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A Musical Message From The Tenth Dems Membership Chair

by Lisa Radin

When I think of the Tenth Dems, the Beatles come to mind. From “All Together Now” to “Revolution,” the Tenth Congressional District Democrats is a grassroots organization that rocks. I’m proud to be a member.

That’s why I’m inviting you to “Come Together” now and JOIN the most dynamic grassroots political group around. “From Me to You,” Tenth Dems provides a very personal link to local and national politics. I’ve learned so much as a Tenth Dems member and volunteer, and I’ve met an extraordinary number of interesting and smart people.

Illinois’ 10th Congressional District contains portions of both Cook and Lake Counties. We’re “Here, There and Everywhere,” from



Glencoe to Zion, from Des Plaines to Fox Lake; from Lake Michigan to Libertyville. An individual can become a member of Tenth Dems for only \$35.

So “Tell Me Why” you should become a member of the Tenth Dems. Well, Because. The

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Tenth News

www.tenthdems.org

FEBRUARY 2014 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 11, Edition 2

Kirk Helps GOP Deny Unemployment Insurance Benefits Extension

For more than 10 years – first as 10th District Congressman and later as Illinois’ junior U.S. Senator – Mark Kirk has sought to portray himself as a moderate, even as he has supported his party’s radical agenda to weaken the middle class and dismantle basic assistance to the poor.

Recently, however, Kirk is making no bones about his true priorities. Even with the long-term unemployment rate at the highest level since the Great Depression, Kirk opposes extending emergency unemployment assistance to more than 1.3 million out-of-work Americans – including 200,000 military veterans.

On January 14, Kirk voted with his party’s ultra-conservative leaders and helped filibuster the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act – a bill that, if passed, would have reinstated and extended for an additional three months emergency unemployment insurance benefits for individuals who have been jobless for longer than 26 weeks. The Federal benefits expired on December 28, leaving about 1.3 million jobless Americans with no safety net. What’s more, each week Congress fails to renew emergency unemployment benefits, an additional 70,000 jobless Americans lose their financial lifeline.



“It should never have come to this,” said progressive talk radio host Thom Hartmann of the plight of the long-term unemployed.

Historically, Congress has funded extended unemployment insurance benefits in recessions, cutting back only as the economy improves. Congress never before has discontinued that funding with long-term unemployment as high as it is now; nearly four million workers have been jobless for longer than six months. In fact, when Republicans controlled the White House, they extended unemployment insurance benefits multiple times with no strings attached.

Now, in contrast, Republicans, including Mark Kirk, are using this emergency to inflict more pain on the American public—apparently for the sole purpose of blaming that pain on President Obama. Meanwhile, the political hostage-taking is forcing families into abject poverty and further damaging an already ailing U.S. economy. Out of necessity, unemployment

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Loose Lips (and Emails) Seem to Be Sinking Gov. Christie's Ship

by Steven Gan

One of the more palatable Republican politicians for me has been Governor Chris Christie. Although I'm not happy with his stance on certain social issues, his no-nonsense style impressed me, as it did many on both sides of the aisle. I also saw him as instrumental, if inadvertently, in helping to get President Obama reelected. It gave me a warm and fuzzy feeling to see Christie embrace President Obama in gratitude for his support just a few days after Hurricane Sandy devastated large portions of New Jersey.

