



YosemiteDems.net

**The Mountain Democrat
Newsletter Editor
PO Box 760
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THE MOUNTAIN DEMOCRAT

**June - July
2015**

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The Mountain Democrat is published bimonthly by the Oakhurst Democratic Club and the Mariposa Democratic Club, 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 2015

June 6: Oakhurst Club Meeting

June 13 Mariposa Club Meeting

July 2015

July 4: **NO** Oakhurst Meeting

July 11: Mariposa Club Meeting

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

YosemiteDems.net or MariposaDemocraticClub.org



Susan Rowe was presented the California Democratic Party 2015 Region 4 "Volunteer of the Year" Award by CDP Region 4 Director, Martha Gamez and CDP Vice Chair Alex Gallardo-Rooker at the 2015 CDP Convention.

Congratulations Susan!

Conventional Wisdom

By Les Marsden

Off-year California Democratic Party conventions can be dull as dishwater, but May 15-17 in Anaheim was anything but! Sunday morning's report from Credentials Committee Lead Chair Michael Wagaman confirmed a whopping 2,123 delegates in attendance (not counting observers.) My pages of scribbled notes cite great General Session speeches by Nancy Pelosi and an absolutely electrifying Elizabeth Warren—the latter giving we Progressives the sort of blood-pumping workout our lovably incorrigible CDP Chair John Burton intended when he introduced Senator Warren by saying "...in words that would make my grandmother proud, she is the f--king champion of the people!" US Senate Candidates (CA Attorney General) Kamala Harris, and (US Representative) Loretta Sanchez, stumped, Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, Secretary of State Alex Padilla, Member of the Board of Equalization Fiona Ma, State Controller Betty Yee, Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones, CA Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de León and many others spoke. Madera County Central Committee Chair (and longtime activist) Susan Rowe was deservedly awarded the Region 4 Directors Award from our Director Martha Gamez. Breakout sessions were filled with business and presentations from (in my case) the Rural, Progressive, Environmental and Labor Caucuses—and more. One real highlight was John Nichols' amazing barn-burning speech on Saturday night to the Progressive Caucus; he's the Washington correspondent for *The Nation*—and his speech was one of the greatest progressive calls-to-arms I've witnessed. California Democratic Council President Emilie Gatfield had scheduled me to present a history of the CDC during our well-attended Friday convention meeting—my involvement with the CDC began 40 years ago in 1975 when I was 17 years old, and I've been an officer of the organization for many years. I enjoyed personal catch-up time with CDP Vice-Chairs Alex Rooker and Eric Bauman, among many others. View video convention highlights

Conventional Wisdom (continued)

or Elizabeth Warren's speech in its entirety here: <http://www.cademconvention.org>

But now, please indulge a personal turn. The keynote speaker for Saturday's \$125-a-plate dinner was retired Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank. The Congressman and I first met in 1997 in Boston (just days after Max was born despite dire prognostication) when Barney brought his mother to a production of *Groucho: A Life in Revue* in which I starred in the title role. The Boston theatre staff didn't tell me he had attended until a few days later, so I called his DC office where he was back at work. When he next returned to Boston, I took the Congressman to lunch. You all know me, so just imagine: a kid in a candy store with a captive Congressman—and a high-ranking one to boot! I wanted to get down to the nitty-gritty on politics and government, but Barney—who's a Marx Brothers junkie, only wanted my inside scoops on the Marx Family, with whom I've been closely associated since the 1970s! A wonderful visit and we stayed in touch afterwards.



A couple of years later when I was to star in another Marx play (this time as Harpo) at Washington DC's famed Arena Stage, Barney let me know he'd be there on opening night and he was—though he ended up refereeing a somewhat heated discussion (as he described it) after the show between journalist Cokie Roberts and NPR Legal Correspondent Nina Totenberg, who argued over whether Les Marsden was REALLY playing that harp solo. I was, of course—as Barney knew, and he was able to set the ladies straight. During my months in DC, the Congressman took ME to lunch in the

Conventional Wisdom (continued)

Members' Congressional Dining Room (not the public one) which was a huge treat. He's one of the most intelligent AND genuinely witty people I've been lucky to know—and I've known a few! He gave me behind-the-scenes tours of the Capitol, introductions to sitting Congressional Representatives and Senators and much more.

