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Four Questions for Mark Kirk

by Steve Sheffey

Since he was re-elected in 2008, Mark Kirk has proven to be one of the most unprincipled politicians in recent memory. He has reversed positions on gay rights, cap and trade, Gitmo, earmarks, reproductive choice, and Sarah Palin, just to name a few. Actually, Palin was a triple flip-flop—first he was for her, then he was against her, now he's for her again.



You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows—just a pollster. But when the winds are variable, Kirk—the man who never met a microphone he didn't like—maintains a stony silence.

In theory, elected representatives are accountable to the people. Kirk owes us some answers:

1. **Yes or No: Would Kirk have voted to confirm Judge Sotomayor?** Kirk still refuses to give a yes or no answer to a very simple question: Would he have voted to confirm Judge Sotomayor's appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court? I don't see how anyone can vote for a candidate who refuses, or is unable, to answer this question. The Supreme Court affects the life of every American. The senate term Kirk is running for extends beyond Obama's first term. Will Kirk try to block Obama's appointments? If Obama loses in 2012, would Kirk vote to confirm Republican appointees who might seek to overturn *Roe v. Wade*? We deserve an answer.

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Tenth News

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Democratic Congressional Candidates Square Off

by Nels Howard

On Saturday, January 23, over 350 voters came to the Westin Hotel in Wheeling to hear the three Democratic Primary candidates for the 10th District's Congressional seat, Julie Hamos, Elliot Richardson, and Dan Seals. The gathering was sponsored by Tenth Dems and WCPT AM/FM Radio, moderated by progressive talk radio host Dick Kay. It was broadcast live, requiring a strict 90-minute time frame.

Before the opening comments from the candidates, moderator Kay clarified that he would conduct the event as a "forum" rather than a debate to allow for a more free-flowing dialogue. Each candidate then gave a two-minute opening statement. Hamos explained how she and her family fled from Hungary during the revolution, and how that experience helped shape her principles. Richardson referred to his background as a small-business owner, civil rights attorney, and group home counselor. He explained that he's running for Congress out of frustration with its lack of concern for small-business owners, coupled with Kirk's re-election victory in 2008. Seals said his biggest motivation in running for office was his three daughters and his concern for their future. He spoke of being moved by the many people he's met across the 10th District campaigning door-to-door and hearing of the hardships they're facing.

Moderator Kay then began asking the candidates questions that had been prepared in advance, often following up with additional questions based on their responses:

For more photos of this exciting event, please see insert sheet.



Is America shifting back to the right? Richardson said healthcare isn't a right or left issue. Representatives need to go out and talk to their districts and stop framing things this way. Hamos said the 10th is trending independent, and it is not the time for public officials to "cover." Seals agreed the people want to see their problems addressed, to "get it done." Congress needs more backbone.

What do we do about the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans? Seals said the Bush cuts were unfair, and both cuts and spending should be brought back into line in the long run. But for now, we shouldn't "take our foot off the gas." Richardson said, "You can't raise spending and not raise taxes." He favored looking at savings piece by piece, such as offshore corporate tax breaks. Hamos noted that President Obama had inherited a huge deficit in the midst of a fragile economy, making the situation even more difficult.

Would each candidate support the Senate healthcare bill if this were the only way to achieve reform? Both Richardson and Seals would reluctantly support it, with Seals citing the millions presently uninsured and the present insurance company inequities. He viewed the Senate bill as a "first step." Hamos does not like the Senate bill, stating that "state insurance exchanges" won't work. She said we need a national plan, and, if necessary, we need to go back to the drawing board to develop a much clearer idea of the reforms. Kay asked, would "reconciliation" bypass Senate filibusters? Hamos said reconciliation deals with budget

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A Not So Noble Nobel

by Ron Levitsky

In 1963, the National War College invited William R. Polk to lecture its graduating class regarding the insurgency in Vietnam. Polk, a member of President Kennedy's Policy Planning Council of the U.S. Department of State, had been studying both the Algerian guerrilla war against the French and the conflict then going on in Vietnam. Polk told these young officers that, in guerrilla warfare, combat comprises only five percent of the struggle. Far more important are politics (80 percent, in his estimation) and administration (15 percent). He recalled that, both because "Ho Chi Minh had become the embodiment of Vietnamese nationalism" ... "and because of the appalling corruption of the South Vietnamese government, as I had a chance to observe firsthand, ... I warned the officers that the war was already lost."

The above quotes are from Professor Polk's 2007 book, *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency, Terrorism & Guerrilla War, From the American Revolution to Iraq*. Last November, Polk wrote a policy paper on our nation's choices regarding the Afghanistan insurgency. In Polk's own words—"Alas, it made no impact."

