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What You Do Not Know About the Affordable Care Act (And Need To)

By Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

By now, most Americans know that enrollment in Affordable Care Act health insurance plans through the Marketplace (as well as through expanded Medicaid in Illinois and other states that took advantage of the opportunity to offer this coverage to their poorest citizens) began October 1 and continues through March 31. Despite serious issues with the federal website, millions of Americans have already enrolled, and many of these people are experiencing health security for the first time.

Notwithstanding the mountain of misinformation disseminated about the ACA, which its detractors derisively dubbed

Obamacare, most of the Act's beneficial changes to health insurance have become widely known. For example, those with health insurance now are able to have annual check-ups, to obtain routine medical screenings like mammograms, and to get immunizations like flu shots without incurring any charges for these services. Those earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level are receiving income tax credits that reduce their premium payments, and those with incomes below 250 percent are receiving additional help with deductibles, copays, and coinsurance. In addition, as most know by now, children may be covered under their parents' insurance up to age 26, there are no lifetime limits on coverage, and the only factors that affect premium amounts are age, place of residence, family size, and tobacco use. And perhaps most important of all, annual out-of-pocket medical

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Tenth News

www.tenthdems.org

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Tenth Dems Celebrates Ten Years of Engaging Voters

By Eleonora di Liscia

On December 17, Tenth Dems did more than celebrate its 10th birthday. It celebrated the meaning of political engagement. Nearly everyone, from the keynote speaker to award honorees to presenters, touched upon how politics is about more than just elections: It's about getting involved.

Around 200 Dems braved the snow and cold to attend the Tenth Dems Annual Fundraiser and 10th Anniversary Celebration at the Deerfield Hyatt ballroom. The event honored volunteers Marguerite Hampton and Barbara Altman as well as State Senator Daniel Biss. Jon Carson, former Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement, gave the keynote address.

Tenth Dems Chair Lauren Beth Gash welcomed the crowd. After a brief interruption by Karen Singer and Clara Berman, who presented a tray of 10 cupcakes with candles to lead the crowd in a rendition of "Happy Birthday," Tenth Dems founder John Hmurovic kicked off the evening. He recounted how Tenth Dems started with 11 people in a living room and grew into an organization of thousands, many of whom have gone on to careers as political organizers. Hmurovic then cited three major reasons to celebrate.

"First, look at how many people are here," he said. "Add to that the number that interact with our Community Connection. Add to that, the thousands who come to Tenth Dems University. Add to that



L to R: Tenth Dems Executive Vice Chair John Hmurovic; Mikva Leadership Award recipient State Senator Daniel Biss; Congressman Brad Schneider; Keynote Speaker Jon Carson; Tenth Dems Chair, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash; Rosenblit Volunteer of the Year Marguerite Hampton; Founders Award recipient Barbara Altman.

the tens of thousands who receive our campaign literature. Add to that the people who march in our parades and knock on doors. The point is, we've reached a lot of people to become a part of the political system. And that's what Tenth Dems is all about."

Second, Hmurovic told how 10th District Democrats were advised

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**DOZENS MORE PHOTOS FROM
 THIS EXCITING EVENING
 CAN BE SEEN AT PAGES 4-11.**



Protect the Environment by Keeping Brad Schneider in Congress

The destruction wrought in November by super typhoon Haiyan in Southeast Asia and by the tornados in Washington, Illinois, is the latest in a series of devastating wake-up calls for urgent action on global warming.

One of the strongest recorded storms in history, Haiyan, with 145-mile-per-hour winds, ravaged cities, towns, and villages, killing more than 6,000 people in the Philippines and leaving many more homeless and desperate for food, water, and shelter.

Scientific evidence strongly suggests a link between the heightened intensity of storms and human activities. Two activities in particular—the burning of fossil fuels and the clearing of forests—have significantly elevated carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere. CO₂ and other heat-trapping gases act like an insulating blanket that warms the land and ocean, increases evaporation, and powers the storm. Higher sea levels, caused by the warmer temperatures, also result in higher storm surges and increased coastal flooding, as the Union of Concerned Scientists explains on its website: http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/impacts/hurricanes-and-climate-change.html.

