

<i>In This Issue:</i>	<b>Holiday Party</b> .....4
<b>Want My Party Back</b> .1	<b>Photos</b> .....5
<b>Congress Watch</b> ...1	<b>Write Stuff</b> .....6
<b>Middle East Peace</b> .2	<b>More Space</b> .....6
<b>Sarah Palin</b> .....3	<b>Yes, We Did</b> .....8
<b>CommCon</b> .....3	<b>Capitol Steps</b> .....8

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# I Want My Party Back

by Ilya Sheyman



I spent the final days of this past election season on the ground in Madison, Wisconsin, hoping against hope that my small efforts could help come between our progressive hero Russ Feingold and a certain defeat at the hands of do-nothing Republican, Ron Johnson, who was riding the national right-wing tsunami to victory. Only a few hundred miles away, another do-nothing Republican, Bob Dold, was following that very same path to victory right here in the 10th Congressional District.

Yet, as painful as those two losses were, they did nothing to prepare me for the even more devastating developments in the days and weeks that followed. In the face of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, there was no talk of an emergency jobs bill or measures to help get the middle class on their feet. No discussion at all of spending the final two months of Democratic rule to jump-start the creation of a new, green economy.

Instead, too many Democratic politicians in Washington, D.C. joined with Republicans to declare that the most pressing issue facing this country was the need to extend nearly four trillion dollars of George Bush's tax cuts that overwhelmingly favor the wealthiest amongst us.

Now, I'd come to expect that kind of approach from Republicans. After all, theirs is the party that has vowed to shrink the government to a size that would fit in a bathtub and then drown it. But to see my party, the Democratic Party, decide that in

*continued on page 7*



# Tenth News

JANUARY 2011 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 8, Edition 1

## Controversial Tax-Cut Extension Bill Signed into Law

On Friday, December 17, President Obama signed into law the highly controversial tax-cut deal he negotiated with the Republican leadership earlier in the month. In a formal White House signing ceremony, he hailed the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 "a bipartisan victory for middle class families and the unemployed." Noting the average middle-class family would have seen an estimated \$3,000 increase in their 2011 income tax bill had the Bush-era tax cuts been allowed to expire on January 1, the president said, "It would have been a blow to [middle-class Americans] and to our economy just as we are climbing out of a devastating recession."

But for most Democrats, the real blow has come in the bill's failure to make the ultra rich pay their fair share of the tax burden. Most Democrats see the new legislation as a grossly unfair compromise in which Republican hostage takers gained an extension of the Bush tax cuts for billionaires and the opportunity to use the same tactics two years from now to eventually make the tax cuts permanent. "It's a huge giveaway to the super rich in these tough economic times," said Congressman Jim McDermott (D-WA).

In what most Democrats perceive as an obscenely uneven trade-off benefiting the wealthy at the expense of the nation's fiscal health, the bill extends the Bush-era tax reductions for all income levels through 2012; continues expanded unemployment benefits; and cuts payroll



taxes by two percentage points in 2011. The legislation also continues the Bush-era 15 percent tax rate on capital gains and dividends. The result is that individuals who make their living from their investments will continue to pay a substantially lower tax rate than most American workers, as Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders explained in a passionate, one-man, eight-and-a-half-hour filibuster against the legislation on December 10.

Among the most controversial aspects of the legislation signed by the president on December 17 are a top estate-tax rate of 35 percent, with an exemption on the first \$5 million for individuals. (The estate tax lapsed entirely this year but was set to return on January 1 at a maximum 55 percent rate and a \$1 million per person exemption.) Only the richest 0.03 percent of American families is subject to the estate tax. So, the \$68 billion in tax breaks created by the provision benefit only "the very, very rich," Senator Sanders has explained.

House Democrats attempted to pass an amendment that would have increased the top estate-tax rate to 45 percent while lowering the per-

*continued on page 7*

# Toward Peace in the Middle East

by Steve Sheffey

Twice in the last decade, Israel offered to cede nearly all of Judea and Samaria (known to much of the world as “the West Bank”) to the Palestinians, only to be rebuffed. It’s time for a new paradigm: instead of rewarding Palestinian intransigence by asking Israel to stop settlement growth, the United States should tell the Palestinians that time is not on their side, and that the longer they refuse to make peace with Israel, the smaller their state will be. The Obama administration recently took a positive first step in that direction by pulling back on its request for Israel to extend its settlement freeze. If the Palestinians want Israel to stop building settlements tomorrow, all they have to do is make peace with Israel today.

