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Let's Talk Politics—More Than A Support Group

by Phyllis Goldman

Is something political on your mind?
Is there something you want to get
off your chest?

Do you need information about
government policies? Do you have a
unique perspective you'd like to
share? Do you want the government
to move in a different direction?

If you answer yes to any of these
questions, then you may want to
attend a "Let's Talk Politics" (LTP)
square-shaped roundtable discussion.

These freewheeling political
discourses have been officially sponsored by Tenth Dems on a regular basis since February 2008
when the first one was held in Northbrook. They've taken place in all corners of the 10th
Congressional District and are a part of Tenth Dems University. Sessions have been held in venues
that range from the backrooms of restaurants to meeting spaces in public libraries. Over the past
year and a half, it's estimated that more than 300 people have attended at least one of these sessions.



Participants in freewheeling political discourse pay respectful attention during a Let's Talk Politics session in Northbrook.

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Tenth News

www.tenthdems.org

SEPTEMBER 2009 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 6, Edition 9

Kirk's Shaky Start

by Steve Sheffey

Mark Kirk's campaign for Senate has been marred by one misstep after another. If he's the best the Republicans have to offer in this state, expect Illinois to stay blue for a long time.

Quick: What's the number one issue facing our country? Healthcare? Energy? Iran? In March, almost as if to prove how out of touch he is, Kirk became one of only 37 cosponsors of H.J. Res 41, a joint resolution sponsored by Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R-MN) that proposes the Constitution be amended "to prohibit the President from entering into a treaty or other international agreement that would provide for the United States to adopt as legal tender in the United States a currency issued by an entity other than the United States." With all the issues facing our country, it would be difficult to imagine a less relevant endeavor.

In April, in response to Gov. Quinn's tax increase proposal, Kirk said that "the people of Illinois are ready to shoot anyone who is going to raise taxes to that degree." So much for fiscal conservatism. Kirk did not mean it literally, but that kind of rhetoric won't convince anyone that Kirk is a statesman.

Rich Miller of the nonpartisan *Capitol Fax* said, "I've heard of dogwhistling the base, but that was like a foghorn in a library. I thought Kirk was supposed to be a moderate? He sounds a bit like Alan Keyes on meth. Or maybe Rod Blagojevich before he was hampered by federal bail restrictions."

Kirk was all set to announce for Senate in April, but then he got frightened by rumors that Lisa Madigan might run. As Kirk held his



finger in the wind for so long that it must have gotten chapped, Alexi Giannoulias unequivocally stated that he was in the race to stay. The contrast in character was obvious.

While Kirk kept waiting for Lisa Madigan to decide his future, he went to China. He came back claiming he told the Chinese government that "the budget numbers that the U.S. Government has put forward should not be believed."

David Weidner, the Wall Street columnist for *MarketWatch*, called Kirk's statement "a colossally stupid thing to say."

Seconds after Lisa Madigan announced she would not run for the Senate, Kirk got on the phone to GOP leaders to tell them he was running. Then he got frightened by the prospect of Andy McKenna running for Senate and began backpedaling.

Kirk's supporters tell us that Kirk is an independent, middle-of-the-road kind of guy, but that's not what the GOP party faithful like to hear, so Kirk posted on his own website a chart showing that of the 14 key issues of this Congress, Kirk took the Republican position 13 times.

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Healthcare Reform: What Happened?

by Sharon Sanders

Healthcare reform of any kind is in trouble because of right-wing extremists and corporate neo-conservatives. In order to deal with an enemy, you first have to understand how he works.

The Republican Party has been taken over by fear-mongering racists. If you combine that with the neo-conservative intellectual side of the party who believe that they know what's best for the rest of the world, and who worship the greed-based and power-hungry mentality of the global corporate community, then you have what is now the Republican Party. This is not to say there aren't some real fiscal conservatives out there who genuinely believe that we're spending too much for social programs and entitlements, but on the whole, the Republicans are no longer a credible political party. We, as Democrats, have been extremely naïve in learning how to deal with them.

Forty years ago, I began studying the likes of Phyllis Schlafly, Joe McCarthy, and others who believed this was a white, Christian country. From there evolved the rather brilliant concept that the way to take permanent ownership of the country was to put a vise around all the institutions that influence the population: 1) get on school boards and determine curriculum and textbook content; use rote teaching styles so children don't question; 2) take control of the media and frame the message; 3) put conservatives on the courts; 4) fill Congress with those who agree with the right-wing agenda; and 5) when all else fails, scare people into submission. Does it sound like neo-fascism? Well, it is.

It's hard for Democrats to get a handle on how subversive the extremists in the Republican Party have become since we see things from such a different vantage point, but here we are, forty years later,



and in spite of President Obama's initial success, the Republicans are able to take out their playbook and attempt to destroy everything he tries to do—especially healthcare reform.

