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Trying to Get Inside the Mind of a Tea Party Supporter

By Steven Gan

We all breathed a tremendous sigh of relief when the country did not go over the edge and cause a global financial Armageddon. Although we all understand the seriousness of a \$17 trillion debt, the Tea Party representatives, who hijacked the political process to assert their extremist views, caused an unnecessary, manufactured crisis. Their rash actions not only brought about a loss of at least \$24 billion to the economy, but also forced hundreds of thousands of government workers to incur lost wages and suffer needless aggravation. What a reckless waste of time and resources! And, yet, most of the Tea Party remains unapologetic.

While glued to the TV with knots in my stomach, I kept hearing over and over on all the media outlets about the group of Republican Congressmen in the House and Senate caucusing with the Tea Party who were first trying to “defund” Obamacare and then, when that didn’t work, to “delay” Obamacare. But other than a few notable senators like Rand Paul (Kentucky), Ted Cruz (Texas), and his sidekick Mike Lee (Utah), I really did not know specifically who these “wacko birds” (to quote John McCain) were. So I decided to find out exactly who in the House of Representatives was part of this group and to try to figure out how they can be so adamantly against Obamacare and, indeed, just about anything that appears to be connected to President Obama.

I went online and found a list of 69 members of the House of Representatives who are affiliated

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MTDO and Tenth Dems Co-Host Open House at New Office

On Saturday afternoon, October 19, more than 100 residents stopped in at 474 Central Avenue, Highland Park, to visit the Moraine Township Democratic Organization’s new office, a large, sun-filled space also used by Tenth Dems.

Visitors sipped cider, sampled sweets, and mingled with one another. Two elected officials, Congressman Brad Schneider and

State Representative Scott Drury, spent most of the afternoon at the open house, talking with friends and neighbors.

Volunteers who hosted the open house also set up a table where Democrats had the opportunity to sign nominating petitions for some of the candidates planning to run in upcoming countywide, statewide, and federal elections. ■



INSIDE FIND ADDITIONAL PHOTOS, BRAD SCHNEIDER ON *CITIZENS UNITED*, AN EXPOSÉ OF KIRK’S ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN, AND MORE.

Kirk Espouses Moderation While Supporting Tea Party Politics

Democratic Senator Dick Durbin recently praised Republican Mark Kirk for aligning himself with a bipartisan group of senators that sought to negotiate a compromise to end the government shutdown and at least temporarily raise the debt ceiling. "I want to say a special word about my colleague, my Republican Senate Colleague Mark Kirk, who announced this week that he would vote for a clean debt ceiling," said Durbin.

But how much credit does Mark Kirk really deserve?

Writing about the group of 12 senators in the *The Washington Post* on October 14, David Fahrenthold and Rosalind Helderman explained: "These [12] senators have personal or political reasons to seek an answer in the middle. They are either temperamentally pragmatists and moderates. Or they come from states where they are not a perfect fit for the voters and they need to demonstrate political independence"—whether it is real or not.

So is Kirk a true moderate? Or is he a politician who wants to appear to be more in sync with the values of his constituents than he actually is?

Assuming that Kirk joined the group of 12 because he truly believed that allowing the U.S. government to default on its debts was a bad idea, his willingness to help forge a compromise suggests only that he's a tad less radical than the Republican extremists who were threatening to drive our nation into default. From the start of the standoff through the eve of the government shutdown, Kirk gave his unqualified support to the extremists' goal of repealing or defunding the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

On September 25, as radical Republicans were poised to take our nation hostage, Kirk posted the following statement on his website: "I stand with the majority of Americans in opposing ObamaCare, which is why I have voted against it 36 times. I support the House-passed measure that defunds ObamaCare without increasing federal spending by a dime while preventing a government shutdown."

Correction, Mr. Kirk: As events have proven, conditioning funding government operations on defunding the Affordable Care Act was a recipe for disaster. No moderate legislator would have participated in such extortion.

