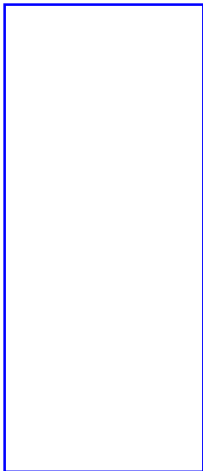




**The Mountain Democrat  
 Newsletter Editor  
 PO Box 760  
 Oakhurst, CA 93644**



# **The Mountain Democrat**

## **Aug.-Sept. 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

#### August 2005

- Aug 6: Oakhurst Club Meeting
- Aug 13: Mariposa Club Meeting
- Aug 20:** Mountain Area Picnic  
(see page 18)
- Aug 21: Yosemite Area Meeting

#### September 2005

- Sep 3:** Mariposa Parade and  
County Fair  
(see page 3)
- Sep 10: Mariposa Club Meeting
- Sep 17:** Oakhurst Parade  
(see page 3)

For more information about our Democratic Clubs and Democratic happenings around the state and nation open your trusty web browser and visit our web page at:

**YosemiteDems.net**

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# WE NEED YOU TO RIDE THE FLOAT



## SHOW THEM THERE ARE DEMOCRATS IN THE MOUNTAINS

**MARIPOSA**  
**SAT. SEPT. 3<sup>RD</sup>**  
Call 209-742-7891

**OAKHURST**  
**SAT. SEPT. 17<sup>TH</sup>**  
Call 559-658-2342

**Bring your  
FRIENDS, FAMILY, DOGS, FLAGS & SIGNS!  
EVERYONE WELCOME!**

## California Democratic Update

By Jerry Lacayo

Why are you a Democrat?

What do you want?

Are you hoping for a change?

What are you willing to do to see your Democratic ideals put into practice?

The California Democratic Council is the organization that brings us all together into one stable. But, it is the herd of donkeys from all the various clubs in the state - working in unison - that will pull the wagon load of issues, policies of fairness and justice, and government services to victory.

It's time to turn this cart around and head straight ahead to a better future. The CDC plan is one of ACTION!

CDC has a great team of officers and a dynamic strategic plan. Our leaders are excited by a vision and energized by the possibilities. We can count on them, but the question now is...Can they count on us?

A truly grassroots organization requires participation from the bottom to the top. For CDC, the entire Democratic movement will be as strong as those who serve. Our government is not going to get better if we, who care, just meet together, eat together, grouse together and return next month to do it again...

Our cart ride to a better future will be successful, but only if every cog of the buggy's wheel turns. If we push ourselves just a little bit harder to say "YES" when asked to help, we will continue to gain momentum.

## California Democratic Update (continued)

### Caring for our herd:

There are many ways that you can help:

- (1) Secretarial needs – now that our area office is open we'll need help in maintaining our "stable."
- (2) Serve on a committee – choose an area of interest to you and help track proposed legislation and advise our membership on necessary actions.
- (3) Voter registration and outreach – help is always needed in this area and a little bit of time goes a long way.
- (4) Special events planning and support – since our events are ongoing the event list changes, but listed here are a few upcoming events:
  - Lobby Days, TBD, Sacramento and field offices
  - Ride on the float, Labor Day (great visibility at the parade), Mariposa
  - Mountain Heritage Days, third weekend in September, Oakhurst
  - Costume Party, late October, Mariposa
  - Annual Jefferson Dinner, spring, Mariposa
- (5) Donate - Newsletters, insurance, phones...it all adds up. Your financial contribution is another way to help care for our herd. Every penny counts. And though we keep our dues very low for those who cannot afford more...for those who can, please help us with the tools necessary to better represent you all.

To offer support in any of the above listed areas, or any others you think might help, please contact Jerry Lacayo.  
Email: [jerycdc@yahoo.com](mailto:jerycdc@yahoo.com) -or- Phone: (209) 742-7891



## **Club Building**

By Ginny Terrell

Club-building is the life blood of every organization. Attrition makes it important to be on the lookout for new members, and we should always be ready to bring new people into the fold. New members also change the dynamics of a club, and cause us to think about things in a different light, get off our behinds, and question why "we've always done it that way". The following are a few ideas that may help.

