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Let's Talk Politics

by Monica Petrescu



On a warm Thursday evening in early August, 20 participants gathered in the meeting room of the Vernon Library, all eager to talk politics. Some attended to discuss recent political concerns, some to meet new faces in the community, and others to find ways to become politically involved.

For 90 minutes, the discussion moved between different current concerns, from the economy and schools, to taxes and trade. Participants

shared personal stories about how the recent issues affected their family and friends. Some mentioned the struggle of small businesses due to the lack of loans, and others commented on the high levels of bureaucracy within local school systems.

The conversation was not just a chance to sort out problems, but also to find solutions. Eventually discussion centered on the November election, which will undoubtedly be a pivotal point in our political history. The *Let's Talk Politics* participants, regardless of political or professional background, were all eager to do their share to help Democrats in November. Several mentioned having worked with the Obama campaign, and they shared with others how to get involved, from making calls online or at phone banks to knocking on doors or writing letters to the editor.

The sentiment that echoed around the room was virtually unanimous: sitting back and waiting is

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Tenth News

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Lies and 'Misrememberings'

by Steve Sheffey

Few top ten lists match Mark Kirk's top ten lies about his military record. Kirk (1) falsely claimed he served "in" Operation Iraqi Freedom; (2) falsely claimed to "command the war room in the Pentagon"; (3) falsely claimed to have won the U.S. Navy's Intelligence Officer of the Year award; (4) falsely claimed to have been shot at by the Iraqi Air Defense network; (5) falsely claimed to be a veteran of Desert Storm; (6) falsely claimed to be the only lawmaker to serve during Operation Iraqi Freedom; (7) falsely claimed to have been shot at in Kosovo; (8) falsely claimed to have been shot at in Kandahar; (9) falsely claimed to have been repeatedly "deployed" to Afghanistan; and (10) falsely claimed not to have violated Defense Department rules on mingling politics with his military service.

Rather than address the deficiencies in Kirk's character, Kirk's supporters tell us that even without the lies, embellishments, and "misrememberings," Kirk has a good military record. They're missing the point. Kirk's military record is relevant only because he lied about it. If Kirk hadn't revealed himself to be a serial exaggerator, his military record, whatever it is or isn't, would be utterly irrelevant.

Most of us have never served in the military. I would never disrespect anyone for serving in the military, but neither would I hold lack of military service against anyone. Military service is not a prerequisite for holding public office, nor is military service—or the lack thereof—an indicator of how well someone will do in public office.

For example, Republican presidents Ulysses Grant and Dwight

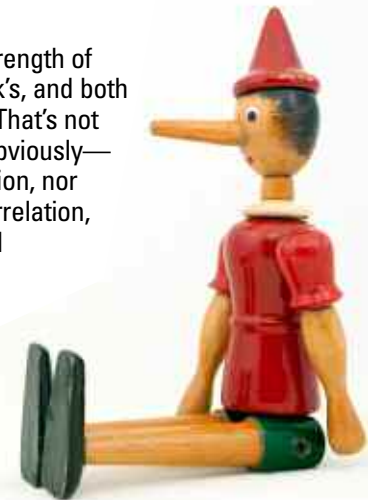
Eisenhower were elected on the strength of military resumes far better than Kirk's, and both proved to be mediocre presidents. That's not because of their military records, obviously—the point is that there is no correlation, nor should one expect there to be a correlation, between a good military record and performance in office.

There are much better predictors of how someone will do in Congress: character, stands on the issues, and—if available—(hold your breaths, Kirk fans)—previous record in Congress. Kirk fails on all three counts, which is why he needs to change the subject.

In an effort to deflect attention from his "misrememberings," Kirk tried to shift the attention to Alexi, but in doing so, Kirk only highlighted the lengths to which he will stretch the truth.

On July 12, the *Chicago Tribune* described Kirk's criticism of Alexi's tax refund as "baffling" and summarized Kirk's position as "instead of going to a tax accountant to determine what to pay, Giannoulas should ask his opponent. (Never mind that Giannoulas said he would donate his \$30,000 refund to charity.)"

