make it less complicated, and therefore less stressful, to run a business. Maybe that means simplifying the tax

code. I'm not an accountant, either, but I suspect this would be helpful to everyone *but* accountants, who might have less to do for their small business clients.

One thing I'm pretty sure needs to happen is the establishment of universal healthcare, preferably a single-payer system. I don't understand why employers are expected to shoulder the burden of providing health insurance for American workers, especially since lately there are about 600,000 fewer people per week actually working.

Another idea for making the climate friendlier for business startups would be to go back and undo a lot of the newer bankruptcy provisions that were put in place by Congress a few years ago. I heard Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) talking about that on the Thom Hartmann radio show recently. He said (and I broadly paraphrase here) that if the penalties for failure were not so Draconian, more people might be willing to take the risk of trying to build a business in this country.

I realize these are all somewhat half-baked ideas (note the subtle allusion to Keebler/Kellogg's). Again, I'm not an economist, but it's pretty clear that even the "best and brightest" economic minds don't have all the answers. And what I DO know is that whatever we've been doing isn't working for us.

I have one more idea that may be worth considering. In the theatrical version of Peter Pan, there is a moment when Tinkerbell is on the verge of death, having selflessly drunk a poison meant for Peter. At this point, Peter breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience directly, beseeching children of all ages to clap if they believe in fairies, because the pure and simple expression of that belief will save Tinkerbell.

We, as a nation, need something akin to a Tinkerbell moment.

As I understand it, the run-up of wealth that started with the housing sector and then moved into the markets in general (as those real estate-based assets were sold) was largely illusory. We all collectively believed in the value of the assets, and that collective belief kept things growing. When the markets suddenly stopped believing in fairies—I mean in the value of the assets—our economy, and soon the global economy, was left poisoned and gasping for life.

I realize that we can't simply collectively imagine all the wealth back (though I'm not entirely sure why). But we need a call for the collective belief in the inherent value of our ability to make things better. And that means putting aside ridiculous partisan obstructionism and calling for all of us, as Americans, to embrace our common purpose and save our national soul.

So, children of all ages, wherever you are, whatever your political leaning...clap if you believe in America.



## Spread the Word *continued from page 1*

the Terri Schiavo Restoration Act, which would have required the federal government to forcibly insert a feeding tube into a woman who had been in a vegetative state for 15 years, against the wishes of her husband. (Nancy Pelosi said at the time that "Michael Schiavo is faced with a devastating decision, but having been through the proper legal process, the decision for his wife's care belongs to him and to God." Kirk thought the decision belonged to the federal government.)

But it is equally important to supply context: Kirk's votes against equal pay and in favor of the Terri Schiavo Restoration Act were examples

of Kirk's voting with the Republicans—and against our district's values—when it matters. When we hear Kirk tell us to vote the person, not the party, we need to remind friends, acquaintances, and strangers that, as Professor Stanley Fish has said, "voting the person rather than the party is about the dumbest thing you can do."

Party affiliation is important, and it is an excellent predictor of voting. If all I know about a particular bill is that a majority of Republicans supported it, then nine times out of ten I will be able to correctly tell you how Mark Kirk voted. And if we can get the word out in the 10th District, we won't be surprised in 2010 when we see how the 10th District voted and the *sedanlughen* is wiped off Kirk's face.

# Tenth Dems University Professor Jerry Goldman Presents "The Mystique of Making Laws"

Clip from Rock Video Illustrating Bill's Journey Through Congress Actualizes TDU's Invitation to "Rock and Enroll"



Northwestern Professor Jerry Goldman simultaneously educates and entertains his audience at a recent Tenth Dems class.

(I thought I heard some singing along!)