President Obama and the Democratic Party firmly support Israel. President Obama and members of his administration have repeatedly stressed that the bond between the U.S. and Israel is “unbreakable” and, under President Obama, military cooperation between the U.S. and Israel has reached unprecedented levels. As Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) said, a “strong Israel is a matter of U.S. national interest as is an enduring peace in the region.” It is no accident that strong progressives such as Congresswomen Schakowsky, Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) are also strong friends of Israel.

Allies, even strong allies, will sometimes disagree, and it is important to understand that the few disagreements that the Obama administration has had with Israel are not only nothing new but are also instances where the Obama administration has continued the failed policies of previous administrations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted on November 9 that the “disagreements with the U.S. over Jerusalem are well known. They are not new and have continued for 40 years.” These differences are apparently not well known to those who would use Israel for partisan purposes to advance the political fortunes of the Republican Party, but those of us who genuinely care about peace in the Middle East and a strong U.S.-Israel relationship should stress that this is, and has been, American policy, and is not unique to any one president.

The Bush administration also publicly opposed settlements and building in Jerusalem, and every Democratic and Republican president since 1967 has failed to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 requires that the U.S. embassy be moved to Jerusalem unless the president signs a waiver every six months, which is just what Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama (thus far) have done.

It is precisely because these issues are not unique to the Obama administration, but represent continued U.S. policy across Democratic and Republican administrations, that it is time to reexamine a policy that has yet to bear fruit after 40 years.

The rationale for current U.S. policy is simple. The fate of Judea, Samaria, and Jerusalem is to be decided by the parties, and any unilateral actions by Israel necessarily prejudice the outcome of that decision. A two-state solution is in Israel’s best interests because Israel cannot permanently rule over the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria without giving them the right to vote, which would risk Jews becoming a minority in their own country. Given that Israel has shown a willingness to trade land for peace when a partner for peace emerges (Israel accepted a state with none of Judea, Samaria, or Jerusalem in 1948 and gave the entire Sinai to Egypt in exchange for a promise of peace), and, given that Israel has traded land for peace even in the absence of a partner for peace (Israel unilaterally withdrew from Lebanon and Gaza in the last decade), one would think that it would make sense for Israel to refrain from settlement

expansion or building in Jerusalem to make an eventual land swap that much easier.

The problem with that logic is that the status quo cannot be maintained indefinitely. These “settlements” are towns with families and needs that keep growing. Can you imagine what it would be like if Deerfield or Highland Park forbade all construction of any kind for any reason? That’s how unreasonable the Bush road map is by prohibiting the “natural growth” of settlements, a prohibition predicated on the assumption that Palestinian leadership would be induced to negotiate in good faith.

Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and is not a settlement. Had Jordan not attacked Israel in 1967, Jerusalem would not today be Israel’s undivided capital, but Israel cannot now be expected to reverse the realization of a 2,000-year old dream.

President Obama’s outreach to the Islamic world makes sense. There are a lot of Muslims, and it’s better they be our friends than our enemies. But friends speak truth to friends. For 40 years, the U.S. has opposed building in disputed parts of Jerusalem, so if any prime minister of Israel defends such projects, any U.S. president, wherever he is and whoever he is, will be forced to respond—and the result is a perception of discord between allies that only gives Palestinians another excuse not to negotiate. And this cycle will recur as long as U.S. policy remains unchanged, pushing peace further and further into the horizon.

## **It’s time for a new U.S. policy and a new truth for our Muslim friends.**

President Obama should tell the world that the clock will not stop forever while Palestinian leadership stalls the peace talks. The Palestinians should resume negotiations without preconditions. The sooner they return to the negotiating table the better—the better for the Palestinians, the better for Israel, the better for peace. But until then, Israel legitimately controls these territories, having won them in a defensive war against countries whose stated goal was Israel’s destruction. And the longer Palestinian leadership carries, the smaller their state may be.

As Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-NY)—yet another progressive who firmly stands with Israel—said in October:

“Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. It is not a settlement.

“As such, the resumption of construction in Jerusalem is not a justification for a crisis, a showdown, a meltdown or even a hissy fit. Ramot and Pisgat Zeev are going to be part of Israel in any conceivable final status deal and to pretend otherwise is pointless.

