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Demystifying Obamacare As Enrollment Begins

by Barbara Altman

The passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA or "Obamacare") was the culmination of more than a half-century-long effort to ensure that no American has to forgo healthcare because of cost. As the "signature achievement" of the Obama administration, the ACA has been targeted by Republicans since the day it was signed into law – first through dozens of lawsuits and, when the Supreme Court failed to invalidate the legislation, through vote after vote to repeal or defund it. As of this writing, the Republican "crazy caucus" in the House is even proposing to condition funding the federal government after October 1 on defunding the ACA.

A proponent of "Medicare for all" is under no illusion that the ACA is the perfect solution to the healthcare crisis in this country. How much simpler to take one of the most successful federal programs ever, Medicare, and extend eligibility

to the entire population? We need only reduce the eligibility age from 65, in annual increments of three or five years, until all Americans of every age are covered by Medicare. But since this simple plan is not going to pass Congress anytime soon, we must work with the legislation we have. And it's plenty good enough to right the most egregious wrongs in the U.S. healthcare delivery system.

The next challenge is to ensure that those whom the ACA was designed to help reap its benefits, and that's not as easy as it may sound. There has been a ferocious and well-funded campaign of misinformation designed to undermine this legislation that makes affordable health insurance available to scores of people for whom it heretofore has been out of reach. To combat that campaign, we feature in this issue of the Tenth News a series of articles demystifying Obamacare and explaining its benefits.

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Tenth News
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The Impact of the Affordable Care Act

by Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

Implementation of core parts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or "Obamacare") begins October 1. Starting that day, you can enroll in one of the new marketplace health insurance plans or, if income-eligible, in expanded Medicaid. And your income may also entitle you to premium support for the marketplace plan you choose. For those who enroll in a plan before December 15, coverage will begin January 1, 2014.

If you are 25 years old or younger, or have children that age, you already know that health insurance plans that cover spouses and children must cover children up to their 26th birthday, under a provision of the ACA that has been in effect since 2010. Many more benefits will be apparent after January 1. Below, we explain some of these benefits and dispel some of the myths and misinformation that have been circulated by political opponents of President Obama and his signature legislation.



Here are the top five facts to know about the Affordable Care Act if you are eligible for Medicare:

1. Your Medicare coverage is protected. Medicare isn't part of the Health Insurance Marketplace established by the ACA, so you don't have to replace your Medicare coverage with Marketplace coverage. No matter how you get Medicare, whether through original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan, you'll still have the same benefits and security you have now.
2. As a Medicare beneficiary, under the ACA you now get more preventive services for less. Medicare now covers preventive services like mammograms and colonoscopies, without any cost to you for the Part B coinsurance or deductible. You also

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE of Tenth News is your guide to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), a.k.a. Obamacare. Pages 3-5 are full of important information you can use – and share – about what to expect now that Obamacare is being officially rolled out. And be sure to read *Congress Watch* on page 5 to learn about Rep. Schneider's efforts to protect Obamacare funding.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver and gold pen, poised to write on a calendar. The calendar shows dates 15, 16, and 17, with days of the week Thursday and Friday visible. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hand and the pen.

A Democratic Smorgasbord: The Tenth Dems Events Calendar

by Eleonora di Liscia

You care about your world and want to get involved, but you don't really know where or how. Or you're running your first race for elected office and don't know where to publicize that critical fund-raiser or how to attract volunteers.

Calling the Tenth Dems Events Calendar to the rescue! The Calendar lists upcoming events of interest to Democrats and Independents. The Calendar has two facets—the Weekly Calendar email blast to subscribers on Wednesdays and the Tenth Dems Events Page posted at <http://www.tenthdems.org/events/>. The emailed Calendar lists events up to eight days in advance, whereas the posted version includes events further into the future.

"This is a service we provide to our Democratic community," said Tenth Dems Chair Lauren Beth Gash. "It enables Democratic candidates and partisan and/or non-profit organizations to get a broader audience than they might on their own. Since our mission is to help elect Democrats to all government levels throughout the 10th Congressional District, this Calendar serves our mission well."