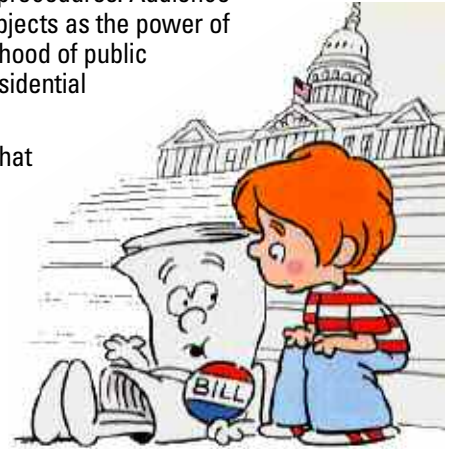
by Catherine Caporusso

On February 24th, at the Northbrook Library, Tenth Dems University was proud to present Professor Jerry Goldman, political science professor at Northwestern University. Professor Goldman spoke about "The Mystique of Making Laws." He employed a multi-media presentation to convey in detail how an idea makes its way to becoming a piece of legislation.

Prof. Goldman began with a clip from the Schoolhouse Rock video "I'm Only a Bill" and continued with the steps

a bill takes as it goes through Congress, the importance of congressional committees and committee chairs, and the difference between House and Senate procedures. Audience discussion included such subjects as the power of lobbyists, the value and likelihood of public campaign financing, and presidential signing statements.

The session ended early so that both the professor and the audience could watch and listen to President Obama's address to Congress. It was a valuable night for all in attendance, and we owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Goldman. As the Schoolhouse Rock song goes, "Knowledge is Power."



## Republican Lawmakers Need Lesson in Economics

by Gary Lukens

How interesting that not one Republican lawmaker voted for President Obama's financial stimulus package. Considering these are the same lawmakers who voted for years to throw money into a never-ending war, apparently Americans' needs come in a distant second as far as the GOP is concerned.

It seems our House and Senate officials have reversed roles for the last eight years, with the majority Republicans spending wildly on wars and infrastructure, while the minority Democrats called for fiscal responsibility.

With little to do but say please and thank you, Democrats bit their lips and asked for receipts. Many of those receipts came back showing the Bush administration having showered billions upon billions of dollars upon private contractors like Haliburton. The recession must be hitting Dick Cheney rather hard.

Vast sums of money were given to shady contractors that in many cases never delivered a fraction of their contracted duties or commodities. When something was actually done, American taxpayers were grossly overcharged.

As things got worse, Democrats tried to demand fiscal responsibility from the Bush administration. Often times they heard the same stale rhetoric: liberating an oppressed society is far more important than reconciling where the money is going.

In time, Bush received all the money he needed for his war. Highly partisan Republican lawmakers made sure of that. But now, when our new president asks that taxpayer money be spent on Americans, it seems Republicans are pouting.

With the Presidency, House, and Senate firmly in their control, Democrats no longer have to say please and thank you. And with America's economy dangling precariously on life support, they shouldn't have to.

## How Can Anyone Say President Obama Isn't Significantly Different (and Better)?

by Steven Miles Sulkin

How anyone can say that President Obama is "just another politician," or "doing a poor job," or "off to a bad start," all lines I've read in the press, is beyond me.

Look at all he has already done. And look at just one element of what he has done by establishing the website <http://www.recovery.gov/>.

If you have not studied this site yet, do so. It's remarkable. It's the website the administration created so that we can track every dollar spent by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. When have you ever seen anything like this before? This sort of transparency and accountability, in other words, this sort of honesty, is refreshingly new and it is the foundation of the Obama administration.

So I ask you all to stand fervently behind our president. He needs you now more than ever. I, and I'm sure you, can feel the wind coming out of the sails of this presidency, the lessening of passion and involvement. Many of us feared this would happen. So we need to fight back and spread the word that we can once again recapture the phenomenon of the election, our own passion. How can we do that?

By inspiring ourselves again first and then others.

I, personally, on occasion watch the video I created for the inaugural, "Yes We Can (Change our Destiny)." I watch it to reinspire myself, to remind me how I felt on November 4th. And it feels good.

