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## Congressman Bob Dold Firmly on Board With House's Right-Wing Agenda and Limiting a Woman's Right to Choose

This will be a fascinating two years for "Congress Watch." Republicans not only control the entire 114th Congress; they also have increased their majority in the House. But we hope that will change in 2016.

Republican Congressman Bob Dold, who recaptured the seat he held in the 112th Congress, will have to face 10th District voters again in two years. Former 10th District Congressman Brad Schneider has yet to say whether he will run again, and Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rodkin Rotering is seriously considering running for the seat.

Republican Senator Mark Kirk, now in the Senate majority, also will face a Democratic challenger in 2016. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, 8th District Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth is seriously considering running against Kirk. *The Hill* reports that although Duckworth may "clear the field," 17th District

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# Tenth News

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FEBRUARY 2015 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 12, Edition 2

## Dems Gather to Hear State of the Union Address

by Adrienne Kirshbaum

Beginning the seventh year of his presidency, Barack Obama still seems to have a lot of energy for his job, and many local Democrats were eager to hear what he would have to say in his State of the Union address. Tenth Dems arranged a Watch Party at Max & Benny's on the evening of January 20 and welcomed all who wanted to come hear the President lay out his plans for 2015. Breaking bread together on an icy winter evening and then watching a speech like this with like-minded people provides a comfort level that is difficult to match.

Sometimes the fanfare that precedes these events is more exciting than the actual address, but this time Obama proved that he hasn't lost his fighting spirit. Despite being blocked at almost every turn in his presidency, he has a clear view of what he wants for the nation and what he hopes to accomplish in the "final quarter" of his two terms in office. This State of the Union address was inspirational, and the Tenth Dems crowd at Max & Benny's cheered and applauded often.

That the State of the Union is a choreographed event doesn't make it any less impressive. The House Sergeant at Arms announces the President, who makes his way to the front, shaking hands and greeting colleagues on both sides of the aisle. The Vice President, who is President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House are seated behind the podium. It's always fun to watch their reactions to the speech. Depending on their party affiliation, they may smile

and clap enthusiastically or grimace and seem to fall asleep.

This year's speech was President Obama at his best. He seemed relaxed and sure of himself as he announced that the shadow of crisis has passed and that the state of the union is "strong." He began by telling the story of a young family that worked hard and endured through tough times, explaining that he had sought the presidency to work for people like these. He then said that we have experienced the fastest economic growth in over a decade but that American families still need government's help to feel more secure in a world of constant change. In particular, the President called for child care for working parents, paid sick leave and maternity leave, free community college, jobs for our veterans, the closing of the prison at Guantanamo Bay, and climate change legislation. He pleaded with House and Senate members to come together and get things done and promised Republicans that he would listen to their ideas.

President Obama closed by evoking his 2004 speech about how "there are no red states and there are no blue states," the speech that first brought him national attention. He said that he still believes that the cynics are wrong and that we are all one people. ■



*More photos from this event can be found on pages 7-8.*

GO TO PAGE 6 TO FIND PHOTOS OF  
 TENTH DEMS CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY  
 OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

## Congress Watch

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Congresswoman Cheri Bustos, 11th District Congressman Bill Foster, and state Sen. Kwame Raoul also have expressed interest in challenging Kirk. There are also reports that 2nd District Congresswoman Robin Kelly is considering a run.

This column plans to keep a close watch on Dold and Kirk. When they campaign for reelection, we intend that readers of this column know exactly what relation the things these politicians say to voters bears to the things they actually do in Washington, D.C.

### Dold

In the first three weeks of the 114th Congress, as of January 22, the Republican-dominated House has passed 12 bills. Five of those passed with virtually unanimous votes; they related to such noncontroversial issues as terrorism risk insurance, FEMA response to wind storms, protection for emergency responders, suicide prevention for veterans, and incentives for private employers to hire certain veterans.

So let's look at the seven bills the House passed over the opposition of most Democrats. Bob Dold voted for six of them, as did virtually every other Republican member of Congress. Specifically, this newly-elected Republican representative for the 10th District voted to shift funding for health care under the Affordable Care Act (ACA or "Obamacare") from corporations to taxpayers, to authorize the Keystone XL pipeline, to weaken government regulation of private industry in general and the financial industry in particular, to make granting permits for natural gas pipelines the default, and to restrict women's access to reproductive health services like abortion by prohibiting anyone from receiving tax credits under the Affordable Care Act if the insurance they purchase covers abortion services. President Obama already has signaled his intention to veto some of these measures.

