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Maureen Wener Selected to Serve as New Executive Director of Tenth Congressional District Democrats

by Mary LaPlante



photo by Ravi Ganapathy

Maureen Wener became the Executive Director of the Tenth Congressional District Democrats (Tenth Dems) in February 2009. In her first interview for the Tenth News, she talks about her passion for politics, civic responsibility, and the power of all. A former senior manager in the

medical education field specializing in continuing nursing education, Maureen also serves as treasurer and political director for Illinois State Representative Kathy Ryg of the 59th District. Previously, Maureen worked for Illinois State Senator John J. Cullerton of the 6th District. Maureen majored in political science at the University of Kansas, and holds a master's degree in political science from Northeastern Illinois University. Maureen is a lifelong Democrat.

What drew you to accept the Tenth Dems Executive Director position?

I accepted this position primarily because it provided me with the opportunity to work with Lauren Beth Gash and all the wonderful Tenth Dems volunteers. I used to volunteer for Lauren, and I have the utmost respect for her. She is someone who doesn't just stand on the sidelines in regard to the important work that needs to be

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Tenth News

JULY 2009

Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter

Volume 6, Edition 7

www.tenthdems.org

Mr. Kirk Goes to China

by Steve Sheffey

Tenth District Congressman Mark Kirk told an audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, that on a recent trip to China he advised Chinese officials that they should not believe the budget figures being published by the United States government. China is our largest creditor, and Kirk claims that he told China that, in Kirk's words, "the budget numbers that the U.S. government have put forward are not to be believed."

Yes. Those were Rep. Kirk's exact words. You can go to <http://www.mefedia.com/entry/video-with-representatives-like-this-who-needs-enemies/19424698> to see a video of Kirk's comments as well as to see Rachel Maddow discuss Kirk's comments with David Weidner of marketwatch.com. According to Weidner, it was more than inappropriate for someone in Kirk's position to tell China not to believe our numbers. In Weidner's words, "It was a colossally stupid thing to say."

Weidner went on to explain that "had it been someone of some import or some authority from this country, we might have seen a real international incident in terms of economic credit for this country across the globe. But I think, fortunately, the world kind of knows where this is coming from. This is a brawl in the U.S. between two parties."

Ryan Rudominer, National Press Secretary for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, called Kirk's actions "incredibly irresponsible" and a danger to the American economy: "After helping get us into this current economic crisis by supporting President Bush's failed economic policies, Congressman Mark Kirk went to



China and told Chinese officials that the American government was not to be trusted," Rudominer said. He explained, "Congressman Kirk's questioning of America while representing our government in China is incredibly irresponsible and endangers the American economy. These are serious times. Congressman Kirk needs to get serious about his support of the American economy, especially when Kirk is representing his country in China."

Illinois State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias had a similar take on Rep. Kirk's actions. Giannoulias explained, "In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, Mark Kirk is essentially telling China, which holds more U.S. debt than any nation on earth, not to trust the American government, and by extension, the American people. This puts the full faith and credit of the United States at risk and threatens to permanently wreak havoc on the credit markets that are essential to our recovery and our economic future."

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Kirk Goes to China *continued from page 1*

Did Kirk commit treason? Of course not. But his words were highly inappropriate, and unbecoming of someone who claims to be a statesman. As Giannoulas put it, "Congressman Kirk's reckless actions demonstrate a terrible lapse in judgment and should be immediately retracted."

This report from the *Washington Monthly* about Kirk's badmouthing his government on foreign soil is worth reading in its entirety:

In general, criticizing U.S. politicians by questioning their patriotism is cheap and unnecessary. But once in a while, Republican opposition to the administration is so counter-productive to the nation's interests, it's hard not to wonder whether the GOP official is deliberately trying to undermine the United States.

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL) now appears to have taken a bold step in the debate over the budget deficit: Openly telling a foreign government not to trust the administration in Washington.

The *Straits Times* reports that Kirk spoke to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank, and discussed a meeting he had with Chinese leaders.

"One of the messages I had—because we need to build trust and confidence in our number one creditor," said Kirk, "is that the budget numbers that the US government had put forward should not be believed. The Congress is actually gonna spend quite a bit more than what's in the budget, and the health-care bill probably being the lead driver of additional spending by the Congress."

Now, I realize that Mark Kirk is poised to launch a Senate campaign, so he'll need to make ridiculous attacks as often as possible in order to boost his fundraising prospects. The more intense the vitriol, the more likely GOP donors will feel generous.

But that's not a compelling excuse. America's credibility—and, in particular, President Obama's reliability—with China is absolutely necessary to the health of the nation's economy. It's one thing for conservative lawmakers to try to undermine confidence in America's leadership on Fox News or in some tirade on the House floor, but Mark Kirk, by his own admission, went directly to the Chinese and told them not to believe the Obama administration. Our role in international finance is predicated on the full faith and credit of the United States government, and Mark Kirk wants China to think this isn't worth much.