I suggest others do the same. Remember how you felt, remember what you did during the election and don't make that a fleeting phenomenon. Follow President Obama's lead and make civic involvement part of the fabric of our new society.

Don't forget, we made this happen. We can change our destiny, and we can change our world.

# An Open Letter to Barack Obama on the Occasion of his Election to the Presidency of the United States

Dear Barack,

Although I know I am not the first nor will be the last to do this, I am writing to congratulate you on your historic election win to become the 44th President of the United States of America.

I was elected to my role as a Councillor in the London Borough of Enfield in 2006 at the age of 21. I am often being praised for getting elected so young. Sadly, my story is not reflective amongst the majority of my generation. So many young people care deeply about political issues—like the many millions who marched against the war in Iraq, against climate change, or joined the Make Poverty History campaign. However, they feel the vehicle of our democracy, through voting or standing for public office, is no longer a force for change while politicians continue to move towards the centre ground and continue with the status quo.

The area I represent is called Edmonton Green—a place I have lived all my life. It is an area of high social deprivation with unemployment and worklessness above the average of the UK. Edmonton is also a place of great and rich diversity, with Afro-Caribbean, Turkish, Greek, Irish and Bengali communities living and working together. I think our diversity gives us character and makes us stronger as a community. Sadly again, there are people in Edmonton that do not see politics as a power to change things. But despite this I never lose heart and will continue to fight to make my constituents lives better. It is because I still believe in politics as a force of change that led me to support your campaign.

Up until March of this year, I had never travelled the United States before—in fact, I had never left Europe. But for a couple of weeks in that month, I journeyed to your office in Chicago to work on the campaign. Despite the cold, I worked tirelessly, calling on voters, using phones, working on the internet, and more, determined to win you the Texas primary. Sadly, you lost to Senator Clinton (who I have very much respect for) but I was still immensely proud to work with such brilliant people. Previous to that you had something around

eight straight victories. When I returned home friends jokingly mocked me that it was I who broke your chain of success. I seriously hope not.

Many people from the UK went to help you during the actual Presidential race against Senator McCain. As much as I would have liked to have done so too, I felt it was incredibly important to help you during the nomination period. Through my own personal experience with the Labour Party, sometimes securing the support of party members is the hardest part.

Whilst in Chicago, I was amazed by how many ordinary people were working on your campaign, particularly those who had never voted before, or the many young people I met who were not at an age to vote in these elections but still wanted to help. It is a real testament to a campaign that was grassroot led and empowered millions of people under the common cause of “Yes we can.”

I was equally amazed at all the innovative new ways of campaigning, particularly using personalised social networking media like Facebook and my.barackobama.com. Recently, I bought an Apple iPhone and was excited to see an application to connect with voters through it. There is much my party can learn from this style of campaigning to help us with our efforts in the future.

More recently I have been working with Democrats Abroad to help register Americans in the UK to vote in the election. We registered a record amount of people and the voting numbers reflected that. The determination of your campaign to reach out to Americans abroad as well as at home is to be commended. Your campaign understood Americans abroad love and care about their country and should have an equal influence on its future.



*Kris Brown, Labour Party Councillor for Edmonton Green*

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## Governor *continued from page 2*

for the first time when he asked me to sign a petition. That was his *modus operandi* for achieving his green goals, as well as other pursuits on behalf of better government. When he first walked into the room, I asked a person standing near me, “Who is that guy with a handful of papers?” The answer was, “That’s Pat Quinn, and those papers are petitions. He carries them wherever he goes.”

On January 29, 2009, the Illinois State Senate voted 59 to 0 to remove Blago from office by impeachment. Blago left Quinn holding the bag for the huge deficit of \$9 billion. Undaunted by this state of the State, Gov. Pat Quinn started taking positive steps toward a remedy by reducing state government spending—ordering agencies to cut travel, contracts, and hiring—moves he said would save hundreds of millions of dollars. I expect that he will take larger scale steps in the near future to take a bigger bite out of the shortfall.