The "Save American Workers Act" continued the Republican effort to chip away at the ACA. It will change the IRS definition of full-time employee from one working at least 30 hours to one working at least 40 hours a week. Under the ACA, workers earning less than an amount calculated as 400 percent of the official poverty level may receive federal subsidies to purchase health insurance if they do not have employer-furnished health insurance. By excusing employers of 50 or more workers from providing health insurance to those working less than 40 hours a week (instead of only those working less than 30), the effect (and, likely purpose) of this

legislation is to shift the cost of health insurance for more working Americans from private employers to the federal government – that is, us taxpayers. All but 12 Democrats voted no; Republicans unanimously voted yes, including Dold.

Next, Dold joined every other Republican in voting to authorize the Keystone XL pipeline, a measure opposed by many environmental groups, among others. The President has said that he will veto this bill.

Dold also agreed with every other Republican to amend existing legislation so as to make it more difficult for all federal agencies to promulgate regulations and easier for regulated businesses to challenge federal regulations.

He also joined every other Republican to make requests for permits for natural gas pipelines deemed approved if not disapproved within 30 days.

Dold voted with his fellow Republicans to weaken Dodd-Frank, the legislation passed early in the Obama administration to curb some of the dangerous practices in the financial industry that contributed to the 2008 Great Recession. The bill will delay the effective date of the Volcker Rule and allow large banks to hold on to certain risky securities until 2019. It also exempts private equity firms that conduct securities transactions from the Securities and Exchange Commission's regulatory authority. And the bill makes risky derivatives trading less transparent.

Finally, despite his campaign claims that he supports a woman's right to choose, on January 22, as we went to press, Dold joined every Republican but one and voted for the "Prohibit Taxpayer Funded Abortions Act." This bill prohibits individuals from using federal tax credits to pay for any health insurance plan that covers abortion. In addition, any plan that offers abortion coverage would have to prominently display that information.

This provision would have the effect of keeping health insurers from providing coverage for any abortion services. A large number of those who purchase health insurance are eligible for tax credits to reduce their premiums, and under this bill they could not use the tax credits if the plan they chose offered abortion services. This means that any insurers that wanted to remain competitive would have to eliminate abortion services from their plans or risk not selling any policies.

You may recall that just last November Dold ran as supporting a woman's right to choose. Here is what he said on his campaign website: "Protecting a woman's right to choose is critical and I have a strong record of safeguarding women's healthcare rights (and protecting their right to choose) during my time in Congress."

It has taken newly-elected Congressman Dold just three weeks into his term to give the lie to this claim.

The single Republican bill Dold has not supported to date would tie funding of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to a number of anti-immigrant measures. For example, the bill would void DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program instituted by President Obama to protect Dreamers from deportation. Broadly, Dreamers are certain immigrants who entered the United States before age 16, live law-abiding lives, and are in school or serve in the military or hold a high school diploma or GED.



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## Congress Watch

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The President surely would veto this measure if it ever came to his desk. However, it almost certainly won't, even though Republicans control both houses of Congress. This is because the bill is so extreme, and its tie to DHS funding so controversial—especially in the wake of the spate of terror incidents and threats in January in Western Europe and the U.S.—that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is unlikely to bring it to the floor. According to pundits, Boehner only brought it up in the House in the first place to satisfy the diehard anti-immigrant sentiment in his caucus.

### Kirk

On January 12, Illinois Senator Mark Kirk voted with every other Republican, and 10 Democrats, in favor of cloture on the bill, already passed by the House, to authorize the Keystone XL pipeline. As noted, the President has already said he will veto this bill.