There may be more reckless and irresponsible moves a congressional Republican can make, but very few come to mind.

Here's hoping Kirk was just engaging in some right-wing bluster, and he never issued any such warnings to the Chinese. Perhaps he just wants people to think he tried to undermine the nation's credibility with China, but he knows actually doing this would be the height of foolishness.

Misguided bravado in advance of a campaign is understandable. Traveling overseas to undercut confidence in the United States is not.

As the *Guardian* reported, Kirk is an "elected federal official telling a foreign government—not just any foreign government, but the largest holder of U.S. debt—not to trust or believe his own government in Washington. No, it's not treason. But I can promise you that if the situation were reversed...if, say, Nancy Pelosi had told Bashar al-Assad on that famous trip to Syria she took in 2007 that Bush was bluffing about X, Y or Z, the howls of treason would have arisen like stench from a landfill."

So much for independent, thoughtful leadership.

Mark Kirk Is Crafty

by Gregory Mysko

I admire Congressman Mark Kirk. The man is brilliant. Congressman Wonderful.

No. It's not what you think. I'm not a drooling sycophant. But I have to give Mark Kirk his due. While the nation was distracted with Sarah Palin going ballistic on David Letterman over a stupid joke, our Mark Kirk was in Beijing meeting with Chinese leaders doing what he needed to do for his upcoming Senate campaign.

Kirk was using his "Thoughtful Independent" skills when he told the Chinese that the Obama administration had no credibility. In essence, like a crafty wizard, his words can be summarized as: "Don't pay any attention to that President Obama. He and his people are liars and out to deceive China. Their financial numbers are bogus."

The Tenth Dems forwarded an email to members that asked, "Did Kirk commit treason?" and answered, "No. But his actions were highly inappropriate, and



unbecoming someone who claims to be a statesman." That is true. But Kirk is an ambitious and pretentious Republican who wants to become a U.S. Senator and has some political problems to overcome. So his actions were not a surprise to anyone and very appropriate for a right winger.

Kirk's foremost need is to win a Republican primary next February. And to do that, he needs to have enough of the hardcore far-right Republican base behind him to push him to first place in a plurality. This is assuming there will be the usual contingent of Dick Cheney-admiring millionaires also running for the seat. A solid majority of Republican primary voters choose ultraconservative candidates in statewide primary elections. Trashing Obama in China was a brilliant move for Kirk politically to build up his fan base back home. Kirk needs to boost his credibility with the far right in Illinois after spinning "Thoughtful Independent" political voodoo in the 10th District for many years.

While the Chicago and downstate news media ignored the "Obama credibility" story, it was repeated widely on right-wing GOP websites like *Team America* and *Say Anything* with approving reviews from the Obama-hating tea bagger community. It does not matter that the story was covered in *The Washington Post*, British media, and on MSNBC. The Chicago news outlets did not cover the story, and as long as the word gets out to the right target group through quieter means, that is all that counts.

Mark Kirk is an admirer of China. He once proposed that American schools be required to offer Mandarin language classes. And in a January 2009 interview with the *China Economic Review* magazine, Kirk commented on the new president's attitude towards China: "He will learn quickly that he needs China and must therefore decide whether diplomacy regarding North Korea is more important than a trade bill on the floor of the House." In other words, profits of corporations exporting jobs to China are more important than a nuclear threat from North Korea.

If Mark Kirk is serious about running for the Senate, he will have more problems to deal with than winning over right-wing converts. As they say, the chickens will come home to roost. And I am waiting for the next interview with Mark Kirk by the *China Economic Review*.

A Town Hall Meeting Orchestrated by Frank Luntz

In helping his party implement its strategy for killing meaningful healthcare reform, Republican Congressman Mark Kirk is at the top of his game. That's because the strategy, as cunningly crafted by Republican pollster and communications strategist Frank Luntz, hinges on the skillful execution of the kind of deceptive techniques that Kirk has honed to perfection during his eight years as the 10th District's representative in Congress.

Kirk's proclivity for disseminating misleading information to prevent constituents from supporting policies in their own best interests, and his skill at appearing to support policies he actually undermines, sum up to a tee the carefully orchestrated Town Hall meeting on healthcare reform he held at Wilmette Village Hall on Saturday, June 13.

Following verbatim the "10 Rules for Stopping the Washington Takeover of Healthcare" that Republican strategist Luntz outlines in "The Language of Health Care" (<http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/frank-luntz-the-language-of-healthcare-20091.pdf>), Kirk began the meeting with a slide show consisting of cherry-picked data, designed to highlight the benefits of the existing U.S. healthcare system compared to government-run systems in Canada and the U.K. The presentation highlighted the comparatively low access to women's healthcare (i.e., pap smears and mammograms) in Canada and the U.K. and the U.S.'s higher rate of success in battling breast cancer. But Kirk made no mention of, and showed no slides reflecting, any of the numerous world health metrics where the U.S. lags far behind, such as, most tragically, infant mortality.