Why and how? In general, the population is uneducated when it comes to understanding the Constitution and other laws of the land. Many are ignorant of the fact that a functioning society needs coordinated government programs in order for our roads, schools, parks, fire and police departments, military, and many other institutions to work smoothly. The Bush administration, placed in office by a right-leaning Supreme Court, gave the FCC under Michael Powell and Kevin Martin the power to hand over control of the media to conglomerates like News Corporation's Rupert Murdoch, thereby allowing and encouraging the likes of O'Reilly, Hannity, Beck, and others, to spew their lies, misinformation, and hatred across the airwaves and, eventually, to foment the disruption of healthcare rallies across the country. If Democrats had done that during the Bush/Cheney years, we would have been called "traitors"—but these people are now called "patriots" by the Right. They have encouraged all Republicans and Blue-Dog Democrats to do everything possible to

sabotage healthcare reform. Even the media giant CNN has been reluctant to muzzle Lou Dobbs, who stirs the pot of hatred and fear. The mainstream media, such as ABC and CBS, with their many Big Pharma sponsors, have been reticent about showing the many positive healthcare rallies around the country, and they have made it seem as if there were as many anti-reform screamers as there were those rallying for reform. It's simply not true.

We Democrats have failed to get out the message that if we don't do something now, within a few short years no one except the very rich

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Universal Single-Payer Healthcare Is a Constitutional Imperative

by Tony Nelson

On August 4, in downtown Waukegan, the Tenth Dems hosted a session of "Let's Talk Politics" guest-moderated by the city's new mayor, Robert "Bob" Sabonjian. It was the first time I actually met the new mayor, and I was impressed with his bold, straightforward manner and his responses to the topics raised by the approximately 50 members of the community in attendance. Though it was a Tenth Dems function, Mayor Sabonjian is an Independent and some of those who attended were of a decidedly conservative bent.

The major topic of the night was healthcare. I asked Mayor Sabonjian what his position was regarding the current debate raging through the country and how healthcare reform would affect Waukegan. He pointed out that the finances of the City of Waukegan and the Lake County Health Department are being assaulted by the ever-increasing number of people who show up at Vista Hospital (formerly Victory Hospital). Many of the people who come for medical attention and use the emergency room services do not have any form of health insurance, forcing the hospital and the city to absorb the cost of treating them.

The mayor pointed out that he favors a single-payer healthcare option at the federal level of government. Why? Not only would it address the issue of lessening the fiscal burden of the uninsured and uninsurable, but it also could address the needs of the many children in our community who do not have adequate medical treatment or

preventive services. This would allow for a healthier atmosphere throughout the schools for children and families alike.

A few attendees questioned the role of government in providing healthcare for all and disagreed with the notion of government-managed care. I voiced the opinion that our U.S. Constitution states, in its Preamble:

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

If healthcare for our citizens does not fall under the "general welfare" of the Preamble, we should then remove all social services from government, including education, fire and police services, clean water and air regulations, food and drug regulation, etc. Of course, few rational people would say these are not essential parts of a functioning society and a necessary role of government. Healthcare should be included on this list of essential government services, as it is for most industrialized nations around the world today. President Obama says the country cannot maintain the current healthcare system for another decade because the insurance companies are forcing rates to rise at an unsustainable pace that could bankrupt the nation.

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The Spirit Moveth, Even Democrats

by Ron Levitsky

A few weeks ago, I received an email from an organization supporting the Clean Energy and Security Act. I receive lots of emails from various liberal groups. The difference was that this organization, Interfaith Power and Light, is openly religious. Like other environmental advocacy groups, it wants Americans to buy energy-efficient lights and fuel-efficient cars. But unlike other groups, it calls for a “religious response to global warming” and a need to “deepen the connection between ecology and faith.”

Liberal Democrats, ever wary of attempts to poke holes through what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between church and state, might grow suspicious of such an organization. After all, the Founding Fathers, themselves children of the Enlightenment, made certain there was no mention of God or Jesus in the Constitution and, remembering the horrific religious wars of Europe, were wary of religious passions doing mischief. As Jefferson also stated, “But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God.” For men like Jefferson, Franklin, Washington, and Madison, politics and religion mixed like gunpowder and matches.

Today, liberal Democrats generally share those same fears and are especially concerned with the marriage of convenience between the Religious and the Political Right. As our nation begins yet another round of election campaigning, I am wary of this right-wing union for several reasons.

First, many of these conservative Republicans are religious hypocrites. Consider the morality of Governor Mark Sanford; Senators John Ensign and David Vitter, Congressmen Mark Foley and Bob Livingston—as if Republicans play their own version of “Survivor” to see who will be the last adulterer standing. Helen Chenoweth, Republican Congresswoman from Idaho (1995-2000), wanted Bill Clinton to resign as President even though she herself



had been involved in an affair. But, in her case, it was all right because “I’ve asked for God’s forgiveness, and I’ve received it.”