And it turns out that the majority of Americans want healthcare reform—which is a major reason why President Obama won two elections. According to a recent poll reported in *Forbes* in late September, "Only 26 percent of voters believe 'Congress should repeal the law,' and only 7 percent believe 'Congress should delay and defund the law.'" (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/theapothecary/2013/09/30/new-poll-only-one-third-of-americans-support-repealing-defunding-or-delaying-obamacare/>).

Besides revealing his willingness to distort facts and spread misinformation, the September 25 web posting supporting efforts



to defund the ACA demonstrated Senator Kirk's disregard for our nation's system of lawmaking, which is a cornerstone of our democracy. In 2010, the ACA was passed by both chambers of Congress, signed by the president, and thereby enacted into law. Thereafter it was fully vetted for its constitutionality by the Supreme Court, and it has survived 40 attempts by Republicans to repeal, delay, or defund it. In continuing to actively oppose this two-and-one-half-year-old legislation, Kirk is fully aligning himself with his party's Tea Party wing.

Perhaps more important, the September 25 statement posted on his website shows Kirk's complicity with his party's efforts to deny access to affordable healthcare to millions of Americans. Note that one problem Kirk did not face as he struggled with his own recent health crisis was how to pay for the care he needed.

Under the ACA, thousands of Illinois young adults are now covered by their parents' health insurance until they reach age 26. Beginning January 1, no one in Illinois will be denied health insurance because of a preexisting condition; no one in Illinois with a serious health condition will find insurance benefits exhausted because of lifetime limits; out-of-pocket expenses will be capped; and everyone who fulfills the personal mandate and purchases health insurance will obtain preventive care at no charge. Most important, insurance will be affordable, with premium support available to those earning less than four times the federal poverty level, subsidies for out-of-pocket costs available to those with lower incomes who meet certain other conditions, and Medicaid for those with lower incomes still.

So when at the end of September Mark Kirk called for repealing Obamacare in a bill to fund the government, he was declaring his support for what became a three-week-long hostage-taking in October. At the same time, he was declaring his opposition to granting his constituents access to what he, personally, takes for granted—affordable healthcare.

No matter how he may spin it, this is not the position of the moderate Kirk purports to be. ■

Brad Schneider Leads on Iran

By Steve Sheffey

What happens around the globe affects every street in every corner of the 10th District. We are fortunate that Congressman Brad Schneider serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

True progressives recognize that nuclear proliferation must be opposed, by diplomacy if possible, by military action if necessary. Talking is not appeasement. President Obama has been clear that Iran cannot be allowed to develop nuclear weapons and that no options, including military options, are off the table. The idea is to achieve that objective without military action if possible. That's why it's so important to continue and strengthen sanctions until and unless Iran ends its program. Nice words from Iran are not sufficient, which is why Secretary of State John Kerry said that our policy will not be "trust and verify" but "verify and verify."

Congressman Schneider published an article in *The Times of Israel* on October 10 explaining that "As long as the Iranians accelerate their efforts toward nuclear capabilities, we should accelerate the enforcement of the sanctions. We must continue to provide targeted prohibitions and seek to limit the ability of Iran to expand its income streams away from sanctionable oil and petroleum products..."

"Iran must know that it will not obtain a nuclear weapon under any circumstances. Allowing Iran to acquire a nuclear weapons capability would directly threaten the United States, our interests and our allies. The world is watching and history will judge our actions on Iran with one simple question--did we stop Iran's nuclear weapons program?"

Congressman Schneider authored a letter with Congressman Luke Messer (R-IN) urging continued pressure on Iran. The bipartisan letter was signed by 78 first-term members of Congress, nearly the entire freshman class. The October 4 letter points out that despite some encouraging words from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Iran is accelerating its nuclear efforts and that until Iran fundamentally changes course, the U.S. must continue to toughen sanctions.

Strong congressional support for tough sanctions strengthens the President's hand and sends a message to the world that whereas Americans may have been divided on action against Syria, there is no question that we are united across party lines in our determination to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability.