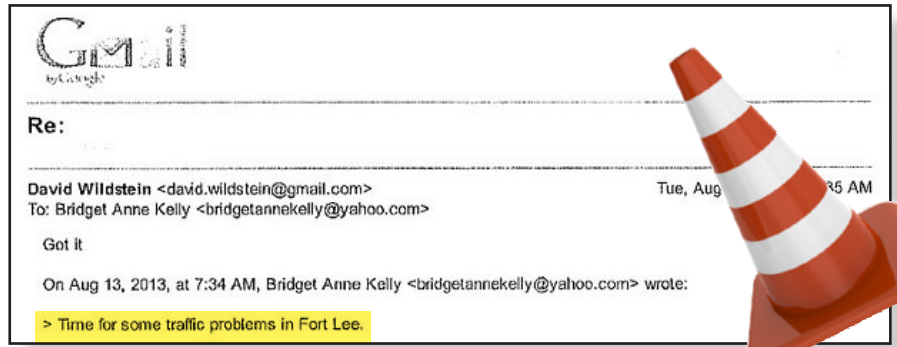
So, like many, I was very surprised to learn about the magnitude of the George Washington Bridge scandal. I was further amazed by watching Governor Christie's apology a day after some shocking emails by his inner circle came to light. Those email messages clearly showed that a traffic study was carried out on the bridge not because of anything having to do with transportation issues, but for political reasons. Although investigations by both houses of the New Jersey legislature, as well as state and federal law enforcement officials are still underway, it appears that the motive for the fake traffic study that snarled traffic for four days was political payback to Mayor Sokolich of Fort Lee, New Jersey, a Democrat, for not supporting Governor Christie's gubernatorial reelection campaign last November.

When the story broke, I was very taken with Christie's apology. He seemed so sincere in his claim that he did not know about the fake traffic study and that his staff and some of the higher-ups within the Port Authority deceived him. In my view, he came across as very believable.

However, there was still something nagging at me. I can't understand why Governor Christie could not or did not aggressively investigate the circumstances surrounding the closing of three out of the four lanes on the George Washington Bridge at the time the closure was carried out, or immediately thereafter.

To explain, let me back up and review the timeline:

- **Aug 13, 2013:** Bridget Kelly, Chris Christie's then-Deputy Chief of Staff, emailed David Wildstein, Port Authority Director of Interstate Capital Projects: "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee."
- **Aug 28, 2013:** Port Authority Chief Engineer Peter Zipf emailed Wildstein: "As requested, attached is a plan for reducing the rush hour toll lane allotment for Fort Lee from three lanes to two." "One additional scenario could be a merge down to one lane, if needed," he added.
- **Aug 29, 2013:** Zipf provided a modified plan for Wildstein, including an option for taking Fort Lee down to a single toll lane, "as discussed."



- **Sep 6, 2013:** Darcy Licorish of the Port Authority Police Department sent an email stating that Wildstein had instructed Robert Durando, General Manager of the George Washington Bridge, to implement the one-lane plan.
- **Sep 9 - 13, 2013:** Traffic hell erupted in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Fast-forward to Wednesday, Jan 7, 2014. Email correspondence between Bridget Kelly and David Wildstein surfaced in the news media. The next day, Jan 8, 2014, Governor Christie held a special news conference, apologizing to the world about what appeared to be an unauthorized closure of three out of four lanes on the George Washington Bridge.

Now, as a CPA who has performed audits throughout his accounting career, I know that audits are all about finding all the documents that represent a transaction or event from inception to completion. And so it caught my eye when Port Authority Chief Engineer Peter Zipf emailed Port Authority Director of Interstate Capital Projects David Wildstein about "the plan" to reduce traffic from three lanes to two, or perhaps just one.

It seems to me that since the George Washington Bridge is said to be the busiest bridge in the world, a plan to do anything as far-reaching as closing three out of four lanes would need to have "special handling." It ordinarily takes months of planning, discussing, reviewing, and finally authorizing something of that magnitude.

You know, transportation engineering is a highly sophisticated field and requires years of study, experience, and knowledge in a multitude of disciplines. In addition, in carrying out transportation projects, you need to engage a number of professionals who specialize in statistics, geography, logistics, and civil engineering in order to develop a traffic study plan that will be executed as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible.

