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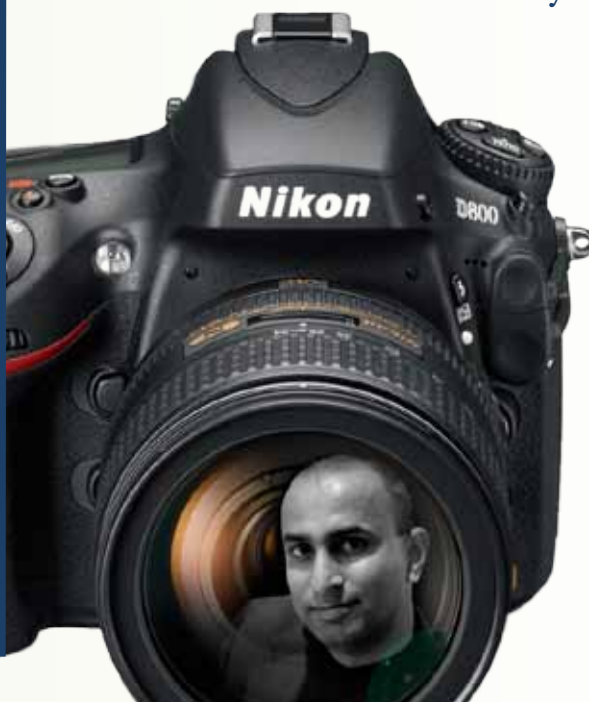
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# THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN: RAVI GANAPATHY by Eleonora di Liscia



When Ravi Ganapathy arrived as a graduate student from India in 1989, the world of politics was far from his mind. Then the second Bush administration invaded Iraq, and Ravi took notice.

"Until the 2000 election, I had zero idea about politics. No clue as to what the policies were, what the Congress was. I would have to thank President Bush for getting me into politics with 9/11 and what happened after that. It got me to understand more about what is going on in our country," Ravi said.

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## Tenth News

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July 2012 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 9, Edition 7

## Dold Votes to Reduce Investment in Clean Energy

With the congressional election just four months away, 10th District Representative Robert J. Dold appears to be going all out to transform his image, making high-profile statements, casting occasional, uncharacteristically "correct" votes, and sponsoring sham legislation in support of make-or-break issues—such as women's reproductive rights—which, in practice, he's repeatedly voted to undermine.

District residents must be sure not to draw erroneous conclusions about Dold's true stand on critical issues based on isolated votes and public statements. Instead, voters must consider his entire voting record since January 2009, the start of Dold's first term in Congress. That record reveals an unwavering allegiance

to corporate interests—at the expense of the American public, the environment, hard-won human and civil rights, and the nation's ability to compete in the global economy.

In a recent display of his misguided priorities, Congressman Dold voted on June 6 for the passage of H.R. 5325—The Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act 2013. The bill, which passed the house in a 255:165 vote, increases by \$298 million funding for the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons program, while slashing funding for clean energy research and development programs. Specifically, the bill cuts funding for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) by

\$75 million below the FY 2012 enacted level; ARPA-E is the government agency tasked with promoting and funding research and development of advanced energy technologies that industry, by itself, is unlikely to support. The bill also cuts the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) programs by \$428 million and the Office of Science by \$73 million.

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**JULY ISSUE**

## Dold Votes to Reduce Investment in Clean Energy *(continued from page 1)*

If enacted, the energy and water appropriations bill would bring spending on energy efficiency and renewable energy to its lowest level since 2006, “leaving U.S. competitiveness at risk in new markets and clean energy industries such as advanced vehicles, advanced manufacturing, energy efficiency for homes and business, and domestic renewable energy, such as wind, solar, and biomass,” the Obama Administration said in a May 31 policy statement. (See [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/legislative/sap/112/saphr5325h\\_20120531.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/legislative/sap/112/saphr5325h_20120531.pdf).) Still, Dold voted with his party on June 6 for the defeat of several amendments aimed at restoring Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy funding, including Amendment No. 1205, offered by Jackson Lee (D. TX) and Amendment No. 1179, offered by Paul Tonko (D. NY). The Lee amendment proposed to increase the funds for the Department of Energy-Energy Programs-Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Account by \$10 million and reduce the Atomic Energy Defense Activities-National Nuclear Security Administration-Weapons Activities Account by the same amount. Tonko

proposed a \$180,440,000 increase in funding for the same program addressed by the Lee amendment, with an equivalent reduction in the Atomic Energy Defense Activities, National Nuclear Security Administration, Weapons Activities Account.