The Calendar took root when a nascent Tenth Dems sponsored its first event, sending notice to a then-tiny email list. Pretty soon, one candidate, then another, and another, followed by a Democratic Township organization and a nonprofit asked Tenth Dems to get the word out on their events. Rather than sending out daily emails, Tenth Dems began compiling a weekly blast to their ever-growing email list. (Note that the now extensive email subscriber list is never sold or shared with third parties.)

Events must have some connection to politics and must avoid hyperbole such as characterizing a candidate in a primary as "exciting." Tenth Dems does not endorse candidates in primaries and will not give preference to one Democrat over another. Listing in the Events Calendar does not imply a preference for any candidate or group; information will be posted from all Democrats who sent it.

Beyond those requirements, the Calendar functions as a type of clearinghouse for a broad range of issues and organizations including veterans, mental health, marriage equality, Move to Amend, League of Women Voters, National Organization for Women, Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, Community Partners for Affordable Housing, Habitat for Humanity, and Latino Coalition of Lake County, to name just a few. Any group is welcome to send information for inclusion. Tenth Dems also publicizes its own events such as the Let's Talk Politics or Tenth Dems University series. And of course, there are the candidates, many of whom consult the Calendar before scheduling an event, to avoid conflicts.

Notices for the Calendar arrive at Tenth Dems through several channels including email, posting through the Events web page

All This in Two Weeks?

Here is a sample of the events listed on the Tenth Dems Events Page for the two-week period from September 9 to 23, 2013:

1. March on Springfield Benefit Concert at City Winery.
2. Democratic Party of Illinois Fall Reception honoring Michael J. Madigan.
3. Senator Dan Kotwoski Event at Luxbar.
4. Exchange Club of North Chicago Hosts Harlem Globetrotters Meet-and-Greet.
5. Illinois Choice Action Team: Democracy Burlesque's "U.S. v Them."
6. Move to Amend Greater Chicago North Meeting.
7. Downtown Cocktail Reception for Representative Elaine Nekritz.
8. Deerfield PFLAG September Meeting with Prof. Timothy Murphy.
9. Exchange Club of North Chicago Holds Lake County Honor Flight Send-Off.
10. Coalicion Latinos Unidos de Lake County Noche de Gala Scholarship Dinner.
11. Waukegan Township 2013 Walk for Seniors.
12. Annual Des Plaines River Clean-Up Day in Cook and Lake Counties.
13. Gift of Adoption Fund Illinois Cruise for a Cause.
14. Stevenson Center on Democracy Program on Conservation and Economic Development.

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Demystifying Obamacare *continued from page 1*

You are invited to read these articles, and you are encouraged to go to www.healthcare.gov and read more about the ACA. Then, you can become part of an *ad hoc* word-of-mouth and social media campaign to debunk myths and promote Obamacare.

Here in the 10th District, we are truly fortunate that our state, with its Democratic governor, has embraced Medicaid expansion, and that Moraine Township has partnered with the Lake County Department of Health and the Alliance for Human Services to train dozens of assisters who will be certified to help our citizens navigate the insurance marketplace and enroll in an appropriate plan. Although Moraine Township's outreach is targeting Southeastern Lake County, some of us who have volunteered to become certified navigators hope to be able to assist with enrollment in other parts of the 10th District; the Tenth Dems Community Connection office in Waukegan may be an excellent venue from which to offer assistance to residents of Northern Lake County.

The period from October 1, 2013 to the end of March 2014 will be an exciting time. Please join us in doing whatever you can to encourage anyone you know who is uninsured to take advantage of the Affordable Care Act and enroll during this first open season. **TD**

Obamacare Impact *continued from page 1*

are entitled to a free yearly "Wellness" visit to your doctor.