From the July 14 *Chicago Sun-Times*: "Just when you thought Mark



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Uncommon Need for the Common Good – Part 2

by Ron Levitsky

Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "It is not a world devoid of meaning that evokes the prophet's consternation, but a world deaf to meaning." For biblical prophets, a good life wasn't spent observing rituals while grasping at riches and abusing the less fortunate. Instead, as Micah stated, God requires . . . "Only to do justice, And to love goodness, And to walk modestly with your God." Whether you are influenced by religious or humanistic values, it is caring for others that gives a life meaning.

Last month, I wrote about the erosion of communitarian values. We see this in the dysfunctional Illinois General Assembly, which has failed to deal responsibly with an enormous deficit, long-standing pension obligations, and providing essential services to those in need. Many of its members seem worried far more about the November elections.

Fortunately, there are activists who encourage state and local governments to do the right thing for their most vulnerable citizens. Here are three from our own 10th Congressional District.

Helen Kaufmann of Moraine Township has four children, including a daughter with Down Syndrome. After serving as a school board member in Deerfield, she became involved with transitioning youth with disabilities to adult life and helped found the Adult Community Transition Program. ACT seeks to create vocational, recreational, and educational programs in different community environments. There are 17-20 full time participants in the program. Currently, Helen is a member of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, a federally-funded organization that suggests improvements in the way the state helps the disabled as well as giving small grants for innovative projects. As Helen puts it, the council is "trying to build consensus and momentum to make the system change."

This is especially difficult, since the system is on "total bread and water," with at least 20,000 disabled people waiting for services. One change she supports is moving people who are in large institutions to community-based housing, which is both better for the individuals and much more cost-effective for the state. Yet, too many state legislators remain uncommitted to fixing these problems. Helen believes that significant change will occur only when family members of the disabled say, "This isn't good enough," and commit to political action. They couldn't have a better role model than Helen.

Few people understand the General Assembly better than Kathy Ryg of Vernon Township. In 2002, after a distinguished career in public office as Lake County Deputy Recorder of Deeds as well as Vernon Hills Town Clerk and Trustee, Kathy was elected State Representative from the 59th District. Eventually chairing the committee dealing with the developmentally disabled and mentally ill, she became a champion for the disabled. Familiar with building coalitions, she found the General Assembly frustrating, because "you want to be part of a team, but there is no team." When the opportunity arose earlier this year, she resigned her seat to become president of Voices for Illinois Children, a not-for-profit organization that works with issues that affect children and families.

By 2012, the poverty rate for Illinois children is expected to reach 22 percent. This is unacceptable, not only morally but also economically. Kathy contends that economic recovery is best achieved by reducing

child poverty. Voices helped pass the Illinois After School and Youth Development Act. Its research has determined that food stamps, the earned income tax credit, and after school programs—along with parental support—are effective in fighting childhood poverty. Voices is among 200 organizations in the Responsible Budget Coalition, which calls for, in Kathy's words, "true tax reform." The coalition supports House Bill 174, already approved by the Senate, which

ouples an increase in the state income tax with an increase in the income tax credit for local property taxes. If this measure had passed last spring, \$6 billion would have been available to pay service providers of the disabled—providers who have fulfilled their obligations in good faith but now must wait six months or more for state reimbursement. Kathy and Voices continue to advocate measures for creating a more equitable tax system that, in turn, will provide the necessary financial resources to help our children.



After retiring from teaching in Buffalo Grove, Hugh Brady of Palatine Township was searching for something meaningful to do. He joined the National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI) and, within a few years, became president of the Barrington Chapter and vice president of the state organization. Hugh contends that as bad as state budget cuts have been for other health programs, mental health has suffered disproportionately with cuts of 40 percent. Yet, this is "not cost savings, just cost shifting," as the loss of treatment programs leads to loss of jobs, more visits to the emergency room, and arrests for nuisance crimes (e.g., loitering). In addition, Illinois leads the nation in placing the mentally ill in nursing homes and institutions for mental disease (IMDs). Yet, it costs the state \$117 per day to keep a person with mental illness in a nursing home as opposed to \$28 in community-based permanent supportive housing (scattered site or small apartment buildings with caseworkers on or near the premises).

NAMI's advocacy has helped to make a difference in Illinois. A lawsuit may move as many as 5,000 people with mental illness from institutions to supportive community housing. The state has improved its involuntary commitment law to better protect both the individuals with mental illness and those around them. And mental health courts have been effective in helping mentally ill people accused of nuisance offenses receive the medical assistance they need.