Sen. Kirk is also promoting legislation in the foreign affairs arena that the President surely would veto. Although, with Democratic Senator Bob Menendez as a cosponsor, it has a bipartisan imprimatur, the bill in question, "Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2015," is seen by many as calculated to undermine the Obama administration's ongoing effort to forge an international pact that will prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

International negotiations with Iran are proceeding within the framework of an interim agreement under which Iran has largely frozen its nuclear program in exchange for relief from some international sanctions. The interim agreement was negotiated in November 2013, between Iran on the one hand and the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany on the other. The Kirk-cosponsored legislation would impose new U.S. sanctions on Iran if, upon expiration of the international interim agreement, there is no long-term agreement in place to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

According to the Obama administration, a U.S. law threatening new, unilateral sanctions would threaten the unity of the international coalition that has been working to force Iran to make concessions in exchange for sanctions relief. Tenth Dems' own Steve Sheffey, whose writing on this subject has been published in *The Hill* (Preventing Iranian nukes without further sanctions), as well as *The Times of Israel* (Iran sanctions: Not a litmus test and Just say no to new Iran sanctions), wrote on January 18 in his weekly Chicagoland Pro-Israel Political Update, "Passage of such a bill would be viewed by Iran and our allies as needlessly provocative and as a sign of bad faith." Sheffey also quotes British Prime Minister David Cameron as saying that passage of this legislation "would 'fracture unity' among the international coalition that is confronting Iran."

Thus, the question is not, as Kirk would have it, whether new sanctions would be advisable should negotiations end without an agreement that keeps Iran free of nuclear weapons. Rather, the question is what good threatening such sanctions now could do, especially weighed against the harm that could ensue from unilateral U.S. action, whether to the negotiations themselves or the international coalition aligned against Iran. ■



## "We Don't Want Nobody That Nobody Sent"

By Mark Rosenberg

In 1948, a University of Chicago law student named Abner J. Mikva stopped at a Democratic committeeman's office to volunteer to work for Adlai Stevenson and Paul Douglas. The response to his request to volunteer was, essentially, "We don't want nobody that nobody sent." Ab Mikva was not daunted, and that encounter was the beginning of a stellar political career

After serving in the Illinois House of Representatives for 10 years, Ab Mikva served as U.S. Congressman in Hyde Park and then in our own Illinois 10th Congressional District. His career path changed when he was appointed to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1979. He left the bench in 1994 to become White House Counsel to President Bill Clinton.

In 1997, along with his wife, Zoe, Judge Mikva started a civic engagement program for Chicago youth called the Mikva Challenge (See [www.mikvachallenge.org](http://www.mikvachallenge.org)). This organization works with 5,000 young people each year to involve them in the democratic process. These youngsters work as election judges, and they volunteer with campaigns and with local grassroots organizations that work to improve schools and communities. "Of all the accomplishments in my professional life, what I am most proud of is helping found the Mikva Challenge," Mikva has said.

Among those mentored by Ab Mikva over the years was a young lawyer named Barack Obama.

In December 2014, President Barack Obama awarded Judge Mikva the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

To honor Judge Mikva's example, Tenth Dems presents an annual award in his name. Past recipients of the Ab Mikva Leadership Award include such luminaries as Loretta Durbin, former State Senator Susan Garrett, State Senator Melinda Bush, State Senator Daniel Biss, and former 10th District Congressman Brad Schneider. ■

# PTSD, Guns, the NRA, and the Ku Klux Klan—A Very Lethal Cocktail

By Steven Gan

Ongoing news streams throughout my day. Like many of you, I glance at some of it for only a few nanoseconds. In other cases, I'll actually put my work aside and read through the news bulletin.

So it was back in mid-December that I was surprised to read that after a 17-month delay, largely due to resistance from the National Rifle Association (NRA), the Senate confirmed Dr. Vivek Murthy as the U.S. Surgeon General. The NRA opposed Dr. Murthy because he believes that gun violence is a public health issue.

As I read about Dr. Murthy's confirmation, I learned that in October 2012 he had tweeted, "Tired of politicians playing politics w/guns, putting lives at risk b/c they're scared of NRA, Guns are a health care issue." Sadly and very ironically, two months after this tweet, 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, were brutally massacred by a gunman with a history of mental illness. Although the incident ignited the national debate about gun control with a new sense of urgency, Congress still has failed to take meaningful steps to reduce access to firearms to the mentally ill, or even to study how guns affect the health of U.S. citizens. Too many members of Congress fear the repercussions of standing up to the NRA.

One huge reason for the absence of any study of the effects of gun violence on our citizens is that the premier public health research organization in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has been operating for almost two decades under a ban against such a study. In the 1990s, the NRA persuaded Congress to pass legislation forbidding the CDC from using federal dollars to promote or advocate gun control. The restriction has since been interpreted to mean that no government research can be conducted on how guns affect health, placing an effective chokehold on any such work at the CDC. This is but one stunning example of the power of the NRA. (See Paul D. Thacker, "How Congress Blocked Research on Gun Violence," Dec. 19, 2012 [http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/science/2012/12/gun\\_violence\\_research\\_nra\\_and\\_congress\\_blocked\\_gun\\_control\\_studies\\_at\\_cdc.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2012/12/gun_violence_research_nra_and_congress_blocked_gun_control_studies_at_cdc.html)).