In this paper, Polk recounted the costs to our nation of the current policy in Afghanistan. Most grievous are the over 1000 American soldiers who have already been killed. Besides the additional



wounded, what of those who have suffered and will suffer brain injuries, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and cancer from exposure to weapons made with depleted uranium? He notes that 40 percent of the soldiers who fought in the first Gulf War are receiving disability payments, and already one in four of our soldiers in Afghanistan is complaining of serious stress, depression, and/or anxiety. Besides 60,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan before the recent build-up ordered by President Obama, there are an additional 68,000 mercenaries. The U.S. spends the equivalent of \$1 million per year per G.I. and private soldier.

Professor Polk also reviewed the alternatives of maintaining or increasing our troop strength in Afghanistan. He rejected both. As in Vietnam, Polk believes that the U.S. has already lost the political and administrative aspects of this war. Under the Bush administration, the U.S. rejected as national leader the exiled King Zahir Shah, who had been the choice of Afghanistan's most respected national assembly, the *loya jirga*. Instead, it pushed on the people Hamid Karzai, leader of a corrupt regime propped up by the U.S. government, a man who was dubiously re-elected as president even though this is not the way Afghans traditionally choose their leaders. His government has no legitimacy among its people. Increasing our combat strength will only make this illegitimacy more

Democratic Candidates *continued from page 1*

issues, not specifics. Richardson felt that going back to the drawing board would only add to the public's frustration.

What about Iraq and Afghanistan? Hamos noted that she and then-Senator Obama spoke out together against the Iraq invasion. She felt that because our Afghanistan involvement now has an exit strategy, timetable, and benchmarks, she is willing to give the president leeway but will demand accountability. Seals said that with the troop surge in Afghanistan, "the president got this one wrong." Seals is skeptical of President Karzai and said we should attack terrorism by addressing poverty, education, and repression. Richardson said we should draw down in Afghanistan because we don't have the money and are stretching our troops too far.

Would you respond to the recent Supreme Court ruling allowing corporations to donate large sums to candidates? All three agreed this was a terrible decision. Seals said it was a huge loss for voters and expected to see candidates sponsored by corporations. He advocated making campaign sponsorship more transparent with more involvement from individual citizens. Richardson said a key action will be to help Congress and the presidency stay Democratic to ensure better Supreme Court appointments in the future. Hamos added that the court ruling has taken campaign financing to a whole new level. Even transparency won't solve the problem... we'll all be "swift boated."

Kay asked Richardson to comment on his positioning as a "citizen legislator," and Seals to comment on his two previous election campaigns. Richardson said he was a citizen who got in the primary race to fight for small businesspeople, to create jobs, and to change small business capital gains rates. Seals pointed out that he took on Mark Kirk, the most powerful Republican in the state, at a time when others stood back. He said his preparation to be a legislator included his business background, an education in management and economics, and a comfort level with policy-making, having been involved in the process as a former aide in the U.S. Senate. Hamos remarked that in these times, 10th District voters are looking for someone who knows how to get things done. She said that junior congresspersons should not believe they could go to Congress and immediately affect hot-button issues. The key to affecting public policy is to find doable issues "below the radar." She cited her interest in the needed rebuild of America's electric grid as an issue that can bring legislators with common interests together across the aisle and said she would seek out, or create, a caucus dealing with this issue.

The last 30 minutes of the forum were reserved for questions from the audience, starting with a provocative one: "Are there any misconceptions about you?" Seals said people assumed he had been continuously campaigning. He said that, among other things, he had taught a class at Northwestern, become involved in green initiatives, and done some consulting work. Richardson said he may be thought of as "too idealistic," but he feels he is realistic in believing that Americans can be energized to achieve great things. Hamos said she may be perceived as an "Evanston liberal," but her battles to cut expenditures in Springfield belie that.

This final segment included a discussion on whether members of the Bush administration should be prosecuted for war crimes. Hamos said she favored a thorough inquiry into what occurred at Guantanamo, including Dick Cheney's involvement but did not feel a special prosecutor should be appointed. Both Richardson and Seals agreed, with Seals saying, "The truth should come out." Concerning Republican obstructionism, Hamos cited her success in Springfield in reaching across the aisle. She is convinced there is still serious but unrecognized bipartisanship taking place in Congress. Richardson added that we could make a "stand up" case for why our ideas are right. Seals noted that an end to congressional district gerrymandering

TDU's "Meet the Candidates" Presents Governor Pat Quinn

by Sharon Sanders

On Sunday, January 10, Tenth Dems had another outstanding candidate event at the UAW Hall in Vernon Hills as Governor Pat

Quinn told the audience why he should serve a full term after stepping in to replace our disgraced ex-governor, Rod Blagojevich. According to Governor Quinn, Illinois has huge job losses and foreclosures with little money in the coffers. A tax hike is inevitable unless we want to go further into debt by

issuing more bonds, instituting more government layoffs and furloughs, or cutting critical programs, such as school funding, essential healthcare, care for the elderly, and other basic services.