The energy and water appropriations bill also prohibits the closure of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste depository—a longstanding, key objective of the Obama administration—and includes numerous other provisions that undermine the Obama administration’s green energy policy. To wit: it curtails eligibility for the program to weatherize homes and blocks implementation of new regulations to make federal buildings more efficient.

Dold’s support of this regressive, anti-environment appropriations bill (and opposition to amendments that would have mitigated some of the harm) highlights his willingness to advance corporate interests at the expense of seeking solutions to the severe environmental crisis threatening our nation and the

world. His refusal to stand up to his party and fight for a better future increases the urgency for moderates and progressives to work together to replace him with Democratic opponent Brad Schneider, who is committed to responsibly maintaining the environment, in part by working to expand the nation’s use of renewable sources of energy. “Doing so will enrich the lives and livelihoods of all Americans,” Schneider says. “Responsible stewardship of the nation’s resources will promote economic growth, create jobs, and preserve our global leadership in industries such as agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and transportation.”



# THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN:

**RAVI GANAPATHY** *(continued from page 1)*

Ravi first ventured into politics by donating to the 2004 Kerry campaign. During Bush's second term, Ravi became more frustrated, even depressed, at where the country was heading. He started to read about history, the Federalist Papers, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. "Reading gave me a little more understanding of how forward-thinking the founders of this country were. We created this country to escape from monarchy and to have freedom of religion. In a sense, we're becoming more religiously polarized and creating a different type of monarchy. I call it a corporate monarchy," he said.

Understanding led to action. When Sam Piro from Tenth Dems sought canvassers in Wisconsin for Obama, Ravi signed up.

"I had never thought about becoming a citizen. Just before I got involved with canvassing, I thought even if it's one vote. It's going to count," said Ravi.

Ravi took the oath of citizenship one month before the 2008 election, just in time to cast his first ballot for Obama.

Ravi worked for the software industry until 2008, when with the support

of his wife, he launched his own photography business.

"When I started working in 1992, we went to work at 7 a.m. and came home at 5 or 6 p.m. After that was your personal time. Now with laptops, VPN connections and BlackBerries, responses are expected immediately, and weekend work is now standard," said Ravi. "My philosophy is that we work to make our family life better. Quite often I noticed my wife and I were in front of the TV with laptops while our daughter was doing homework in a different room. It did not feel right to me, and I had been thinking for over five years to seek an alternate path."

Ravi's software and photography background enable him to play an integral part in Tenth Dems. He photographs all major Tenth Dems events, like last February's candidate forum and appearances by Gov. Howard Dean, and Senators Dick Durbin, Mark Begich, and Amy Klobuchar. He is currently organizing a small photography group to insure future Tenth Dems events are fully covered. Ravi also provides some technological help such as posting the monthly newsletter on the Tenth Dems website and email.

Ravi is spurred by his concern for the next generation. He believes the United States is at a worldwide disadvantage from exporting manufacturing and IT jobs, and now medical patients, overseas, leaving little opportunity for our children. While China and India have exploded in educational output, Republicans here have pursued policies that push people further into poverty by curbing programs such as welfare and student loans. Republicans are creating a country where healthcare, education, and well-paying jobs are only for the privileged and not for the majority, he says.

"When I left India in 1989, my state had 28 engineering schools. As of last year, there are 605. Compare that to us—we are making it less and less affordable for kids to attend college. If this is the path we are taking, in less than 20 years we will become a third world economy, and that's what keeps me up at night," he said.