Right after I read about Vivek Murthy's appointment, my regular subscription to the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) newsletter arrived in my inbox. It's always sobering to read this publication and learn about the ongoing hate in this country and how, over the past three decades, the SPLC has been aggressively fighting back against homegrown terrorist groups. As much as we shake our heads about the radicalism running rampant through Al Qaeda, the Taliban, ISIS, and other groups in the Middle East, we've got plenty of bigoted and racist crazies who would like to take over our government right here in the United States.



One of America's original hate groups that just won't die is the infamous Ku Klux Klan. Over the last 150 years this group has grown, then almost shrunk to nothing, and then revived. It has reinvented itself many times over. These days, although the Klan is a shadow of its once monolithic self, several chapters have been trying to make a comeback. From handing out free bags of candy stuffed with anti-immigration literature to appearing in robes on the U.S.-Mexican border to protest President Obama's executive action on immigration, the Klan continues to be an unusually weird and still dangerously viable organization.

The December SPLC newsletter included a very sad and frightening link to a three-part video about how a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in Tupelo, Mississippi, is making an effort to recruit veterans. This campaign is not only because of veterans' military training and expertise, but also because many vets return from war zones feeling lost and in need of "a family" of people who understand them. The KKK's recruiting of veterans is not new, but what is different this time around is the knowledge that vets with PTSD make much easier, better, and more lethal Klan members. (See <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2014/12/18/vice-ku-klux-klan-recruiting-veterans-to-boost-numbers/>)

Without long-term treatment, PTSD can cause severe delusions, schizophrenia, paranoia, and the like. With the VA's backlog of treatment to our vets, many may "self-medicate" with alcohol and drugs, and some may be vulnerable to that camaraderie of KKK brothers who claim to "understand" them.

Those in our society with mental disorders who could have a violent mental meltdown at any time, including veterans suffering from PTSD, are the absolutely last people who should have access to guns—for their own safety, for their families' safety, and for society's safety. Is this not just common sense?

Unfortunately, common sense does not always rule. No matter how many people suffer from mental illness, no matter how hard hate groups like the KKK try to recruit veterans with PTSD, the NRA continues to ensure that the right to bear arms trumps all. Even though we've finally gotten a new surgeon general, the NRA's stranglehold on our Congress blocks the very government-funded research that could lead to solutions that would make us all safer. ■

# The Affordable Care Act Faces Challenges in 2015

By Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

While most of us have resolved in the New Year to lose weight, exercise more, and promote peace on earth, the Republican majority in the 114th Congress has resolved to try to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or “Obamacare”) for the 50th time. Not terribly surprising or even very original. What is original is what Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), Chair of the Senate Policy Committee, said on *Meet the Press* recently—that Republicans were trying to build consensus around one plan to replace Obamacare. After five years of attempts to repeal without offering a constructive replacement, the Republicans may actually come up with an alternative? Given the success of the ACA in lowering the rate of uninsured to under 13 percent (according to Gallup, a more than four percent drop since enactment) and thereby providing needed affordable health care to millions, I do not recommend you hold your breath waiting for an alternative that would actually pass Congress.

What the Republican Congress does plan to pass this session includes the following changes to the Affordable Care Act:

- 1 With the support of a number of Democrats, repeal the medical devices tax that is expected to generate about \$30 billion over the next 10 years.
- 2 Revise the ACA’s definition of full-time employment from 30 hours per week to 40 hours per week. This measure already has passed the House.
- 3 Abolish the Independent Payment Advisory Board, whose mission is to recommend savings in Medicare without affecting coverage or quality of care. This is the entity that opponents of the ACA wrongly labeled a “death panel.” Note that the Board’s recommendations are already subject to Congress’ overruling them by a supermajority vote.
- 4 Abolish the Patient Centered Outcomes Effectiveness Institute, which examines disease treatment regimens for results and recommends effective treatments to medical providers.