As an advocate for healthcare reform, he applauds President Obama's efforts but knows the reform will be far from perfect. His priorities include keeping a strong S-CHIP program for our children, protecting Medicaid for the poor, and providing healthcare for our



veterans who don't currently have coverage. Removing government waste is another way he wants to help the budget, particularly in areas like Medicaid where there is so much abuse. It's a formidable task, though, and easier said than done. Governor Quinn wants to help struggling families by increasing personal tax exemptions while modestly raising tax rates to fund vital state programs. And he wants an end to regressive tax policies that are so destructive to the middle class. This is a delicate balancing act, and he knows full well that Republicans will be kicking and screaming with any talk of tax increases. His vision of a modern transportation network with high-speed rail is still part of his dream for Illinois, hoping that it will be the



catalyst to jump-start our local economy and that residents of Illinois will see that a 21st century transportation hub and a rebuilt infrastructure are critical for our growth as a state.

The event ended with great pizza, great conversation, and socializing by the crowd after Governor Quinn left. It's reassuring to see the large turnouts we're getting for our candidates, but we all need to work harder to stop the onslaught of Republicans desperately trying to oust our party from office at all levels of government.

Action Alleviates Anxiety

Action alleviates anxiety was a statement I heard recently which really stuck in my head. Think about it. When you have felt anxious about something, has it helped merely to sit and worry?

These are challenging times. Too many of us are feeling firsthand the impact of a failing economy.

We continue to struggle with reform of our healthcare system, two foreign wars, and constant reminders in the media of the corruption that has infiltrated our corporations and some government offices.

More often, I am hearing the voices of discontent, despair, and defeatism as we look to our near future. Many have backed away from the necessary involvement in our system of democracy because they feel helpless. Once again, I am hearing people say, "Why vote? It won't matter." But it does!

Your vote matters and has an impact. Just look around you. If your vote didn't matter, would millions of dollars be spent every election cycle on the efforts to inform you, the voter, about candidates? Would volunteers spend their time walking door-to-door in your neighborhood in rain, snow, and heat? Would your mailbox be flooded with postcards and impassioned letters from candidates asking for your support?

Elected officials and hopeful candidates know where the true power is—in the voices of the people they represent. Our vote is our voice, and we must make the most of every opportunity to use it. Let your needs, hopes, and demands be heard!

We have two opportunities this year to make our voices and our concerns heard. February 2 is the primary election in which candidates vie for the nomination of their political party. I know that many hesitate to vote in a primary because they are reluctant to 'declare' themselves publicly or because there are many

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Healthcare Reform: A Moving Target

by Sharon Sanders

As of this writing, healthcare reform at some level may be passed—or it may not. Whether it is actually reform is another thing. I have become convinced that whether we had worked for single payer right from the get-go or just kept pushing for the public option, none of these pressures from the public would have mattered. First and foremost, we need campaign finance reform. We must stop massive corporations from calling all the shots in Washington. Nothing will ever get done of any worth unless this happens. Too many of our congresspeople are bought and paid for by the powers that be. It seems that once our elected officials step outside the boundaries of the states that elected them and into the cloistered world of Congress, we, the people, are a non-entity.

There is great angst right now among Democrats, and rightfully so, now that we have lost Ted Kennedy's Massachusetts seat and our super-majority in the Senate. However, just a few weeks ago, we talked about reconciliation as a means of getting a bill passed, and I haven't heard much about that lately. Reconciliation is a fast-track legislative process that allows a bill to pass in a limited time period, and with the support of only 51 senators. A "normal" Senate bill can be slowed down by a single senator and blocked by 41 senators. This is not true for a reconciliation bill. However, there is a complicated set of rules behind it that will make it no shoo-in either. Some parts of the bill could be enacted, but other parts would not comply with the rules as they are defined. Of course, even if we get a so-called "reform" bill, at this point there are few details as to whether reasonable limits will be placed on the insurance industry, regarding what they can charge the consumer for premiums and out-of-pocket expenses. Hopefully, some fair and equitable regulations and restrictions will be put in place and a profit ratio mandated that will raise the percentage or amount of each dollar taken in that must actually go toward healthcare itself rather than toward profits.

I've listed below some general statements put out by our government showing differences between the House and Senate bills. The parentheses are my interjections.