Throughout the meeting, Kirk was careful to follow Luntz's second rule: "Acknowledge the healthcare crisis." As Luntz says in "The Language of Health Care," "If you say there is no healthcare crisis, you give your listener permission to ignore everything else you say... If you are one of the millions of Americans who can't afford healthcare, it is a crisis."

Accordingly, Kirk consistently presented himself as on the side of reform. He *appeared* particularly sympathetic to one constituent who expressed frustration with insurance companies' pervasive denial of coverage for preexisting conditions, even while charging exorbitant premiums. In response, Kirk told the audience he agreed that preexisting condition provisions were a major problem and that he was working on a reform proposal that included their elimination. But given Kirk's long history of working to protect insurance industry profits, it would be an unprecedented turnabout if he actually lifted a finger to fight for this much-needed reform. Indeed, given his anemic legislative record, we are confident that even if he did propose such reform legislation it would never make it to the floor of the House.

Kirk also carefully followed Luntz's rules 3 and 4, which advise opponents of healthcare reform to play up the aspects of government healthcare systems that Americans are most afraid of: long waits for urgent care and the potential for the government to interfere in private healthcare decisions. Several attendees told their own horror stories of relatives living in countries with government-sponsored healthcare, such as Canada and the U.K. (One wonders how many of these individuals were planted.) But others in the audience had positive personal anecdotes about those systems. And there were a number of audience members who also shared horror stories about our system here at home. Kirk had virtually no comment for these constituents beyond a sympathetic nod.

Kirk was also sure to speculate repeatedly about future inefficiencies, abuse, and runaway costs of a government healthcare system, always linking these potential problems to massive deficits and higher income taxes. However, Kirk never expressed any regret for the fiscal



irresponsibility during the Bush years when our nation's massive budget deficit actually was created.

Acknowledging at least two failings in the U.S. healthcare system—skyrocketing costs and the millions of Americans with no health insurance—Kirk appeared sympathetic to attendees who spoke about the prohibitive cost of health insurance and how it was eating up their incomes and causing business failures. But he glossed over other failures of our current system, such as private insurers' denial of claims and refusal to pay for life-saving treatment.

A number of us wanted to ask Kirk why he is so concerned about the alleged potential for the government to intervene in personal medical decisions but has no problem with insurance companies making these decisions. However, Kirk never acknowledged our raised hands.

In the end, for those of us able to see through Kirk's smoke and mirrors, it became crystal clear that he's once again trying to trick 10th District voters into believing he's on our side, when he's actually not. In truth, Mark Kirk is working to maintain the status quo on behalf of the insurance industry and others who profit greatly from our present broken system.

* * *

Fortunately, 9th District Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky's June 14 Town Hall meeting on healthcare reform presented a striking contrast to Kirk's deceitful approach. Speaking earnestly, Schakowsky expressed the honorable view that every American should have affordable access to quality healthcare. She also spoke candidly about the inefficiencies and inequities in the current U.S. system and reported that the World Health Organization ranks the United States 37th among the world's health systems—even though our system spends considerably more than most other nations and as much as 40 percent more than Switzerland and Canada. Responding to criticism from conservatives about Canada's healthcare system, Schakowsky said, "There isn't one conservative member of Canada's parliament who would opt for an American program."

* * *

Earlier in June, Schakowsky gave Illinoisans one more reason to feel proud. In a letter to supporters, she said that in light of the unique opportunities presented by the new administration and the Democratic Congress to enact important policy change, she had decided to seek reelection to the House of Representatives—even though her exploratory efforts indicated she had a good chance of winning the Illinois Senate race.

"This is a very special moment in [our nation's] history—one that I have worked and waited for my entire career," Schakowsky said. "Over the next two years, Congress has the opportunity to provide healthcare to all Americans, begin on the road to energy independence, remake the financial regulatory system, pass immigration reform, and help transform our relationship with the rest of the world. I think the next two years present a once in a lifetime opportunity to make progressive change. I want to devote my energy to help make these [policies] a reality, and I decided that I simply couldn't do this if I run a vigorous campaign for Senate."

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President Obama's Cairo University Speech Aimed at Engaging the Muslim World

by Ron Altman

Around the world, from huts in the Indonesian jungle at dusk, to bedrooms in America at dawn, people huddled around their radios and TV sets to listen to the new President of the United States. The occasion of his address at Cairo University was "The Speech," his self-proclaimed "New Beginning" of relations with the world's 1.5 billion Muslims, relations so rashly damaged by his predecessor over the previous eight years.