3. If you have Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage, you now can save money on brand name drugs. When you're in the donut hole, you'll get a 50 percent discount when buying Part D-covered brand name prescription drugs. The discount is applied automatically at the counter of your pharmacy – you won't have to do anything to get it. Under the ACA, the donut hole will be closed completely by 2020.
4. Your doctor gets more support. With new initiatives to support care coordination, your doctor may get additional resources to make sure that your treatments are consistent.
5. The ACA ensures the protection of Medicare for years to come. The life of the Medicare Trust fund will be extended to at least 2029 – a 12-year extension due to reductions in waste, fraud, and abuse, as well as reductions to Medicare costs that will provide you with future savings on your premiums and coinsurance.

Here are important facts for those not yet covered by Medicare:

1. Illinois has expanded Medicaid by adding approximately 340,000 low-income adults to the rolls.
2. Young adults who do not already have insurance through an employer may be covered under a parent's

insurance until age 26.

3. Children with group plans or nongrandfathered individual plans who have preexisting conditions such as asthma are required to be covered by health insurance, regardless of the preexisting condition.
4. Insurers are no longer able to set limits on lifetime benefits. Such caps are entirely prohibited under the ACA.
5. All insurance plans, Marketplace plans, Medicaid, and, as noted above, Medicare, must cover preventive services such as immunizations, well visits, and routine screenings like colonoscopies, without any cost to the beneficiary.
6. Despite predictions of higher insurance rates under Obamacare, a Kaiser Fund study that was based on data reported in September from 17 states and the District of Columbia projects that health insurance premiums generally will be lower than anticipated. At deadline, Illinois reported lower than anticipated premium rates, as well, ranking 10th in cost among 36 states. **TD**

Obamacare: A Timeline

by Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

Provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in effect on January 1, 2014 include:

- **No Annual Limits on Coverage** – The Affordable Care Act (ACA) prohibits healthcare insurers from imposing annual limits on the dollar value of coverage.
- **Limits on Out-of-Pocket Expenses** – The ACA limits annual cost-sharing to the Health Savings Account limits (\$5,950/individual and \$11,900/family in 2010).
- **Health Insurance Exchanges** – The ACA creates state-based American Health Benefit Exchanges and Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Exchanges, administered by a governmental agency or nonprofit organization, through which individuals and small businesses with up to 50 employees can purchase qualified coverage. Exchanges will have a single form for applying for available health programs, whether coverage is through private insurers, Medicaid, or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- **Essential Health Benefits** – The ACA creates an essential health benefits package that provides a comprehensive set of services.

Provisions of the ACA that will take effect in Federal Fiscal Year 2015 include:

- **Medicare Payments for Hospital-Acquired Infections** – The ACA reduces by one percent Medicare payments to

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Obamacare: Fact and Fiction

by Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

The basics for creating a workable, affordable system that insures everyone and keeps private insurance and personal choice intact are these: First, create incentives for those who can afford insurance to actually purchase it. ... Second, create an exchange to help make buying insurance easier for individual – as opposed to corporate – buyers. The exchange lowers premiums. ... Third, help the poor buy their own private insurance with a sliding-scale subsidy.

Sound like Obamacare? These words, spoken by Mitt Romney to describe Romneycare in Massachusetts, equally describe the essential principles of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Yet, since the passage of the ACA in March 2010 there have been more than 40 votes in the House to repeal this legislation, not to mention the lawsuits brought by the governors of 26 states that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

Clearly the public has mixed views of healthcare reform, and there is also a lot of confusion. While some say that the devil is in the details, the fact is that most Americans and, indeed, a majority of Republicans, support the individual provisions of the ACA.

- Eighty percent of Republicans favor “creating an insurance pool where small businesses and uninsured have access to insurance exchanges to take advantage of large group pricing benefits.” That’s backed by 75 percent of independents.
- Fifty-seven percent of Republicans support “providing subsidies on a sliding scale to aid individuals and families who cannot afford health insurance.” That’s backed by 67 percent of independents.
- Fifty-four percent of Republicans favor “requiring companies with more than 50 employees to provide insurance for their employees.” That’s backed by 75 percent of independents.
- Fifty-two percent of Republicans favor “allowing children to stay on parents’ insurance until age 26.” That’s backed by 69 percent of independents.
- Seventy-eight percent of Republicans support “banning insurance companies from denying coverage for preexisting conditions;” 86 percent of Republicans favor “banning insurance companies from cancelling policies because a person becomes ill.” Those are backed by 82 and 87 percent of independents, respectively.
- The one provision of the ACA that isn’t supported by

a majority of Republicans is expansion of Medicaid to families with incomes less than \$30,000 per year.