Areas of agreement:

- Both provide some insurance reforms and consumer protections to take place this year. A new insurance pool will make coverage available to individuals with preexisting conditions. (At what cost? Who sets it?)
- Both houses want to start closing the donut hole in 2010. Both want health insurance marketplace exchanges, but they both disagree as to whether exchanges should be federally or state run. (No talk of negotiating prices or reimportation of drugs.)
- Both want sliding scale credits for households with income above the new Medicaid income levels but below 400 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Both want individual responsibility in terms of purchasing insurance and employer responsibility in offering coverage or financial contributions to help pay for coverage.
- Both agree that Medicare waste and improved delivery systems will help pay for reform. (However, they need many more incentives to keep primary doctors from leaving the profession for lack of reasonable Medicare payments as well as incentives to motivate and attract new doctors to go into primary care and family practice.)
- Both bills actually reduce the deficit by more than \$100 billion over the first 10 years.

There are many areas of disagreement, and critical ones, within the two bills.

- The House bill says that employers who do not conform to the new rules will help pay an eight percent tax on wages for all employees while the Senate bill calls for a flat-rate \$750 charge for each employee not covered and with a waiting period before coverage kicks in.
- The House bill provides employers with a five-year grace period on offering some requirements of coverage, whereas the Senate permanently grandfathered existing employer plans. With few exceptions, the Senate plans are not required to adopt insurance reforms or quality standards.
- The House bill has a 2:1 ratio between the premiums of the oldest and youngest while the Senate has a 3:1 ratio, meaning our oldest citizens can pay up to three times as much as the youngest.
- The House reform standards are much stricter and more enforceable than the Senate.
- The House wants a National Exchange with states having the option to operate their Exchange if it meets federal standards and combines individual and small group markets into one insurance pool and one Exchange. The Senate prefers state Exchanges with federal back-up, opt-out provisions for the states, and no public option.
- The House wants uninsured individuals to pay 2.5% of their income above their federal tax filing threshold, with a cap at the amount of the average national premium. There would be an exemption for those for which this amount would be deemed a hardship. The Senate, on the other hand, wants a fixed dollar amount coupled with an income-related contribution phased in up to 2 percent of income by 2016, and then capped at the average premium level, with some hardship exemptions allowed.
- There are no credits for the undocumented workers and their families in either bill, but the House allows a buy-in whereas the Senate doesn't.
- The thorny issue of payment of abortions with federal funds is actually in both bills, and few details are available as to the final proposals.
- The insurance industry now has an anti-trust exemption, which the House wants out but the Senate wants to keep in.
- When it comes to helping those under Medicaid and CHIP, the House across the board is much more generous with the bill, and they want much more scrutiny over Medicare Advantage plans than the Senate does.
- The House wants a strong Quality Bonus incentive plan given to insurance companies and facilities that come under close scrutiny in terms of quality and cost whereas the Senate wants the bonus allocation spread among most plans.
- The House wants to continue a percentage-of-premium reimbursement on Medicare Part D rather than initiating drug plans based on income, which would result in smaller reimbursements to the individuals under their specific plans. The House also wants to be able to negotiate drug prices and to eventually eliminate the donut-hole. The Senate bill wants Part D premiums to be based on income, which would increase the amount of out-of-pocket expenses, and increase premiums for beneficiaries under Part D.
- The House wants to hold all hospitals accountable for preventable hospital readmissions, provides for transitional care funding, whereas the Senate holds only selected hospitals accountable and no transitional care.

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Dan Pierce for 10th District Committeeman

I ask for your support for my candidacy for 10th District Democratic State Central Committeeman. I held this party position for many years before turning it over to Bill Crowley 12 years ago. Now, Bill is retiring from the post, and I am again running to replace him.



I grew up in the 10th District, attended Harvard College and Harvard Law School before serving as a captain in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War.

Later, I served 20 years in the Illinois General Assembly representing New Trier communities. As a legislator, I served as the first chairman of the House Environment Committee and helped

shepherd through landmark legislation to protect Lake Michigan. I'm also proud that I fought for legislation to give students with disabilities access to special education opportunities. I am honored that my legislative colleagues, Abner Mikva, Adlai Stevenson, and Harold Katz, have endorsed me for State Central Committeeman. I also have the support of State Rep. Karen May and former FCC Chairman Newton Minow.

As mayor of Highland Park for 12 years, I worked to preserve and improve a vibrant downtown while maintaining the unique residential character of the community. As president of the North Shore Sanitary District, I am proud the District has achieved the goal of preventing any sewage from entering Lake Michigan.

What I hope to accomplish in this office:

- Elect a Democratic Congressman in our 10th District
- Fight to make Mark Kirk's retirement from Congress permanent. He wants President Obama's former Senate seat—we must stop him!
- End "pay to play" politics as practiced by disgraced ex-Gov. Rod Blagojevich

I look forward to your support in the February 2 election.

Action Alleviates Anxiety *continued from page 3*

uncontested races. Taking the time to cast your vote in a primary is a way to show all the candidates that you are watching, are aware, and intend to take an active part in the process.