Ravi also believes deregulation has led to what he calls "corporate communism." In France, any service provider that runs lines to your home must allow competitors to use those same lines. In the U.S., however, each service provider must install its own line, effectively preventing small businesses from competing and stifling real consumer choice. Ravi hopes that change will come. "However small the change may be, I hope as more people think this way, all these trickles will turn into a flood, and that the next generation of kids will have a better life than ours."

**UP  
ONLY AND BE  
COUNTED**



# Why We Must Change the Criminal Justice System in Lake County

by Sharon Sanders

On Tuesday, May 15, Tenth Dems University and Common Cause hosted a panel of experts in the field of criminal justice and wrongful convictions, particularly as it applies to Lake County. The panel included Chris Kennedy, Democratic candidate for Lake County State's Attorney and a former prosecutor and advocate for our most vulnerable citizens. Rounding out the panel were Jed Stone, criminal justice attorney in Waukegan; Rob Warden, award-winning legal affairs journalist and co-founder of the Center on Wrongful Convictions; and Rey Lopez-Calderon, Executive Director of Common Cause Illinois and a political consultant. Our own Lauren Beth Gash did an outstanding job as moderator.

The topic for discussion was Lake County's dysfunctional criminal justice system, which has received nationwide notoriety. It's not to say that judicial systems work much better in other cities, counties, and states throughout the country, but Lake County is particularly notorious because of the number of innocent people who were convicted of crimes by Lake County prosecutors in the recent past. Many of these convictions were procured by coercing false confessions through physical and emotional abuse.

What the public needs to understand is not only that some individuals, particularly minorities, are wrongfully

convicted but also how wrongful convictions impact the accused, their families, and society as a whole. Obviously, if the wrong person is sitting in jail, the perpetrator is out on the street able to prey on new victims. And, as in the case of Lake County, the cost to the taxpayer can be astronomical when the innocent person is released and sues for the wasted years spent in jail.

The Juan Rivera case has received national attention. Rivera spent 19 years of his life in prison for a crime he did not commit and was ultimately exonerated through DNA tests. Less well-known than Rivera, Jerry Hobbs spent five years in jail in Lake County awaiting trial on charges he killed his daughter and her friend in 2005. Prosecutors dropped the charges after DNA pointed to another man as the murderer. The same held true for James Edwards, convicted in 1994 of the bludgeoning death of a Waukegan store owner. The blood found at the scene recently was linked to someone else. And Bennie Starks, whose case also has received a lot of national attention, spent 20 years in prison for rape before he was released on bond when the DNA evidence was determined not to be his.

Mike Waller, the current Lake County State's Attorney and a Republican, is

now stepping down, but the office has been in Republican hands for far too many years. It desperately needs a change if we're going to have a fair and just system. The office's way of "doing business" is entrenched and change requires a clean sweep. But only the voters can make that change.

Those who argue that we should be grateful for a tough law enforcement system, and thus minimize the impact of false convictions, must remember that when the wrong person is imprisoned, the real criminal is still a menace to society. Chris Kennedy knows this first hand. His cousin was murdered on her way home from college, the random victim of someone who should never have been out on parole. So Chris knows why real justice is so important. And we, as taxpayers, literally pay the price for wrongful convictions in the form of vast sums of money to compensate innocent people for years spent behind bars.

As those who attended the Tenth Dems University symposium learned, we all have to be proactive in working toward a fair and just criminal justice system. One large step will be to support and vote for Chris Kennedy for Lake County State's Attorney.



It was an op ed piece written in 1994 that I hadn't seen for years. Under the headline, "Even after Brown, understanding came one person at a time," constitutional scholar Linda Monk commemorated the 40th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by revealing an incident in her own life.