Unfortunately, however, there is no evidence of anything close to all of the details needed to execute "the plan" submitted by Peter Zipf to David Wildstein. That would require months and months of planning, organizing, and consulting of the specialists involved. And there's no evidence of any knowledge, review, or authorization by the Port Authority Executive Directors of

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Congress Watch *continued from page 1*

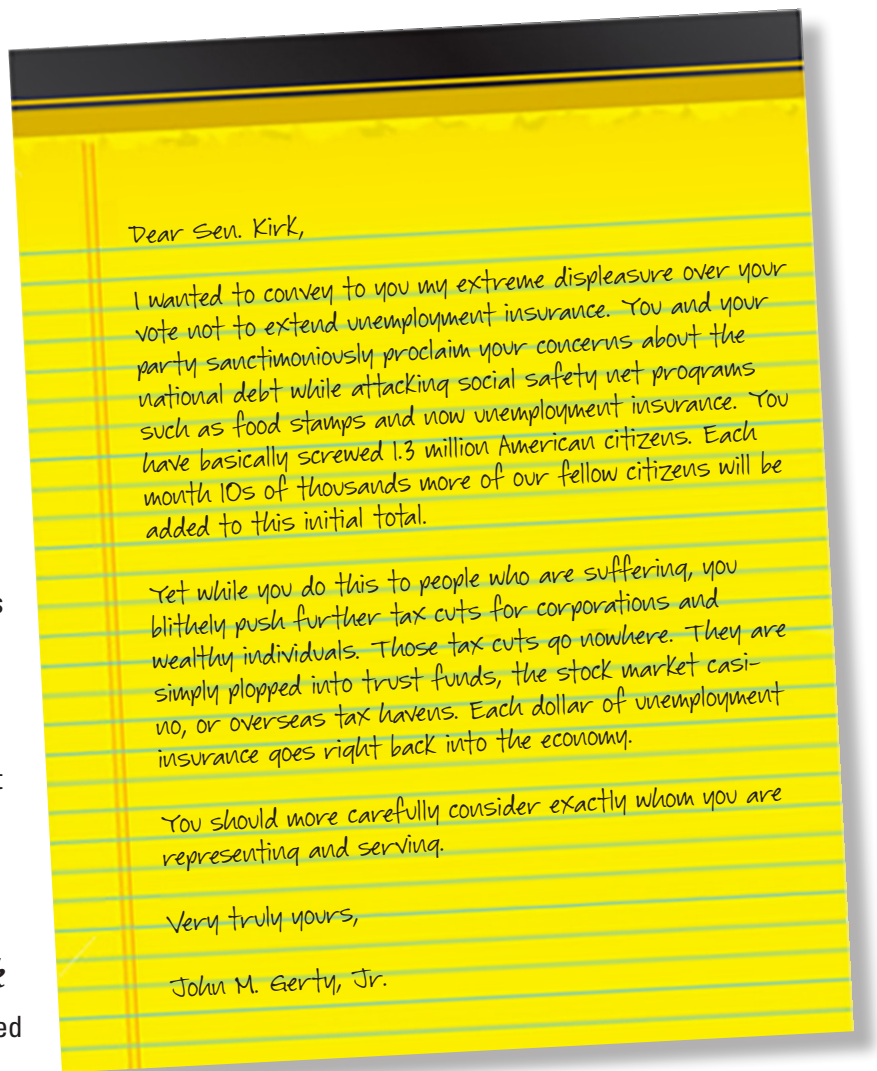
recipients immediately spend the money on goods and services, pouring it back into the economy. For many unemployed workers, extended benefits are their only resource for paying the rent or the mortgage and fending off homelessness. Harvard economist Lawrence Katz estimates that, in the long run, denying the benefits will cost taxpayers much more than is saved by not paying the benefits.

The human cost will, of course, be incalculable. Children who live on the edge of destitution have been found years later to suffer from a species of post-traumatic stress disorder. And in the near-term, homeless and hungry children, children who hardly can be expected to excel in school, are the first to crash through the unraveled safety net.

Although not surprised, we are deeply saddened by Kirk's unwillingness to stand up to his party's extremist leaders on this critical issue, not even on behalf of the veterans of the armed services whom he purports to champion. And it is particularly disappointing that, having recently experienced personal hardships, Senator Kirk still cannot find the empathy or moral compass to make extending unemployment insurance benefits in the midst of a lingering recession a top priority. **TD**

A Constituent Admonishes Senator Kirk

The letter at right was sent to Sen. Mark Kirk after he voted against extending long-term unemployment insurance benefits:



Dear Sen. Kirk,

I wanted to convey to you my extreme displeasure over your vote not to extend unemployment insurance. You and your party sanctimoniously proclaim your concerns about the national debt while attacking social safety net programs such as food stamps and now unemployment insurance. You have basically screwed 1.3 million American citizens. Each month 10s of thousands more of our fellow citizens will be added to this initial total.