Please be sure to get out and exercise your voice, both on February 2 and again in November. Remember, early voting and the new "no-excuse-required," vote-by-mail options are available for the primary and general elections to make this opportunity more accessible to you.

Action helps alleviate anxiety. Pass the word and let's get out the vote!

Sincerely,

Laura Tomsky
Lake County Clerk – Candidate
2010@LauraTomsky.com

Bill Brandt for 10th District Committeeman

This is an exciting time for 10th District Democrats. Our district is currently trending Democratic, so I'm running for Democratic Committeeman to help complete that trend as well as to make certain that our district becomes a bastion of blue, and I'd like your vote.

While the committeeman's post isn't a high-profile position, it really is extremely important to voters. This job is akin to that of a scout, offensive coordinator, and quarterback all rolled into one. The



committeeman is responsible for recruiting and nurturing political talent and bringing the brightest stars up through the system, not only for congressional races but also for state and local elected offices.

The committeeman is also charged with building the party, getting candidates on the ballot, and making sure voters get to the polls to support those candidates.

He or she works to ensure that the candidates reflect the change that voters want: healthcare reform,

environmental protection, especially concerning Lake Michigan and Waukegan Harbor, and, most importantly, strengthening our economy and creating and retaining jobs.

I'm looking forward to the chance to partner with Lauren Beth Gash, who's brought such great energy to the district with her work to build the impressive Tenth Dems organization. I would relish the opportunity to build on that foundation and join Lauren in the push to further strengthen our party by recruiting and mentoring candidates for offices up and down the ballot. As a complement to the Tenth Dems University, I'll add my skills to help candidates develop sound business plans, formulate fundraising strategies, and clarify issue positioning so as to build well-rounded campaigns with firm foundations.

With 35 years of political campaign experience at the state, local, and congressional levels, I have the experience to get the job done. This includes work on campaigns for leading Illinois politicians, such as Governor Pat Quinn, Comptroller Dan Hynes, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, and Senator Richard Durbin.

I'm proud to carry the endorsements of Personal PAC; the Democratic Organizations of New Trier, Northfield, and Wheeling Townships; Congressional Representatives Jan Schakowsky, Mike Quigley, and Bill Foster; State Senator Jeff Schoenberg; State Representatives Elaine Nekritz, Mark Walker, Lou Lang, and Jack Franks; and Cook County Commissioner Forrest Claypool.

I know the committeeman's job may not get much attention from the general public, but I realize it isn't just an honorary position handed out to party loyalists. The committeeman's job requires enthusiasm and energy, a fresh perspective, a strong network, and a willingness to work hard to find the best new candidates. I pledge to contribute all of that—and more—to the committeeman position.

For more information, please visit my website:

<http://democratsforbrandt.com/>

apparent. Indeed, the greater our presence, the more the Taliban can pose as national liberators and gain the people's support.

In his book, *Violent Politics*, Polk recounts Afghanistan's history of resistance. In the first Afghan War, 1838-42, the British army, installing a puppet ruler the people hated, faced an insurgency it couldn't quell from guerrillas who used Islam and hatred of foreigners to unite the people in resistance. Sound familiar? In 1919, in the third Afghan War, Polk states, "The British won all the battles but lost the war." In 1979, Soviet troops fought a fourth Afghan War that lasted a decade. The Russians failed as miserably as the British.

Yet, when some American officials asked the current Russian ambassador to Afghanistan what he'd learned about the country, his advice was ignored. He commented, "The U.S. listens, but it doesn't hear."

Polk believes that the United States should set a date for withdrawal from Afghanistan. In addition, it should support the calling of the *loya jirga*, a truly independent body drawn from villages and provinces and representing a diversity of tribal groups and opinions. Although he recognizes that the Taliban may be the single strongest political group in such an assembly (because Afghans perceive it to be, in nationalistic terms, the strongest opponent of the United States), he



contends that this is already the case. Once the U.S. is no longer perceived as a foreign threat, the Taliban will be forced to negotiate with other factions. Looking to history, Polk reminds us, "The longer we delay the process and the harder we try to prevent it, the more certain it is that the Taliban will dominate. This has been uniformly true of insurgencies for the last two centuries all over the world: those who fought hardest against the foreigners took control."

In addition, our economic assistance, much more cost-effective than our military presence and perhaps administered through the United Nations, will be more effective, since it will no longer be perceived as a means of increasing American control of the country.

But what if the Taliban does regain control of Afghanistan? Polk reminds us that terrorists can operate from anywhere and that Afghanistan, a land-locked nation with few economic resources and poor communications, is unlikely to be an effective center for terrorism.