From the foregoing evidence, it is clear that Republican opposition to Obamacare is political, as confirmed by statements early in the Obama presidency by Republican leadership that the goal was to make Obama a one-term President.

Politically-motivated criticism of the ACA has been bolstered by the public’s lack of understanding of many of its provisions. Delays in implementation of provisions have added to the public’s confusion. Enacted in 2010, most of the ACA’s core provisions do not kick in until January 1, 2014. And, most recently, implementation of the large employer mandate, which will affect only six percent of employers by most estimates, was delayed to 2015.

When people are informed about the actual provisions of the ACA, there is substantially greater acceptance of the legislation. There is little doubt that there will be some hurdles as implementation proceeds, but considering the up to 30 million uninsured individuals whose lives will potentially be improved by having health insurance, the challenge is well worth it. It will be interesting to follow the demographic changes as those residents of states that have refused the Medicaid expansion subsidized by the Federal government are without insurance, but neighboring states offer health insurance to low-income adults. **TD**

Obamacare Timeline *continued from page 3*

certain hospitals for hospital-acquired conditions.

- **Employer Requirements** – The ACA assesses a fee on employers with more than 50 employees if they do not offer health insurance coverage and have at least one fulltime employee who receives a premium tax credit. The fee is \$2,000 per fulltime employee, excluding the first 30 employees.
- **Innovation and Quality Improvement** – The ACA establishes an Independent Payment Advisory Board to submit proposals to Congress and Medicare to promote quality healthcare, improve health outcomes for patients, lower healthcare costs, and expand access to evidence-based care.

Provisions of the ACA that will take effect on January 1, 2018, include:

- **Tax on High-Cost Insurance** – The ACA imposes an excise tax on insurers of employer-sponsored health plans with aggregate expenses that exceed \$10,200 for individual coverage and \$27,500 for family coverage. **TD**

Moraine Township Partners with Lake County Health Department to Help Residents Obtain Health Insurance *by Anne Flanigan Bassi, Moraine Township Supervisor*

Moraine Township is partnering with the Lake County Health Department and the Alliance for Human Services to assist residents in navigating the new Health Insurance Marketplace starting October 1, 2013, and continuing through March 31, 2014.

Starting October 1, Illinois' Health Insurance Marketplace will open to allow residents and small businesses to sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. Dozens of volunteers will be certified to supplement Township staff to ensure that any citizen who wants help with the online health insurance enrollment process can receive that assistance.

Coverage under health insurance plans will take effect as early as January 1, 2014.

Many of our Township residents will be eligible for expanded Medicaid, available to those earning less than 138 percent of the federal poverty level; other residents may be eligible for subsidies to offset the cost of their health insurance, based on their income.

Access to affordable insurance will be especially important for self-employed people, people considering early retirement, people starting a business, the recently unemployed, people without employer-sponsored health insurance, young people

turning 26 and aging out of their parents' health plans, and people with preexisting conditions. Existing medical conditions and gender will no longer be factored into health insurance premium costs, which used to make health insurance unaffordable for many, including small employers.

Moraine Township staff and elected officials, as well as a corps of citizen-volunteers, will have completed almost 40 hours of in-person and online training, passed tests of their knowledge, and undergone fingerprinting and background checks in order to obtain certification to assist with enrollment. While the Township's outreach focus is on residents of Southeast Lake County, our assisters will be certified to help enroll any Illinois resident, so someone who works in Highwood but lives in Arlington Heights is welcome to use this free service.