Yet while you do this to people who are suffering, you blithely push further tax cuts for corporations and wealthy individuals. Those tax cuts go nowhere. They are simply plopped into trust funds, the stock market casino, or overseas tax havens. Each dollar of unemployment insurance goes right back into the economy.

You should more carefully consider exactly whom you are representing and serving.

Very truly yours,

John M. Gerty, Jr.

Loose Lips *continued from page 2*

New Jersey and New York.

Specifically, on Sept. 13, 2014, Port Authority Executive Director Pat Foye wrote an impassioned email to the general manager of the George Washington Bridge, Robert Durango, arguing that “the lane closures that spiraled into a major scandal this week were illegal.” A few minutes after it was sent, Robert Durango responded by stating, “We have restored the 3 toll lanes to Ft. Lee.”

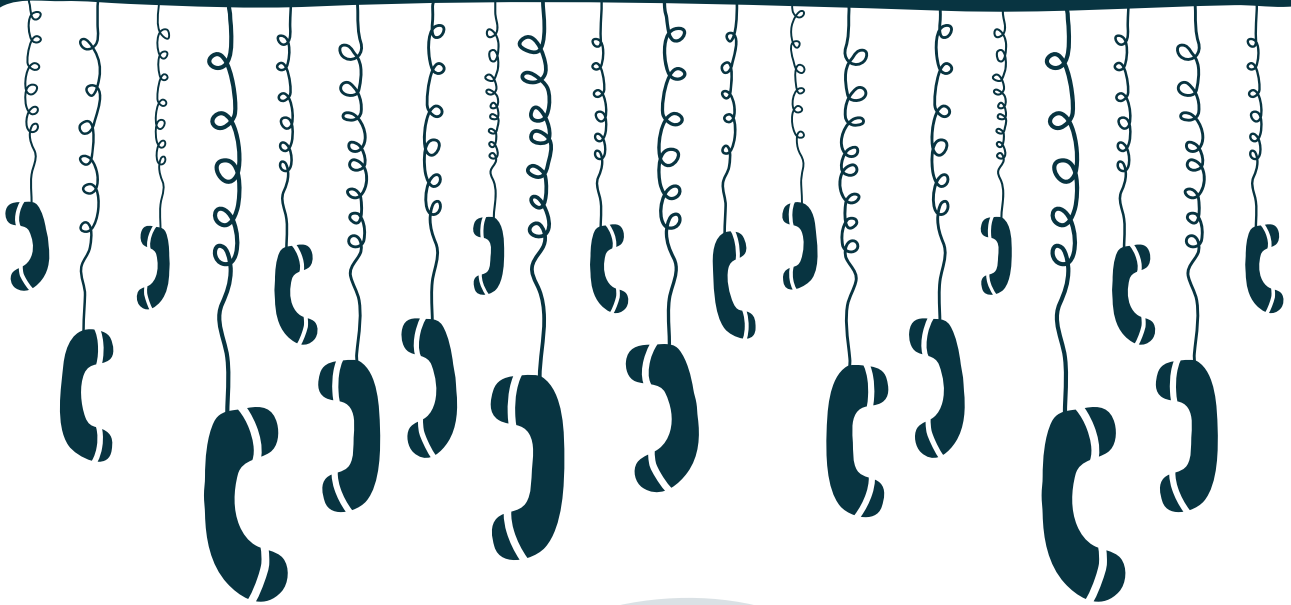
So when the lanes were closed and numerous officials, including the Port Authority Executive Directors of New Jersey and New York, were emailing and calling Governor Christie's office trying to get to the bottom of why the lanes were being closed, why didn't Governor Christie simply ask one of his staff to bring him the approved plan? That would have presumably shown who was involved in the origination and development of this supposed traffic study and, more important, who signed off. I mean, for a governor who is known to be not just a no-nonsense leader but also a bit of a micro-manager, common sense would have dictated an immediate review of “the plan”

so that the questions by several members of Congress, the Port Authority Executives, the media, etc., would have been clearly answered. It would have been that simple.