Dr. Kenneth Stein, Professor of Contemporary Middle Eastern History and Israeli Studies at Emory University, shares some of Polk's concerns regarding how the United States views the Middle East. In a recent speech given to the National Social Studies Supervisors Association Annual Conference, Stein stated that most presidents don't know much about history and are advised by colleagues who helped get them elected, not necessarily those who are best at

helping them govern well. Regarding guerrilla warfare, he reminds us that insurgents have no clock. How will this affect President Obama's pledge to start withdrawing troops from Afghanistan in 18 months? According to Stein, regardless of what President Bush pledged to the Iraqis or President Obama promised the Afghans, the people of these countries know that the U.S. is in the Middle East for its own interests, specifically oil, and that we deal on a regular basis with corrupt leaders who have no real interest in their people's welfare. And, he asks, why should the United States be the world's policeman?

Both scholars take issue with what Stein calls, "the hubris of American exceptionalism"—that our democratic institutions can be imported to other nations. Whether our actions are cynical, to control the region's oil, or sincerely well-intentioned, they are being rejected in the same way our actions were rejected by the Filipinos in 1899 and the Vietnamese 70 years later.

As Graham Greene wrote in *The Quiet American*, his novel of early American involvement in Vietnam, American innocence, based upon woeful ignorance, can lead to tragic results, for ... "innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm." But it is so very harmful.

In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, President Obama asserted that there are times when the use of force is "...not only necessary but morally justified." It is a speech that drew praise from Newt Gingrich and Sarah Palin. Republican strategist Bradley Blakeman wrote, "The irony is that George Bush could have delivered the very same speech."

What's so disappointing about Obama's speech is not that force isn't at times necessary but that it is used all too often. When Obama referred to Nazi Germany in an attempt to prove his point, he failed to note what the great American diplomat George Kennan had pondered—that from 1919-33, Great Britain and France weren't willing to nurture and sustain Germany's democratic Weimar Republic. If they had, they might well have avoided Hitler's Third Reich. Carefully crafted diplomacy, with an understanding of history and the use of empathy, can make war much less common.

During George W. Bush's first administration, neo-conservatives were hyping the concept of a "Long War" lasting decades against fanatical Muslim fundamentalists with the goal of achieving American world hegemony. A war that, Dr. Polk believes, will bankrupt America economically and spiritually. Who would have thought that a Democratic president would be continuing the neo-cons' mission?

How Politically Engaged Are You?

by Mary E. La Plante

The Democratic Party's official website contains a powerful definition from the late Ron Brown, former chairman of the Democratic Party, on core Democratic Party values: "The common thread of Democratic history, from Thomas Jefferson to Bill Clinton, has been an abiding faith in the judgment of hardworking American families, and a commitment to helping the excluded, the disenfranchised and the poor strengthen our nation by earning themselves a piece of the American Dream. We remember that this great land was sculpted by immigrants and slaves, their children and grandchildren."

As February begins—a month full of crucial issues, events, and elections—perhaps we can keep this quote in mind as we use this time to take stock and reflect upon our own political engagement in

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How Politically Engaged *continued from page 6*

our community, state, country, and the world. For without a doubt, our support and involvement in and contribution to the democratic process is needed to help bring about positive outcomes in regard to serious matters: the 2010 Illinois primary elections on Feb. 2; the ongoing battle concerning healthcare, certain now to heat up even more with the recent loss of the Senate seat in Massachusetts; a continual rise in unemployment; the housing crisis; the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; environmental concerns; and the recent catastrophic earthquake in Haiti. But in the midst of all this, we have the ability to affect positive change by utilizing our considerable resources—intellectual, material, and spiritual—so that we continue to help the Democratic Party truly be the “party of the common man.” (And woman!) To that end, your response to the following ten questions will help you take stock of, and perhaps deepen, your political engagement. And, if you’d like to become more involved locally or wish to receive further information on the issues themselves, write, call, or email Tenth Congressional District Democrats at P.O. Box 523, Deerfield, Illinois 60015. Telephone: 847-266-VOTE (8683). Email: info@tenthdems.org

1. Are you a registered voter? If not, contact Tenth Dems to learn how to exercise your fundamental right as an American citizen.
2. Do you know who your elected officials are? Go to: <http://www.tenthdems.org/index.php/5>
3. Are you concerned about the latest healthcare reform news? The never-ending wars? The horrific loss of precious lives? Contact Tenth Dems for clarification and information on how to contact your elected officials and to obtain help with how to effectively communicate your thoughts.
4. Are you inspired to write a letter to the editor about the housing crisis, job loss, company closings, and rising unemployment, but need a few examples from fellow Tenth Dems? Go to: <http://www.tenthdems.org/index.php/202>
5. Do you buy local, sustainable foods? Are you committed to cleaner eating? For a directory of local farmers’ markets, go to: <http://www.illinoisfarmdirect.org/index.html>
6. Are you concerned about energy and the environment? Go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/energy-and-environment>
7. Do you want to help the people of Haiti, but don’t know exactly how to begin? *The Huffington Post* and Google offer various indexes of ways you can help. Go to: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/impact/>
<http://www.google.com/relief/haitiearthquake/>
Churches, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship are also widely involved in Haitian disaster relief.
8. Do you want to help continue the work of Tenth Dems by providing financial support or becoming a volunteer? Contact the Hon. Lauren Beth Gash at: info@tenthdems.org
9. Would you like to host a Tenth Dems event in 2010? Provide space and refreshments so that politically minded, community-focused people can get together to help make the world a better place? Then please contact Tenth Dems today!
10. Do you need to brush up on your history of the Democratic Party, and become better acquainted with Democratic principles? Go to: <http://www.democrats.org/>