After October 1, appointments with certified assisters will be available on business days from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. We also will provide weekend and evening hours. To schedule an in-person appointment with a trained counselor/navigator who can help you understand your health insurance choices and any financial assistance you may be qualified to receive, call 847-432-3000. **TD**

Schneider Helps Protect Obamacare from Republican Efforts to Defund

House Republicans have again passed legislation aimed at defunding and delaying the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA, or "Obamacare"). With five Democrats crossing the aisle to vote for "The No Subsidies Without Verification Act" (H.R. 2775), the bill passed the House on September 12, 235 to 191. Our 10th District congressman, Brad Schneider, stood with the majority of House Democrats and voted against it.

Sponsored by Diane Black (R-TN), H.R. 2775 responds to a regulation issued by the Department of Health and Human Services in July giving state-run health insurance exchanges flexibility in verifying eligibility for insurance subsidies under the ACA. Republicans argue that the July rule creates the potential for improper payments, as applicants can understate their income.

But Democrats say Republicans exaggerate the flaws in the existing verification system. The July rule requires exchanges run by states and the federal government to verify applicants' income and employment status against government data prior to granting a subsidy. When disparities arise, however, the

rule requires that only a random sample be investigated, leaving room for some applicants to receive improper subsidies. The expectation is that such overpayments will eventually be discovered and the government will be able to recoup the improper payment when recipients file their tax returns. "There's 100 percent income verification on the back end," Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ) told reporters.

The No Subsidies Without Verification Act stands virtually no chance of becoming law, as it's unlikely to pass in the Senate; and, even if it does, the President has promised to veto it. Still, its September 12 passage in the House underscores the GOP's aggressive push to defund the ACA before enrollment begins on October 1. Republicans are so determined to prevent healthcare reform from taking full effect, they are now threatening to use it as a bargaining chip in upcoming negotiations over ending the sequester cuts and raising the debt ceiling. Many say they are ready to shut down the government and, by publication of this article, may well have done so.



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The Price of Compassion – A Personal Perspective

by Steve Gan

By the time you read this piece, the situation in Syria may have changed dramatically. There's the possibility that we've gone back to square one and are about to blow a part of Syria away, or that the Russian offer of putting the Syrian dictator's chemical weapons under U.N. control may actually have come to pass. But no matter where we are in this crisis, one thing that will remain a constant is the need to draw a line against the unconscionable suffering of others, no matter where they live.

Although the Syrian conflict has continued unabated for the past 2½ years, it wasn't until very recently, that is, before the chemical weapons attack, media coverage of the conflict constituted barely more than a footnote at the end of the news hour. And sometimes even that didn't happen. With millions of Syrians displaced, tens of thousands maimed, and over 100,000 killed to date, it's a sad commentary on our society when this humanitarian catastrophe is shelved in favor of the next 24-hour headline.

As was announced by U.S. and U.N. officials, the dictatorial regime of Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons on August 21, 2013, in suburban Damascus and callously killed more than 1,400 people. Once President Obama and the U.S. government started to put pressure on Assad, he insisted that it was the rebels who used chemical weapons. Even though it has been reported that his government stores tons of this deadly stuff in caves throughout the country, Assad still proclaimed that he bore no responsibility for the murder of his own people, including many innocent children, who suffered wrenching deaths from the sarin gas and other chemical toxins that were used against them.

I suppose one doesn't have to have personal experience to understand the gruesome havoc that chemical weapons can cause, but I am here to tell you that I have actually experienced such a horrific moment in my life when I could easily have been a victim of sarin gas.

Do you remember the Tokyo sarin gas attack back in the mid-1990s? The sarin attack on the Tokyo subway, usually referred to in the Japanese media as the Subway Sarin Incident (地下鉄サリン事件 Chikatetsu Sarin Jiken), was an act of domestic terrorism perpetrated by members of Aum Shinrikyo on March 20, 1995. Aum Shinrikyo was founded by Shoko Asahara in 1984, and in its first couple of years it was just another fringe religious organization. However, as time passed and membership grew to 9,000 individuals in over 40 countries, its leader became

more obsessed with biblical prophecies and power, and the group morphed into a very hostile cult. Aum Shinrikyo (currently known as Aleph) has been—and is still—listed as a terrorist organization by several countries.