Congressman Schneider disagrees strongly with some of the Republicans who signed this letter on other issues, but that didn't stop him from leading and working with his colleagues on an issue of common concern. We need more like Brad in Congress. ■



Congressman Brad Schneider Comments on *Citizens United*

On January 21, 2010, the Supreme Court made its monumental 5-4 ruling in the case of *Citizens United v. FEC*, superseding numerous cases of judicial precedent by negating the federal government's ability to ban political spending by corporations in candidate elections. To reach this conclusion, the five-justice majority stated a defense of First Amendment rights, as Justice Anthony Kennedy laid out a legal theory that deemed corporate rights equal to those of human beings, and defined spending as the equivalent of speaking.

I believe the Supreme Court's decision has already begun to undermine the integrity of our electoral system and threatens the legitimacy of our political institutions. The Court effectively elevated the opinions of large interest groups at the expense of the voice of the average American. By negating the constitutionality of placing limitations on corporate spending in political campaigns, the Supreme Court paved the way for an onslaught of political contributions that threatens to drown out the voices of the American people.

In the two election cycles following the *Citizens United* decision, we have already seen the profoundly negative impact and the corrosive effect on our electoral process. It is imperative that Congress act to rectify the situation created by the Supreme Court's decision, to ensure that all Americans have an equal voice in the political process. ■

Inside the Tea Party Mind *continued from page 1*

with the Tea Party Movement (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_politicians_affiliated_with_the_Tea_Party_movement). I read about each representative's background and views on the issues at BallotPedia (<http://ballotpedia.org>) and came away quite startled at what I was learning.

There are, however, a couple of caveats on interpreting the sources and quality of the data I found.

- Although I relied on sources that appear to be widely used, I could not confirm the accuracy of the data.
- I am not a statistician and am only making some broad inferences and drawing some conclusions based upon my own personal views.

Still, in slicing and dicing the data a little bit, here are some interesting things I noticed:

- The Tea Party Member of Congress with the highest net worth (\$64,744,035) is Rep. Diane Black, Republican of the 6th Congressional District of Tennessee.
- The Tea Party Member of Congress with the lowest net worth (\$472,502) is Rep. Stephen Fincher, Republican from the 8th Congressional District of Tennessee.
- The average (median) net worth of Tea Party Members of Congress is \$4,860,639.
- The mean net worth of Tea Party Members of Congress is \$1,717,502; that is, the number of Members with a net worth above and below this figure is the same.
- The average income for a family of four for all Congressional districts represented by members of the Tea Party Caucus is \$49,282.
- The Congressional districts with the nine lowest median incomes for a family of four have average family incomes between \$30,624 and \$39,922. According to the U.S. government, the poverty threshold for a family of four in 2012 was \$23,021.
- The average net worth of the Tea Party representatives for the nine Congressional districts with the lowest median incomes is \$3,145,808.

I could run through more of these figures, but at this point I'm just trying to understand the Tea Party mentality. For example, although the 4th Congressional District of Alabama has the second lowest median income, \$31,344, its Republican representative, Robert Aderholt, who caucuses with the Tea Party, just happens to have a net worth of \$3,161,009.

So how is it that a district that one might accurately call "economically challenged" can be represented by an individual who, in comparison to 99 percent of Americans, is very well off? And a district with a population of 635,000 and with a median income of \$31,344 would, of course, have families above this figure and certainly well below this figure, with some below the poverty



level of \$23,021. Aren't these the very families that probably can't afford health insurance and would therefore benefit tremendously from the Affordable Care Act?

Many of the Congressional districts represented by well-to-do Tea Party Republicans are populated by economically-challenged constituents who actually need what Obamacare is able to provide them. And not only are these well-to-do Tea Party Republicans representing constituents who actually need what Obamacare is able to provide them, these representatives also have been trying in every way possible to take away the very program that is indispensable to many of their constituents. So why on earth did economically-challenged individuals vote for Tea Party conservatives to be their representatives in Congress in the first place?

There could be one major reason. I believe that many people do not know that Obamacare is simply a nickname for the Affordable Care Act and that they have been misled into believing that Obamacare is a sinister healthcare program they need to steer clear of at all costs. The interviews that the comedian Jimmy Kimmel conducted in early October showed that many Americans don't understand that Obamacare and the Affordable Care Act are exactly the same thing. Those interviewed in the segment said that they did not want Obamacare, but they either wanted or supported the provisions of the Affordable Care Act, or were at least leaning in favor of them. After being told that Obamacare and the Affordable Care Act are the same, one woman acknowledged feeling stupid that she didn't realize this. But she's not alone. There are probably millions like her who, if they knew better, would not support their Tea Party representatives.