But even as the scientific evidence mounts, nations around the world have been unable to take the coordinated action needed to protect the planet. Impeding efforts to reduce global warming emissions are a handful of powerful special interests and the politicians who serve them rather than the public.

As ordinary citizens, we can play an important role in addressing the global warming crisis by demanding that our elected leaders be part of the solution, not the problem. We must all work together to elect leaders—at all levels of government throughout the world—who both recognize the scientific findings and are truly committed to taking action to protect the planet—even when it means standing up to powerful industry lobbies.

As an important first step in the process, we must arm ourselves and members of our communities with knowledge about potential officeholders—knowledge that will allow us to look past political rhetoric and gain a deep understanding of our candidates' true stands on environmental matters.

Virtually all candidates for public office claim to be pro-environment. But, once elected, many—as two former 10th District Congressmen, Mark Kirk (now Illinois's junior senator) and Robert Dold, have demonstrated—quickly discard their environment-friendly mask only to vote for policies that protect corporate profits instead.

Following in Kirk's footsteps, during his one term in Congress Dold went to great lengths to make voters perceive him as pro-environment. But when push came to shove, he voted in virtual lockstep with the House Republican leadership as it waged an unprecedented assault on the environment. In the process, Dold voted for numerous pieces of legislation aimed at stripping the Environmental Protection Agency of its authority to enforce water pollution standards, halting efforts to address climate change, undermining science, and defunding programs that protect air,



water, wildlife, and delicate ecosystems.

Last May, Dold announced his intention to challenge incumbent Congressman Brad Schneider in 2014 in the hopes of regaining the seat he held from 2011 to 2013. Voters who are familiar with Dold's voting record will not be fooled by his rhetoric and will instead work to reelect Brad Schneider—a leader who is truly committed to addressing global warming. It is only by electing the right political leaders—those willing to stand up to the special interests—that we will be able to address this most important issue of our time, one that threatens the very sustainability of our planet. ■

Among the pieces of anti-environment legislation Dold supported in the first session of the 112th Congress are:

H.R. 910: The Energy Tax Prevention Act of 2011 legislatively repeals the EPA's scientific finding that greenhouse gases endanger human health and the environment and permanently blocks the EPA from regulating greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act.

H. Amdt. 467, Scalise of Louisiana Amendment: This amendment proposed to bar the Department of Agriculture from implementing a plan to work with farmers, the agriculture industry, and forest managers to address the threats to the forests and food sources caused by climate change.

H.R. 2250, EPA Regulatory Relief Act of 2011, proposes to indefinitely delay long-overdue air pollution control standards for industrial boilers and incinerators, which act as small, in-house power plants and emit toxic air pollution including mercury, which is a potent neurotoxin with especially dire consequences for pregnant women and children, and cancer-causing dioxins. Industrial boilers and incinerators are the nation's third largest source of mercury emissions. Every year the standards are delayed means up to an additional 18,000 premature deaths, 52,000 asthma attacks, and 5,100 heart attacks. Still, Robert Dold voted for this measure which delays tighter pollution controls.

This is just a small sample of the numerous pieces of anti-environment legislation Dold supported during his first term in Congress. For additional information on his voting record, see the House Votes Descriptions on pages 16 – 25 of the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) 2012 Scorecard (<http://www.lcv.org/scorecard/scorecardweb.pdf>). ■

Affordable Care Act *continued from page 1*

expenses are capped and insurers cannot refuse coverage or raise premiums because someone with insurance gets sick.

What is less widely known is that other provisions of the massive ACA are designed to improve delivery of healthcare by increasing coordination of care among a patient's primary care physicians and specialists while also incentivizing the practice of primary care medicine. One of the frustrations of navigating healthcare for those with a chronic illness (like diabetes, for example) is the duplication of services by various treating physicians and the lack of coordination of care among them. The United States is unique among the developed nations with healthcare systems in that a far greater proportion of American physicians are specialists. This results in fragmentation of care and an absence of communication among all the physicians caring for a given patient.