Echoing Lincoln's First Inaugural Address—"We are not enemies, but friends"—President Obama declared "that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition." He argued that "they...share common principles...of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings." There followed a tour of the problems of the Moslem world, from Palestinians to Pakistanis, from issues of cultural affectations like head coverings, to dealing with nuclear weapon proliferation in a dangerous area of the world. He repeated his campaign pledge to speak with Iran "without preconditions" to help to improve relations between the United States and the Islamic Republic.

In all these aspects, the president's speech could have been a commentary on Juan Cole's new book, *Engaging the Muslim World* (Palmgrave Macmillan 2009). There is no evidence that President Obama's speech was inspired at all by Mr. Cole, or that *Engaging the Muslim World* was even read in the White House, but Obama's speech did mesh with Cole's thinking in a number of important ways.

Juan Cole is the Richard P. Mitchell Professor of History at the University of Michigan and a frequent guest on cable TV. He finds "Islamic anxiety" in the West to constitute the mirror image of "America anxiety" in the Moslem world. To Cole, "Islamic anxiety" is defined by a majority in both England and the U.S. who would not like to live next door to a Muslim, people who find a terrorist in every mosque and under every turban. Conversely, anyone who listens to al-Jazeera or al-Arabiya knows that the Arab world blames America for everything from the cost of bread to the failure of the Palestinian Authority. In Iran, we are the Great Satan, the center of every conspiracy. In the Palestinian territories the Israelis are the enemy, but the U.S. is the manipulator of the "puppet regime."

If you yearn to know the detailed history of al-Qa'eda, the relationships between the Moslem Brotherhood, Islamic Jihad, and Osama bin Laden, or the name of bin Laden's father (Mohammed) and how many children he is alleged to have fathered (54 with 22 wives), Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower: al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (Knopf 2006) is the best of a large genre. But if your goals are more pedestrian and utilitarian, Cole will inform you on a country-by-country basis about the failings of American foreign policy, with suggestions for engagement.

As President Obama broke the issue of dealing with the Moslem world into seven problems (violent extremism, Palestinians, nuclear weapons, democracy, religious freedom, women's rights, and economic development), Cole takes a geographic perspective. His chapters concentrating on Egypt, Saudi Arabia ("The Wahhabi Myth"), Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan (not the trendy AfPak), and Iran cover the crux of the relationship between Islam and the West.

As informative as is Cole's book, there is also much to criticize. Because of the centrality that Muslim commentators place on it, it is surprising that so little attention is paid to the Arab-Israeli conflict and its offspring, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I suspect that Cole's



original manuscript was not so lacking, if only because of the fervor with which he deflates commonly held assumptions of American Jews and their many allied countrymen. His slant appears in synch with that of the anti-Zionist left, partially corrected by his editors. His history of conflict is right out of Palestinian textbooks—words like "massacre" and "ethnic cleansing" come far too easily to his pen. In addressing Hizbollah, Hamas, and the Iranian nuclear threat, he often lacks historical perspective and downplays the risks to peace that a failure of his rosy scenario would imply. In this, he is the mirror image of the Israeli right, always expecting the worst, and acting to ensure that the worst occurs. But if we only read literature that we agreed with, we would learn nothing. It is a wise person who thinks for a few moments from the perspective of opponents.

Cole is very certain about his terminology. "Islamofascism" is described as a term of derision and insult (as Bush clearly meant it to be). "Islamic" refers to religious ideals, as does the homologous "Judaic." "There can, of course, be Muslim criminals and Muslim terrorists. Members of fringe cults attempting to hijack Islam may call their groups 'Islamic,' but that claim should be challenged." The equivalent term of derision would be to speak of "'Judaic terrorists' or 'Christofascists.'"

In Cairo, President Obama made it clear in his language and his themes that he understands and honors the Islamic tradition. Yet, he expressed his belief that his ideas "are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere." Similarly, Cole concludes that we must repudiate the infamous "Bush doctrine of 'preventative war' which appears to Muslims as a warrant for aggression."

We can foster a positive view of our political institutions among Muslims, not by aggressively pressing them to transform their society, but by working at home, in the words of Mr. Obama's Philadelphia speech on race relations, to "perfect" ours. The Muslim world, too, needs to drop its defensiveness as befits a great world culture. The fact that no Arabic translations of the works of Jefferson and Martin Luther King are available in the bookstores of Cairo and Beirut is both symptomatic and shocking.

Engagement is a two-way street. Each side must extend a hand in friendship and grasp the offered hand.

The Case Against Oil

by George Rosenblit

This article is the second in a series examining existing and alternative sources of energy.

This week, as I filled my gas tank at a price close to \$3.00 per gallon, with no idea how high the price could go, I thought of the many reasons why we should try to drastically reduce our dependence on oil. Foremost is the reduction of global warming. Then, the amount of money (petrodollars) flowing from the U.S. to foreign countries to pay for the oil is staggering and affects our economy. When we buy oil from the Mideast, we are funding terrorists. And let's not forget the effect on our pocketbooks as the gasoline prices escalate.