Instead, from Sep 13, 2013 through Jan 6, 2014, Governor Christie danced around the questions of why the closures were ordered and denied the accusations that the lane closures were related to any kind of political payoff. Then, when the emails by his inner circle came to light on Jan 7, 2014, he apologized for the actions of his staff, but he continued to claim ignorance of why the lane closures were ordered.

Given that Governor Christie is a very capable, intelligent, take-charge individual, I find the idea that he either didn't know anything or didn't have the common sense to properly and expeditiously investigate why the closure was ordered just not plausible.

As the documents and witnesses help us to piece together the truth of this debacle, and as the inconsistencies, contradictions, exaggerations, and lies pile up, time will tell if Governor Christie's ship will stay afloat. **TD**



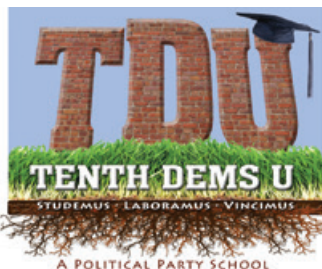
Tenth Dems University to Present Free Forum on NSA Surveillance Practices

On Thursday, February 20, at 7:00 p.m., at the Northbrook Public Library's Dan Ryan Auditorium, 1200 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, Tenth Dems University will be presenting a forum on the surveillance practices of the National Security Agency (NSA).

The principal speaker will be Professor Geoffrey Stone of the University of Chicago Law School. Professor Stone served on President Obama's committee of outside experts tasked with reviewing the NSA's surveillance practices. He is a former dean of the law school and an expert on constitutional law. Professor Stone is also the author of several books, including *Top Secret: When Our Government Keeps Us in the Dark*.

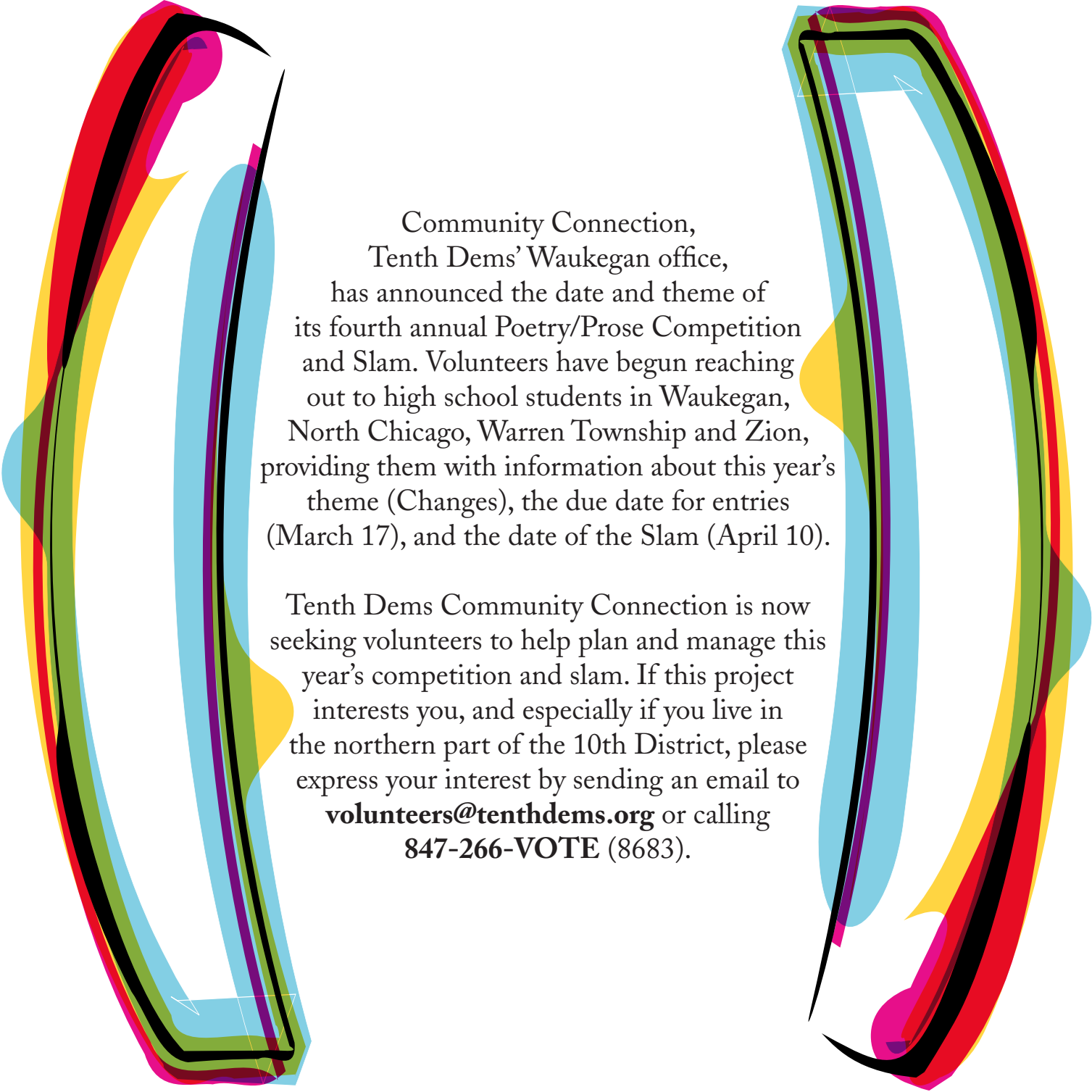
**This event is free of charge.
For more information or to volunteer:
email events@tenthdems.org
or
call 847-266-VOTE (8683)**