As frustrating as such lack of communication may be for the patient, it is equally frustrating for primary care physicians. Lack of coordination among providers increases costs and impedes the delivery of quality healthcare. Two provisions of the Affordable Care Act are designed to ameliorate this problem by increasing Medicare and Medicaid payments to primary care physicians.

One of these ACA provisions provides a bonus to those physicians who participate in Medicare. The second raises payments to providers who participate in Medicaid, increasing rates to approach Medicare rates. The Medicaid expansion will especially benefit physicians who practice in states where there are high numbers of uninsured. By encouraging primary care physicians to participate in these programs and increasing their reimbursement, the ACA provides added incentive to prospective physicians to practice primary care medicine rather than train as a specialist.

In addition, the Affordable Care Act incentivizes primary care physicians through a program called the Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative (CPCI). The goal of CPCI is to help primary care practices achieve better care and lower costs by:

- Managing care for patients with high healthcare needs (because those patients are more likely to be hospitalized and generate higher costs)
- Ensuring access to care
- Delivering preventive care (which is now covered in full by insurers under the ACA)
- Coordinating care between primary care physicians and specialists

To meet these goals, CPCI pays participating practices per member per month fees (average of \$20 per month); and those practices are eligible to share in any savings achieved by improvements in healthcare, such as reduction in per patient hospitalizations or readmissions. These goals also are facilitated by implementation of an electronic health record (EHR), which allows access to patient histories and treatment regimens by all involved in the care of patients.



In addition, it is expected that ACA implementation will lead to a reduction in emergency department visits by affording more Americans access to a primary care physician. Therefore it is critical to the success of CPCI that the number of primary care providers be expanded so that there are enough primary care physicians to meet the needs of all of the currently and newly insured.

Imagine that your physician will have ready access to hospital records, emergency department visits, and laboratory tests ordered by different physicians through your EHR! In some places, mainly those healthcare systems with integrated services, it is already happening. ■



COMMUNITY CONNECTION CORNER

ComCon Sets Date for Fourth Annual Poetry/Prose Contest and Slam

Tenth Dems Community Connection has set the date for its Fourth Annual Poetry/Prose Slam, which will be held in Waukegan on April 10, 2014. At the slam, all of the Waukegan, North Chicago, and Zion high school students who submit their original poetry and prose pieces to be judged for cash prizes will be invited to read their work aloud.

Immediately after the first of the year, volunteers will solicit the help of English teachers in area public and private high schools with publicizing the contest and encouraging student participation.

Following the 2014 slam, Tenth Dems will publish each of the poetry and prose pieces that is recognized by the judges, or by the slam audience, in a "literary edition" of this newsletter. Last year's "Community Connection Third Annual Poetry & Prose 2013 Literary Edition" of the Tenth News can be found on the Tenth Dems website at <http://www.tenthdems.org/2013/12/community-connection-third-annual-poetry-prose-2013-literary-edition/>. ■

Tenth Dems Celebration *continued from page 1*

in 2006 not to bother running because they wouldn't have a chance. Now, Democrats hold multiple seats at all government levels, including Brad Schneider's in the U.S. House.

Third, Tenth Dems provides volunteers an opportunity to be involved.

Keynote speaker Jon Carson spoke of the lessons about engaging voters learned from the Obama campaign. Termed "One of the best organizers I have ever met," by the President, Carson was National Field Director of Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign. There, he saw the great energy that was out there and how much volunteers could do when given the tools.

Carson told how "Camp Obama" gave the campaign "an early sign not only of the volume of people that wanted to be a part of a network but the quality of people. It was not just young people but it was people leaving careers," Carson said.

One lesson was in learning to let go. For example, volunteers were allowed access to the voter activation network, a level of trust that had been virtually unheard of. "What we learned is when you give them more responsibility, some amazing things can happen," he said.

Another lesson was that technology, while useful, did not replace personal contact. "Technology allows us to find people who have never worked on a campaign before, but it doesn't replace people wanting to be a part of something," Carson said.