Monk was in seventh grade in 1970 when her Mississippi grade school was integrated. Assigned to work with a black student, Monk, who described herself as "a very racist little twelve-year-old," made her new classmate's life miserable. Yet, the other girl "... stuck it through. Her very presence was a rebuke to me." It took Monk a long time to change

I pulled this article from my files after watching President Obama's interview with Robin Roberts in which he stated his support for gay marriage. Much has been written about why Obama gave his support at this time and whether or not he will benefit politically. What interested me, however, was his explanation of how he reached his decision, an explanation similar to Linda Monk's struggle against her own racism. Obama and his wife had discussed the issue of gay marriage over the years, and "in the end the values that I care most deeply about and she cares most deeply about is [sic] how we treat other people," Obama said. He made reference to the Golden Rule and noted members

no idea where homosexuals lived—somewhere on the Planet Gay in a distant galaxy. Later, in college, it seemed that homosexuals—such as Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, and Allen Ginsberg—were exotic literary figures, but still distant in time and place.

I was to learn better. My favorite history professor at Northern Illinois University was gay, and I wondered how lonely his life must have been surrounded by the cornfields of DeKalb. Thirty years later he committed suicide. Early in my teaching career, I had colleagues who many of my fellow teachers and I suspected were gay, but they were careful, even secretive, to keep their



her attitude. She hadn't associated with black people before. "School was where I was finally able to learn about blacks as people, not as caricatures, and it was a painful learning process."

Monk didn't excuse her prejudice, recognizing that other children acted with more sensitivity and kindness. "I know all too well that I am not naturally an enlightened person. I had to learn better."

of his staff "who are in incredibly committed monogamous ... same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together."

Regarding gay marriage, like President Obama and so many others, I went through this same learning process over a long period of time. An adolescent in the 1960s who thought about girls at least once every five seconds, I knew absolutely nothing about homosexuality. I had

private lives separate from faculty events. As years went by and gay couples began to live together more openly, I knew several gay friends in relationships as committed as my own marriage. I supported domestic partnership and civil union laws as a reasonable compromise that would give my gay friends the same legal rights that my late wife and I enjoyed as a married couple. I thought this would be enough, but I was wrong for several reasons.

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First, the conservative agenda. Mitt Romney not only opposes same-sex marriages but also civil unions “if they are identical to marriage other than by name.” He has signed the National Organization for Marriage’s pledge to support a constitutional amendment allowing marriage only between a man and a woman. And under his administration, the federal government would vigorously support the Defense of Marriage Act, which forbids federal recognition of same-sex marriages.

In his recent article, “Redefining marriage to include same-sex couples would benefit nobody,” John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, articulates the conservative defense of traditional marriage. He contends that family relationships are not about equal rights but, rather, meeting different needs in different ways and that men and women approach marriage with different but necessary perspectives. “Marriage is built around complementarity of the sexes, and therefore the institution of marriage is a support of stable families and societies,” the archbishop explains.

Archbishop Sentamu’s comments point to this larger conservative agenda. Nancy Polikoff argues in *Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage* that recognizing distinct roles for husband and wife is a traditional concept used in the past to relegate wives to servitude, without rights to their own property or the custody of their children. By advocating for traditional marriage limited to a man and a woman, many conservatives

are masking an agenda of limiting a woman’s role to that of dutiful wife and mother. Polikoff notes that, in the early 1970s, Phyllis Schlafly and her conservative Eagle Forum used the fear of gay marriage to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment. Also according to Polikoff, conservatives argue that federal assistance to the poor would be unnecessary in a society with a traditional two-parent household headed by a man.

Second, over the years the Supreme Court—citing either the right of privacy, due process, or equal protection—has frequently recognized the rights of men and women as individuals to determine how to live their lives. In 1967, the court overturned a Virginia law that forbade the marriage of blacks and whites. In 1965 it negated a law prohibiting the sale of contraceptives to married couples; seven years later it granted the same right to unmarried couples. Regarding gay couples, the court (with Justice Anthony Kennedy writing the majority opinion) actually admitted its error in upholding laws prohibiting sodomy, overruling a 1986 decision in 2003 to overturn such laws. Most recently, the federal appeals court in Boston unanimously ruled that the U.S. government cannot deny federal benefits to same-sex couples legally married in their home states. And another federal appeals court has refused to review a lower court’s ruling to overturn California’s Proposition 8 that banned same-sex marriage.