Healthcare Reform *continued from page 4*

- The House provides for \$34 billion over five years for mandatory appropriations while the Senate wants to spend no more than \$25 billion.
- The House asks for a 5.4 percent surcharge on income in excess of \$500,000 individual and \$1,000,000 joint, but the Senate has no provision for any surcharge based on income.

Let’s Talk Politics

Mt. Prospect

by Sharon Sanders

Let’s Talk Politics keeps expanding its territory into more and more townships of the 10th Congressional District. People want to talk about what’s on their minds and give their views on where we’re heading as a country. And even though this is not the venue for solving problems, it’s definitely the place to discuss them. New participants are always encouraged to get involved in Tenth Dems. As opposed to the Republicans who walk in lockstep, Democrats are encouraged to share their differing views. On January 14, Bob Boros ran the **Let’s Talk Politics** at Bogie’s in Mt. Prospect. Along with several candidates for local office, there were quite a few new faces. Several wanted to get involved in Tenth Dems and that’s what we like to see—an ever-growing group of committed individuals who want to make a difference. That’s part of the beauty of **Let’s Talk Politics**—a place where you can come and be part of the venting process. After all, it feels so good to release your political frustrations.

Vernon Hills

by Phyllis Goldman

If you didn’t make it to the **Let’s Talk Politics** meeting in Vernon Hills on January 5, you missed a spirited discussion adeptly led by Scott Linn. About 25 people attended, and although we all appreciated President Obama, there was much diversity of opinion regarding his leadership thus far. The grades for his performance as expressed by the group ranged from A to D. We acknowledged the fact that when he took office, President Obama was faced with an almost unprecedented legacy of problems. But, as our leader, what should he press for on healthcare: single payer, a public option, a nationwide insurance marketplace, a state-run insurance marketplace, opt in, or opt out? Opinions ran the gamut. Should he listen to McChrystal, Biden, or Eikenberry? Should Rahm Emmanuel stay or go? How about Geithner and Summers? If we reached any consensus at all, it was that since he’s been in office less than a year, we should give him a chance. So, if you think the administration is too pragmatic, too centrist, too right-leaning, too left-leaning, come to a **Let’s Talk Politics** meeting. It’s your chance to air your opinion or to just listen and hear what others are thinking. Yes, we disagreed on many issues, but we all seemed to have a good time, and we learned a lot listening to each others’ ideas.

If you want to organize a **Let’s Talk Politics** meeting in your area, just email Phyllgoldman@gmail.com for details.

- The Senate is asking for a 40 percent excise tax on group health coverage in excess of \$8,500 individual/\$23,000 family coverage. The House has no such provisions.

And finally, we are back to this: do we scrap the bill and wait 15 or so years to start over, or do we take whatever is passed and go forward, hoping we’ll still have enough Democrats elected in 2010 and 2012 to finish the job? I’ll leave that up to you.