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Party Preparations



Tenth Dems Celebration *continued from page 4*

Carson also spoke of a generation bringing new energy to politics on a scale never before seen—baby boomers. Although the baby boomers might drop out because of grandkids or a new job, a campaign must learn to harness them when they can give that extra 30 hours a week.

Another important lesson was in understanding modern communication. Because so much information is available, people tend to think if they didn't hear of something, it didn't happen, Carson said. He also found that no matter how many sources of information are available, people still rely on validation from other people, people they trust.

For example, at the start of the government shutdown, polls showed that blame was evenly split between the political parties. But as the shutdown continued, more people blamed Republicans. Carson said this was the result of neighbors talking to each other.

Carson cited one other crucial generation—millennials. Republicans are terrified because their values do not line up with millennials' values on a single issue, he said. "We forget that winning the election isn't the goal. It's policy. Sometimes the win comes when you shift political opinion so your opponents adopt your view, and the number one influence is the millennial generation," he elaborated.

An example in engaging millennials is the Affordable Care Act's provision allowing them to stay on their parents' insurance until they are 26.

The evening's other speakers also talked about engagement. Representative Brad Schneider spoke of the pride with which he cast his first votes in Congress last January, first for Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House and then to authorize relief for the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Schneider called representing the 10th District

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Some of Our Speakers



Tenth Dems Celebration *continued from page 5*

the most important job he's ever had (after being a husband and father) and thanked Tenth Dems volunteers for their important role in sending him to Congress.

Hon. Ab Mikva, presenting the Mikva Leadership Award to State Senator Daniel Biss, expounded upon what Biss brought to the Illinois legislature:

"I liked Daniel Biss for four reasons," Mikva said. "First, he was a Democrat, and I love Democrats. Second, he was running in the 10th, my old district. Third, he was teaching in my alma mater at the University of Chicago, and fourth, he was a Ph.D. I spent 10 years in state legislatures, and I can't even remember a single Ph.D. I thought at the very least, that would shake things up."

And because of that one Ph.D., Mikva quipped, the Illinois legislature abolished capital punishment, passed ethics reform, reformed the pension system, and authorized same-sex marriage. Equally important, what it didn't do was pass laws denying the right to vote, attacking women's rights, or "passing some of the radical legislation of the right-wing legislatures that are about to fall off the far-right end of the earth."

Accepting his award, Biss spoke of the importance of standing up and being counted, not just to be the deciding vote on important legislation but to make your voice heard every day. Going door to door and person to person "is the best education of what Democracy is that a person can have. You start to think it's all about you, but when you're out knocking on doors what you come

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Tenth Dems Mingle and Pose for Pictures



Tenth Dems Celebration *continued from page 6*

to understand is it's not that that last door will make the difference. You do it because you're a citizen of a democracy and you stand up to be counted," he said.

Biss closed his remarks with a story about a colleague who left a gravely ill child's bedside to return to Springfield to cast an important vote. It turned out, he explained, that her vote wasn't necessary to passage of the bill, which would have passed with one vote even had she stayed home. But, he continued, that didn't make her vote any less important or meaningful; what mattered was that she made her voice heard and stood up to be counted.

Barbara Altman, a member of Tenth Dems' leadership team, received the Founders Award for her sustained significant contributions to the organization. Altman is editor of the Tenth Dems newsletter and is actively involved in voter protection and the Community Connection's steering committee. "ComCon's motto is that politics is about more than just elections," she observed. "And as true as this is, I believe the converse is also true—that is, elections are about more than just politics. We hold elections

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Tenth Dems Celebrate



Tenth Dems Celebration *continued from page 7*

to select people to govern on our behalf, people who share our values," she continued. "Working toward a common goal, we brainstorm, we divide up tasks, we invite others to pitch in. Faced with heavy lifting, we each take an end and lift together."