“As I have said, those who earlier complained about the inadequacy of Israel’s unilateral and uncompensated settlement freeze, who chose to waste those ten months instead of diving aggressively into direct talks on peace, cannot reasonably now turn around and complain that the end of the freeze and the resumption of Israeli construction in Jerusalem—Israel’s capital, and the singular geographic center of the hopes and aspirations of the Jewish people for three millennia—is either a shock or an insurmountable obstacle to peace.

“Israeli construction in Jerusalem, in two already well-established neighborhoods, is neither a show of bad faith nor a justification for



*continued on page 7*



# Understanding Sarah

by Jack Altschuler

When someone consistently says false and outrageously divisive things, some head scratching is in order.

Let's be clear that, to be a liar, a person has to both say something that is false and know that it is false. That is to say, there must be a conscious intent to deceive. The question is whether Sarah Palin answers that description.

Here are just a few of Palin's "vacations from reality." These concern substantive issues, rather than her frequent vacuous absurdities.

- She decries government debt, yet when she was mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, she drove the town's long-term debt to 25 times what it was before she got her hands on the checkbook.
- She consistently decries federal earmarks, yet as governor she played fast and loose with them. For example, first she supported the "bridge to nowhere," and then she opposed it. Regardless, she kept the \$442 million dollars of federal earmark money.
- She broke her word to Alaskans by quitting her job as governor, saying she wanted to do what was best for Alaskans. Since then, she has spent almost no time promoting what is best for Alaskans.

That's just a short list of her integrity outages, and it's difficult to identify if she behaves that way in order to deceive. Still, if it looks like a mama grizzly, walks like a mama grizzly, and growls like a mama grizzly, it's probably a mama grizzly.

Now, about that divisive business—here's an example.

Shortly after the 2010 midterm election, Palin was speaking in a school to children who had baked cookies to send to American troops. In a seemingly throwaway line, she said, "It isn't wrong to support our troops."

The implication of her statement, said in the context she created, is that some people actually do think it is wrong to support our troops although you'd be hard-pressed to find someone like that. Yet, her comment created an us-them divide based on a fictitious premise. The premise is that there is an "us," those good people who are right and do what is good (like support our troops) and there is a "them," those fictitious, nasty others who are wrong and do what is bad (like not support our troops).

The key point is what creating and widening an us-them divide accomplishes: It verbally links people with her against a dreadful enemy—those made-up hordes who don't agree with Palin and whom she implies are evil and un-American. And most of her divisiveness is based on falsehoods. That is the lens through which she has to be seen in order to understand her.

Here's another example: Palin brayed through every microphone available that, "They're gonna pull the plug on Granny," referring to the provision in the then-proposed healthcare bill that extends coverage for end-of-life patients to consult with their doctors. There never was anything in the bill about terminating anyone's life, and the provision she sullied is intended to help Americans in one of life's darkest hours. Indeed, she signed a similar provision into law when she was governor of Alaska. So, why would Palin say such a false, mean-spirited thing and frighten Americans if what were uppermost in her mind was doing what is best for Americans?



It's clear that Palin was focused only on garnering support for herself. She did that by encouraging us to join her against "them," those conjured, evil others who would assassinate Granny.

Wilfred Bion was a psychoanalyst who worked with shell-shock patients through and following World War II. One of his discoveries was what he dubbed "B.A.M.S."—Basic Assumption Mental State. It is an individual's unconscious assumptions about reality, the way the world works, and what is important. Each of us behaves in accordance with our individual B.A.M.S. unless we put forth the effort to be conscious and proactive, instead of being reactive.

That's an important concept to keep in mind when trying to understand Palin's behavior. It appears that her Basic Assumption Mental State is that everything is about Sarah Palin.

When one has been accused of first-degree murder, one of the defenses available is "not guilty by reason of insanity." To prove insanity, the defense must show that the accused was not able to distinguish between right and wrong and, possibly, that the defendant lacked the ability to control his or her behavior when the crime was committed. We do not punish those who are insane; we just make sure that they will not be a danger to others in the future. That brings us back to the issue of lying.

If Sarah Palin's Basic Assumption Mental State is that it's all about her and that promoting herself is always the most important thing, then it's possible that she really is not able to distinguish between right and wrong and cannot control her behavior. It's possible she isn't a liar. Instead, it's possible she is a sociopath.