Put that "Mountain Democrat" bumper sticker on your car. Be prepared to talk about your club, make an invitation, and let them know why it's important to get involved. Have a membership form handy.

Do visibility events: Ride the float, have a picnic, do voter registration - and always advertise, advertise, advertise!

Get your latest voter registration list and contact local Democrats. Invite them to join. If your meetings are small, perhaps you can have a picnic or other gathering to bring people in. Have fun! Most people like being part of something that's fun, as well as educational or helpful to the community.

Ask your members to invite someone new to the next meeting. Call the existing members to remind them of the upcoming meeting. The power of numbers is impressive to a newcomer. If they see a large, active group chances are they'll be more apt to get involved. Success breeds success.

Do well by doing good: Hold a fund raiser, i.e., a

## **Club Building (continued)**

scholarship fund. This can be an ongoing thing, with several different events through the year, always with plenty of advertising. It doesn't need to be a fundraiser - it could be something like cleaning the river, or whatever your group decides. The important thing is the philanthropic nature of the event.

I'm sure there are tons of other great ideas out there, but these should at least get people started.

As for the Yosemite Gateway clubs (Coarsegold, North Fork, Mariposa and Oakhurst) here's my chance to pitch our first annual picnic! Spread the word!!! Saturday, AUGUST 20th, 3 - 6 p.m. at the Oakhurst Community Park. Food and beverages will be available for sale. There will also be drawings, great prizes, Democrat memorabilia, etc. Family and friends WELCOME!

**FIRST ANNUAL  
MOUNTAIN DEMOCRATS'  
CELEBRATE SUMMER  
PICNIC  
SATURDAY AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup>  
3 - 6 PM  
Oakhurst Community Park  
(See Page 18)**

## Education News from the CDC Convention

By Laura E. Lee

The speakers at these two workshops were well informed and passionate about their concerns with Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed changes in the school system and his cuts in the budget. It appears that he will not honor an agreement he made with teachers, who accepted a two billion dollar cut this year in return for a pledge for more funds next year. The funding cut will come at a time when California ranks 43rd in the country in per pupil spending. The complaints of the teachers have fallen into the chamber of "special interests" along with nurses and other workers and are now to be ignored.

Another concern is the governor's interest in lengthening the time that a teacher must spend in a district before tenure may be obtained. Tenure, which is the right to hold a position on a permanent basis granted to teachers, civil service personnel, etc., is a three year period in Mariposa and two years in some areas. (Specified requirements must be fulfilled.) There is an effort to extend the time to five years, which puts an unnecessary burden on new teachers, not being certain of a job for the longer time. It was expressed that administrators certainly know within the three-year period whether a teacher is effective or not.

Merit pay, another proposal of the governor's, was severely criticized by several speakers. It could easily be used to punish particularly creative teachers or those with certain political leanings or those believed to be from minority groups - racial, sexual orientation, etc. Faculty

## Education News (continued)

cohesion would be disrupted. The question of who would make the decision is a major one.

Solving the problems of our educational system is complicated and difficult and becoming less hopeful with our present governor. State Treasurer and candidate for Governor, Phil Angelides, has said, "He (the governor) won't ask the most fortunate to pay one dime more or close corporate tax loopholes, but he told 25,000 students, who had done all their work and made all the grades, that there was no room for them at our state colleges and universities".



*Mortimer Mouse Sez...*  
**Picnic, picnic, picnic...**  
**where is it??...I just**  
**LOVE**  
**PICNICS**



## Writing Letters to Newspapers

By Pandora Edmonston and Margaret Hartley

This spring and summer we two friends met regularly to write letters to the editor.

With the entire world in a state of emergency, and democracy collapsing everywhere, finding topics posed no difficulty. We took on the Patriot Act and took a swing at the nomination of John Bolton. We decried the Republican attempt to dismantle the filibuster rule and pack the Supreme Court. We called for further investigation of the events of 9/11--and we joined the debate about Guantanamo Bay, demanding the closure of this appalling camp.

In preparation we plowed through sheaves of articles and reports. We worked jointly, but signed the letters alternately. The first, concerning the Patriot Act, bore Pandora's signature. The second, the John Bolton letter, Margaret signed.

