



The Mountain Democrat
Newsletter Editor
PO Box 760
Oakhurst, CA 93644



MOUNTAIN DEMOCRATS

yosemitedems.net

JUNE-JULY 2005

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The Mountain Democrat is published bimonthly by the Democratic Clubs of Eastern Madera and Mariposa Counties which are affiliated with the California Democratic Council, and is distributed to all current members of those clubs. For a membership application see the inside back cover of this newsletter.

COMING EVENTS

June 2005

Jun. 4: Oakhurst Club Meeting

Jun 9: Lex Bufford Bar-B-Q

Jun 11: Mariposa Club Meeting

Jun. 17-19 **CDC Convention**
San Bernardino

July 2005

July 2: Oakhurst Club Meeting

July 9: Mariposa Club Meeting

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Phil Angelides Speaks to Local Democrats

by Ellie Schermerhorn



Angelides with congressional candidate Lex Bufford and MCDCC Chair Susan Rowe

The Madera County Democratic Central Committee and over 100 enthusiastic Democrats feted State Treasurer and gubernatorial candidate Phil Angelides on Saturday, May 21st. The celebration took place at Edgar's Italian Restaurant in Madera.

After visiting all tables and introducing himself to each of the faithful, Angelides addressed the luncheon crowd with a pull-no-punches critique of our current governor, speaking of California as the "richest state in the wealthiest nation in human history, yet we're 48th out of 50 states in student achievement, and we have a Governor who wants to cut \$15,000 out of every public school classroom." He was particularly concerned about the Governor's attacks on teachers, nurses and firemen.

Angelides talked about a "high road to prosperity" versus the

Angelides Speaks to Local Democrats (Continued)

governor's current path in a "race to the bottom". He's firmly committed to protecting and strengthening education, and received an enthusiastic response for his proposal to make preschool available to every four-year-old in the State.

The treasurer highlighted local investment programs implemented during his term. These programs moved state investment funds to community banks, helping to provide loans to small businesses and awarding grants to promote responsible development.

Angelides stated that the "wealthiest Californian's should pay the same tax rates as they did under Republican Governors Ronald Reagan and Pete Wilson."

In her introduction, **political activist Gail McIntyre** reminisced about 1991 when Angelides was made Chair of the California Democratic Party. During his term, he opened more than 100 local campaign offices and registered over a million new Democratic voters. These efforts paid off when in 1992, California became the first state in the country to elect two women to the United States Senate and Bill Clinton became the first Democrat to carry California in 28 years.

In addition to hearing from the Treasurer, local Democrat and California Democratic Council activist **Ginny Terrell** was awarded recognition with the "**Grassroots Spirit Award**" for her significant contributions to the Democratic cause in Madera County.

We thank MCDCC chairwoman Susan Rowe, her board and many assistants for all the effort that went into making this event a big success!



California Democratic Party Convention - 2005

By Les Marsden

It's a re-energizing experience to physically connect with the national movers and shakers of our Democratic Party, and our Mountain area Democrats did just that on April 15 - 17 at the California Democratic Party Convention at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Attendees representing the Yosemite area included Ginger Julian, Ginny Terrell, Susan and Mike Rowe, Heather Bernikoff and David Raboy, Laura Lee, Jerry Lacayo and Les Marsden. The total delegate and observer count was estimated to be about 2,000.

We were treated to absolutely electrifying speeches and panel discussions by Senator Barbara Boxer, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, CDP Chairman Art Torres and Arianna Huffington among many others. Senator Dianne Feinstein addressed a luncheon and National Democratic Committee Chairman Governor Howard Dean was keynote speaker for a dinner on Saturday night.

There were interesting attempts to garner attention and support all throughout the three-day event. Current State Treasurer Phil Angelides had a well-orchestrated presence. State Controller Steve Westly and Attorney General Bill Lockyer both took advantage of the party gathering to announce their own assays for the Democratic nomination.