Global Warming

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, the major contributor to global warming. It enters the atmosphere when fossil fuels are burned, whether for home heating, through the combustion of gasoline in autos, or the effluent of coal-fired electric generating plants.

There are the nay-sayers who deny that global warming is real, and they are dead wrong.

James Hanson, a NASA physicist who has studied climate models for decades, ominously warns that unless the emission of greenhouse gases is reduced, the planet will reach a dangerous tipping point by 2016. He emphasizes that emissions must be reduced immediately and that a carbon tax is more efficient than cap-and-trade mechanisms, which are too cumbersome and too slow to avert environmental catastrophe. (See *Washington Spectator*, June 15, 2009 - a newsletter of the Public Concern Foundation.)

When Bill Clinton took office in 1993, global warming was a slow-moving environmental problem that was easy to ignore. Since then, summer Arctic Sea ice has lost the equivalent of Alaska, California, and Texas. The 10 hottest years on record have occurred since Clinton's second inauguration. Global warming is accelerating. Time is close to running out, and Obama knows it. After meeting with former Vice President Al Gore, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on global warming, he said that the time for delay is over; the time for denial is over. "We all believe what the scientists have been telling us for years now—that this is a matter of urgency and national security and it has to be dealt with in a serious way."

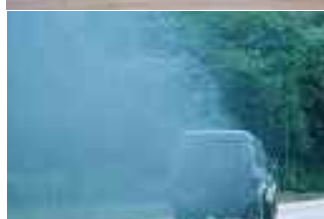
After years of inaction on global warming, 2009 might be different. Obama replaces a president who opposed mandatory cuts of greenhouse gas pollution, and it appears he will have a willing Congress. Also, next year diplomats will try to agree on a major new international treaty to curb the gases that promote global warming. Now it is a ticking time bomb that President Barack Obama can't avoid. (See "Obama Left With Little Time to Curb Global Warming," Associated Press, Seth Borenstein, December 14, 2008.)

The OPEC Cartel

Why are gasoline prices so high? The price of crude oil is the major factor. Six months ago, gas was \$2.00 per gallon, and now it's about \$3.00. Crude oil was \$30 per barrel last January, and now it's close to \$70 per barrel. WHY?

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a cartel of 12 countries made up of Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela. They set the "Benchmark Price" of oil on the open market. We have no control.

Their goals are to determine the best means for safeguarding the cartel members' interests, to pursue ways and means of ensuring the stabilization of prices in international oil markets with a view to



eliminating harmful and unnecessary fluctuations, to ensure a steady income to the producing countries, to ensure an efficient and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations, and to ensure a fair return on their capital to those investing in the petroleum industry.

OPEC's influence on the market has been widely criticized. Several members of OPEC alarmed the world and triggered high inflation across both the developing and developed world when they used oil embargoes in the 1973 oil crisis. OPEC's ability to control the price of oil has diminished somewhat since then, due to the subsequent discovery and development of large oil reserves in Alaska, the North Sea, Canada, and the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the opening up of Russia and market modernization. OPEC nations still account for two-thirds of the world's oil reserves, and, as of April 2009, 33.3 percent of the world's oil production, affording these mostly Mideast nations considerable control over the global market.

And there is no doubt that Big Oil tries to maximize profits at every opportunity, even to the detriment of the consumer. The profits are obscene. The second quarter this year showed Exxon Mobil with a 32 percent increase in earnings compared to the same period last year, more than \$7.6 billion. BP saw a profit increase of 38 percent, \$6.7 billion, and Conoco Phillips recorded a 56 percent increase, more than \$3 billion. (See <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=102999>.)

U.S. Oil Imports

In March 2009, the top five exporting countries accounted for 62 percent of United States crude oil imports. They are Canada - 1.845 MBD (million barrels per day), Mexico - 1.092 MBD, Venezuela - 0.949 MBD, Saudi Arabia - 0.944 MBD, and Nigeria - 0.860 MBD, a total of 5.690 MBD. Extrapolating to 100 percent of the imports, we are importing 9.177 MBD from all sources. (See "Crude Oil and Total Petroleum Imports Top 15" at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/pub/oil_gas/petroleum/data_publications/company_level_imports/current/import.html.)

The bottom line? Using the March 2009 benchmark of \$70 per barrel, \$23.4 billion of our U.S. dollars are flowing out of this country a year!

Oil funds terrorists

We can go through the same math and find that Saudi Arabia receives \$2.42 billion per year from their exports to us.