In five coordinated attacks on the morning of March 20, 1995, as millions of people were commuting on the Tokyo subway system, Aum Shinrikyo perpetrators released sarin gas on a few lines, killing 13 people, severely injuring 50, and causing temporary vision and neurological problems for nearly 1,000 others. The attack was directed primarily against passenger trains passing through Kasumigaseki and Nagatacho stations, home to the Japanese seat of government, and is considered to be one of the most serious attacks to occur in Japan since the end of World War II.



On the morning of the attack, at about 8:30 a.m., right in the middle of the morning rush hour, I was on the train heading to my stop called Hiroo station. Suddenly, the conductor announced that the train would not be going into the downtown area. Hiroo station is just two stops from Kasumigaseki station, where one of the main gas attacks occurred. Although the conductor didn't know what the problem was, he asked us to get off the train at the station where we were and to take other transportation to our final destinations.

I really didn't think much about it, but when I arrived at my office about half of my staff of 30 was still missing. That's when I found out about the attack. As the morning dragged on and one by one the remaining staff came in, we learned about the traumatic details. By noon there was only one employee who had not shown up. Although we tried to contact him, we could only leave messages on his cell phone. Finally, we were able to get in touch with his wife who told us that her husband, one of my key managers (I'll call him Kenji), was in the emergency ward where they were administering anti-sarin and anti-toxic nerve

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gas neutralizing compounds to him. From what I heard, Kenji had lost his sight and had been violently vomiting blood.

To say that we were all in shock is an understatement. We walked around like zombies and couldn't believe the heinousness of this crime. Who in their warped mind can do such a barbaric and totally senseless act? Don't these perpetrators have brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, wives, children, grandchildren, and other loved ones? Wouldn't they feel destroyed if something like this happened to any of their own? Certainly no one with an ounce of compassion would ever think of doing something so abhorrent. Unfortunately, the demoralizing reality is that we have seen countless times how once perfectly normal people may come to have deranged minds and commit unthinkable acts.

It didn't take long for the authorities to capture and arrest Asahara and his fellow perpetrators. After years of trials, he and twelve of his followers continue to sit on death row for their involvement in this senseless attack.

My poor manager Kenji did recover to some extent, but he lost most of his eyesight and his ability to have a normal life. With two young daughters at the time, it was a devastating blow. When I think about it I mutter to myself, "There but for the grace of God go I."

In all, more than 5,000 people were affected by the sarin gas attack. People who absorb even a tiny non-lethal dose of sarin gas don't even realize it until years later when they begin to suffer neurological damage.

So now let's get back to when President Obama announced that Bashar al-Assad had used chemical weapons against his own people and that the United States should intervene. Having seen firsthand the devastation of chemical weapons, I was relieved and entirely with the President on this issue. Then, when he asked the U.N. for support that was refused because of the no-go votes from Russia and China, I was terribly disappointed.

I was further disappointed when the President tried to muster support from our Congress. Sure, members of Congress supported Bush in his quest to invade Iraq for "presumably" having chemical weapons. It's too bad that we couldn't rally the same enthusiasm in a circumstance where it was known that chemical weapons were used.

But what really galls me is how Russia, and in particular Prime Minister Putin, was too concerned about maintaining Syria as a good customer for arms to acknowledge that Assad was responsible for using sarin gas against children. From my perspective, the humanitarian calamity was not even an issue for Putin. Instead, it's all about maintaining his ego and influence on the world stage.

Whether Putin is to be commended for his role in trying to avert a military strike by the U.S remains to be seen; we'll have to wait and see how his proposal plays out. In the meantime, I think the real hero of this whole terrible debacle is President Obama, whose sense of compassion in bringing the horrors of chemical weapons to the world's attention has not only kept it in the news well past the 24-hour headlines but also has put the rest of world on notice that chemical weapons, regardless of who uses them, will not be tolerated. **TD**

Drury Spearheads Passage of Landmark Reform Legislation

Illinois State Representative Scott Drury's months-long efforts have culminated in landmark legislation requiring the electronic recording of police interviews in certain types of felonies. Governor Quinn signed the bill into law on August 26.