Four Questions for Mark Kirk *continued from page 1*

- 2. Why did Kirk reverse his position on cap and trade?** Kirk defended his flip-flop on cap and trade by saying that he voted in favor of it because he was voting the “narrow interests of my district,” but when he voted for cap and trade, he burnished his military credentials and said that he voted for it for “national security” reasons. Isn’t the rest of Illinois concerned about national security? What other deeply held beliefs will Kirk jettison for being only “in the narrow interests of my district”? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpLOdIL2BD8>
- 3. Why did Kirk vote for Darrell Issa?** Kirk is among the first to denounce the United Nations when it unfairly criticizes Israel, and this is to his credit. But Kirk voted to elect Rep. Darrell Issa to Republican leadership even though Issa had previously accused Israel of apartheid and even though he had called on the U.N. to redraw Israel’s borders. Why does Kirk hold Republicans to a lesser standard than that to which he holds the U.N.? Kirk voted for Issa for the post of Republican Policy Committee Chairman the week after Kirk was reelected in 2006. This was a vote within the Republican Party for a Republican leadership position. It was one Republican against another, and only Republicans voted. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI) defeated Issa by a 2-1 margin. Ironically, when Kirk did not follow the Republican majority, he voted wrong. Kirk was one of about 60 Republicans who saw nothing wrong with elevating to leadership a man who accused Israel of apartheid. He has never explained why he voted for Issa. Imagine the outrage—the justifiable outrage—we’d hear if Obama appointed someone who had previously accused Israel of apartheid and called on the U.N. to redraw Israel’s borders. Kirk owes us an explanation if he expects our vote. It’s true that Issa previously contributed to one of Kirk’s campaigns, but there’s got to be more than that. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/15/AR2006081501015_pf.html
- 4. Almost everyone knows people who are unemployed. Where was Kirk when the House voted to extend unemployment benefits?** On September 22, 2009, Kirk skipped a vote on extending unemployment benefits. He previously voted at least eight times against extending unemployment benefits that were about to run out. To add insult to injury, around the time the vote was taking place, Kirk tweeted that his Senate campaign “was currently working on a site redesign.” At least he didn’t tweet “let them eat cake,” but he might as well have. Kirk has still not told us what he was doing that was more important than casting that vote. <http://progressillinois.com/2009/9/23/roskam-kirk-unemployment-extension>

For those of you keeping score at home, here’s a partial list of the positions Kirk reversed in 2009. (Too bad for his contributors that there’s no money-back guarantee on campaign contributions):

1. After supporting the selection of Sarah Palin for vice president, Kirk received letters from constituents objecting to Palin’s extreme right-wing views. Kirk then said that he would not have picked her for vice president. But in November 2009, he sought Palin’s support. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syJ8BkR8yUI&feature=player_embedded and <http://dsc.org/truck>
2. After narrowly winning re-election by misleading his constituents into believing he was pro-choice, on November 7, Kirk voted in favor of the Stupak Amendment to the Affordable Health Care for America Act. This amendment bars any insurance plan that is purchased with government subsidies from covering abortions, and, with Kirk’s help, it passed. As a result, NARAL Pro-Choice America now opposes his candidacy and Planned Parenthood has endorsed Alexi Giannoulias for U.S. Senate. <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll884.xml>
3. After leading people to believe that he supported gay rights, Kirk came out against gay marriage, in favor of the Defense of Marriage Act, and in favor of the military’s “don’t ask don’t tell” policy. <http://www.suntimes.com/news/brown/1750844,CST-NWS-brown03.article>

4. After telling people to vote the person rather than the party and touting himself as independent, Kirk went on to take the Republican position on EVERY major issue this Congress has faced. Says who? Says Kirk for Senate. <http://thecapitolfaxblog.com/sidebysideGOPDem.jpg>
5. After voting for cap and trade because, according to Kirk, “national security” required it, he announced that he was only voting “the narrow interests of my district” and that he’d vote against it the next time. This is the granddaddy of all flip-flops, and it only took 19 seconds! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kplOdIL2BD8>
6. After voting to allow the Obama administration to move foreign terrorist suspects from the Guantanamo Bay prison to the United States mainland, Kirk criticized a proposal to transfer detainees from Guantanamo Bay to the United States mainland (Thomson Correctional Center in Illinois). He told President Obama that, “If your administration brings al-Qaida terrorists to Illinois, our state and the Chicago metropolitan area will become ground zero for Jihadist terrorist plots, recruitment and radicalization.” Kirk was criticized by the Sun-Times and the Tribune for his inflammatory and inaccurate statements. http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/archives/individual/2009_11/020983.php http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-blickstein/mark-kirks-gitmo-flip-flo_b_359678.html <http://www.suntimes.com/news/commentary/1887512,CST-EDT-edit17a.article> www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/chi-1117edit1nov17,0,5529461.story
7. Kirk criticized earmarks in recent spending bills after procuring millions of dollars of earmarks for his supporters. <http://www.dsc.org/twofaced/>
8. After consistently supporting foreign aid for Israel, regardless of what else was in the bill, Kirk joined Republican opposition to the FY 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act. <http://www.speaker.gov/newsroom/legislation?id=0349>, the only vehicle for providing security assistance to Israel. <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll949.xml>

Democratic Candidates *continued from page 2*

would relieve some of the polarization.

In closing comments, Seals said what’s missing in Washington is a “kitchen table conversation” on making ends meet, spending smarter, and facing the future. He mentioned endorsements from a number of local Democratic organizations as well as the *Daily Herald* editorial board. Richardson closed by reminding the audience that after Feb. 2, we’ll all continue to be Democrats. And, we’ll most likely be running against a moderate Republican. He added that he believes he is most electable. Hamos closed by speaking about her life’s work of bringing people together. She cited her endorsements from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and *Pioneer Press* editorial boards and by 35 of the area’s elected leaders. She promised to “bring you into the process,” not just at Election Day, but year round.

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