Second, conservative beliefs threaten to influence what I do in my home, how my children are taught in school, and how my family and our friends—white, black, Latino, straight, gay, religious, atheist, Cubs and even White Sox fans—enjoy our civil rights. In extreme cases, religious conservatives resort to violence—murdering doctors who perform abortions, blowing up their clinics, and bashing gays. A religion filled with hate and fear is a moral *Exxon Valdez* that threatens to engulf us all.

Third, this alliance between the Religious and Political Right has been working. In return for the Religious Right’s supporting conservative Republicans, the Republican Party has furthered a religious agenda that opposes family planning and gay rights yet wishes to impose prayer and creationism on schools. This alliance helped to elect George W. Bush to two terms as president and has

strengthened conservatives in the judiciary. It seems a winning formula, and that’s the real problem.

We shouldn’t be surprised at the success of linking spiritual fervor with political action. Some of my greatest political heroes were deeply religious. In his biography of John Woolman, Edwin Cady writes of early American Quakers, such as Benjamin Lay and Woolman, who were so “God-intoxicated,” that they persuaded fellow Quakers not only to give up their own slaves but also to campaign actively for abolition. Abraham Lincoln, who belonged to no specific church, infused his greatest rhetoric with biblical passages, such as “a house divided” and “four score and seven years ago.” He grew more religious as the Civil War progressed, and his faith helped him endure what no other president has ever had to bear.

Of course, the church was and still is central to African-American

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Kirk Shaky *continued from page 1*

That’s Kirk, by his own admission (the exception was cap and trade). Naturally, the chart is gone now, but we have copies for anyone who would like to see it.

After Kirk finally announced for Senate, he found time to criticize Pace for not using stimulus money to buy hybrid buses. In other words, for not using the money that Kirk voted against Pace receiving. The chairman of Pace also pointed out that each Pace bus takes 50 cars off the road and that the buses Pace purchases are 30 feet in length and actually get better fuel mileage than the 40-foot hybrids Kirk wanted Pace to buy. Not only that, but previously Pace approached Congressman Kirk for five straight years requesting federal funding to add hybrid buses to its fleet, and each time the request was ignored.

Kirk then discovered Twitter. There are some people who serve their country with quiet dignity. Kirk is not one of those. He continually reminds us that he does regular reserve duty. He tweeted himself into hot water when he possibly violated military rules by disclosing his location while on duty and by working on a political campaign while on active duty. Kirk attempted damage control by saying that his staffers were doing the tweeting, not him. But that raised more

questions, because Kirk’s tweets clearly suggest that they were coming from Kirk, himself.

You might think that Kirk would have learned his lesson, but you would be wrong. Just a couple of weeks later, Kirk was caught sending out a tweet while touring a Veterans Affairs hospital, possibly violating the law that prohibits candidates from campaigning on federal property (his tweets feature the Kirk for Senate logo). Not a sign of good judgment or a well-run campaign.

While Kirk was calling attention to himself in almost every way possible, he maintained a stony silence on whether he would have voted to confirm Judge Sotomayor. Alexi Giannoulis has stated unequivocally that he would have voted to confirm Sotomayor. The Senate’s role in confirming Supreme Court nominees is crucial, and should matter to anyone who cares about a woman’s right to choose whether to bear a child, as well as a host of other issues. Obama may appoint several other Supreme Court Justices during his presidency. Kirk continues to refuse to say whether he would have voted yes or no on Sotomayor. It’s a simple question. We deserve a straight answer. Yes or no? If Kirk can’t or won’t answer that question, he doesn’t deserve to be our senator.

Kirk is aiming to become the first sitting U.S. Congressman elected to statewide office since Rod Blagojevich. I don’t think he’ll make it.

Nuclear Power? Way to Go!

by George Rosenblit

We, as a nation, have become “addicted” to electric power. Without question, we depend very heavily on the use of electricity. It is unlikely that this need will go away. From appliances in the home to machines in industry, electricity has become increasingly indispensable. As hybrid auto designs progress to all-electric operation, and sales of those autos increase, the demand for electricity will expand dramatically to keep all those batteries charged.

So, our focus must be on how best to provide electric power for now and in the future. The two contending processes at this point in time are nuclear power plants and coal-fired power plants, considering the vast amount of electricity needed.

The fear of unleashing the mysterious power of the atom to harm us is a natural reaction. Only through knowledge can we dispel that fear.

Let’s compare some important factual information about the two major competing methods of generating electric power—nuclear reactor vs. coal-fired.

Nuclear Reactor Plant Safety

From the outset, there has been a strong awareness of the potential hazard of nuclear reactors and release of radioactive materials. There have been two major reactor accidents in the history of civil nuclear power—Three Mile Island (TMI) in Pennsylvania and Chernobyl in the Ukraine. TMI was contained without harm to anyone. Chernobyl had no provision for containment, and there was an intense fire.