And we need to do as much for her as we do for murder defendants who are judged "not guilty by reason of insanity." We need to make sure that she cannot be a danger to others, like America and Americans.

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## Community Connections Is Up and Running!

Tenth Dems activists, students from Waukegan High School, and committed volunteers from across the district have been meeting at our new Community Connections office in Waukegan to plot the path forward for a new kind of Democratic office that serves the day-to-day needs of the local community.

Inspired by the belief that we, as Democrats, are committed to directly helping others and helping people help themselves, the core mission of the Community Connections office will be to connect residents of Waukegan and North Chicago with the government, and social and other services they need to make their lives a little better. And this office will also serve as a safe space where community members can gather, organize, and learn the skills necessary to win power and improve their own lives. The office is located in the heart of Waukegan, so we'll also be building

relationships with and supporting local businesses and community groups in their efforts to revitalize the downtown area.

Right now, the Community Connections office is gearing up for a mid-January Open House with local activists, elected officials, and community leaders from across Waukegan and North Chicago.

To make the office work, we're still looking for some basic supplies. If you have any of the following items that you're able to donate (or want to get involved with Community Connections), please call 847-266-VOTE (8683) or email [volunteers@tenthdems.org](mailto:volunteers@tenthdems.org). We still need: office supplies (paper, pads, pens, calendars, posters, etc.), desk chairs and folding chairs, coat racks, small bookcases, laptops, cellphone chargers for all kinds of phones, desk items, toilet paper, paper towels, and hand soap (pump kind), garbage cans and waste basket liners, or gift cards to any store that sells some of these things.

# Tenth Dems Holiday Social at The Alley

by Kim Rodriguez

Local snowbirds braved a bitterly cold and snowy night to attend the Tenth Dems annual holiday party at The Alley in Highwood on December 13. The pizza was hot and the friendship was warm, as nearly 50 attendees gathered for Democratic community friendship, food, and bowling.

The party was a great opportunity to reflect upon the work of 2010, especially Dan Seals' effort to capture Illinois' 10th Congressional District seat. Many people wrote messages to Dan on a giant poster-size thank-you card. The words of gratitude and goodwill covered every available inch of white space front-to-back.

Twenty-ninth District State Senator Susan Garrett welcomed everyone and introduced 58th District State Rep. Karen May and 59th District State Rep. Carol Sente. After their remarks, a presentation followed about Tenth Dems University.

State Senator Garrett spoke about TDU's purpose to educate participants on political issues affecting the 10th District. The intention is for each graduate to become more effective at discussing current issues and to become better at influencing positive opinion about them. Sharon Sanders presented participants in Tenth Dems educational programming with certificates, recognizing their involvement in numerous TDU events.

Tenth Dems University also presented a special award to Flor Washington in memory of her late husband, State Rep. Edward Washington. She thankfully accepted the honor and the acknowledgment that her husband was a "sincere advocate" for the constituents of Waukegan, Park City, and North Chicago. Flor Washington added that her husband had "left the earth in victory."

After the presentations were finished, the holiday gift raffle began. Several donated prizes included a gift certificate to a local restaurant, a spa massage, Democratic memorabilia, and toys.

The Alley has terrific bowling lanes, and master scorer John Hmurovic was challenged to a game. He managed to break 100, and everyone on the team had a great time.

You can look forward to more socials in 2011. We hope to see you at a future event. Happy New Year to everyone!



*"My New Year's resolution is to stand up for what I believe in and what my constituents expect and deserve."*

Susan Garrett, Illinois State Senator 29th District



1. Claire Montenegro and Adrienne Kirshbaum; 2. Newsletter co-editor, Allan Sperling signs in at Holiday Party. Karen Singer, Cosette Winter and Mary Mathews oversee registration. 3. Hundreds of items, including Tenth Dems buttons, are raffled off to lucky winners. 4. Barbara Altman, newsletter Editor-in-Chief, enjoying pizza. 5. Susan Friedman and Allan Sperling, newsletter co-editors, and Carol Blustein, Northfield Township trustee, smile for the camera. 6. Kim Rodriguez signs one of the thank you posters for Dan Seals. 7. Arthur Chapman scans the dessert table. 8. Karen McCormick and John Hmurovic; 9. Glenn Stier, Tenth Dems webmaster, rocks out with Elvis. 10. Carolyn and Perry Zafariades pose with State Representative Carol Sente. 11. Hon. Dan Pierce signs another thank you poster for Dan Seals. 12. State Representative Karen May and Flor Washington, accepting a posthumous honorary doctorate for her husband, State Representative Eddie Washington.