Now, let's not forget that we normally deal with the Saudi ruling class. They are Wahhabi Sunni Arabs and have had a special arrangement since 1774, 235 years ago, to share all income with the Wahhabi religious entity in Saudi Arabia, an extremist sect that has established madrassas (religious schools) all over the world, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This sect funded the Taliban there, and Hamas in Gaza. It teaches animosity and death to infidels, which include all non-Wahhabi Arabs, and Americans, Britons, Christians, Jews, and Sikhs. Wahhabi Sunnis have been enemies of the Shia based in Iran for centuries and remain so now.

The al Qaeda group that attacked the Twin Towers and the Pentagon

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New Tenth Dems Exec Director *continued from page 1*

done in our communities—she takes the initiative and does something. It's really easy to work for someone who has the passion and go-getter attitude that Lauren demonstrates: it makes my job easy. Lauren is an organizer and an extremely dedicated person. She cares. Without her, there would be no Tenth Dems. And the wonderful volunteers I get to work with also care. Everyone has the same mission, which is getting Democrats elected to office at all levels. It's amazing that all these people in our community want to contribute to getting Democrats elected to office. It's empowering!

What's the most challenging part of your job?

Organizing all the important day-to-day things with our volunteers in order to achieve the mission of the organization. To do that, first one must step back and assess what needs to be done. I try to see the big picture; it's important to keep abreast of everything. Fundraising is difficult—we cannot be successful without donations and membership fees. We need to make sure people are paying their membership fees. We need funds to support candidates, pay bills, and send mailings. Having volunteers is great, but we also need people to recognize the necessity of funding the organization.

What is the primary mission of the Tenth Dems?

Our mission is getting Democrats elected at all levels of government, and supporting the Democratic Party's mission.

What are your goals for 2009?

Raising money for Tenth Dems; organizing volunteers; helping all the Democratic candidates who are running for office in 2010. And defeating Mark Kirk.

What do you need help with?

We need volunteers for everything: the membership committee, web design, our online store, communications. I invite everyone to visit TenthDems.org and volunteer their skills and talents.

Who inspires you? Who are your role models?

State Representative Kathy Ryg, because she cares about her constituents and about the right things getting done, and because she's exceptionally honest. I've known her since she ran for Lake County Clerk in 1994. Lauren Beth Gash is also an inspiring figure to me because she took the initiative to run for state representative when there were no Democrats in our area, and that alone took a lot of chutzpah. And she was successful. Lauren is another person who cares and is honest. She didn't run just because she wanted to be in office; she wanted the right things to be done for the people of Illinois.

Even after Lauren lost by a very small margin to Mark Kirk in the 2000 race for 10th District U.S. Representative, she didn't just sit back. She launched the Tenth Dems with other interested parties and volunteers from the community. She saw the importance of electing Democrats to office and, because of that, built the Tenth Dems.

And there are others who have inspired me. The 10th District is blessed to have inspiring Democratic leaders from North to South and East to West.

Tell us about some important Tenth Dems events coming up.

We're planning an annual fundraiser for late summer. We always do our best to have a big name speaker for this event. In the past we've had U.S. Senators Russ Feingold and Evan Bayh, and Barack Obama before he was elected president. I would like to invite people to become part of the host committee for this important fundraising event. We'll also be sending out invitations to those on our mailing list.

What do you feel is the biggest issue facing the country today?

There are so many issues, but for me, it's healthcare reform. I urge everyone to get involved and become an activist. Do your research, and make sure you support a bill that helps the American people.

If It's Summer, There Must Be Interns

by David Mandel

Despite the weather trying to prove the calendar wrong, summer came to Illinois in May and June. That is, college students returned to their homes en masse. Many of the returning students were gearing up for their internships. The summer internship is an annual tradition in the life of any student. This year, one internship program has become a popular choice for local students: the Tenth Congressional District Democrats' summer internship.

This is the program's fifth summer, and it has seen an explosive growth in interest. Twenty-some students—ranging from high school juniors to



Interns Jennifer Bitoy, David Mandel, Chelsea Fesik, and Eliza Brown collaborate on tasks, learning how democracy works at the grassroots. photo by Ravi Ganapathy

college graduates—are participating in the program this year. According to the application, students taking part in the program have, in the past, “helped at Tenth Dems events featuring former Presidential nominee George McGovern, as well as Presidential hopefuls, Senators Evan Bayh of Indiana, Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, and Illinois’ Barack Obama” and current interns “may do research, walk door-to-door with candidates, work in campaign offices, staff events and issue forums, and get to meet many political figures.”

The internship program is essential to the Tenth Dems's efforts. Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, a founder and the Chair of the organization, notes, “Our interns are the backbone of our organization. Because of their dedication and the hours that they put in, they tend to be more aware of all that our organization does and, as a result, quickly become part of our leadership.” The progressive nature of the internship program is attracting a wide range of qualified and interested students.