Amazingly, these are the only major accidents to have occurred in more than 12,700 cumulative reactor-years of commercial operation in 32 countries. We are talking about 103 nuclear reactors operating in the U.S. and more than 400 worldwide! These statistics suggest that the risks from Western nuclear power plants, in terms of the consequences of an accident or terrorist attack, are minimal compared with other commonly accepted risks. Nuclear power plants are very robust. (See <http://www.world-nuclear.org/>.)

Here is some detailed information about Three Mile Island that should put your mind at ease. In March 1979, a partial meltdown occurred due to equipment malfunctions, design-related problems, and worker errors. This event led to no deaths or injuries to plant workers or members of the nearby community. Only a very small amount of radioactivity was released offsite.

Detailed studies of the radiological consequences at TMI were conducted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (now Health and Human Services (HHS)), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the State of Pennsylvania. There were also several independent studies. Estimates are that the average dose to about two million people in the area was only about one millirem; a chest xray is about six millirems! The conclusion is that in spite of serious damage to the reactor, most of the radiation was contained and the actual release had negligible effects on the physical health of individuals or on the environment. (See U.S. NRC Fact Sheet on TMI Accident, <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/3mile-isle.html>.)

Coal-Fired Plant Safety

In contrast, the safety record of the coal industry is horrendous. Coal dust in the underground mines causes coal workers to develop “black lung,” an obstruction of the small airways leading to a disabling respiratory impairment. Today, an estimated 4.5 percent of coal miners are affected; about 0.2 percent have progressive massive fibrosis (scarring), the most severe form of the disease. Between 1968 and 1992, more than 59,000 deaths were attributed to black lung disease. In

1992, Pennsylvania had the highest number of such deaths; West Virginia ranked a distant second. (See *American Lung Association Report*, <http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.aspx?c=dvLUK900E&b=35990&printmode=1>.)

Mountaintop strip mining can also result in a human toll. Water is used to wash the coal. This process results in very large amounts of contaminated water, a black sludge being stored behind earthen dams in huge sludge ponds. One of these dams was breached in 1972 above the community of Buffalo Creek in southern West Virginia. Over 132 million gallons of black wastewater raged through the valley below. 125 people were killed, 1100 more were injured, and 4000 people were left homeless. More than 1000 cars and trucks were destroyed, and the disaster caused \$50 million in damage. (See <http://www.mountainjusticesummer.org/facts/steps.php>.)



Kentucky’s Martin County sludge spill occurred after midnight on October 11, 2000, when a coal sludge impoundment owned by the Massey Coal Company broke through into an underground mine below, propelling 306 million gallons of sludge down two tributaries of the Tug Fork River. The spill polluted hundreds of miles of waterways, contaminated the water supply for more than 27,000 residents, and killed all aquatic life in Coldwater Fork and Wolf Creek. The spill was 30 times larger than the Exxon Valdez oil spill (12 million gallons) and one of the worst environmental disasters ever in the southeastern United States, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_County_sludge_spill.)

Millions of tons of toxic coal ash are piling up in power plant ponds in 32 states, a practice the federal government has long recognized as a risk to human health and the environment but has left unregulated. An Associated Press analysis of the most recent Energy Department data found that 156 coal-fired power plants store ash in surface ponds similar to the one that collapsed in Tennessee. An earthen holding pond breached December 2008 at the Tennessee Valley Authority’s Kingston Fossil Plant, spilling 5.4 million cubic yards or 1.1 billion gallons of sludge across 300 acres, destroying three homes and clogging the Emory River. (See <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/jan/09/toxic-coal-ash-piling-ponds-32-states/?print=1>.)

More detailed information on these hazards of coal processing can be found in the June 2009 issue of this publication. (See http://www.tenthdemocrats.org/newsletters/0906_nl.pdf.)

Environmental Considerations—Nuclear Reactors

We have learned about potential hazards as a result of the TMI event. Since then, reactor design has included safety features to preclude environmental contamination and minimize the chance of a meltdown, including improved instrumentation to monitor reactor operation and containment protection.

The result is that environmental pollution has been virtually eliminated. Of great importance is that there is no contribution to global warming

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Two Presidents

by *Jeremy Levy*

The inauguration of a new president may be the most exciting event in any democracy. For those who believe the newly elected official will change their nation for the better, it is often a time for celebration. South Africans were ecstatic at the inauguration of their new president, Jacob Zuma, which occurred May 9. But citizens' expectations can be unrealistic, and frequently go unfulfilled. The enthusiasm surrounding the elections of Barack Obama and Jacob Zuma has largely been a result of factors such as the unpopularity of their predecessors, as well as effective campaign advertising. Both South Africa and the U.S. expect monumental things from their new presidents, expectations that can only yield disappointing results.