Quinn took early and decisive action to rebuild the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) when he appointed Marc Miller, a natural resource professional and avid Illinois outdoorsman who has dedicated his career to protecting Illinois’ rivers, lakes, streams, and other special places for current and future generations. Everyone who loves the Illinois outdoors can take heart that Gov. Quinn recognizes the critical importance of the work done by IDNR and will work to

restore the former strength of the Department. Especially in the state’s current fiscal crisis, we know that rebuilding the IDNR will take time, but Quinn has made clear it is a priority. ([http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageNavigator/PSP\\_feb09](http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageNavigator/PSP_feb09))

Although he could have been a great governor if he had put the interests of the citizens of Illinois first and not used “Pay-to-Play,” Blago did not do so. He chose the path of greed blatantly and without remorse. As a result, he has made his mark in history as the first governor in the U.S. to be impeached for malfeasance in office. For this dubious achievement, he may also be inscribed in the *Guinness Book of Records*. But his antics in public office in the pursuit of greed may cause the newly coined word “Blago” to be defined in Webster’s Dictionary as one who uses greed for personal advantage to the detriment of others.

In contrast, Quinn’s odyssey reminds me of Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken.” Frost writes that “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.” Quinn’s path, strewn with high standards of ethics and public service, is a road less traveled, especially by Blago and many other politicians in Illinois.



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## Open Letter *continued from page 7*

I will never forget 2008. I hope this year will remain in history books for centuries to come, as it will teach generation after generation that the politics of hope is very much alive, that nobody can tell you something is impossible. When things are bad there's nothing to suggest they cannot get better.

I am not going to pretend, and I believe you will not either, that your Presidency will make everything perfect, the same way I do not believe being a Councillor will make everything perfect. It is not our job to do that. It's our job to be the building blocks for people to decide their own fate so they can live long, healthy, and happy lives.

We face huge challenges in the world. I am now a bit more confident we can see them through.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Kris Brown  
Labour Party Councillor for Edmonton Green

*Kris Brown is one of three young Britons who stayed with George Rosenblit while volunteering for the Obama campaign last year. See Tenth News, May 2008, p. 5.*

## Better Message *continued from page 3*

air, and water will become even more unsafe, our products even more hazardous, our workplace even more dangerous, our retirements increasingly in jeopardy, and our healthcare more of a disaster than it already is. Here we are, in the worst recession since the Great Depression, and Republicans like our Mr. Kirk are coming up with no answers other than to push for tax cuts and reduced spending and refuse to compromise one iota with the Democrats. They care less about the country or our quality of life than about the opportunity to badmouth President Obama.

A democracy can only flourish with a strong middle class, and what happens to the middle class affects the quality of life of us all. What we need to do is be thrilled about Obama's victory but understand that the problems are so vast he may not be able to solve them. We must not let the right wing get the upper hand in all this. They are very, very good at destroying society, but incapable of putting it back together. We must stay strong and have our arguments ready. As President Obama said, we inherited this mess. We didn't make it. But they may have so badly harmed our country, it may take another generation to fix it. Time is running out.

## Coming up at Tenth Dems U:

### Neil Steinberg Encore Discussion

Monday, March 9th, 7:00 p.m.

Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook

Chicago Sun-Times columnist Neil Steinberg returns to Tenth Dems University for an encore discussion of the current political scene. His topic is "Being a Smart Democrat in the Age of Obama." Since

his last appearance in January, we swore in a new president in Washington, a new U.S. Senator from Illinois, and a new governor. And that was just January.

Hear Neil Steinberg's thoughts on what's been happening, and on what it means to be a Democrat now that the pendulum of government control has swung our way. Besides writing a regular column for the Sun-Times for over a decade, Steinberg is the author of six books, and is a 10th District resident.

To register, visit [TenthDemsU.org](http://TenthDemsU.org), or call 847-266-VOTE (8683).