Andy Bookman, a senior at Florida State University, expressed his desire to “get more experience in a political environment.” Moreover, he hopes to go above and beyond the minimum hours so that he can work on “as many different [projects] as possible.” This level of commitment and energy is not unique to Andy. The interns participating in the program are motivated by a personal desire to be politically active and become a part of the community.

While the internship offers plenty of opportunities to any student interested in politics, that is not what motivated many to seek the position. One intern, Jessica Werley, acknowledged the unique opportunities of the Tenth Dems internship in her decision to work here. “I worked at a non-profit grassroots before and it was very good experience, but I wanted something that was more engaging in the community,” she said. In the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, there exists a great opportunity to revitalize our community. The historic 2008 presidential election has shown young people across the country that they can make a difference by becoming active in their communities. Werley is hoping to do more than just political work. As a resident of the 10th District and an active Democrat, she hopes to “make sure that things are going well for everyone and to watch out for when something happens that is unfair or disadvantageous to someone. It's caring. You take care of your community.”

The evident desire of the interns to effect change in their own

Case Against Oil *continued from page 5*

on 9/11 were mostly Saudi Wahhabis trained in madrassas to hate infidels and to conduct mass killings of people to carry out the objectives of their religion.

The Shia are the majority in Iraq and are supported by the Shia country Iran, as are the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Secretary Gates says he is encouraged by action of the ruling Saudis to rein in the Taliban, but we shall see if such action will make a real difference.

In any case, we must stop imports from the tinderbox of the Mideast, especially from Saudi Arabia. Of course, we cannot act summarily; we must first develop alternative energy sources.

Tar Sands

As mentioned above, we import more oil from Canada than any other country. About 50 percent of those imports comes from tar sands (also called oil sands).

British Petroleum (BP) and Shell are extracting oil from these tar sands. The processing of the sands, after destructive strip mining, has taken an unexpectedly high environmental toll. To recover each barrel of oil requires "four tons of sands, two to five barrels of water, uses enough natural gas to heat a home for one to five days, and adds to greenhouse gases slowly cooking our planet." These are the industry's own calculations. (See "Canada Pays Environmentally for U.S. Oil Thirst," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, May 31, 2006.)

The BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana, processes these barrels of oil further, producing toxic waste. Remember the uproar when BP received a permit from Indiana EPA under questionable circumstances?

On July 15, 2007, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article entitled, "BP Gets Break on Dumping in Lake," outlining how expansion at British Petroleum's Whiting, Indiana, refinery would increase pollution in Lake Michigan. This information set off protests from politicians, environmentalists, and the public (over 10,000 letters were received by our Senator Dick Durbin) asking BP not to dump. In the face of this strong opposition, Bob Malone, Chairman of BP America, backed down. But BP still has a valid permit that it could decide to use at any time.

BP's effluent into Lake Michigan is toxic waste. Ammonia promotes the growth of algae, which depletes oxygen, thereby killing fish. The sludge contains heavy metals, including mercury, which through chemical interaction in the lake is converted to methyl mercury, a neurotoxin.

Methyl mercury is one of the few chemicals that can pass through the blood-brain barrier. The EPA has reported, "Adult exposure to relatively high levels of methyl mercury through fish consumption can result in numbness or tingling of the extremities and loss of coordination. Exposure of the developing fetus through maternal intake of contaminated fish can result in neurologic developmental abnormalities in cognitive and motor functions." When corporations like BP are permitted to discharge these effluents into our waterways, we must limit our consumption of fish to minimize the toxic effects of methyl mercury on ourselves and our children. (See "Big Oil vs. The People," *Tenth News*, October 2007.)

In Summation

Should we pull out all stops to reduce global warming? I say YES!

Should we continue to fund terrorists? I say NO!

Should we adopt an urgent goal to minimize the need for oil imports? I say YES!

Should we continue to import oil from Canadian tar sands? I say NO!

I REST MY CASE!

Representative Hamos Warns of Pending Crisis in Care for People with Disabilities, Students, and the Elderly in Illinois

by Nels Howard

Earlier this month, Julie Hamos spoke to a gathering in Winnetka about her future political plans—still up in the air—and then spoke at length about the imminent budget slashing that will soon be affecting large groups of the most vulnerable Illinois citizens. Touching on her political future, she implied that the still unannounced plans of several other Illinois political figures (particularly the Illinois Attorney General) have delayed any announcement from Julie. However, she did speak frankly of her affinity for the position of Attorney General. She credited her strong feelings for seeking justice to her early experience as a child fleeing with her family from Soviet-controlled Hungary. She said her experience since then as a law student, a young lawyer advocating for the elderly, and eventually as a state representative on the North Shore has only strengthened her desire to play more of a role as an advocate for justice and the people of Illinois.