Although Obama's inauguration was an historic event, it was not nearly as festive as Zuma's, which actually felt more like a party. The ceremony was preceded by performances from various South African dance groups, and clusters of Zuma supporters sporadically broke into song on multiple occasions. The joy of the crowd was unbelievable. As I walked through, I was greeted with handshakes and offered swigs of beer. As in the U.S. presidential election, the South African people voted for change, and they certainly showed their excitement about it.

Much of the excitement surrounding the new presidents stems from the unpopularity of their predecessors, George W. Bush and Thabo Mbeki. At the recent inaugurations, each crowd booed upon the arrival of its respective former president. Both countries showed a seemingly unanimous hope for a better administration to come. Bush's unpopularity was the foundation of the Obama campaign, as he promised to bring us change and made frequent comparisons between Bush and McCain.

The change out of the Mbeki administration is also expected to be drastic. While Mbeki's centrist economic policy stimulated growth for South Africa, it largely neglected poor citizens in a country where racial economic disparity continues to be a looming aftereffect of Apartheid. Zuma is expected to enact redistributive policies to help the nation's poor and unemployed, as well as focus on racial reconciliation more than Mbeki.

Adding to the fervor, Zuma's inauguration symbolically marked the end of his long political conflict with Mbeki. Both fought apartheid under the African National Congress, an organization that is currently South Africa's dominant political party. When Mbeki became president, he appointed Zuma as one of two deputy presidents, but fired Zuma in 2005 on supposed corruption charges. While Mbeki was still in office, Zuma replaced him as head of the ANC. After Mbeki was accused of interfering with Zuma's trial for the above-mentioned charges, the ANC coerced him to resign as president of South Africa. Zuma endorsed Kgalema Motlanthe, the caretaker president who finished Mbeki's term starting September 25, 2008.

Enthusiasm surrounding both presidencies can also be attributed to effective campaign advertising and imagery. The Obama campaign was marked by familiar catch phrases, such as "Hope" and "Yes We Can." McCain supporters scoffed at Obama's celebrity-like image, and perhaps they were somewhat right that this image was absurd. Similarly, Zuma's image was that of a charismatic man of the people, known for leading supporters in song. This, of course, is a unique quality for any presidential candidate.

The Obama hype has certainly died down since the inauguration. The first few months of his presidency have already shown that creating change is more difficult than it often seems during a campaign. Obama diverged from his campaign rhetoric on human rights issues by announcing the continued use of military commissions. In addition, the closing of Guantanamo Bay, a promise made by both candidates in their

campaigns, seemed like an easy change at the time. But that change is now facing severe opposition in Congress. As a country, we are no longer celebrating Obama's arrival, but are instead watching anxiously to see what he does next in economic and foreign policy issues.

Regardless of how well or poorly the new presidents govern in the upcoming terms, neither can live up to the public's overzealous expectations. In the U.S., ten out of the eleven presidents since 1946 have had higher approval ratings entering office than leaving. We simply can't help glorifying our incoming leaders. There is no telling what will occur in the upcoming presidencies of Obama and Zuma. Voters can celebrate all they want if their candidate is elected, but there's no guarantee that they aren't celebrating too soon.

Nuclear Power *continued from page 4*

or to health hazards. Nuclear power plants are clean!

Environmental Considerations—Coal-Fired Plants

On the other hand, coal-fired plants are not clean; the effluent in the smokestack represents a serious health hazard in the process of generating electricity. When the coal is burned, it spews toxic sulfur dioxide and mercury into the air, as well as carbon dioxide, which is a key contributor to global warming. Sulfur dioxide forms sulfuric acid in the presence of moisture, which causes acid rain. Mercury forms methyl mercury in Lake Michigan, and in rivers and streams. It enters the fish food chain, and then we ingest the poison when we eat the fish.

This type of plant bears responsibility for 30 percent of greenhouse gas pollution in the United States, and it imposes both economic and human health costs on our society.

Particulate matter (soot) from coal-fired power plant emissions causes asthma and other chronic respiratory ailments. A Clean Air Task Force study found that "Fine particle pollution from U.S. power plants cuts short the lives of nearly 24,000 people each year."

Duke Energy and other ACCCE (American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity) companies are spending millions to maintain the status quo while convincing people that the coal and utility industries want change. They insist publicly that coal is clean.

Storage of Spent Fuel Rods

As mentioned in the last issue of this publication, in a simplified example, the atoms of Uranium 235 are split to produce barium and krypton plus a release of energy that heats the fuel rods.

In reality, the overall process produces many different atoms, both radioactive and non-radioactive. The presence of these eventually reduces the efficiency of the fuel rods to produce heat (nuclear power) to the point where they must be replaced.

The nuclear fuel in these spent rods is still highly radioactive and producing heat. Therefore, the fuel rods must be safely stored on an interim basis until their radiation intensity and heat has decreased so they can be handled for reprocessing or permanent storage. So far, the U.S. has opted for permanent storage rather than reprocessing, but hopefully may reconsider.