Marguerite Hampton received the Rosenblit Volunteer of the Year award for her significant contribution to Tenth Dems' day-to-day operations, including acting as bookkeeper. Hampton told how she became a Democrat after evaluating both parties' platforms for a high school assignment. She found Democrats believed in values such as equality, freedom of religion, and equal access to healthcare. "Democrats are untiring and unwavering advocates for these things," she said. "Tenth Dems provides me with an effective avenue to advance these goals." ■

More Photos from the Celebration



Congressman Schneider Speaks and Poses for Photos



Tenth Dems Welcomes Keynote Speaker Jon Carson





L to R: John Hmurovic and Hon. Lauren Beth Gash with Mikva Leadership Award recipient State Sen. Daniel Biss and presenter Hon. Ab Mikva; Volunteer of the Year Marguerite Hampton with Hmurovic, 2012 Volunteer of the Year and presenter Ravi Ganapathy, and Gash; Founders Award recipient Barbara Altman with Gash, Claudia Lovelette, who presented the award on behalf of her late husband 2012 honoree Chuck Knight, and Hmurovic.



Republicans and Jobs

By Jack Altschuler

On December 3, 2013, Speaker of the House John Boehner declared in a 57-second speech: “Republicans continue to stay focused on the economy. And the fact is that the American people want us to do everything we can to strengthen the economy so there will be more jobs and higher wages available. This week we’ll take further steps to strengthen our economy.”

Then he launched into an attack on the Affordable Care Act.

So, here is the question for you: Can you name a single thing that the Republicans in Congress have proposed or done since January 20, 2009 that has been aimed at creating more jobs or higher wages?

They spent lots of energy and money to fight the Jobs Bill, and they defeated it. They fought against and then were at last shamed into allowing the Jobs for Veterans Bill to pass. Okay, we’ll give them credit for that and do so with the same enthusiasm with which they supported our veterans. Then they spent all the rest of their time on anything but more jobs and higher wages.

They spent much of the past five years proudly battling against gay rights, immigration reform, and voting rights. Not much of a connection with more jobs and higher wages there.

There was some truly goggle-eyed work done by Republicans in the House on the Affordable Care Act—Obamacare. It is essentially the program recommended years ago by the very conservative think tank, The Heritage Foundation. It is

also essentially the same as the program enacted into law in Massachusetts under Republican Governor Mitt Romney. But today’s Republicans—the ones for whom John Boehner speaks—have spent their time trying to repeal Obamacare 43 times. And, speaking of healthcare, they agitate for defunding Planned Parenthood, too. It is unclear how any of that helps to alleviate the suffering or improve the opportunities of our under- and unemployed.

They’ve also made sure that we don’t have sensible control over the sale of firearms. Gotta give the Republicans credit, too, as over the years they have boldly managed to give Congressional endorsement to the naming of several post offices. Check that box as Mission Accomplished. Still, where is the action toward more jobs and higher wages?

The Republicans have paid attention to anything that would thwart President Obama but have done nothing to help Americans needing jobs or higher wages. Boehner was right in what he said—Americans want Congress to do something about that. Too bad for us that all he and the Republicans offer is lip service.

Do you want Congress to behave differently? Do you want our problems solved instead of neglected as they get worse?

Then you’d better get active, get involved, and send people to Washington who will get this country headed in the right direction. If you don’t, I promise you that our paralyzed Congress will do nothing to help you or anyone you care about with job opportunities or higher wages.

One more thing: With about three applicants for every job opening, it is a mathematical certainty that two out of three jobless people can’t and won’t find work any time soon, leaving them unemployed. Meanwhile, the Republicans in Congress want to cut unemployment benefits, lest we teach the unemployed to be dependent on government. That is the reasoning expressed by Republican presidential wannabe Rand Paul for his party’s lack of concern with the fact that on December 28, extended unemployment benefits expired and the Congress set the long-term unemployed adrift, hungry.

And Happy Holidays to all of them. ■

“I’m So Disappointed in Obama....”

By Eleonora di Liscia

I swear if I hear that one more time, I will hurt someone.

Yes, I’m disappointed that the Affordable Care Act rollout isn’t going smoothly—partly because Republicans are trying to put government on an all-juice diet and there isn’t money to pay for the necessary software.