One of the real highlights of the weekend was a truly hilarious video called 'Arniegeddon - November 2006' created by Frommer's office.

California Democratic Party Convention (continued)

Days were devoted for the most part to smaller gatherings and workshops. I attended three: the Disabilities, Children, and Environmental Caucuses but was very disappointed by the lack of truly actionable agendas in (particularly) the Children and Disabilities meetings.

Business before the entire massed delegation included the Resolutions Committee Report, Regional Director Elections, Statewide Officer Elections and other mundane organizational matters.

For me the greatest amount of time and most valuable experience was in networking -- not only with those well-known Californians such as former Governor Jerry Brown and Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi (now running for Lieutenant Governor), but with our fellow foot soldiers - the movers and shakers of their respective areas of our state. I made many valuable connections and hope to be able to use them to inform our club and also to reciprocally share what we are doing to advance the cause of the Democratic grassroots right here in the Mountains.

The overriding uniting force of the three days, however, had to be Schwarzenegger. There was a palpable delight in the air due to the recognition that Arnold is hugely vulnerable; his decline in popularity was a great opportunity for non-stop bashing. Just as with Bush, it appears that the greatest weapons we as Democrats possess are 1) the leaders sent to us by the GOP and 2) the illuminating truths about those leaders which are finally opening the eyes of so many to that which WE have known all along: the GOP simply can't be trusted to tell the truth and protect the people of America.

**Oakhurst Democratic
Club
P.O. Box 760
Oakhurst, Ca. 93644
559-658-2342**



Visit YosemiteDems.net for the latest Club info!

Club Sets Goals in “Air Your Views” Session

If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there. With this realization, the Oakhurst club dedicated its April 2nd meeting to defining what the members want to accomplish over the next year.

Led by Ginny Terrell and Jim Landis, members brainstormed on priorities. Three primary objectives were agreed upon: 1) Growing the club (including minority outreach, youth outreach, and improved visibility); 2) Getting out the vote; and 3) Improving fundraising. These goals will help guide club officers over the next year, and will be revisited in 3 – 6 months to track progress.

Officer Election on June 4th

John Cameron and Bernice Stiner, members of the nominating committee, presented a proposed slate of officers at the May 7th meeting. These officers, if elected, would assume their responsibilities on July 1st. The proposed slate includes Ginny Terrell for President, Billie Cavin for Vice President, Scott Hill for Secretary/Treasurer, and Clariss Cassin and Ed Bailey for Members at Large.

Our Sincere Thanks

Bob Odell and Monika Moulin will be stepping down from their

Oakhurst Democratic Club (continued)

positions as President and Vice President. During their terms, the club has grown from 10 to almost 90 members, developed a website, executed an extremely successful get out the vote campaign, participated in award-winning floats, registered numerous voters, and had a strong presence at the local fairs. We are grateful for their efforts and look forward to their continued participation and wise counsel to the club!

Steve Westly Contest – We Lost But We Still Won!

Democratic State Controller, Steve Westly, ran a contest giving \$5,000 to the Democratic club proposal that showed the best potential for organizing efforts through the use of technology. Although the excellent proposal submitted by our consortium of local clubs didn't win, it still got us plenty of attention, including a free high-powered computer and the prospect of being “adopted” by another strong Democratic club (perhaps Santa Clara).

The objective of our proposal—the formation of a Yosemite Gateway Democratic Office—is slowly becoming a reality, with the space donated by Jerry Lacayo of the Mariposa Democratic Club, and the devotion of a lot of sweat equity by Ginny Terrell. Stay tuned on how our Oakhurst, North Fork, Mariposa, and Coarsegold clubs are going to work together to grow Democrats in the mountains!

July and August Meetings – Ol’ Kettle Restaurant at 9:00AM

Speakers for our July 2nd and August 6th meetings are still under development. Some ideas we're working on are local organic farming, media in politics, restoring Hetch Hetchy, and reproductive choice

For more information, call Ellie or Scott at 559-658-2342, or
Visit YosemiteDems.net for the latest Club info!