The electric power companies are required to store spent fuel in an area near the reactor facility until the question of final storage in a National Repository such as Yucca Mountain in Nevada has been resolved. The final storage site should be far from populated areas.

Currently, spent fuel rods are stored in a pool of water. Above-ground dry storage in casks is permissible if pool capacity is reached. (See <http://www.nrc.gov/waste/spent-fuel-storage.html>.)

High level liquid radioactive waste can be solidified as glass inside stainless steel canisters. (See Nuclear Power—A Reference Handbook,

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The format is straightforward and informal. At each event, the moderator is a volunteer member of Tenth Dems. The public is always invited to participate. Usually, each meeting starts with introductions, and then people just let it all hang out. It's been a good opportunity for some of us to vent our frustrations or to get some advice on what to do about specific dissatisfactions with the government or officials. The goal is for the people attending to voice their own opinions and concerns.

We thought that after the election things would quiet down for a while, but we were certainly mistaken. The need for healthcare reform in this country seems to be the topic of the moment. People have been forthcoming about problems they've confronted because of our disintegrating healthcare industry. But global and local problems have also been addressed. Our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Pakistan's involvement have been of great concern to the participants. And, of course, there's always the economy and climate change for us to be upset about.

In July we had a successful, informative discussion in Libertyville with a great turnout. Healthcare reform was, of course, the topic on most everyone's mind. Early in August, the recently elected Independent Mayor Bob Sabonjian of Waukegan was the guest moderator. Participants in the discussion were, for the most part, involved local citizens.

"Let's Talk Politics" is not exactly a support group, but it is the place to go to air your concerns and possibly get some relief.

Check with the Tenth Dems Events List and TDU schedule often to see when and where the next "Let's Talk Politics" discussion is taking place. In the meantime, be on the lookout for our upcoming Highland Park "Let's Talk Politics" event. And if you are interested in moderating a "Let's Talk Politics" discussion in your area, we have guidelines available for you. Just email me at phylgoldman@comcast.net.

We're Still Talking...

The Tenth Dems's next "Let's Talk Politics," cosponsored with the Moraine Township Democrats, will be held right after Labor Day, on Tuesday evening, September 8, at 7:00 p.m., in the back room of Bella Via, a restaurant and pizzeria in Highland Park. Food will be available starting at 6:15.

Bella Via is located at 1899 Second Street.

Healthcare Reform Is Topic A in America Today, and Tenth Dems University is in Session

**Subject: Reforming Health Care:
Can We Afford the Status Quo?**

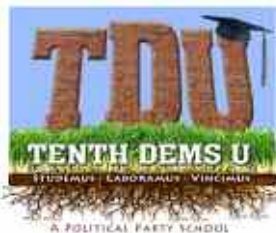
A presentation by the Concord
Coalition, followed by a roundtable

Date: Wednesday,
September 16

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: UAW Hall, 680 Barclay Road, Lincolnshire

Admission is free, and all are welcome. Preregistration is strongly advised. Go to www.tenthdems.org or call 847-266-VOTE (8683).



politics. It helped its congregants survive the dehumanization of slavery and actively participated in the Underground Railroad. Black preachers, such as Nat Turner, led the three largest slave revolts in antebellum America. After the Civil War, the first African-American senator was Reverend Hiram Revels; and, later, the first black congressman from the east was the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., formed the Southern *Christian* Leadership Conference and, for thousands of blacks and whites, cast the Civil Rights Movement as a spiritual struggle to save the soul of America. Remember how his words resonated in so many of us when he proclaimed, "Thank God Almighty I am free at last!" Jimmy Carter probably wouldn't have been elected president were it not for the endorsement of African-American religious leaders. And, of course, these churches were overwhelming in their support of Barack Obama and crucial to his victory.

For many, the anti-war movement also has been a spiritual act. Just as they fought against slavery, the Quakers have been at the forefront of the peace movement. One of the most tragic moments of the Vietnam War occurred in 1965 when Quaker Norman Morrison burned himself to death below Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's office. In the struggle against both Iraq Wars, no group has been more courageous and persistent than Chicago-based Voices for Creative Non-Violence led by Kathy Kelly. Influenced by the Catholic Worker Movement and the example of Dr. King, Kelly has used civil disobedience and often risked her life to fight U.S. imperialism. After the Shock-and-Awe Campaign ending in Iraq's surrender, U.S. soldiers marching into Baghdad were themselves shocked to see Kelly unfurling banners of peace in the windows above them. She had remained in the city during the savage bombing, the strength of her faith helping her to bear witness with Baghdad's civilians to what she believed was a terrible injustice.