So...Boston, Washington and now here we were nearly 20 years later, just two retirees in Anaheim. After a wonderful dinner spent getting caught up with three dear longtime friends (California Democratic Party Controller Hilary Crosby and husband Kip, and CDC President Emilie Gatfield) and a number of other great CDP pals, I had the chance to say hello to Congressman Frank. He immediately recounted—in detail—my performances in both plays to anyone near us but incapable of escape. After chatting about other past adventures, he reminded me of a stroll we made through



the Capitol's Statuary Hall—where we had ridiculed certain Republican figures present in both flesh and marble form. I then reminded him of the lowpoint of one day when Barney introduced me to then-Speaker Denny Hastert—pretty much a stiff himself.

Congressman Frank's speech (given just before the photo at left was snapped) was great—as you can see for yourself at:

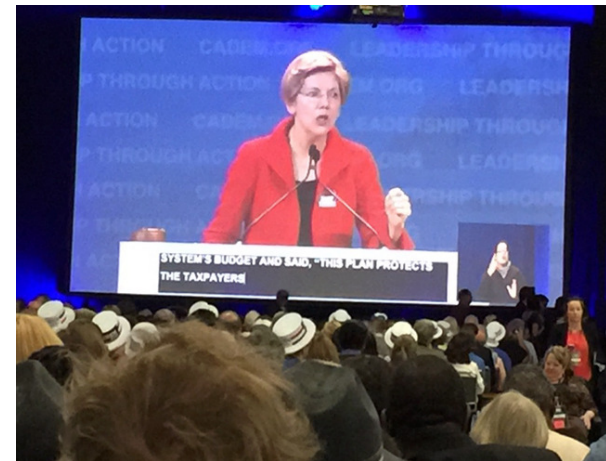
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LUbEJPQEJ4>

All in all, a truly memorable CDP convention filled with great activism and informational exchanges, with cherished relationships

Conventional Wisdom (continued)

rekindled and celebrated—and with positive hopes for the future both for our party and our nation.

One final note: Newly-elected California Democratic Council President Emilie Gatfield surprised me in March during an Officers conference call with a great idea she had had—making Mariposa the site of an Officers Retreat—the first retreat the CDC has had in years. The dates? The weekend of April 26–28. When I protested that it was the weekend of our MSO concerts both in Mariposa and Yosemite, she said, “I know! That's why I've scheduled it for that weekend—so we can all go to your concerts!” And, yes, we did have a highly productive weekend of planning (despite the fact my concert prep time cut into my CDC time.) It was great to have even more Democrats in the audience than usual, and from all over California at that.



Elizabeth Warren speaking at the 2015 CDP Convention

And Then Along Comes Bernie

By Peter Cavanaugh

He has the same chance as a long-tailed cat in a roomful of rocking chairs.

I'm happy Bernie Sanders is now in the 2016 presidential race.

Although Bernie has announced his candidacy as a Democrat, he has acted and voted in Washington as an Independent from Vermont since 2007—the longest serving independent member of Congress in American history.

In identifying his political philosophy through the years, Senator Sanders allies himself with such notable American icons as Mark Twain, Albert Einstein, Helen Keller, Jack London, Lucille Ball, Harry Belafonte, Upton Sinclair, Carl Sandburg, James Baldwin, Woody Guthrie, Ernest Hemingway, Walter Reuther, Kurt Vonnegut and Francis Bellamy, who wrote the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bernie Sanders is a “Democratic Socialist.”

And—what is “Democratic Socialism?”

Democratic Socialism seeks a delicate, cooperative balance between individual and collective ownership, matching the rewards of private enterprise with the priority of common good as fairly and efficiently as human nature allows.

Here's what Bernie the Democratic Socialist believes:

* Government should belong to the people. When certain folks say, “Government is bad”, they speak for rule by wealth—however unknowingly. Even though he surely knew better, Ronald Reagan had it down to a science.

And Then Along Comes Bernie (continued)

* America today witnesses the most unequal income distribution of any major country on earth—worse than at any time since the 1920s. This must change.

* We need a massive federal jobs program that puts millions of our people back to work and brings about an end to disastrous trade policies that have sent so many jobs overseas.