The *Chicago Tribune* reports that 31 states currently ban same-sex marriage, which has also been defeated in the 32 states where it has been on the ballot. Yet, the

*Tribune* also notes that “national polls have shown a strong swing toward acceptance of same-sex marriage.” In fact, a recent Gallup poll indicates that, for the first time, a majority of Americans (53 percent) favor same-sex marriage. There may well be setbacks ahead, but the string of court decisions coupled with a growing change in public opinion will eventually grant to same-sex couples an equal right to marry. Following the image first used by the nineteenth century abolitionist Theodore Parker, and later by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Finally, the outpouring of unrestrained joy among the gay community in response to Obama’s statement has been incredibly moving. Andrew Sullivan, the openly gay author of the *Newsweek* story on President Obama and gay marriage, blogged, “I think of all the gay kids out there who now know they have their president on their side. ... I think of the centuries and decades in which gay people found it impossible to believe that marriage and inclusion in their own families was possible for them, so crushed were they by the weight of social and religious pressure. I think of all those in the plague years shut out of hospital rooms, thrown out of apartments, written out of wills, treated like human garbage because they loved another human being. ... I think of the gay parents who now feel their president is behind their sacrifices and their love for their children.”

It took me a long time to understand something as simple as the Golden Rule I’d learned as a child in religious school. Like Linda Monk and President Obama, thank God I learned better.



# What's Wrong with Requiring ID to Vote? By Eleonora di Liscia

The tales of Chicago electoral politics are legion. Dead people showing up to vote. People casting multiple ballots in the same election. I even know someone whose sister arrived at the polls only to be told she had already voted. At times, it's hard to disentangle the truth from the legend.

So why not require citizens to prove who they are before handing them that ballot? What's wrong with producing identification? Doesn't everyone have ID anyway?

As Dane County Circuit Court Judge Richard G. Niess wrote in his brilliant March 12, 2012 decision permanently enjoining Wisconsin's voter identification law: "The right to vote belongs to all Wisconsin citizens who are qualified electors, not just the fortunate majority for whom Act 23 poses little obstacle at the polls."

While Judge Niess was strictly construing Wisconsin's state constitution (no judicial activism here), the principles at stake apply or should apply everywhere in America.

Wisconsin's Act 23, enacted May 25, 2011 by Governor Scott Walker and the Republican-dominated legislature, requires in part that Wisconsin voters must present unexpired identification—or ID that expired after the most recent election—in order to vote. Acceptable identification includes a state driver's license, state ID, armed forces ID, certificate of naturalization less than two years old, unexpired driving or ID card receipts, Indian tribal ID, or an unexpired student ID that contains the date

of issuance and a signature and expires no more than two years after issuance, along with proof of enrollment.

Most people should fall under at least one of those categories, right? But not everyone does or can. And Judge Niess's point is that the right to vote is too important, too sacred, too seminal to eliminate that right for any otherwise qualified voter. It is the right that underlies our entire system of government.

"Where does the Wisconsin Constitution say that the government we, the people, created can simply cast aside the inherent suffrage rights of any qualified elector on the wish and promise—even the guarantee—that doing so serves to prevent some unqualified individuals from voting? It doesn't. In fact, it unequivocally says the opposite," Niess wrote in his opinion.

While obtaining a state ID may seem simple enough, not everyone has the ability to get one. In Wisconsin, you must show proof of your name and birth date through either a birth certificate, a passport, or a naturalization paper. (Illinois requires proof of birth date, signature, and social security number.)

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign's *amicus brief* cites the burden placed on the elderly. About a quarter of those over age 65 no longer drive and do not otherwise need a state-issued ID. Some lack birth certificates. Many do not have the ability to get to a Department of Motor Vehicles office, perhaps because they are dependent on a ride or because of health issues. And as One Wisconsin Now points out, some DMV offices are only open one day a week.

In April, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported one instance where a 63-year-old woman and her 87-year-old mother were turned away from a

Waukesha poll because they lacked proper ID, even after Judge Niess's injunction. The 87-year-old woman had left her ID at home and the 63-year-old's had an out-of-date address.

Wisconsin students could also find themselves barred from voting. According to the *amicus brief*, as of June 2011, none of Wisconsin's universities or colleges issued IDs that fulfilled the voter ID act's requirements.