While Illinois law already mandates recording interrogations of murder suspects, Rep. Drury's bill extends this protection to eight other felony categories, including aggravated kidnapping and aggravated assault with a firearm.

The impetus for the legislation sprang from Illinois's checkered history of wrongful convictions based on false confessions. While helping to restore confidence in police practices, the new law protects the public from the expense of wrongful conviction lawsuits. State and local governments have paid out over \$300 million on such lawsuits to date, according to Rep. Drury's office.

"This legislation is a game-changer," said Rep. Drury. "The days of rogue cops and prosecutors torturing false confessions out of innocent people are thankfully coming to an end."

Private criminal defense attorney Matt Keenan agrees: "This new law protects everybody. The interrogation process is inherently

tremendously intimidating. This law will not stop police from doing their work, because an officer who is doing his job in an honest and competent manner has nothing to fear."

Keenan compared the expected benefits of recording interrogations with those already seen with traffic stops. Many police departments now routinely video-record traffic stops, which include DUI field sobriety testing.

"An experienced judge can usually arrive at a verdict more accurately from seeing and hearing precisely what happened," Keenan said. "At times, the videos have shown that some police officers exaggerate. In other cases, the police understate the evidence. Keeping an accurate and complete record is the best way of insuring the integrity of the process."

Rep. Drury's efforts were joined by U.S. Attorney Thomas Sullivan, former First Assistant State's Attorney Bob Milan, and Northwestern University's Center on Wrongful Convictions.

Rep. Drury's District 58 includes Highwood, Glencoe, Highland Park, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, North Chicago, and Northbrook. **TD**

Sometimes, Conspiracy Is the Only Explanation

by Jack Altschuler

It is curious that the Republican National Committee (RNC) decided to hold its own commemoration of the 1963 March on Washington rather than participate in the national celebration of the 50th anniversary of the march, held just two days later on the National Mall. And so it was that on August 26, Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) spoke at that all-R event. He said, "The first thing we have to do is take the monkey wrench that the court threw in it, out of the Voting Rights Act, and then use that monkey wrench to be able to fix it so that it is alive, well, constitutional, and impervious to another challenge that will be filed by the usual suspects."

Hold on just a second. This is a Republican calling for restoration of the teeth of the Voting Rights Act, insisting on reinvigorating a liberal cause? Well, the story gets even more curious.

Following Sensenbrenner at this event was Reince Priebus, the fire-breathing, absolutist chairman of the RNC, who said, "I think Jim just made some news." He did not counter what Sensenbrenner said or spout far right-wing propaganda about intrusive government, even though Priebus is one of the "usual suspects" about whom Sensenbrenner spoke. This pairing and this behavior are worthy of some head-scratching. Indeed, that the RNC convened an event to commemorate the 1963 March on Washington was in and of itself more than unusual.

The Republicans have acknowledged that they have to appeal to minorities if the R's are to avoid extinction, and they have been clear that they believe that to do that they must change their image. The

only thing that requires, say leading Republicans, is crafting their messages properly. There has been no acknowledgment that they are on the wrong side of nearly every issue that is important to the very people whom they must attract. For the Republicans, it is all about the manipulation they can manage through wordsmithing. Modify their positions on issues of importance? Not a chance.

Appropriately, minorities have continued to shun the Republicans.

Now comes Sensenbrenner, committing to deliver substantive value to minorities and, oddly, the far right chair of the RNC doesn't push back. Very strange, but try this for an explanation.

For decades, the Republicans have done everything they could think of to disenfranchise, marginalize, and control anyone who isn't an old white guy. Now they are making noises as though they are going to be the flag-bearers for restoration of a key liberal cause. They will claim championship and insist that they are all about supporting the little guys of America, the minorities and the poor. They will proclaim that those people should now flock to the Republican Party, the party that, no-kidding, we-really-mean-it-this-time, is looking out for the little guys.