If religion has played such an important role in the politics of the Left, why do liberal Democrats seem uncomfortable with expressing their religious beliefs? Rabbi Michael Lerner, author of *The Left Hand of God*, offers an intriguing hypothesis. He contends that many liberals have elitist feelings toward those who give politics a spiritual dimension. They are dismissive of working-class supporters of Bush for voting Republican against their best interests (*e.g.*, why support tax cuts for wealthy?). Yet, these liberals don't understand what the Religious Right, through its churches and other spiritual organizations, offers people who are frightened, lonely, and depressed by a materialistic, competitive world. It is a sense of community and hope, even if that hope is an apocalyptic dream of salvation for those who believe and the destruction of God's (*i.e.*, Pat Robertson's) enemies.

What Lerner advocates is for Democrats to do what John Woolman, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Kathy Kelly have done—engage in "spiritual politics." He is not calling for tearing down the wall between church and state or injecting politics with a specific sectarian belief. Rather, like Dr. King, he believes that most Americans hunger for a vision that is not competitive, materialistic, or frightening. What Democrats need to offer, instead, is "a spiritual vision of a world based on love, kindness, and generosity." We work for peace, for understanding, for social justice, for a healthy environment, and yes, for love, because in our hearts, and in our souls, we are moved by something greater than ourselves. Thus, we can "re-ensoul politics."

Such a spiritual politics can, as it did for Dr. King, give us the faith to move mountains. Or, in the case of the Interfaith Power and Light advocacy group, it can help us to keep those mountains—with their pristine forests and clear-running streams—right where they are.

10 Simple Ways to Be an Engaged Global Citizen, Part I

by Mary E. La Plante

The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government.

- Thomas Jefferson to Maryland Republicans, 1809

How do you practice good citizenship in your life? Becoming a registered voter, encouraging others around you to do the same, and exercising that right are, of course, fundamental to a healthy democracy. But being an engaged and informed global citizen also calls for taking an active interest in events happening beyond your local community, and engaging in the wider world around you.

Listed below are the first five of 10 simple ways you can become an engaged global citizen. And, thankfully, good global citizenship is also a value that once again has priority in the White House. Voting is just the beginning.

1. Expand your news sources and learn how people around the world think; discover the pressing issues they face. On the following BBC and Radio France Internationale websites, you can simultaneously read and listen to news from around the world. VOA also deserves recognition for its excellent coverage of news, particularly in Africa and Russia. Go to:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/>
<http://www.rfi.fr/actuen/pages/001/accueil.asp>
www.voanews.com/

2. Be an eco-traveler. On your next vacation, travel outside your resort and learn about local culture, needs, and politics. Spend your money on items that benefit the local economy; try to connect with people from the local community. You get to go home at the end of your stay; they don't. *The New York Times* provides a comprehensive index on traveling with a conscience.

See <http://travel.nytimes.com/travel/guides/eco-tourism/overview.html?scp=1&sq=eco%20travel&st=cse>.

3. Immerse yourself in learning all about clean water. When I traveled to Kenya to work on a sustainability project, I saw firsthand the devastating effects a lack of water has on local communities: it circumvents the education of children, girls in particular, as they are charged with fetching water for their household; and it has a detrimental effect on a great many people's health, as unclean water translates into too-high rates of water-borne illnesses and fatalities. Everyone deserves to have access to clean water.

You should research organizations that work closely with local communities to make a difference. Listed below are just two out of many not-for-profit organizations helping to tackle the worldwide water crisis. The EPA can also provide you with information on water issues, both domestic and international, and it has a speaker's bureau to boot. Think about engaging an EPA-sponsored speaker for your next school, community or work event. Go to:

<http://www.charitywater.org/>
www.rotary.org/
<http://www.epa.gov/>

4. Be a locavore, and learn what most of the world knows: food tastes best when it comes from the earth, and not from a drive-through. By eating locally-grown organic food, you're not only helping your family's health. If you participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), you're also helping to sustain small farms as well as to protect people and the earth from harmful pesticides and other chemicals.

As a locavore, you also demonstrate solidarity with the rest of the world's food cultures. And eating seasonally, locally, and organically helps reduce our carbon footprint because foodstuffs are not jetted or

trucked in from distant locales. It's possible to obtain most of your fruits and vegetables (and even meat) from local farmers; they often offer classes in canning, growing, and cooking.

For information on Illinois CSAs, as well as information about the Wisconsin-based Michael Fields Agriculture Institute, a remarkable institute that engages in research, food policy, and biodynamic farming, go to:

http://www.iira.org/pubs/publications/IVARDC_Reports_679.pdf
<http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org/>

5. Switch to fair trade coffee, hot chocolate, and tea at home and at the office; and practice fair trade principles in your life. This simple gesture means that cocoa and coffee farmers in Africa, Central America, and elsewhere receive a sustainable wage for their work, which in turns means better standards of living for themselves and their communities. It was only when I interviewed two cocoa farmers from Ghana for a fair trade story that I understood the incredible benefits of fair trade: fair and just wages translate into money to build schools, health clinics, roads, and homes; there's money for higher education; and there's a new-found sense of well-being and self-respect amongst the men and women who work so hard to harvest the crops for our daily jolt of caffeine.