Or sign up now at <http://tenthdems.org/nsa>



Tenth Dems U doesn't have a campus, hasn't hired a full-time faculty, and has no plans for scheduling homecoming festivities or fielding a football team. What we do offer, however, is a chance for you to become a better-educated voter, a more active and effective political volunteer, and to learn the skills you need if you ever want to run for public office. (TDU 238)

Calling All Lovers of Literature and Supporters of Students



Community Connection,
Tenth Dems' Waukegan office,
has announced the date and theme of
its fourth annual Poetry/Prose Competition
and Slam. Volunteers have begun reaching
out to high school students in Waukegan,
North Chicago, Warren Township and Zion,
providing them with information about this year's
theme (Changes), the due date for entries
(March 17), and the date of the Slam (April 10).

Tenth Dems Community Connection is now
seeking volunteers to help plan and manage this
year's competition and slam. If this project
interests you, and especially if you live in
the northern part of the 10th District, please
express your interest by sending an email to
volunteers@tenthdems.org or calling
847-266-VOTE (8683).

A VOTE FOR LABOR

Republicans tend not to like anything that gets between them and their God-given pursuit of wealth. So it's no surprise that Republicans try to stymie or roll back all things pro-labor. Remember how Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker started union-busting the second he set foot in office?

And that's why it's so important to send 10th District Congressman Brad Schneider back to Washington in November. Brad has been steadfast in supporting workers and voting against any attempt to strip their rights. You can guess what Tea Party challenger Robert Dold would have done. Just replace every "for" with an "against," and vice versa.

Why repeal when you can stymie? Republicans are not fond of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) which enforces the National Labor Relations Act allowing workers to unionize. The NLRB consists of five members, but had been operating with a quorum of three members for about 10 years.

Last summer, with a third term set to expire, Republicans filibustered all nominations. If that were not enough, Republicans passed the "Preventing Greater Uncertainty in Labor-Management Relations Act" by 10 votes. (You've got to love the names of these bills. If it sounds good, just assume it's bad.) The "uncertainty" was that suffered by business if the NLRB actually could function. The Act prevented the NLRB from taking any actions, including appointing personnel, without the very quorum that the NLRB could not obtain because Republicans had filibustered its nominees.