What if you are physically disabled? What if your wallet is lost or stolen along with your ID? Should you be denied entry to the voting booth?

Sure voter fraud "corrupts elections and undermines our form of government.... But voter fraud is no more poisonous to our democracy than voter suppression. Indeed, they are two heads on the same monster," Judge Niess writes.

The more appropriate way to address voter fraud is through the state's police powers, through civil and criminal penalties, and not through burdening the right itself. As an 1880 Wisconsin Supreme Court opinion warned, the right to vote must not be impaired by regulation. *Dells v. Kennedy*, 49 Wis. 555, 6 N.W. 246, 246-247 (1880). Any regulation can become a slippery slope, enabling politicians little-by-little to invade and subvert the right to vote itself.

As Judge Niess concludes: "A government that undermines the very foundation of its existence—the people's inherent, pre-constitutional right to vote—imperils its legitimacy as a government by the people, for the people, and especially of the people. It sows the seeds for its own demise as a democratic institution."







5-4.

*Citizens United v Federal Election Commission*, a decision that unleashed massive Republican buy-out of elections, was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court 5-4.

That and a host of other 5-4 decisions have chiseled away at our constitutional rights: The right to remain silent (*Berghuis v. Thompkins*). The right not to be strip searched over minor offenses (*Florence v. Board of Chosen Freeholders of County of Burlington*). The right to insure separation of church and state (*Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn*).

Just one vote would have reversed the outcome on any of these decisions. If the healthcare bill is declared unconstitutional by the time you read this, it will likely be 5-4. If the Supreme Court overturns the privacy rights inherent in *Roe v. Wade*, it will likely be 5-4.

This month's column is more of a *Yes, We Will!* than a *Yes, We Did!* but it underscores the importance of re-electing President Obama and enough Senate Democrats to insure that the next Supreme Court appointment can flip that 5-4 balance to a progressive majority, or at least not dig us in deeper with a right-wing majority of 6-3.

Still, President Obama already has made two historic Supreme Court picks. Justice Sonia Sotomayor is the first Hispanic and third female Supreme Court Justice. Justice Elena Kagan's appointment marks the first time that two consecutive women have been appointed and that three women have served together on the bench.

Both women replaced liberal justices (David Souter and John Paul Stevens). Both women are credited with bringing a new dynamism to the court. A March 1, 2011 *USA Today* article reported: "The new justices have brought a stronger voice on the left than the four liberals had before.... Kagan particularly is putting forward broader legal arguments that could guide her colleagues' thinking, often in contrast to those set up by the court's five conservatives."

On May 11, 2010, *The Washington Post* reported that the pair represented a shift toward a "younger, changing court, one that values experiences outside the courtroom and emphasizes personal interaction as much as deep knowledge of the law."

Initially, there were fears that Sotomayor, with her background as a prosecutor, would lean conservative, but that hasn't been the case. According to the June 8, 2010 *Los Angeles Times*, Sotomayor has voted reliably with the liberal bloc on cases concerning campaign speech, religion, juvenile crime, federal power, and Miranda rights.

Sotomayor's first major dissent was in another 5-4 decision, *Berghuis v. Thompkins*. The majority held that a criminal defendant may be questioned for hours by police unless the defendant clearly states that he wishes to remain silent. Simply remaining silent is not enough. In her dissent, Sotomayor wrote that the government had to show that a defendant knowingly gave up his constitutional right to remain silent, but the Court had overruled that safeguard.

Sotomayor was part of the 5-4 majority (with Justice Kennedy's swing vote) that held it cruel and unusual punishment to sentence a juvenile defendant who had not committed murder to life without parole. She strenuously dissented when the Court refused to hear the case of a Louisiana inmate who was forced to do hard labor in 100-degree heat as punishment for not taking his HIV medication.

The first Supreme Court Justice in 40 years to have never served as a judge, Kagan has developed a reputation for colorful writing and insightful questioning. Her questions, wrote *USA Today* (March 1, 2011), "reveal a more sweeping context, one often at odds with the prevailing view of the ideological right." According to Jeffrey Rosen in *The New Republic*, "Kagan's real strength, however, is her ability to brush away the legalistic smokescreens of justices on the opposing side."