Our campaign was not uniformly successful. Editors variously omitted things, misspelled Pandora's name, misrepresented our punctuation, and rejected our letters altogether.

But sometimes our work saw print. The Patriot Act letter got first billing on the opinion page of the Gazette. Our piece about the filibuster was published in the Gazette and the Fresno Bee. Our letter about Guantanamo made the Merced Sun-Star and the Seattle Times.

## Writing Letters to Newspapers (continued)

Sometimes we struggled. Our 9/11 letter required two agonizing meetings and ultimately wasn't published. Our Bolton letter (at 467 words) failed as well. One of our successes (the filibuster piece) provoked a critical response in the Gazette.

We learned as we went along. Some papers don't mind if you submit letters that you also have submitted elsewhere. Others, like the New York Times, do mind. Some set a fairly loose maximum of about 200 words. Others, like the New York Times again, set a short maximum of 150 words.

We skipped the NYT and unsuccessfully tried USA Today. We sent our letters to other out-of-town papers as well, including the Seattle Times, since one of us has a residence there. We seemed to have the best luck publishing letters that pertained directly to current news articles. E-mail may have been slightly more successful than "snail" mail.

We certainly didn't convince every reader, but if we did our homework properly, we must have awakened a few. At the very least we made sure the progressive viewpoint was represented on several opinion pages.

We recommend our project for its simplicity--a tiny example of what friends can do, working together, writing, taking tea breaks, and possibly casting some little light in a darkening world.



## Labor News from the CDC Convention

By Ellie Schermerhorn



Assembly Member Koretz with Ted Kennedy

The June California Democratic Council convention in San Bernardino included plenary sessions on labor topics. Representatives for public employees and food service workers in the LA area discussed the importance of working together with Democrats to support workers' rights. Included in the forum was Assemblyman Paul Koretz, elected in 2000 to represent the 42nd Assembly District, and currently Chair of the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment.

Koretz was frank about the Schwarzenegger Administration's proposal to make an employee's right to a meal or rest break a "choice", with the burden falling on the employee to ask for the break. The practical effect is that employees in many industries will be coerced into giving up their meal and rest periods altogether.

What troubled Koretz the most, though, was the process the Administration has taken in promulgating this proposal.

First, let's look at the story behind the story because there

Labor News (continued)

always is one. Koretz said that companies such as Wal-Mart and Applebee's had not been following the regulation requiring these breaks, and were faced with large fines. So how does a company get out of paying a fine for breaking the law? Well, change the law!

But who has the authority to change the law? The Legislature or the Industrial Welfare Commission do, but Schwarzenegger knew he didn't have enough leverage there - so he had the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE), which doesn't have the authority to *change* the law, propose a rule that breaks be a "choice". Hey, if breaks are a *choice*, Wal-Mart and Applebee's haven't broken any laws, right? As Arnie would say, "FanTAStic!".

The story gets uglier. In March 2004, the DLSE placed all employee complaints in abeyance pending their new rules which weren't released until December 2004, so hundreds of employee claims have been on hold for months while the Administration maneuvers behind the scene to weaken existing law.

And then, of course, there's the well-publicized and phony "news story" put out to television stations promoting the draft legislation, which just happened to be produced by (who else?) - the Administration!

So here's the upshot: The DLSE has one year to bring their regulation forward to the Office of Administrative Law for approval, and Koretz and his Committee will be watching closely to see how this evolves.



## Take Back America Conference

By Ginny Terrell

Many of you have heard that I attended the "Take Back America" conference in June, and have asked for feedback on just what goes on there. The conference is put on by Robert Borosage and Roger Hickey, co-directors of "Campaign for America's Future".

After registration on Wednesday afternoon, we were treated to the opening plenary session. This year's session was headed by Robert Borosage, Antonio Villaraigosa and Jan Schakowsky - U.S. Representative from Illinois. Donna Brazile was also on hand, and proved to be a very funny, and articulate lady!

After the book signings and general reception we attended the Gala Awards Dinner. This year's recipients were John Kenneth Galbraith (Lifetime Achievement Award), Florida ACORN, Nevada AFL-CIO and several others for the Paul Wellstone Award, and Ellen Malcomb, founder of Emily's List and ACT, for the Progressive Champion Award.