Brad Schneider voted against this crippling bill. And just think: With 10 more Brads, the bill would have been defeated. Brad also sent a letter to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell calling for him to allow the vote on the nominees. (As a trade-off to prevent limiting their abuse of the filibuster, Republicans allowed confirmation of all five nominees in July 2013.)

Brad also took a firm stand against the Working Families Flexibility Act (another great name for terrible legislation). The bill allowed employers to opt to award workers compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay. "Middle-class families work too hard, sacrifice too much for us to make it more difficult for them to earn a fair shake," Brad said in a statement. "This is simply a bad deal for American workers who rely on hard-earned overtime to make ends meet. They deserve safeguards



for a fair day's wage and a fair day's work. This bill includes neither."

Naturally, the bill passed in the Republican-controlled House – but not with Brad's vote.

Brad has taken a strong stand against workplace discrimination. He was an original cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would expand protections and close loopholes for women under the Equal Pay Act, which requires equal pay for equal work. For some reason, this concept offends Republicans. The bill passed the Senate, but Republican leadership has refused to bring it up for a vote in the House.

Brad helped introduce the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would prohibit employers discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation and identity. While passing the Senate, this bill, too, is stymied in the House.

One of Brad's biggest concerns is helping the unemployed. "It's simply unconscionable to think that with the economy continuing to slowly recover, Congress would fail to act to extend these critically important emergency unemployment benefits," he said. "Many of the families in my district and throughout the country continue to struggle and depend on these benefits, which is why I call on all of my colleagues to support an extension as soon as possible." Yet, as we go to press, Republicans persist in opposing this bill. See this month's *Congress Watch* feature on page one for a fuller analysis of the GOP's refusal to reinstate extended unemployment insurance benefits. **TD**

What You Do Not Know About the Affordable Care Act (and Need To) – Part II: Accountable Care Organizations

by Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is a comprehensive and highly complex legislative enactment that is about much more than ensuring that every person in the United States obtains affordable health insurance coverage. As discussed in Part I of this article, which appeared in the January 2014 edition of the *Tenth News* (<http://www.tenthdems.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/201401NL.pdf>), one of the goals of the Affordable Care Act is to reduce healthcare costs through improved coordination of care.

One approach to coordinating care, which is modeled on some of the group health cooperatives currently existing as well as on a souped-up version of the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), is through encouraging physicians, hospitals, and other healthcare providers to form networks. Through these networks, called Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), providers are paid more if they keep patients healthy.

So how is an ACO different from an HMO? The primary difference is that ACOs do not share the one feature of HMOs that has irritated many HMO participants (doctors and patients, alike): In an HMO, referrals are limited and dictated by the network, whereas in an ACO, a patient is not required to remain in the network. Additionally, the key feature of an ACO is the requirement that it meet a number of quality measures to ensure that money is not saved by limiting the healthcare provided.

An ACO makes the various providers within the system jointly accountable for the health of patients, giving them financial incentives to cooperate, to share information, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of tests and procedures. Savings achieved are shared by all the providers. Since part of the blame for our high medical costs is attributable to the fee-for-service system that pays for each procedure, bundling of fees based upon a diagnosis is expected to generate some cost savings. The key



participant in an ACO is the primary care physician, who participates in the coordination of care and, in some instances, shares the risk of high cost and complicated patients.

A management consulting firm has estimated that as of last November as many as 30 million Americans were receiving care from an ACO. In this area, the main ACO network is

the Advocate Health system. While Advocate is one of only a handful of ACOs in Illinois, that number is likely to expand with the full implementation of the ACA. Nationwide, over four million Medicare beneficiaries and approximately 500 hospitals have signed up. Medicare has experienced significant cost savings from ACOs, as well as improvements in objective measures of quality healthcare.