* The minimum wage should be a living wage with pay equity for women.

* The United States must lead the world in combating climate change and transforming our energy system to efficiency and sustainability.

* Every person in this country who has the desire and ability should be able to get all the education they need regardless of family income.

* The United States remains the only major country on earth that does not guarantee health care to all people. Health care should be a right, not a privilege.

* In a democratic, civilized society—no one should be hungry or live in desperation. We need to expand Social Security, not cut it.

* We should insist on real tax reform that makes the rich and profitable corporations pay their fair share, not hide loot stashed away in the Cayman Islands.

* As a result of the Supreme Court's “Citizens United” decision, American democracy is up for sale to the highest bidder. It must be overturned—if necessary, by Constitutional amendment.

And Then Along Comes Bernie (continued)

Every major political pundit says poor Bernie doesn't have a chance. But what makes Bernie mad makes me angry, too.

Bernie Sanders and I were both born on September 8, 1941—the first day of The Siege of Leningrad by German forces in World War Two.

This was before Pearl Harbor. At the time, most folks thought there was no way the Nazis wouldn't win.



Oakhurst Club Hears About Solar Cars and Abu Dhabi

On May 3 club members Dick and Jackie Roberto presented us with a fascinating first-hand account of their experiences in the Middle East titled: "It's a Long Way to Abu Dhabi: United Arab Emirates International Cross Country Solar Car Race". Below are a couple of examples of the great photos they showed.



2015 Convention Highlights

By Rosemarie Smallcombe

2015 is a Resolution Year as opposed to a Platform year in the Democratic Party, so the general session at the Convention focused on 11 Resolutions out of the 73 considered by the Resolutions Committee. The Resolutions approved by the Convention were:

Resolution in Opposition to the “Fast-Tracking” of the Trans-Pacific Partnership that Outsources American Jobs;

Resolution in Support of Divestment from Fossil Fuel Companies;

Resolution in Support of Repealing California’s Personal Beliefs Exemption to Mandatory Vaccinations;

Resolution on Fighting Inequality by Expanding Economic Opportunity;

Resolution to Make California Work Better For Working Women by Advancing Workplace Equality;

Resolution in Opposition to Arctic Oil Drilling;

“I Can’t Breathe”—Medical Aid and Transparency in Police Encounters and Investigations;

California’s Senior Bill of Rights;

Calling for the Republican Party to Stop Blocking Student Loan Debt Relief;

Calling Upon the Republican Party to Address Climate Change Now; and

Rebuild California by Making the Commercial Property Tax Code Fair.

2015 Convention Highlights (continued)

There was a fair amount of discussion about a couple of resolution topics—mandatory vaccinations and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The Resolutions Committee considered five proposed resolutions on repeal of the personal beliefs exemption to mandatory vaccinations.

The discussion at the Convention came to a head at the General Session when Hilary Crosby, CDP Controller, gave a very impassioned speech regarding her experience with the ill effects of failure to vaccinate. Other arguments presented on both sides were very good, but the delegates decided to approve the repeal of the personal exemptions provision.

There were at least 3 resolutions relating to the Trans-Pacific Partnership submitted for consideration, but they were combined prior to presentation to the General Session for a Vote.

Most of the other resolutions recommended for approval by the Resolutions Committee were also selected because of their relevance and timeliness. For example, the Committee believed it important to tell Obama how California Democrats feel about the decision to permit Shell to drill in the Arctic. They also believed it was important to focus on the issue of encounters between police officers and members of the public who are killed as a result of those encounters, which has been in the news a great deal lately. Concern about America’s failure to respond decisively to climate change was reflected in the resolution calling for Republicans to address climate change, as well as a sweeping resolution to drop fossil fuel stocks from the state’s two major public pension funds, valued at about \$500 billion. The Party also wants the state’s 33 public universities to purge such investments from their \$12 billion in total endowments. This resolution, submitted by R.L. Miller, chair of the CDP Environmental Caucus, had been endorsed by the Caucus on Saturday morning.

2015 Convention Highlights (continued)

All the remaining resolutions submitted for approval prior to the Convention will be voted on at the Executive Board meeting in August.