Kagan's first major dissent was in a 5-4 decision preventing U.S. taxpayers from challenging government programs that help religious organizations via a private-school tax credit. Arizona allows residents to apply up to \$500 of their state income tax toward tuition paid to private schools, many of which are religious schools. The majority held that the taxpayers lacked standing

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**JULY ISSUE**



## YES, WE DID! THE SUPREME COURT *(continued from page 8)*



candidate would be forced to restrain his or her spending to avoid triggering the matching funds. "There's just one problem," Kagan wrote. "Arizona's matching funds provision does not restrict, but instead subsidizes speech." Kagan noted that Arizona had every reason to try to develop effective anti-corruption measures.

A president who chooses the judiciary leaves his footprint for decades to come.

Besides his two Supreme Court picks, President Obama has appointed 29 Court of Appeals and 148 District Court judges. Selecting judges for the lower federal courts can be critical as these judges serve as our first line of defense in protecting our rights and our environment. Returning Obama to office is not just about the presidency. The entire judicial branch is at stake, as well.

to challenge the law because a tax credit enabling taxpayers to spend their own money was not the same as a government subsidy.

Kagan countered that to deny standing "threatens to eliminate all occasions for a taxpayer to contest the government's monetary support of religion." She analogized to the bank bailout: What if instead of a bailout, the government had allowed "the banks to subtract the exact same amount from the tax bill they would otherwise have to pay to the U.S. Treasury. Would this proposal calm the furor? Or would most taxpayers respond by saying that a subsidy is a subsidy (or a bailout is a bailout)...?"

Kagan's second major dissent involved campaign finance. The 5-4 decision struck down an Arizona law that provided public matching funds to a candidate when his or her opponent reached a certain level of private funding. The majority held the law restrained free speech in that a



## Fifth Graders' Wish Lists Fulfilled by Vicki Bailyn



We delivered our fourth and fifth Teachers' Wish Lists to the fifth grade classrooms of Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. Cardenas at Clearview Elementary in Waukegan. Teachers and kids were very excited to see the books—and even the crayons and copy paper! Even hand sanitizer! We wish that we could do this for every elementary classroom in Waukegan. And then, one-by-one, for every classroom throughout the 10th District.

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**JULY ISSUE**



# Tenth Dems Hosts Second Annual Poetry and Prose Slam by Daniel J. Berkowitz



"What is belonging?"

This was the question that brought together high school students from across the northern 10th Congressional District on Tuesday, May 22 to participate in the 10th Dems Community Connection's Second Annual Poetry (+Prose) Contest and Slam.

Students from Waukegan, St. Martin de Porres, North Chicago Community and Zion-Benton Township High Schools were invited to submit and read original works of poetry and prose on the subject of "belonging."

"Think of where you belong," students were asked. "Think of the groups, the communities you belong to. Who gives you that all-important sense of belonging?"

"What are you *longing* for," the prompt continued. "What do you want to be? What has gone on for too long and what would you change if you could?"

I believe I speak for many in the audience when I say that the degree of maturity and the profound quality of insight displayed by the evening's young poets were astonishing.

The contest and slam provided a unique opportunity for aspiring writers of high school age to share their work and hear the work of their peers, as well as to receive feedback from experienced and accomplished figures in the field.

The work submitted and shared by participating students reflected both literal and abstract interpretation of "belonging" — from the physical belonging of a mobile phone (and one's belonging to it, in return), to the intangible state of being accepted — or rejected — by others.

Some students entertained the question of what it is to belong to a group — such as one student's prose account of what, in his view and experience, it is to be an African-American male. Other students offered both fictional and factual accounts of being — and feeling — rejected; of what it is to be without belonging; of the journey toward finding it. Such work included insightful reflections on gender roles and painful recountings of both emotional and physical trauma.

Contestants' entries were submitted without any identifying information — the judges were given no indication as to a student's age, sex, race, religion, or any other descriptive trait or characteristic.