Thursday the fun really started! Howard Dean and Arianna Huffington were our speakers at the opening plenary, followed by a day full of options. You simultaneously had the choice of three plenaries and three training sessions! WAY too many decisions! But since I had decided to take more workshops this year, I stuck to my guns and tried to narrow the field. After lunch it started all over again, with two more sessions of plenaries and workshops. Suffering from severe jet-lag and the red-eye special, I opted to go back to my room for some sleep after listening to Howard and Arianna, then

## Take Back America Conference (continued)

down to business. Lunchtime offered us the Tom Paine Award, given to John Edwards.

Friday morning's opening plenary featured Bill Moyers, who was at his best. Then off for another day of choices. Just as an example, the workshops offered in one afternoon included: Fundraising - How to Put Together an Effective Strategy; Base Vote Strategies; Mobilizing the Hispanic Vote; and Public Speaking and Communications. It's fortunate that some of the workshops were given several times over the three days.

The good news is, since I won the 50-50 drawing at the Oakhurst June meeting, I was able to purchase the CD-ROM which contained all of the plenary and training sessions. It will be available to any of the clubs who wish to listen to various segments. I still haven't listened to all of it! So, there you have it! Three very busy days filled with good fun and learning! If you can make it next year, GO! It's worth every penny!



*Mortimer Mouse Sez...*  
**You don't know what fun is  
until you've gone to a parade  
on the  
GREAT Democratic Float**





## Interfaith Leader Addresses Oakhurst Club

By Ellie Schermerhorn



Kamal Abu-Shamsieh

Any minority facing isolation needs to begin by “focusing on itself to determine what went wrong. It’s a process of critiquing and testing. Define you own identity and issues. Don’t let others define those for you”.

This was one of the primary messages brought to the Oakhurst club at its June meeting by Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, Director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno and founder of the Interfaith Alliance of Central California.

A Palestinian born US citizen and journalist, Abu-Shamsieh described how both Democrats and Muslims are challenged by three main elements: extremists who hurt by their behavior, a media with narrow perspectives, and religious factions who defile people of other faiths. “These factors lead (a religious or political group) to isolation, and then they become an easy target”, he stated.

A member of the Fresno County Democratic Central Committee, Abu-Shamsieh described outreach efforts that

## Interfaith Leader Addresses Club (continued)

need to be taken by any isolated group. He proposed both positive actions and negative cautions: building issues around the groups to be reached, emphasizing interfaith diversity, not preaching to the converted, and not taking minority groups for granted.

The speaker reflected on the modern period and the bloody history between the east and west, and alluded to comparisons between Democrats and fundamentalist forces at work today. As the west developed democracy, extreme forces in the east rejected anything modern and instituted a life of cultural extremism. “TV sets were destroyed because they didn’t exist in the time of Mohammed”, he noted. In other countries, religion was abandoned as part of the cultural fabric, and western thinking was embraced, but with no critique.

He emphasized the need to build bridges between the east and the west, as well as between Democrats and the American people. For example, Abu-Shamsieh would like to see more interfaith clubs in schools. “When we formed the Interfaith Alliance of Central California, we found that the education directors of the local churches had never met”. Since that time, the Alliance has formed an interfaith youth movement in the Central Valley where youth of diverse faiths share their religious understanding and participate in community service projects.

The burning question Abu-Shamsieh left our club with: What can we do to build bridges with our community?



**Awesome  
Iced Cafe Mochas**

**Cold Drinks**

**Raffles**



**Hot Dogs**

**Ice Cream**

**Watermelon**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

for the

**FIRST ANNUAL**

**MOUNTAIN DEMOCRATS'**

**CELEBRATE SUMMER**

**PICNIC**

**SATURDAY AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup>**

**3 – 6 PM**

**Oakhurst Community Park**

Call 559-658-2648 for more information

Map at [yosemitedems.net](http://yosemitedems.net)

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Annual Dues are \$5.00 per person  
(Mariposa lifetime membership is \$100)

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mariposa Club: \_\_\_\_\_ or Oakhurst Club: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member: \_\_\_\_\_ or Renewal: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisorial District (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisorial District (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail form and check payable to:

Mariposa Democratic Club	or	Oakhurst Democratic Club
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