I don't exclusively fault supporters of the Tea Party for not understanding that Obamacare is the same as the Affordable Care Act, a program that many of them might actually need. Rather, I fault their Tea Party representatives who, in my view, have taken advantage of a segment of the population who mistakenly voted for individuals who are working in direct opposition to their best interests. ■



New Leadership Adds Spark to Community Connection

By Carolyn Rivers

Community Connection, Tenth Dems' Waukegan office, has a new executive director, Robette Williams. A First Lady of her church, Robette is dedicated to furthering the goal of Community Connection by fostering an atmosphere in which elected officials, volunteers, and members of the community can mingle and act upon Democratic values in accordance with our belief that politics should be about more than just elections.

Among the ever-expanding cadre of volunteers working with Robette are Carolyn Rivers and Joe Dubaniewicz, both of whom bring to their work with Tenth Dems their ongoing experience with numerous volunteer projects in Waukegan and neighboring communities.

One Community Connection tradition has been its participation in downtown Waukegan's monthly ArtWauk, which has provided an opportunity for local residents to stop in the office and find out about the services and volunteer opportunities Tenth Dems offers. Since ArtWauk is an evening event, Robette and staff recently sponsored a daytime gathering at Community Connection, Donuts and Democrats, as reported elsewhere on this page. ■

Tenth Dems Hosts its First Donuts and Democrats at Community Connection in Waukegan

By Melissa-Ann Evanchik

On Saturday, October 12, 2013, the Tenth Dems Community Connection hosted Donuts and Democrats in Waukegan. This event, intended to be the first of many, was open to the community and featured special guests Mayor Leon Rockingham, Jr., of North Chicago, and Rita Mayfield, State Representative for the 60th District.

Many members of the community attended the event and enjoyed various delicious breakfast choices including donuts, bagels, coffee, and hot apple cider as they mingled with one another. Conversations filled the room on a wide array of hot topics, including the ongoing government shutdown, the Affordable Care Act, and upcoming local political campaigns. Petitions were passed for various local Democratic candidates, as campaign season has begun to heat up.

The turnout was great, and the event was a success. Tenth Dems extends thanks to all who attended and hopes to see everyone at future events. ■

The Continuing Frog Boil

By Jack Altschuler

The U.S. budget sequestration went into effect on March 1, 2013. It was designed to reduce defense and certain non-defense discretionary spending by annually declining percentages through 2021.

It applies these cuts with the fine precision of a large asteroid smashing into the Earth. It was said to be designed to pressure Congress and the White House into hammering out a budget agreement on a timely basis. The cuts were not supposed to go into effect because acting with such stupidity was unthinkable.

Apparently, some of the major actors in the drama didn't do enough thinking, because we're living with the sequester now. Oddly, we are not hearing much of a wail from those affected. There are reasons for that.

First, the impact of the sequester on defense spending is small enough to be a rounding error for the agencies with nearly unlimited spending ability—agencies that buy thousand-dollar toilet seats, tanks for fighting the nonexistent Soviet Union in a land war, and trillion-dollar airplanes that no one wants. Besides, when the affected contractors are unhappy with the government they don't march in the streets. Their comments are given behind closed doors, so you don't hear them.

Second, many of the domestic program cuts only affect poor people, and nobody in Washington listens to them. For example, study after study has shown that early childhood education is the cornerstone for later success in higher education and for a lifetime. But the sequester cut 57,000 children out of the Head Start program, necessarily relegating them to a much dimmer future. Understand, though, that the Head Start victims of the sequester are poor kids whose parents' voices aren't heard in Congress because those parents don't make large campaign contributions and so don't have access. And you can't hear them because the corporate media doesn't cover them, either.