The entries were reviewed by judges Wendy Anderson and Jacqueline Nicole Harris — both highly and uniquely experienced in the art and, as Ms. Harris put it, "craft" of writing.

Ms. Anderson is a published poet and essayist, as well as a longtime professional writer and editor who has either written or edited for such publications as *Crain's Chicago Business*, *Chicago Magazine*, and the online literary magazine *Bookslut*,

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# Tenth Dems Hosts Second Annual Poetry and Prose Slam *(continued from page 11)*



## Community Connection Corner

among others. She is the author of the poetry collection, *Wild Things in the Yard*. Additionally, Ms. Anderson has taught in the graduate-level journalism program at Northwestern University, and regularly leads creative writing workshops focused on memoir and poetry.

Ms. Harris is a self-published author from North Chicago. She is a graduate of North Chicago Community High School and Shimer College (formally of Waukegan). Ms. Harris's debut book, *Random Acts of Verse*, is now available, and she is currently in the process of producing an audio album entitled "My Time."

The evening's emcee, Patrick Murfin, also attended Shimer College, as well as Columbia College Chicago. He served a stretch in prison as a draft resister, after which he worked on the Chicago underground newspaper, *The Seed*, and edited the monthly, *Industrial Worker*. He also co-authored with Fred W. Thompson *The IWW: Its First Seventy Years, 1905-1975*.

In 2004, Skinner House Books of Boston published his collection of poetry, *We Build Temples in the Heart*. He is a self-described eclectic blogger at *Heretic, Rebel, a Thing to Flout*, and contributes to both *The*

*Third City* blog and *Working Class Heroes*, an on-line journal.

When one considers the immense stature and broad experience of Ms. Anderson, Ms. Harris, and Mr. Murfin, it is no wonder that the evening's event was an overwhelming success.

Attendees and Tenth Dems organization staff alike offered nothing but praise for the event and its participants.

"This event," remarked one attendee, "highlights the importance of and greater need for support of the arts and artistic expression. It is a reminder of the great achievements young people can accomplish when they participate in the arts."

Many audience members expressed having been emotionally moved or intellectually inspired — if not both by the evening's performances and readings. See below for one audience member's take on the event.

The event also raised, for many in attendance, thoughts concerning the often politicized issue of arts education in public schools.

"As Democrats," said former state representative and Tenth Dems Chair Lauren Beth Gash, "we believe firmly in the importance of the arts and arts education. These students have shown today what great things they can do when they receive an education in creativity and self-expression."

The entries judged as the best were awarded prizes: \$200 for best poem; \$100 for second-place poem; \$50 for third-place poem, and \$200 for best piece of prose; \$100 for second-place prose; \$50 for third-place prose. Abigail Porcayo of St. Martin de Porres High School won first place in the poetry contest for her poem, "Shed A Tear." Alondra Padilla, also of St. Martin de Porres High School, won first place in the prose contest for her piece, "The Building With the Squeaky Door."

## Slam Leaves at Least One Audience Member Awe-Struck

Many of us search for something to believe in or to hope for, a goal to reach, a person or philosophy to hold us together when we fall apart. We look for a way to believe that what is to come will be better than what is or was. I'm writing to tell you there are great treasures in our midst.

At times I strained to hear every word of a nervously rushed reading of magnificent imagery. Sometimes I was overwhelmed by the candor.

Sometimes I was surprised by the degree of maturity and tenderness of the subjects, and I became a believer. I became a believer in the future that rests in the hands of the young who hold many marvels and gems among them and valiantly struggle with their gritty and raw wounds held in darkness and fear.

I'd forgotten that so much of what is to be treasured in life is not found by looking with our eyes but by listening

with our hearts and letting our minds be blown open by the imaginative and brilliant imagery exhibited by the artists, poets, writers, actors, teachers, and leaders of the next generation.

It was an honor to witness this unfolding of such formidable talent from among the high school students in our little part of the world.

--Aryn Alschuler



# Focusing Towards the Future

## *Tenth Dems Interns Hard at Work*



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