*"I'm resolving to help connect Illinoisans with their government, at all levels. More voices in our political process will lead us to better results."*

*Sheila Simon, Illinois Lt. Gov.-elect*

*"To keep Illinois' economy moving in the right direction!"*

*Pat Quinn, Illinois Governor*



*"My New Year's resolution—I will not sweat the small stuff and will stand up for transparent, open government."*

*Michelle Feldman, Lake County Board District 22*

13. Barb Cornew, Cathy O'Brien, and Steve Walanka; 14. Hon. Lauren Beth Gash and Andy Bookman prepare to knock down some pins. 15. Karen and Pat Desent; 16. Audrey Russell; 17. Leadership Committee member Elizabeth Albert with State Senator Susan Garrett and Sharon Sanders; 18. Greg Garmisa and his wife, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, display their Tenth Dems degrees. 19. Bev Rosenstein, Audrey Russell, and Stella Jones 20. Tenth Dems banner is proudly displayed during raffle. Tickets were drawn by Marcy Maller and Linda Gohlke. 21. John Hmurovic is one of many bowlers at the Holiday Party. 22. Mary Clare Jakes, Honorable Lauren Beth Gash, and Beth Martin; 23. Arthur and Lorraine Chapman make new friends. 24. Andy Bookman, Eric Preston, Mary Mathews, and David Bonner; 25. David Bonner, Ilya Sheyman, and Andy Bookman enjoy the party. 26. State Representative Karen May and Paul Frank, candidate for Highland Park City Council; 27. Moraine Township Trustee Dwayne Douglas, State Representative Karen May, Phil Carigan, College of Lake County trustee, Waukegan Township Supervisor Patricia Jones, and former State Representative Lauren Beth Gash.

# A Letter from an Editor: Who's Got the "Write" Stuff?

We are nearly halfway through President Obama's first term, and the anguished cries of discontent, even betrayal, are heard with greater and greater frequency across this land—from Democrats. (The Republicans, it should be noted, have been remarkably consistent in their criticisms of the president since before he took office.) While it comes as no surprise that the GOP would take umbrage with Mr. Obama, the fervor of Democratic dissatisfaction with him should. We Americans have short political memories; Democrats, even shorter. Every time I hear a formerly rock-ribbed Obama supporter vilify a presidential action (or lack thereof), I sit back a moment and picture what these last two years could have been like under a McCain administration, abetted by his own personal attack moose, Caribou Barbie Palin.

People, we need to put a cork in our anger toward President Obama and direct our wrath where it really belongs: the GOP. From Chairman Michael Steele down through the ranks to the truly rank (Rep. Michele Bachmann, I'm talking to you), and down even further to the right-wing media loudmouths polluting our airwaves, an entire political party has been co-opted, placing its extraordinarily narrow self-interest ahead of the legitimate interests of several hundred million of us regular Americans.

The results of the just-concluded midterm election ensure that the next two years are likely to be full of the same governmental

gridlock that has effectively paralyzed the U.S. Senate in recent years and now promises to do the same to the House of Representatives. Have you seen and heard enough of this nonsense? Would you like to make your voice heard? Numerous issues, serious issues, threaten the very future of our communities, our state, and our country, if left unattended. For example, what have you done to encourage responsible school board candidates in your local district? And, while we're talking about responsibility, the state of Illinois has dramatically underfunded public employee pensions for decades. How much longer can we allow this stunning level of incompetence to imperil the state's fiscal standing, and throw far too many lives into chaos? And, while we're at it, where is the public outcry over our society's continuing refusal to treat education with the importance it demands? Is it any wonder we've fallen behind other industrialized nations? Though it seems, at times, there's nothing we can do individually to change things for the better, each of us still has a voice. The newsletter you're reading now can serve as a forum for you, yes you, to speak to an issue you're particularly passionate about. Send your articles and ideas to [tenthnewseditors@gmail.com](mailto:tenthnewseditors@gmail.com).