And you can certainly be disappointed that the NSA continues to listen to our phone calls just as it did under the Bush administration. (Remember having this conversation in 2002? So why are you surprised now?)

And there have certainly been some environmental decisions that have pained even this self-appointed keeper of the Obama Presidential Flame.

So, ok, this president is not perfect. I suppose you’re always perfect on your job, which I suppose is harder than, say, running the Free World. And I suppose you always got everything you wanted for your birthday. Well, I didn’t. So I’m happy when I get a lot of things I want. Seventy-three percent of the things I want, according to PolitiFact.com’s accounting of Obama’s 480 promises. (<http://www.politifact.com/personalities/barack-obama/>)

So let’s get some perspective here. A recent poll said that if the 2012 election were held today, Romney would have won. Let’s explore that alternative reality:

● Affordable Care Act:

WHAT YOU GOT UNDER PRESIDENT OBAMA: Romneycare.

WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN UNDER PRESIDENT ROMNEY: No care.

● Foreign Wars, Part I

WHAT YOU GOT UNDER PRESIDENT OBAMA: End of the war in Iraq and drawdown of the war in Afghanistan.

WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN UNDER PRESIDENT ROMNEY: Escalation of the war in Iraq. Secretary of State John McCain personally drops bombs on Iran.

● Foreign Wars, Part II

WHAT YOU GOT UNDER PRESIDENT OBAMA: Obama attempting to resolve Syria crisis through peace talks.

WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN UNDER PRESIDENT ROMNEY: Secretary of State John McCain personally drops bombs on Syria.

● Marriage Equality:

UNDER OBAMA: End of Defense of Marriage Act and Don’t Ask Don’t Tell. Many other gay-friendly reforms.

UNDER ROMNEY: Marriage is between a corporation and a corporation; I mean, a man and a woman....



● Immigration Reform:

UNDER OBAMA: Unable to pass the DREAM Act through Congress, Obama uses executive powers to prioritize deportation of gang bangers and terrorists instead of children.

UNDER ROMNEY: Kindly book yourself on the next train out of town.

● Guantanamo:

UNDER OBAMA: OK. No real progress there as Congress has consistently cut off funding to move detainees. However, number of detainees has decreased.

UNDER ROMNEY: Detainees get lots more company.

● Waterboarding:

UNDER OBAMA: We don’t do it.

UNDER ROMNEY: What’s the problem? Great idea!

● Climate Change:

UNDER OBAMA: Acknowledged global warming: Enhanced fuel-efficiency standards, invested in renewable energy, and implemented green standards for federal buildings along with a host of other environment-friendly regulations.

UNDER ROMNEY: What climate change?

● Bipartisan Politics:

UNDER OBAMA: Occasional pandering to Republicans.

UNDER ROMNEY: Full-time pandering to Michelle Bachmann.

● The Supreme Court:

UNDER OBAMA: Two liberal women (one is the first Hispanic) appointed to fill vacancies. Supreme Court balance holds at 5 to 4 in conservatives’ favor. Obamacare survives.

UNDER ROMNEY: Two right-wing extremists appointed to fill vacancies left by two liberals’ retirements. Supreme Court balance is 9 to 0 after the two remaining liberals are hospitalized due to mental trauma from explaining law to Supreme Court Justice Michelle Bachmann. Bachmann writes lead opinion striking down Romneycare in Massachusetts. ■

Marriage Equality in Illinois, Greg Harris, and a Bishop's Exorcism: A Personal Perspective

By Steven Gan

As a gay American, I was ecstatic that the Illinois legislature voted on November 5 to extend to gay and lesbian Americans in our state the right to marry the person of their choice. I was further very proud when Governor Quinn signed the legislation into law on November 20, making Illinois, after Hawaii, the 16th state in the union to grant marriage equality for all. It is not only another step in the name of equality but also a huge advancement in expanding the stability of Illinois families. Now, families headed by gay couples will enjoy the same protections and feel as valued as every other family in our state.