Recently, five local NAMI chapters attempted to construct a 30-unit community-based supportive apartment building in Arlington Heights. After receiving the recommendation of four village commissions to proceed with the plan, the village board voted 4-3 against the project. Disappointed but "optimistic," Hugh and his colleagues are working to address village concerns, and they hope for approval later this year.

After interviewing these three remarkable individuals, I was struck by four commonalities:

1. The reforms they advocate aren't based merely on concern for those in need, but also on best practices in the field and cost-effectiveness—something that should pique the interest of taxpayers. Two examples are the importance of investing in early childhood health and education, and the need to move the disabled and mentally ill from institutions to supportive community-based housing.

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Propaganda and Learning

by Frank Palmer

I've been noticing recently that the Tea Party tax protesters have embraced some strange positions:

- 1) They say their taxes are too high.
- 2) They denounce the president who put through the largest tax cuts in American history for the brackets most of them inhabit.
- 3) They cheer congressmen who voted against those tax cuts.

Their behavior is quite inconsistent with the facts.

Their behavior is, really, consistent with how they—all of us—learn things. I had a friend who said that more people today believe superstitiously that the Earth is round than ever believed superstitiously that the Earth was flat. Note that he didn't claim the Earth was flat; he'd taken one trip around it. But he said that most people today believe that the earth is round because their teachers and parents told them so. They haven't looked at the evidence; they've accepted what they were told. And, if you accept what you're told, then the contest in persuading you is won by the people whom you believe.

Now, we like to believe that we decide in whom we shall place credence on the basis of whether what they tell us is based on the facts. To a certain extent, some of us judge that way. But, all too often, we get the "facts" in large clumps and from the same sources that give us the general patterns.

A surprising number of today's right-wing positions are based on denial of certain facts.

It started small: "Democrats are the party of deficits," before Reagan. As a matter of fact, Democrats accepted deficits as an alternative to slow (or negative) growth. Republicans would not. They only accepted deficits as a consequence of bad recessions (that is to say, negative growth). When you look at the record, average Democratic deficits instead of recessions were slightly smaller than average Republican deficits as a consequence of recessions. Still, you can see why the Republicans thought they would be and should be larger.

The tide turned with Reagan. He intended to balance the budget by-and-by. His tax cuts were intended to bring fast economic growth. So, his was the balanced-budget side although the debt soared under him. His was the fast-growth side although growth was rather slow under him. (Reagan's second term had economic growth—as measured by

real GDP—actually slightly higher than the average of post-war administrations. Even that term had growth lower than the average post-war Democratic administration. The preceding term was about average for Republican administrations, and the succeeding term—Bush 41—was a disaster. The 12-year period had the lowest growth of any three successive presidential terms since 1948.)

From the end of World War II until 1980, every presidential term ended with the debt higher in dollar amounts, but lower as a fraction of GDP, than it had begun. Reagan (and conservative Republicans, generally) said that wasn't good enough. If the debt didn't come down in absolute terms, we were heading for disaster. Under Reagan, the debt more than doubled as a fraction of GDP, and then that fraction increased again under Bush.

Maybe it's a coincidence; maybe there was a tipping point. The Republican Party, and the right wing in general, seems to depend on generalities that conflicted with specifics ever since. They have become:

- 1) The anti-evolution party
- 2) The "there is no Global Warming" party
- 3) The "tax cuts for the rich lead to faster growth" party

Although Republican congressmen controlled the bipartisan 9/11 Commission, the Republican administration ignored their recommendations. Nevertheless, they were the party fighting terror.

As I said earlier, we learn generalizations. And lots of people have learned their generalizations. Even so, the Republicans have only about half the electorate (rather less than half since 2006) even with much wider acceptance of these positions. Knock any one of these generalizations down, and they'll have problems holding on to that fraction.

So, what can we do?

We have to develop our own generalizations:

- 1) Employment increases under Democrats.
- 2) The Democrats are the party of education.
- 3) The Democrats are the party that supports our veterans.
- 4) The Democrats are the party of opportunity.

These are only a few. We have to do better at getting these generalizations out, and getting them out at every opportunity. I don't advocate developing our own counterfactuals. I do advocate developing our own generalities.

We Need a Sarah Palin

by Terry Wrem Jones

Emily's List, the organization whose mission is dedicated to electing pro-choice Democratic women to office, is currently running a campaign asking you to pledge to "vote in November and send the message loud and clear: Sarah Palin, you do NOT speak for me."