Thomas Jefferson Dinner

By Laura Lee

The tables in the Great Western banquet room were decorated in red and white with carnations of matching colors, of course. Gloria Colclazer's unusually large irises lent color to the side tables. Three musicians from the Mariposa Symphony played chamber music throughout.

That was the scene for approximately ninety people who came for the Mariposa Democratic Club's annual Thomas Jefferson Dinner. Chef Les Marsden prepared the dinner in part chicken lime mojo, marinated artichoke and spinach cocotte with mushroom sauce, just to give you the general flavor. Les raced between the kitchen and the podium where he introduced Supervisor Lee Stetson and Jerry Lacayo for their introductory remarks and then the keynote speaker. Les's charisma nicely covered the fact that he was wearing a dark jacket, white apron, and Bermuda shorts in varying combinations.

Chris Stampolis, President of the California Democratic Council and a member of the National Democratic Committee, was the speaker for the evening. He shared his enthusiasm and charm, too, as he encouraged us to contact, by call or visitation, every Democrat in our various areas. He believes that there should be systematic outreach using "nurturing" as a positive and successful style. He recommended contacting as many Democrats as possible, with a possible goal of fifteen Democrats in a three month period. Putting his ideas into practice will help us to elect the type of people that we need in our government.



Oakhurst Club Defines Goals

by Ginny Terrell

Every now and then it's a good idea to look at where we are, and where we want to go. It doesn't matter if it's your personal life, career, or in our case - the club. Toward that end Jim Landis and Ginny Terrell had a "Goal Setting" session at the April meeting with the Oakhurst club. The idea was to find out how we can make our club better, more inviting and visible, while still having a good time. We weren't trying to cure all the world's ills, but rather, trying to figure out how we as a club could make a difference. As one of our members reminded us, "Think globally, act locally".

The response was very positive, with ideas ranging from identifying candidates for local office to putting up a "greeting" sign at the front of the restaurant. From writing letters to the editor and speaking out in general, to developing a club at the local high school. After everyone had their say, the members voted on which items should be the top three to work on over the next six months. Our savvy group came up with some real winners: Our top priority will be to "Grow the Club", through minority outreach, youth outreach and improving visibility. Next in importance (if there is a special election) is "Get Out the Vote". And finally, "Fund Raising", the mother's milk of any organization.

The other items won't be forgotten. We'll take a look at them periodically and work on them as we can. But now we have an idea of where we need to go. The next thing is to figure out how to get there...



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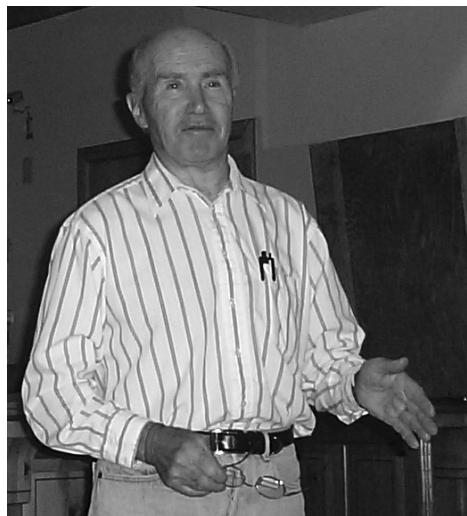


Come to our meetings
Says Mortimer Mouse,
Forget about cooking,
And please bring your spouse!



AARP Views on Social Security Reform

by Ellie Schermerhorn



With the debate about changes in Social Security raging, the Oakhurst club sought out the opinions of one of the most vocal groups on this issue, the American Association of Retired Persons. The AARP Sacramento office was kind enough to refer us to Dan Downey, Advocacy Volunteer for their association, and he addressed us at our May 7th meeting.