Here is another example. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicted that the sequester would produce a reduction in economic growth of 0.6 percent, which would affect job retention for 750,000 Americans. "Retention" is not about new jobs. It is about employed people just keeping their jobs. That means three-quarters of a million Americans will lose their jobs because of the unthinkable sequester. Like the parents of kids kicked out of Head Start, the newly unemployed don't have access, so you don't hear their voices, either, making it relatively easy for the rest of us to ignore the change.

Third, we human beings only become aware of change when a big WHUMP! smacks us in the head. Most of the time we tolerate small changes quite easily and don't even notice them. By the time



we at last notice their accumulation into a WHUMP!, it is too late to prevent the adverse consequences that we will live with forever. That is to say, most of us are living with the unrecognized effects of small changes and, like live frogs in a slowly heating pot of water, we fail to recognize that we are being boiled alive.

Yet, metaphorically speaking, that is what is happening to Americans. We are tolerating changes like the sequester, either because for most of us each change is very small, or because we are powerless, as are the poor, the disenfranchised, the unemployed – the people who don't contribute big money to political campaigns.

And the incremental deterioration story gets worse. The recent government shutdown engineered by Ted Cruz (R-Psych Ward) and his extremist pals kicked another 7,000 to 19,000 kids out of Head Start before it was over. Many of those kids will underperform, and we will lose the benefit of their contributions and their genius. Some will drop out and be a weight on society and some will turn to crime for survival. Even if some in the investment class don't care about these kids, they must understand the value of spending a buck today to get a return of two in the future. Yet all they seem to be able to see is that they want everything now.

The shrinking of Head Start is just one example of an incremental change that is absorbed with barely a public whimper. On the other hand, here is a happy thought: we're saving money today because we've cut unemployment compensation for those 750,000 Americans being laid off this year and we won't have to listen to them complain because they don't have a voice powered by campaign contributions.

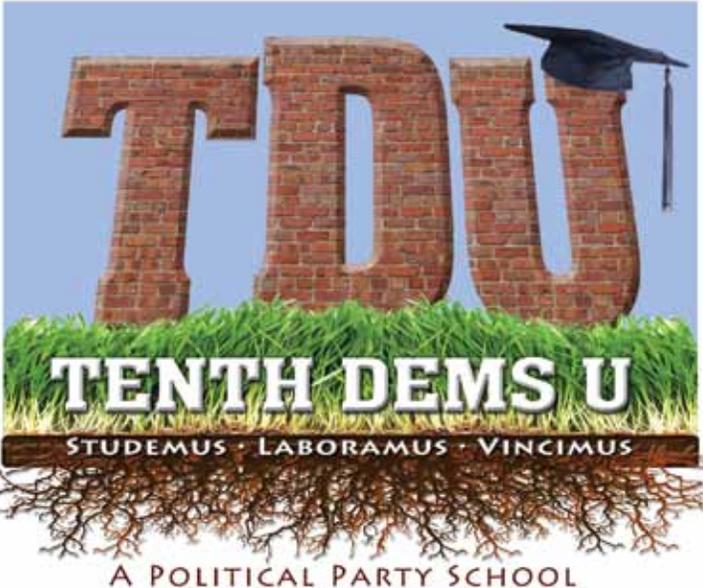
Come to think of it, perhaps you are not donating thousands of dollars to the right legislators every election cycle. If that is the case, you just might want to check the thermometer in your pot. It might be edging up to the WHUMP! mark at the top of the scale. ■



**Tenth Dems Enjoy Food, Drink, and Conversation
at New Moraine Office**



**At Moraine Office Open House, Visitors Sign
Nominating Petitions and Chat with
Congressman Brad Schneider and
State Representative Scott Drury**



TDU 236: Panel Discussion on Campaign and Election Reform
When: Wednesday, November 6, 2013 at 7:00 pm
Where: Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Rd., Glenview
What: Tenth Dems, Common Cause, and the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project invite you to a panel discussion with experts on our elections and voting system. Local members will help us understand what's working, what isn't, and what we can do as citizens to improve the system. There will be time for questions, answers, and comments. The event is free and open to the public.

RSVP here or, for more information, send an email or contact us at 847-266-VOTE (8683). Please leave your contact information (name, email, phone) if you call or write.

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