The actions this organization requests you take, in addition to signing the pledge, include telling all your friends to take the pledge, and then telling Emily's List all about how you've spoken out against Sarah Palin and her candidates.

Nice start, I suppose, but I think it speaks volumes about our sadly myopic view of how to connect with the American people and combat the vociferously stupid former governor. Now don't get me wrong. I have no quarrel with Emily's List and what they do. I'm just citing this as a typical example of how weakly and ineffectively we seem to approach the problem of winning over hearts and minds with our own talking points, such as they are.

Sarah Palin is continually out on her stump spouting simplistic slogans, most of which are patently false. She sells these lies with spark and

folksy charisma and all the vapidness of a beauty pageant contestant. And it's working. How many average Americans has she convinced, for example, that maintaining the Bush tax cuts for the top two percent wealthiest Americans is somehow in their own best interest? How does she manage to disguise the reality that "trickle down economics" is warm, yellow, and smells kind of funny?

I realize that the truth is just more nuanced than a lie. But we have to figure out a way to take the truth, dumb it down, and make it easily digestible for those who don't watch *The Daily Show* or MSNBC.

And most of all, we need to find a spokesperson to represent this Democratic "product." Someone who can be Sarah Palin's opposite number. Someone attractive, engaging, but otherwise terribly average—not too intellectual, not too challenging. Someone common folk across America can easily relate to.

Think you're the right person for the job? Send the DNC a cover letter summarizing your lack of qualifications, along with your resumé—be sure to highlight the jobs you've quit. And don't forget to include a head shot.

That's where this article originally ended. Then, as serendipity would have it, the Sunday *New York Times Week in Review* section featured

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Voting with His Party, Republican Mark Kirk Says No to Financial Reforms

After months of wrangling, both houses of Congress passed financial reform legislation this summer. President Obama signed the long-awaited Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act in a flashy ceremony at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington on July 23. "These reforms represent the strongest consumer financial protections in history," the President said. "These protections will be enforced by a new consumer watchdog with just one job: looking out for people—not big banks, not lenders, not investment houses—as they interact with the financial system." Not as far-reaching as many Democrats would have liked, the legislation does provide some much-needed regulation of the financial industry and some long-awaited protection for American consumers.

Some observers say the bill that is being touted as "the most sweeping changes to America's financial regulatory system since the 1930s" isn't the rock-solid set of financial system safeguards and consumer protections that proponents of real reform had hoped for. The critics say the bill does much to maintain the status quo and not enough to avert a repeat of the 2008 financial system meltdown.

"The biggest banks that took the most of the [TARP] money ended up with the most beneficial position, and the regulators that failed to stop them in the first place get even more power and discretion," journalist Michael Hirsch reported in *Newsweek* on July 25.

("Financial Reform Makes Biggest Banks Stronger," <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/06/25/financial-reform-makes-biggest-banks-stronger.html>). Hirsch quotes a former treasury official speaking on condition of anonymity: "The bill may make [the big] banks even more critical to the economy and therefore even more likely to be rescued in some future crisis," Hirsch said.

To be sure, the finance industry had a huge hand in shaping the legislation, and the big financial powerhouses got much of what they wanted. The 2,300-page compromise bill restricts banks' proprietary trading and forces derivatives onto clearinghouses and exchanges. Still, it allows the banks to keep the biggest part of their derivatives business and leaves open the potential for "the banks to end up dominating, if not controlling the clearinghouses," writes Yves Smith in a must-read article on the website Naked Capitalism



(<http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2010/06/misnamed-financial-services-reform-bill-passes-systemic-risk-is-alive-and-well.html>). "Language proposed by Rep. Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., to limit [the banks'] ownership stakes to 20 percent, was dropped in the final version of the bill," Smith reports. "No numerical limitations were set; regulators were given the ability to do so."

And, while the final bill does create a consumer protection agency (CPA) that is charged with protecting consumers from unfair and abusive practices in mortgages and credit cards, it houses that agency—initially envisioned as independent—in the Fed, "which has never taken any interest in consumers," Smith explains.

Also watered down was the important Volcker Rule, which proposed to restrict banks from making certain kinds of speculative investments with their own capital. The final version of the bill still allows banks to own private equity and hedge funds—just not more than 3 percent of tier-one capital.