The Saturday General Session had a number of leading California Democrats speaking, and Elizabeth Warren highlighted the day with a very impassioned speech about issues important to Democrats. It sounded like a campaign speech, but she certainly didn't announce that she was running for any office despite many signs in the audience suggesting that she should! The Saturday night banquet featured Barney Frank who gave a very good speech on economic fairness and income inequality as well as the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

On Sunday, Hilary Crosby managed to get 1,000 subscribers to sign up for Dem 2016 (a monthly contribution to the State Party) and won her bet with Chairman John Burton resulting in a pie in John's face!



Hilary Crosby, John Burton, and THE PIE

Mariposa Democratic Club Water Plant Tour

By Anne Brock

The Mariposa Democratic Club enjoyed its tour of the MPUD (Mariposa Public Utilities District) water plant on Saturday, May 16. Mark Rowney, the General Manager, took us on a 90 minute tour of the facilities.

Since MPUD was formed in the mid 1940s, it has been through a lot of changes. Initially, water was pulled from Stockton Creek and various wells; later, a system was set up to pull water from Saxon Creek. Mr. Rowney mentioned that without the Saxon Creek project, they would have run out of water in October 2013.

Mr. Rowney mentioned the many improvements they've made over the years to both water quality and the functioning of the system. In 2003, they were losing up to 30% or so of the water due to leaks; now that is down to less than 3%. They also built a new plant a few years ago (mainly with government grants) that allows them to be more efficient and to produce cleaner water. The new plant could process a million gallons a day, although they typically run at around half of that.

While Mr. Rowney stressed how important it is to reduce water consumption, he did say the reservoir is mostly full, which can last the town until 2016. He appreciates the way everyone in town is working to conserve water.

The group enjoyed the tour; we were impressed by how the automation allows the MPUD to operate with only six full-time employees.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership— the Race to the Bottom, and the Subversion of Democracy

By Ben Leet

On May 14, 2015, the Senate approved, 65 to 33, “fast track” authority for the trade agreement known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) among ten nations.

The vote fell out: Republicans 49 yes, 2 abstentions; Democrats 16 yes, 31 no; Independents 2 no. Senator Feinstein yes, Senator Boxer no.

This deal has been highly controversial. The group Private Citizen, Global Trade Watch, summed up their critique: “. . . the deal would extend the incentives for U.S. firms to offshore investment and jobs to lower-wage countries.” Also it would create expanded powers for foreign corporations to challenge protective regulations on finance, on the environment, and workplace safety. Senator Elizabeth Warren states that the TPP would “tilt the playing field in the U.S. further in favor of big multinational corporations. Worse, it would undermine U.S. sovereignty.”

It is challenged by economist Dean Baker who says, “For example, if New York State wants to restrict fracking, a foreign gas or oil company could contest the ban in an investor state tribunal. . . . But the TPP is about corporate profits, not free trade.”

A statement from Americans for Financial Reform argues, “Any bank from a TPP signatory country that claims disadvantage from a regulation . . . could bring a private challenge and claim compensation from U.S. taxpayers.”

My take is that TPP would continue to lower wages. Presently the

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (continued)

collective wage earnings of the lower-earning half (77 million) of all U.S. workers is less than 8 percent of total national income. Their average annual income is less than \$10,000, while the average income for all workers is above \$77,000. The portion of private wealth held by the poorer 50% of U.S. households is 1.1%. These ratios are worse in Mexico and China. Economists claim 3.2 million to 5 million U.S. jobs have been lost due to trade with China since 2000. This is a race to the bottom.

Our trade could and should promote inclusive prosperity, and it is possible.

My blog, where I post hyperlinks to the sources, is:

<http://benL8.blogspot.com>



Mortimer Mouse Sez...

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BECOME A FAN
Of our Facebook Pages**

(click the little "Like" button)



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Today's Date: _____

___ Mariposa: Annual Dues are \$10.00 per person
(Jan. 1 – Dec. 31) \$15.00 family
Lifetime membership \$150.00

or

___ Oakhurst: Annual Dues are \$5.00 per person
(Jul. 1 - Jun. 30)

___ New Member or ___ Renewal:

How did you find out about us? _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ ZIP: _____

Physical Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ ZIP: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

E-Mail: _____ Fax: _____

Supervisorial District (if known): _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

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