Crush 'em for years and then save 'em (at least a little), telling them that you're their hero.

Brilliant strategy.

Diabolically brilliant.

Sometimes, conspiracy is the only explanation. **TD**



Save the Date!

Open House at New Moraine Township Dems Office

When: **Saturday, October 19, 2013** (time TBD)

Where: 474 Central Ave., Highland Park, IL 60035 (2nd floor above Las Palmas, elevator building!)

Our Congressman, Brad Schneider, and our State Rep., Scott Drury, will be joining us! Additional information will be available as soon as time is confirmed! If you can help us plan this event, bake cookies, or staff that day, please call 847-266-8683.

Then head on up to 118 N. Genesee in Waukegan for another Community Connection Office ArtWauk Open House, from 5-8pm. Visit artwauk.com for details.

Congress Watch *continued from page 5*

As to why Republicans are so intent on defunding and delaying the ACA, Daily Kos blogger Jon Perr offers a highly plausible explanation in his August 11 diary, "The Real Reason for the GOP's All-Out War on Obamacare" (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/08/11/1230529/-The-real-reason-for-the-GOP-s-all-out-war-on-Obamacare>). Republicans fear "not that healthcare reform would fail the American people, but that it would succeed," Perr writes. "Along with Social Security and Medicare, successful healthcare reform would provide the third and final pillar of Americans' social safety net, all brought to you by the Democratic Party." In other words, the GOP was never really concerned about

a "government takeover of healthcare" or "healthcare rationing," or "interference with the doctor-patient relationship," or "death panels." These myths were propagated to mask Republicans' real concern, which is that an American public grateful for access to healthcare could provide Democrats with an enduring majority for years to come.

We're pleased that our new Democratic congressman, Brad Schneider, and longtime Democratic senator, Dick Durbin, are both working to improve the social safety net for all Americans. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about Illinois' Republican junior senator, Mark Kirk, who has consistently supported his leaders' efforts to deprive the American public of adequate access to healthcare. **TD**

Events Calendar *continued from page 2*

link, or members bringing attention to a pet cause. Volunteers sift through approximately 50 requests a week to select the 20 most relevant to Democrats.

And that's only the beginning. After the notices are selected, they go to Events List Coordinator Terry Blaurock for compiling and editing. Then, the list must be formatted and proofread by dedicated volunteers such as Stephen Ark and Adrienne Kirshbaum. Gash estimates that the list takes about 20 hours a week, which is why many organizations that have started similar calendars eventually give up.

"It's an incredibly difficult task that involves a tremendous attention to detail and is quite time consuming," said Gash. "I think people have no idea how much effort goes into the production of our Weekly Events list. Terry Blaurock, who oversees this production, is truly a gem."

Blaurock, who estimates she spends at least a couple hours per day on the Calendar, noted that "it gets really, really busy before an election, especially during a presidential year. The candidates often have open houses as they move to a new space and they have fundraisers."

"This allows a brand new Democratic candidate with no email list to have access to tons and tons of Democrats," added Gash. "We also know that volunteers look at it constantly." **TD**

Two Weeks *continued from page 2*

15. State Senator Daniel Biss Critical Issue Series: Criminal Justice in Illinois.
16. League of Women Voters of Illinois 2013 State of the State.
17. Exploring the Role of Women in Local and National Politics. (Natural Resources Defense Council)
18. Senator Daniel Biss Cocktail Reception in Chicago.
19. Lake/McHenry Organizing for Action Planning Meeting.
20. Citizen Action/Illinois 2013 Annual Dinner with U.S. Congressman Keith Ellison.
21. Adopt a Beach Clean-Up at Lake Bluff Beach.
22. Habitat for Humanity Applicant Information Meeting and Junta.
23. Democratic Fall Picnic & BBQ in Lake County.
24. September Open House at Tenth Dems Community Connection in Waukegan. **TD**