Since President Obama holds a veto pen, the only way these proposals could become law is if enough Democrats vote with Republicans to override the veto. This appears highly unlikely, except perhaps in the case of repeal of the medical devices tax.

However, there are two other significant threats to the ongoing viability of the Affordable Care Act: the pending lawsuit, *King v. Burwell* [Secretary of Health and Human Services], and the number of states with Republican governors and Republican control of the legislature. Relying on some unartfully drafted legislative language, plaintiffs in the *Burwell* case contend that unless a state actually operates a Marketplace website of its own, the ACA doesn’t allow the federal government to provide financial assistance to citizens of that state who purchase health insurance on that exchange. If the Supreme Court upholds the plaintiffs’ case in court, low- and middle-income citizens of any state that opted to use the Federal exchange would lose the tax credits that lower their premiums, as

## Open Enrollment in Obamacare Ends February 15

Unless you move, marry, divorce, lose your job, have a baby, or experience any other event that qualifies you for a special enrollment period, February 15 is the last day you can enroll in a health insurance plan under the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare) and obtain premium subsidies or reduced costs you may be income-qualified to receive.

You still will be able to buy health insurance after February 15 to avoid or minimize income tax penalties, but not through the ACA’s Marketplace. This means that after February 15 you will not be eligible for a premium tax credit to help pay for your insurance or cost-sharing to reduce deductibles and co-payments you might be income-qualified to receive.

If you are uninsured for more than three months in 2015, you may be liable for a monetary penalty when you file your 2015 income tax return in 2016. The minimum individual shared responsibility payment for 2015 is \$325 per person (half that for children under 18).

Get Covered Illinois has trained and licensed dozens of Health Insurance Navigators who can help you understand your health insurance options and assist you with enrollment. You can find a Navigator through the “Get Help” tab at the Get Covered Illinois website, or call the Moraine Township Office at 847-432-3240 to make an appointment to meet with a Navigator. This service is free and available to anyone who lives in Illinois.

Medicaid enrollments are accepted year round, and Moraine Township is also available to assist residents with Medicaid enrollment all year. ■

well as any cost sharing that lowers their deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums. Bottom line: millions of citizens no longer would be able to afford health insurance.

The second threat relates to those earning less than 137 percent of the federally-defined poverty level. Under the Affordable Care Act, these people are newly eligible for Medicaid, a state-federal partnership program; however, in the very 2013 decision that found the ACA to be constitutional, the Supreme Court also said that the federal government could not force a state to offer Medicaid to the newly-eligible poor, even if there was no cost to the state. After the states that had chosen to adopt this federally-funded Medicaid expansion last year showed such good results in lowering the number of uninsured, more states had been expected to opt into this federally-financed Medicaid expansion, but the election of more Republican governors and Republican legislatures may reduce the number of states willing to allow low-income families to obtain health care through Medicaid.

From all reports, as was the case last year, ACA enrollments this year will exceed expectations. Yet it appears that 2015 could be a crucial year for the continued success of this landmark legislation. Watch this space as Congress, the Supreme Court, and the states act. ■

# Tenth Dems Participate in King Day Celebrations



(Above) Tenth Dems leaders Lauren Beth Gash and Barbara Altman greeted featured speakers Rabbi Wendi Geffen and Taylor Moore following their inspirational talks at Stone Temple Church in North Lawndale on January 19. The morning's program celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with a special emphasis on the historic ties between the Jewish and African-American communities in the struggle for civil rights. Speakers asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Again, and again, the response was a resounding, communal, "YES, WE ARE!" As Dr. King famously observed, "We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will perish together as fools."

Many Tenth Dems joined the North Shore Baptist Ministers' Alliance King Day celebration, as described in the poster, right. Elected officials in attendance included Hon. Patricia Jones, Waukegan Township Supervisor, Hon. Nancy Rodkin Rotering, Mayor of Highland Park, Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Hon. Tommy Rhyan, Hon. Beverly "Sugar" Young, Hon. Wayne Motley, Mayor of Waukegan, Hon. Leon Rockingham, Mayor of North Chicago, Hon. Jim Neel, and many others. Pictured together, at top, beneath a television screen displaying Dr. King's image, are Hon. Patricia Jones, Waukegan Township Supervisor, and Hon. Nancy Rodkin Rotering, Mayor of Highland Park.



# Dems Gather to Hear State of the Union Address





## Dems Gather to Hear State of the Union Address

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