Julie then went on to talk at length about the mess Illinois finds itself in with its huge budget deficit. Illinois must make up for a \$6 billion shortfall in this year's state finances. She noted that many of the services the state provides to people most in need of help are "grant-based." Springfield legislators know that if they want to come close to balancing the budget without a tax increase these grants are some of the budget items most easily cut. In fact, she said, we can expect these grants and the services they support to be drastically cut. She warned that we will see children with disabilities and seniors with limited resources as some of the worst hit. College students (over 2000 in a recent radio news report) will see their financial support disappear, too. Julie said that the proposed two-year 1.5 percent income tax hike would have helped avoid these painful results. But voting for any kind of tax increase is a terrifying act for any officeholder whose seat is vulnerable—and even for some who may be secure.

No matter how justifiable the increase may be, opposition candidates will use that tax vote against the incumbent. Sure enough, when the vote for a temporary tax hike was called in Springfield, it fell short. A handful of Democrats voted with the Republicans to defeat it. Interestingly, no Republicans—not even the supposed moderates—voted for the tax increase, despite knowledge of the cruel repercussions their vote would have on many Illinois seniors, students, and children with disabilities.



TDU Presents U.S. Supreme Court: Transitions and Challenges

On Thursday evening, July 9, Gary Feinerman, a partner in Sidley Austin LLP's Appellate Practice Group and a former Illinois Solicitor General and U.S. Supreme Court Clerk, will lead a Tenth Dems University class entitled U.S. Supreme Court: Transitions and Changes. This TDU class will meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Highland Park Public Library, 494 Laurel Avenue, Highland Park.

The U.S. Supreme Court's 2009-10 term has just ended. With the impending confirmation hearings for Judge Sonia Sotomayor, the Court is at the forefront of public discussion. And with the potential of more vacancies to fill in the years ahead, we are at a critical juncture in our nation's history. Feinerman will talk about what's at stake, where the Court has been, and where it might go in the future.

This event is free and open to all. Admission may be limited due to room capacity, so priority admission is given to those who register in advance at <http://tdu.tenthdems.org/index.php/1001>. For more information, call 847-266-VOTE (8683).

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New Tenth Dems Exec Director *continued from page 6*

Make sure a good bill gets passed. Once you do your research and familiarize yourself with the different issues on the table, you should contact your local elected officials. Just make sure the bill makes sense for the American people. It's important to get communities involved, educated, and talking about the issues. It's not about the power of one; it's the power of all. Together we can make a difference.

What would you say to someone who's never gotten involved in politics before?

Get involved. Otherwise, you can't complain if you're not involved. You can be upset, but if you don't exercise your right to have your voice heard as a citizen, you can't complain. You elect people to represent you in office; that's how government works. And even if someone gets elected whom you didn't vote for, it's still their job to represent their constituents.

The only way to know they're doing their job is to pay attention to the job they're doing. That means a little bit more than going by what you read in the papers. For example, let's say there's a bill that's introduced. And let's say, hypothetically, you're upset because a legislator didn't vote for that bill. However, there could be so much more in that bill, so it's important to know why or why not someone voted for that bill. Perhaps you find out it raises your taxes, which is why they didn't vote for the bill. It's easy to learn about bills: call the offices of elected officials; look up the bill online; visit websites. Even at the local level, you should go to village and township meetings and learn who's running for office. Perhaps these people are not being written about in the newspaper, but you should still be active and know what's going on as it affects your schools, libraries, and communities.

All politics are local. Some of these local elections could be the most important elections you vote in!

Congress Watch *continued from page 3*

We applaud 9th District Congresswoman Schakowsky's decision to put the interests of our nation and the American public above her own political aspirations. Sadly, we know we will never be able to say this about 10th District Congressman Mark Kirk.

Interns *continued from page 6*

communities stems from a new perspective on the importance of local politics. Young people are realizing the value of local engagement because President Obama's own political career began as a community organizer on Chicago's South Side. Eliza Brown, recently graduated from Highland Park High School, remarked that "local politics are incredibly important because it means building up from the bottom."

One of the definitive features of the Tenth Dems internship is that it is open to high school students as well as college students. Some of the interns are under 18 and see this internship as their first foray into the political world. Among them is Francesca Moree, a high school student from Mundelein. She acknowledges that this internship is an important learning experience. "Not only do I want to have a better understanding of our government's functioning," said Francesca, "but I also want to be able to educate my peers." She continued, "While we're not yet of voting age, we're pretty darn close, and if we want a say in our government, then it's our responsibility to understand how it works. I'm looking at this as one of the greatest personal challenges that I could put myself up to; I don't know much, but every day that I work with the Tenth Dems is a day spent gaining more and more knowledge."

Stephen Ark, a high school student from Gurnee, sums up the desires of the interns: "I'm most excited to meet a bunch of new people, learn more about [the 10th District], maybe make a difference, and have fun in the process." So are we all.

The Tenth Dems is now taking applications for its Fall 2009 Internships.