Here in the U.S. you can become a patron of cafes and restaurants that engage in fair trade principles: the *Sun Times* link below provides a partial listing to fair trade cafes and restaurants. And in our own neighborhood, the Glenview-based Sweet Dreams Café operates under fair trade principles both in its staffing and in sourcing its products. Go to:

<http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:vaQzfwVTMIQJ:jump.suntimes.com/list.cfm%3Ftag%3Dorganic-dining+organic,+fair+trade+restaurants+in+illinois&cd=13&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>
[sweetdreamsorganicbakery.com](http://www.sweetdreamsorganicbakery.com)

See the October *Tenth News* for 10 Simple Ways to Be an Engaged Global Citizen, Part II.

Nuclear Power *continued from page 5*

Harry Henderson, ABC-CLIO Inc. Santa Barbara, CA, page 93.)

Potential Terrorist Activity

Can a large aircraft attack a nuclear facility and release radioactive materials? A thorough study was undertaken by the U.S. Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) using specialist consultants and paid for by the U.S. Department of Energy. It concludes that U.S. reactor structures "are robust and (would) protect the (nuclear) fuel from impacts of large commercial aircraft."

The analyses used a fully-fueled Boeing 767-400 of over 200 tons as the basis, traveling at 348 miles per hour—the maximum speed for precision flying near the ground. The wingspan is greater than the diameter of reactor containment buildings and the 4.3 ton engines are about 50 feet apart. Hence analyses focused on single engine direct impact on the centerline—since this would be the most penetrating missile—and on the impact of the entire aircraft if the fuselage hit the centerline (in which case the engines would ricochet off the sides). In each case no part of the aircraft or its fuel would penetrate the containment. Other studies have confirmed these findings.

In 1988 Sandia National Laboratories demonstrated the unequal distribution of energy absorption that occurs when an aircraft impacts a massive, hardened target. The test involved a rocket-propelled F4 Phantom jet (about 27 tons, with both engines close together in the fuselage) hitting about a 12-foot-thick slab of concrete at 475 miles per

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Healthcare Reform *continued from page 2*

will be able to pay premiums, co-pays, and deductibles. Many more millions will bog down the healthcare system even further at county hospitals and clinics. We have not gotten out the message that we wouldn't be screaming for healthcare reform if the healthcare and insurance industry conglomerates had not been so abusive in the first place. When the CEO of Aetna is earning \$102,000 an hour (no kidding, that's \$102,000 every hour), you must wonder what he did, or did not do, at our expense to deserve this type of pay. This kind of compensation for administering health insurance necessarily is paid at the expense of families across this country that are underinsured or uninsured, either because they can't afford to pay premiums or because a catastrophic illness caused their reimbursements to exceed their health insurance policy's "lifetime limit."

Now, we must let President Obama know, and quickly, that we don't care about bipartisanship at this point. It hasn't worked, and it won't work. The extremists in the Republican Party—and there are many—want only one thing—to see Obama fail. We must see that the job gets done and that our healthcare system is truly reformed.

Single Payer *continued from page 2*

I posit that we cannot achieve the goal of being arguably one of the best nations in the history of the world without the ethical treatment of all our citizens, regardless of income, career, or stage of life. Availability of health care aids the poor, the middle-class, the young, the elderly, and the nation. Healthcare for all should be a shared responsibility for every citizen. If Americans are to strive for the "blessings of liberty," and "establish justice" as the Preamble demands, we must have truly universal, single-payer healthcare in the United States.

Nuclear Power *continued from page 7*

hour. It showed how most of the collision energy goes into the destruction of the aircraft itself—about 96 percent of the aircraft's kinetic energy went into its destruction and some penetration of the concrete, while the remaining four percent was dissipated in accelerating the 700-ton slab. The maximum penetration of the concrete in this experiment was only 60 mm (2.36 inches).

Overall Conclusions

Coal-fired facilities are continually responsible for serious illness and for deaths to both miners and the general population. There are some regulations in place for mine safety, which have been ignored to a large extent. The coal industry has strongly resisted change via promotional campaigns and leverage in Congress.

Nuclear power facilities have demonstrated a fantastic record of safety. Both the government and industry have taken potential hazards seriously. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has led the way with regulation and oversight. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nuclear_Regulatory_Commission&printable=yes.)

Nuclear power as a source of electricity is viable until uranium ore supplies are no longer available and technical methods of extending the life of fuel rods are exhausted. This gives us ample time to explore and apply alternative sources of "clean energy." Current efforts with alternative energy will be covered in the next issue of this newsletter.

Argonne National Laboratory has developed many types of reactors, exploring and improving safety features along the way. (See Argonne National Laboratory 1946-1996, Jack M. Holl, University of Illinois Press, 1997.)

Bottom line: Coal is still very hazardous and dirty—Nuclear is safe and clean.