One of the downsides of ACOs is the consolidation of hospitals. Consolidation reduces choices available for patients and also raises costs for insurers by limiting their negotiating power with hospitals and physician groups. Yet some hospitals are reluctant to participate because of the risks of cost sharing, especially for highly complex patients. Many hospital executives find ACO models to be unstable and financially risky. That's one reason 46 percent of hospital chief executives in a recent survey reported no plans to participate in an ACO or ACO-like model in the near future. According to this survey, conducted in October 2013 by Purdue Healthcare Advisors, a nonprofit consulting firm, nearly half of CEOs feel that either their hospital or healthcare organization is too small for an ACO-like structure or that there are too many unknowns and inconsistencies surrounding the models to take the risk of participating, or both.

While the final result is difficult to predict, it is likely that in the future there will be increasing movement away from a fee-for-service payment approach, at least for Medicare and Medicaid. Improved quality and healthcare outcomes will be a high priority. **TD**

Membership *continued from page 1*

"Long and Winding Road" to electing Democrats to local, state and national office begins with the people. **"Eight Days a Week,"** Tenth Dems volunteers perform the necessary tasks, including making phone calls, preparing mailings to voters, and going door-to-door with candidates. We have volunteers who write for our newsletter, organize issue forums, work on our website, coordinate our intern program, and serve as our liaison to other Democratic groups and to organizations that share our opinions on the issues of the day. Whenever **"The Fool on the Hill"** rears his ugly head, Tenth Dems members will be the first to know. From establishment Republicans

to the Tea Party, we don't just **"Let It Be;"** we educate people across our district about the issues that are important to them and the candidates who share our values. Our grassroots efforts have been critical to electing Democrats throughout the 10th District.

"Do You Want to Know a Secret"? We not only recruit and train candidates and deploy armies of volunteers. We also raise money.

So **"Help!"** Join us. Go to <http://tenthdems.org/join> and join Tenth Dems. You can give \$35 for an individual membership, a bit more, or much more. **"With a Little Help from My Friends"** (and all of our friends), Tenth Dems will continue its important work. **TD**

The Tenth Dems Chair Visits the White House

It's not every day that one receives an invitation to the White House to socialize with the President and First Lady, along with a small group of key Administration officials and fellow Americans. So, even though the President and Lauren became friends while both served in the Illinois General Assembly and both the First Lady and the President were early supporters and have been featured guests at Tenth Dems events, Lauren was a little surprised to receive an invitation in November to join the Obamas at an annual Holiday Reception in the White House.

Lauren and her husband, Gregg Garmisa, who first met on Capitol Hill in 1981, made plans to attend the party and, at the same time, to visit their son, Ben, who now works on Capitol Hill.

In spite of a steady rain and, as to be expected, somewhat sobering security precautions, Lauren, Gregg and the other guests were in great spirits as they proceeded onto the White House grounds and then into the residence itself. Once inside, the awe-inspiring reminders of where they were became apparent immediately. Whether it was admiring the official presidential portraits everywhere, or mingling with Hollywood stars, or chatting with old friend and current Chief of Staff to First Lady Michelle Obama, Tina Tchen, Lauren and Gregg enjoyed

the evening thoroughly. While the chance to visit with senior White House advisor Valerie Jarrett was also notable, as was the dazzling display of food, the highlight for Lauren and Gregg, of course, was hearing from President Obama himself, greeting visitors to the People's House.

The President observed that he and Michelle were just "renting" and jokingly asked the guests to leave the silverware for the future tenants. While the Holiday spirits ran high, President Obama reminded the guests that there were still more than three years left in his second term and that, collectively, everyone had to chip in to continue marking America's recovery from its previous economic downturn.

Lauren and Gregg were, needless to say, fired up and ready to go! After more than 30 years in and around government, they are accustomed to pretty much everything one can anticipate from the experiences of public participation, yet they were still awed by this wonderful event.

The next day, before their return home, Lauren and Gregg were able to spend some time with their son, which was a terrific way to put an exclamation point on their visit to the nation's capital!



(top left) At the White House Holiday Party, Lauren Beth Gash and husband Gregg Garmisa ran into Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President and longtime friend of the Obama family; (top right) Lauren also saw Tina Tchen, her colleague from the late Senator Paul Simon's staff and current Chief of Staff to First Lady Michelle Obama; (2nd row, center) Alan Cumming, Eli Gold on CBS' The Good Wife, set in Chicago, was at the party.



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