"Dodd-Frank effectively anoints the existing banking elite," Hirsch wrote in the aforementioned *Newsweek* article. "The bill makes it likely that [today's big banks] will be the future giants of banking as well."

For all its flaws, the legislation closes gaps in the legal-regulatory-oversight framework that led to the 2008 global financial meltdown and the nation's worst recession since the great depression, causing millions of Americans to lose their homes. Republicans, including 10th District Congressman and Senate hopeful Mark Kirk, worked neither to develop nor to improve the bill. They could not bring themselves to participate in this crucial exercise. They neither supported efforts to improve the legislation nor voted for its passage.

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Progressing Toward an Internship That Matters

by Monica Petrescu

If you have progressive values and are looking for a fall internship that will make a difference, have we got a deal for you!

The Tenth Congressional District Democrats (Tenth Dems) is accepting applications for fall internships. Several of our interns have gone on to internships in Washington, to college majors in political science or law, or paid political and nonprofit positions locally and in Washington.

Interns may do research, walk door-to-door with candidates, work in campaign offices, staff events and issue forums, and get to meet many political figures. In the past, they've helped at Tenth Dems events featuring former Presidential nominee George McGovern, as well as



Presidential hopefuls Senators Evan Bayh of Indiana, Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, Howard Dean of Vermont, and Illinois' Barack Obama.

Tenth Dems is a grassroots political organization that helps elect Democrats to all levels of political office throughout the 10th Congressional District. The organization has had thousands of volunteers helping Democratic candidates.

The 10th Congressional District contains portions of both Cook and Lake Counties stretching from Wilmette on the south through Waukegan on the north and from Lake Michigan on the east through parts of Arlington Heights and Palatine.

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Candidate Profile: Kay Hoogland

by Monica Petrescu

To many people, "politics" means bills and debates in Springfield or Washington. Yet, many of the issues that affect our lives each day, from the water we use to make coffee in the morning, to the roads we take to work, even to the small businesses around the corner, are decided not at the state or national level, but on county boards. The role of county commissioner thus requires not only professionalism but also a strong commitment to the community.

Kay Hoogland is the Democratic candidate for the Lake County Board in the 18th precinct. An experienced attorney, Hoogland is also a longtime resident of the county and has raised her two sons in the area. She has taken leadership roles locally, serving as a Board Member for the Lake County YWCA, and as President of the Stevenson High School Foundation. Getting to know the problems faced by residents in the area has led her to seek office in order to help make Lake County an even better place to live.

One crucial concern Hoogland is determined to address is the current situation of the county budget. The recession has forced Lake County residents to tighten their belts—a practice the County Board has failed to adopt. In fact, the property taxes in Lake County continue to be the highest in the Midwest. Kay Hoogland hopes to use her 25 years of experience as an attorney and corporate leader to cut costs at the county level. As partner at a national law firm, and Director and VP of the *Chicago Tribune* and Motorola, Hoogland assisted troubled businesses to make difficult decisions in times of crisis. She hopes to



use this background to assess the county budget, line by line, and eliminate wasteful spending.

In the past months, Kay Hoogland has been going door-to-door, meeting residents and hearing their stories. From these conversations, the burden of high property taxes and tough economic times is

obvious. Many families even feel they may be forced to move out. Hoogland plans to tackle this issue on the County Board by linking property taxes to more current home assessments. She also plans to work to provide tax incentives to local businesses in order to spur economic growth.



This fall, Hoogland faces a difficult race: a race for the people of Lake County. Commissioners will soon have to make crucial choices regarding property taxes, roads, and small businesses in Lake County. Kay Hoogland will bring her experience as an attorney and her knowledge of the community to the office, to serve as a leader, as a friend, and as a neighbor.

A Jobs Program You Can Believe In

Ever since the New Deal, finding jobs has been a Democratic tradition, helping America improve the economy.

According to Webster's, the word "economy" is a noun. One of its definitions is "the structure or conditions of economic life in a country, area, or period." That doesn't sound too threatening. But this is a word that sends chills through economists and politicians and has the electorate all fired up. It is also the condition that creates a nearly 10 percent jobless rate in this country and is leaving Americans homeless and hopeless.