We've been bombarded with plenty of crackpot ideas in the past few decades. The time is now to solicit common sense solutions from those among us who have been silent for too long.

## My Plea for More Space

by Debra Shore

For someone whose favorite song used to be Peter Pan's "I Won't Grow Up," my wish for 2011 will seem passing strange, but here it is: I want the grown-ups to come back and be in charge.

I won't grow up,  
(I won't grow up)  
I don't want to go to school.  
(I don't want to go to school)  
Just to learn to be a parrot,  
(Just to learn to be a parrot)  
And recite a silly rule.

Hey, I still don't want to go to school, but a bit more gravitas in the public realm would be welcome, don't you think?

I feel as if there is a madness loose across our land, a flight from reason into sound and fury. We whine and complain and demand immediate pain relief. The traditional filters separating news from noise are failing. "We are creatures of comfort and convenience," a prominent pollster noted. "We simply will not compromise our comfort and convenience." Good luck addressing climate change, right?

I won't grow up,  
I don't want to wear a tie.  
And a serious expression  
In the middle of July.

So it is I find myself yearning for grown-ups—those sober, serious, responsible people who knew things, showed character, and weren't afraid of hardship or sacrifice.

The ad I wanted to see throughout the recent campaign cycle opens with a scene of a child building a sand castle at the beach. As he lugs buckets of water from the ocean's edge, his father comes to join him, helping to shape an intricate structure. Other siblings begin to help, and mom, too. They work steadily, absorbed in creating something



grand and wonderful. It takes time, and patience, and yet there is pleasure and pride in the work. At some point, they step back to admire what they have built. Then a group of other people come down the beach (Think rowdy; think Tea Party.). They see the sand castle and kick it down. In an instant, what had taken so long to build was knocked over, destroyed.

Voiceover: "Democrats: We build things. Social Security. Healthcare Reform. Building takes time and effort. Republicans? The Party of No, HELL NO."

My wish for 2011 is for leaders who find the courage to lead, for citizens who decry the flight from reason in our public life, for elected officials who serve the public instead of their own ambitions. My wish for 2011 is to become such a leader.

And if it means I must prepare  
To shoulder burdens with a worried air,  
Well, then, it is time. Let's step up together.

*Debra Shore is a Commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.*



## Congress Watch *continued from page 1*

person exemption to \$3.5 million. But the amendment failed in a 194-233 vote. Sixty Democrats and 173 Republicans voted against it. (For more details on the vote, see <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll646.xml>.)

Some Democratic lawmakers were so outraged by the bill's generous tax breaks for the ultra rich that they refused to support it. Given the nation's \$13.8 trillion national debt and \$1.4 trillion deficit, "it seems unconscionable... to be driving up this already too high national debt by giving tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires who don't need it,

## I Want My Party Back *continued from page 1*

the face of all these challenges, the best we could do was to give everyone a refund on their government in the form of tax cuts was the last straw.

What happened to the party of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy? Of Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson? Of Russ Feingold and Paul Wellstone? Of Abner Mikva and, yes, of then-candidate Barack Obama?

I've had enough. I want my party back.

I want to see Democrats invest in our shared prosperity by passing a new jobs bill that would: provide a life vest of unemployment assistance to those drowning without work; that would guarantee state aid so that communities wouldn't have to continue letting go of cops, firefighters, or teachers; that would stimulate public and private sector job creation through direct hiring for infrastructure projects; and that would create a national green jobs bank that would provide loans directly to small businesses.

I want to see Democrats vote for a fixed timetable to extricate ourselves from the quagmire in Afghanistan and to finally bring every brave man and woman home from Iraq, so that we can start building bridges and roads, schools and hospitals, mass transit and a green economy—right here in Buffalo Grove and North Chicago instead of Kabul and Baghdad.

## Middle East Peace *continued from page 2*

avoiding negotiations aimed at achieving a final status agreement. The legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians are not going to be achieved by violence and they're not going to be achieved by the equivalent of holding their breath until their lips turn blue. Direct negotiations are [the] sole pathway to their goal and the sooner they recognize this fact, the better."

**Israel has a moral and legal right to build settlements.** One reason those less sympathetic to Israel prefer to call the disputed land "the West Bank" instead of the traditional "Judea and Samaria" is that it's hard to argue that Jews don't have historic ties to "Judea" or that Jews should be forbidden from living in "Judea." Jews have lived in this land for thousands of years, and modern political Zionism emerged in the 1800s, decades before the Holocaust. The League of Nations and Great Britain formally recognized the need for and legitimacy of Israel shortly after World War I.