Dan was clear that AARP is a vocal opponent of the “carve outs” that go by many different names: privatization, personalization, private accounts or personal accounts. They would hurt the financial health of Social Security and pose a threat to the retirement security of millions of Americans and their families. AARP *does* support the enhancement of options such as Individual Retirement Accounts and other tax deferred retirement accounts.

Dan discussed another proposal supported by AARP: an increase in the cap on taxable wages from \$90,000 to \$140,000. Although Dan acknowledged this was “quite a leap”, AARP feels it is necessary for the solvency of the system.

AARP Views on Social Security Reform (continued)

Currently, the Social Security trust fund is invested 100% in guaranteed government bonds, sometimes disparagingly called “IOUs”. (Author’s note: I hope no one tells the countries who are funding our deficit by buying these bonds that they are “worthless IOUs”, as the President has implied). AARP would like to see a modest diversification of the Social Security trust fund investments. Their suggestion is that a portion of the fund be invested in a total market index fund. By investing in an index fund, which may over time provide a higher yield, the fund would have an *opportunity* to earn a higher return, yet no one person would suffer if the yield were lower than the bond yield. In other words, as we learned in the last newsletter about health insurance, this “pooled risk” would help spread the burden if the bet turns out wrong, and no individual would suffer a catastrophic loss of benefits.

Two proposals, which AARP opposes, are a reduction in the cost of living indexing currently in place for benefits, and an increase in the Social Security retirement age.

The debate is far from over. Dan encouraged us to keep voicing our opinions to our elected officials. Although we sometimes feel our efforts are fruitless, these representatives do take note of the positions of those who elect them.



There's a Right Way to Elect Our Public Officials

By Vincent Lavery

It is an oxymoron to suggest that any nation that has what appears to be little more than a one-party system can be described as a democracy.

As Bee Editorial Page Editor Jim Boren pointed out in a column after the November 2004 elections, 153 partisan races in California — Assembly, state Senate and Congress — were "contested, yet every one of them went the way the politicians had determined in the redistricting process" two years earlier.

No Partisan Politics

I have a neutral solution free of all partisan politics. In creating districts, boundary lines drawn under the concept known as the straight edge approach, start at the Oregon border and move south, county by county, until the required number for a given political district is reached.

For example, the law currently requires 639,075 people for a congressional district, plus or minus 2%. Under the straight edge approach, the First Congressional District would be comprised of the 13 northernmost counties in California. The second district would be the next four complete counties and so on.

The three primary objectives of the straight edge approach are: (1) Keep entire counties within an electoral district, Assembly, state Senate or Congress when possible; (2) Create a district within a given county when possible; and (3) Create political districts within city boundaries when possible.

This proposal borrows from the suggestion of state Sen. Chuck Poochigian of Fresno that two Assembly districts be created inside each state Senate district, a concept referred to as "nesting." This creates more political camaraderie between the two Assembly members and the state senator.

There's a Right Way to Elect Our Public Officials (continued)

Again, when a county or city has a population that exceeds the minimum number for a particular district, that county or city would automatically have that district within its boundaries. For example, Los Angeles County, with a population of 9.54 million, under the straight edge approach would have 15 congressional districts, all within the county lines and, as far as possible, laid out on a north-south-east-west grid.

That is to say, they would not look like salamanders or the strangely shaped districts we now have. Other than the obvious benefits of taking the unfairness out of the present redistricting system and allowing for competitive races, the straight edge approach offers the following advantages.

It would save tax dollars. The redrawing every 10 years could be accomplished by the secretary of state's staff, probably in less than five working days.

Interest groups within the political districts would be strengthened in pursuing their overlapping interests.

The straight edge approach is easily adaptable to each new census.

Interested? Let your elected officials know you support the straight edge approach.

Vincent Lavery was a delegate for John Edwards at the 2004 Democratic Party national convention and co-chair for the Kerry-Edwards campaign in Fresno County 2004. His e-mail address is vjlavery@yahoo.com.



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