As has been the case with many civil rights causes and events throughout history, there was a force that became the face and spirit of marriage equality in Illinois, and that force was State Representative Greg Harris (13th District, Chicago).

For those of you who do not know much about Greg Harris, he's 58, was born in Denver, and moved around the country with his family until he arrived in Chicago in 1977 to begin a career in marketing. Gradually, Harris moved into politics where he was the chief of staff to Chicago's 48th Ward Alderman, Mary Ann Smith, for 14 years. Subsequently, he was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in November 2006.

Although Harris is often referred to as one of the state's four "openly gay" legislators, he prefers to be thought of as a lawmaker in a district where 63 languages are spoken who cares about a multitude of issues, including immigration and homelessness.

But for the past few years, Greg Harris, along with organizations such as Equity Illinois, Lambda Legal, and Illinois Unites, has been at the forefront of pushing marriage equality in Illinois. In 2010, Harris sponsored the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection & Civil Union Act, which established civil unions in Illinois. That bill was signed into law by Governor Pat Quinn not even three years ago, on January 31, 2011.

The only part of the new marriage equality law that I'm not pleased with is that it doesn't take effect until June 1, 2014. With six months to go, I'm concerned that some organization, some group, or some individual with moral and political discomfort about this law will attempt to delay its official launch through some legal maneuvering.

On the day that Governor Quinn signed marriage equality into law, I was reminded of Linda Blair's performance in the movie, *The Exorcist*. I was 16 years old when that movie came out and waited outside in zero degree weather with a bunch of my high school friends for two hours in a long line that wrapped around the theater. Like many other impressionable teens, I was terrorized when, as the priest tried to remove the devil within her, Blair's head spun 360 degrees and green puke shot out of her mouth. Twelve-year-old Blair was nominated for an academy award for her "outstanding special effects" acting.

Fast forward 40 years. On the day that Governor Quinn signed the marriage equality bill into law, not far away, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield, Bishop Thomas John Paprocki staged an exorcism in front of 500 people, asking God to "deliver us from evil." Although this exorcism had none of the special effects that frightened me 40 years ago, it was no less bizarre. Just as the fictional priest had done with the Linda Blair character, Bishop Paprocki uttered three little words in Latin that he addressed to Governor Quinn: "I exorcise you."

Bishop Paprocki told his group of 500 or so parishioners, which included elementary school students, office workers, and retirees, that he didn't intend to suggest that Governor Quinn or any other Illinois leader is "possessed by the devil." Instead, during his homily, which can be found in full at Catholic Online, http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=53260, Bishop Paprocki said the service was required to "undo the work of the devil." In other words, the bishop equated the accomplishments of the governor and his allies who shepherded the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act through the legislature with the work of "the devil." He reasoned, "Since the legal redefinition of marriage is contrary to God's plan, those who contract civil same-sex marriage are culpable of serious sin. Politicians responsible for enacting civil same-sex marriage legislation are morally complicit as co-operators in facilitating this grave sin."

Bishop Paprocki told parishioners that he was speaking to them "with great reluctance" and that he "did not seek" the moral confrontation with state lawmakers and the governor that led to his carrying out an exorcism. He further said at one point that "the church loves homosexual persons and looks upon them with compassion."

Personally, I don't see how Bishop Paprocki can have it both ways—in one breath he condemns those politicians who want to include everyone under the equality umbrella and then in the next breath states that he still loves homosexuals. Performing this exorcism in the first place appeared to me to be irrational and mean-spirited.

But what concerns me the most is that of all the people who attended Bishop Paprocki's service and listened to his homily, I wonder how many might have enthusiastically supported his statements and found his symbolic exorcism moving. Perhaps some of his parishioners will even be motivated to try to figure out a legal way to thwart the law's taking effect. By injecting and connecting the idea of "the devil" with people whose only aim is to make this country a more perfect union, Bishop Paprocki continues to perpetuate ignorance, fear, bigotry and a discriminatory attitude that has no place in an evolving, compassionate, and inclusive society.

He just doesn't get it that we are all God's children, and not only in this great State of Illinois, but also throughout this great land. ■

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