Israel administers the disputed territories today because Jordan attacked Israel in 1967. One can question the wisdom of building settlements, but it is hard to argue that Jews do not have the right to live in land that they've lived in for generations and that Israel recovered in a defensive war. The assertion by Palestinian leaders that peace is only possible if Jews leave Judea and Samaria is anti-Semitic and racist. If over one million Arabs can live within pre-1967 Israel, why can't about a quarter as many Jews live in what amounts to about five percent of Judea and Samaria?

and in a number of cases they don't even want it," Sanders said.

Speaking shortly before the vote, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), who voted against the bill, echoed the sentiment: at a time of record deficits, it is "simply obscene to give another lavish tax cut to the top two percent."

Most Democrats, however, felt they had no choice but to vote for the bill in order to provide sorely needed unemployment benefits to Americans who lost their jobs in the recession.

I want to see Democrats defend our commitment to health and retirement security with a plan that asks the wealthy to pay their fair share into social security, keeping its promise to future generations, while gradually expanding Medicare to cover every single American and stand behind the promise that quality, affordable healthcare should in fact be a birthright of every single American.

I want to see Democrats fight for real immigration reform that finally takes 12 million of our neighbors out of the shadows and gives them a pathway to citizenship and an ability to realize their dreams and aspirations right here in the United States of America.

I want to see Democrats introduce and pass a Civil Rights Act for the 21st century that guarantees the full spectrum of thousands of rights, responsibilities, and privileges that comes with equal citizenship to all our LGBTQ brothers and sisters.

And, most of all, I want to see Democrats who aren't afraid to stand up and be Democrats—to take up that mantle of progressivism and boldly proclaim that, in the words of the late Paul Wellstone, "Politics isn't about money or power games, it's about the improvement of people's lives."

In the end, that's the kind of politics—a politics of conviction, not capitulation—that can win in the 10th Congressional District in 2012.

And, more importantly, it's also the only way we can keep the American dream alive for future generations.

**Settlements are not the root cause of the conflict or an obstacle to peace.** We hear so often about the centrality of settlements that we can be forgiven for wondering whether, if asked what causes global warming, Palestinian leaders would blame the settlements. When Israel was reestablished in 1948, none of Judea and Samaria was within Israel's borders, yet the Arabs attacked Israel. When Egypt threatened to "drive the Jews into the sea" prior to the 1967 Six Day War, Israel did not control Judea and Samaria—Jordan did. The PLO was formed in 1964, three years before Israel controlled Judea and Samaria and three years before there were any settlements. The "Palestine" the organization was formed to "liberate" was and is all of Israel.

**Arab refusal to recognize Israel is the primary obstacle to peace.** The root cause of the conflict is not the settlements, but the failure of Arab leadership to recognize and accept Israel as a Jewish state. That's why Palestinian leadership rejected the peace plan proffered by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Ehud Barak, which would have given the Palestinians a state on 95 to 98 percent of Judea and Samaria (depending on whose numbers you believe) and Gaza and why Palestinian leadership rejected Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's even more generous offer in 2008. What Palestinian leadership wanted was not another Arab state but the elimination of the only Jewish state. How can Israel be blamed for administering Judea and Samaria when Israel twice offered to cede control but could find no takers?

**Peace is possible if Arab leaders are willing to make peace.** Consider Anwar Sadat's sincere desire to make peace. Settlements

## Middle East Peace *continued from page 7*

did not stop Egypt from making peace. Ariel Sharon forcibly evicted settlers from the Sinai as part of that peace agreement. Israel unilaterally evacuated all settlements in Gaza in 2005—if settlements were the issue, Gaza should have emerged as an island of peace. But the result was not peace but thousands of rockets fired from Gaza into Israel. Settlements were never the issue—there is no “occupation” in Gaza. The only Israeli in Gaza is the kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been held for over four years in violation of international law.

**The U.S. should not impose its formula for peace on Israel.** Israel has proven that it is willing to take risks for peace, and Israel will be less likely to take those risks if it perceives that its lone reliable ally is not solidly behind it. If Israel determines that its security needs require another path on settlements, the U.S. should support the decision of its ally—Israeli children will pay the price if the wrong decision is made. It is not for us, living in the relative safety of America, to dictate to Israel what its security needs are. If we’ve learned anything from our follies in Vietnam and Iraq, it’s that we cannot impose our vision of peace on people living thousands of miles away. Only the parties to the conflict can make a genuine peace, and thus far, Palestinian leadership has proven incapable of making peace, or unwilling to do so.

**Steps can be taken toward a rational settlement policy.** The United States should insist on a rational settlement policy, one that recognizes that Israel cannot freeze, and should not be expected to freeze, natural growth. Moreover, growth within the construction lines, or “vertical growth,” should be excluded from the definition of “freeze” as should growth in communities in Jerusalem or suburbs of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

But if Israel has the superior moral, legal, and historic right to Judea

and Samaria, why freeze any settlement-building? The answer is that Israel values peace over land. That’s why Israel returned the Sinai, unilaterally withdrew from Lebanon, unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, and was willing to cede nearly all of Judea and Samaria in return for the promise of peace. And that’s why Israel, despite the legitimacy of its claims, froze settlement growth for 10 months. The real question is why the Palestinians waited until the freeze was about to expire before even pretending to resume talks.

The dilemma is that Israel is forced to choose between its rights and its Jewish character. Israel cannot remain Jewish and democratic if it administers Judea and Samaria indefinitely—that’s a demographic fact. Most Israelis favor a two-state solution for these reasons and await Arab partners for peace willing and able to implement it. But there is no doubt that certain settlement blocs will remain under Israeli control under a two-state solution and that Jerusalem will remain Israel’s capital, which is why demands by this and previous administrations that Israel freeze all settlement growth and building in Jerusalem are unreasonable and counterproductive. Extreme demands on Israel only fuel extremist Arab fantasies and delay true progress toward peace. The U.S. should support, not pressure, Israel as it takes the steps its democratically elected government deems necessary for peace and security.

Is the goal of Palestinian leadership a state for the Palestinians or the elimination of the Jewish state? By telling Palestinian leadership loud and clear that we support a two-state solution, that we recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s undivided capital, and that we recognize the right of Jews to live in their historic homeland, regardless of the ultimate disposition of that land, we would send a powerful message to the Arab world: time is not on your side, and the sooner you make peace with Israel, the better it will be for you and the world.

## YES, We Did

*by Robert P. Watson, Ph.D., Lynn University*

*Recognizing that although there are disappointments in the Obama administration, many actions have been forgotten or unnoticed. The following is the first in a series of noteworthy accomplishments that should be remembered, keeping in mind that the list is a continuing work in progress.*

Like all presidents, Barack Obama has made mistakes. But, as a presidential historian, I have been struck by claims being put forward by Obama’s many critics and the news media that he has accomplished little when, in fact, his presidency is easily one of the most active in history. Moreover, the president has faced venomous incivility and relentless opposition unlike anything in recent memory. As such, with all the misinformation circulating on talk radio, at town hall meetings, and in the blogosphere about the president, here is a fact-checked list of some of President Obama’s initiatives.

### ETHICS

- Ordered the White House and all federal agencies to respect the Freedom of Information Act and overturned Bush-era limits on accessibility of federal documents (2009)
- Instructed all federal agencies to promote openness and transparency as much as possible (2009)
- Placed limits on lobbyists’ access to the White House (2009)
- Placed limits on White House aides working for lobbyists after their tenure in the administration (2009)
- Signed a measure strengthening registration and reporting requirements for lobbyists (2009)
- Ordered that lobbyists must be removed from and are no longer permitted to serve on federal and White House advisory panels and

boards (2009) \* Note: After saying he would not hire lobbyists, a few have been hired in the administration

- Denied companies and individuals who are delinquent on their taxes or owe back taxes the opportunity to bid for federal contracts (2009)
- Initiated the “e-Rulemaking Initiative” (in cooperation with Cornell University) to allow for online public “notice and comment” of federal laws and initiatives (2010)
- Issued the “Open Gov Directive” ordering all Cabinet departments to promote transparency and citizen participation in their policies (2010)
- Signed extensions on banning lobbyists from serving on agency boards (2010)
- Developed the “Do Not Pay List” with data on contractors and recipients of federal funds who are deemed to be ineligible because of fraud and abuse

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