Tenth Dems has introduced a new service on its Blog, *Jobs Central*. We've asked those who visit our Blog to write a paragraph about themselves if they are looking for work and encouraged them to ask friends and neighbors who are out of work to do the same. We've heard from employers as well. You'll find the new Blog at www.tenthdems.org/2010/08/jobs-wanted-volunteer-opportunities/

If you are an employer and see someone on the Blog who might be of interest, call us at 847-266-VOTE (8683), or email us at info@tenthdems.org. Or, if you are interested in any opening we have listed, you should contact us as well. We will connect employers and

potential employees and let both sides take it from there. Tenth Dems takes no responsibility for any of the information contained in the announcements and does not vouch for its accuracy.

We're hoping that we can match people with jobs. If you want to be listed, send us a paragraph similar to those you see in our Blog. Email your write-up to info@tenthdems.org, and attach your resume as well. Even in this tough economy, you'll discover that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.



Internships *continued from page 4*

Applicants should be high school juniors or seniors, college students, or graduate or law students with a desire to help the Democratic Party. Computer skills are desired. Fall interns are expected to work a minimum of 8 hours a week. We are looking especially for interns with web administration, social media, data, and/or organizing skills.

Course credit is available with cooperating high schools and colleges. Acceptance into the Internship Program is selective and contingent upon an interview. Applicants are asked to submit a brief paragraph explaining why they want this internship, and a resume of their educational background and activities. Neither need be formal.

For more information on the Intern Program, or to apply, contact Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Chair, or Andy Bookman, Internship Coordinator, at info@tenthdems.org or call 847-266-VOTE (8683).

To Protect These Rights

The second in an occasional series of musings on the Bill of Rights

by Ron Altman

I started this series in 2008 during the last national election campaign, and one does not have to be a cynic to believe that the only time Republicans discuss the First Amendment is when they see a way to gain political capital by doing so. The recent furor over the “Ground Zero Mega-Mosque,” to quote a headline from Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post*, is a public lesson in the use and misuse of the First Amendment and its guarantee of freedom of religion.

In my previous article in this series (March 2008), I proposed that the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment (“Congress shall make no law... prohibiting the free exercise thereof”) was the bedrock of our religious freedom because it prohibits Congress, and, through the 14th Amendment, the states, from interfering in religious practice unless there is a “compelling state interest.” New York City, through its planning boards and city council, has found that no such interest exists with respect to the creation of a mosque on Park Place, two blocks from the site commonly referred to as “Ground Zero.”

It has been argued that although the Cordoba Initiative, the local group that originated the plan for the Islamic community center and prayer rooms, has the “right” to build, it should not exercise that right in deference to the sensitivities of the families of the victims of the 9/11 attack. This position is held by such widely diverse politicians as Harry Reid, Democratic leader in the Senate, and Eric Cantor, Republican whip in the House.

But if the right of free exercise of religion means anything, it must apply not only when the majority agrees with the exercise at issue, but especially when the majority disapproves. The whole rationale for the Bill of Rights is that certain rights, being inalienable, are not subject to the vote of a temporary majority, nor to the disapproval of pressure groups, nor even to the will of everyone else. The right to free exercise means nothing if you can’t exercise it.

As with Free Speech, the true test of one’s commitment to the First Amendment comes in a case where the ideas expressed are unpopular. Rights dependent upon not upsetting the majority are not rights at all. We often paraphrase Voltaire as saying, “I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it,” and this sentiment gets to the heart of the argument over the Bill of Rights. Only when one is willing to defend unpopular ideas is the spirit of the Bill of Rights brought to life.

Speaking about the mosque controversy, Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House and possible future Republican presidential candidate, stated that “Nazis don’t have the right to put up a sign next to the Holocaust Museum in Washington.” He attempts to analogize the anguish felt by Jews over free speech for American Nazis, a group claiming kinship with the perpetrators of the Holocaust, to the unease of New Yorkers remembering their city’s supreme moment of suffering on 9/11 and its relation to Islamic militants from al Qaeda. He freely intertwines the clauses of the First Amendment as did Madison, because both freedom of religion and freedom of speech, being fundamental rights, must apply to all, no matter how hateful their message.

Yet, in point of fact, if the American Nazi Party, or its current iteration, were to place a sign that met local zoning limitations on private property, there certainly would be a right to display that sign, no matter how odious the message. As did the attempted Nazi march on Skokie in 1977, this hypothetical example illustrates the scope of the First Amendment’s right of free (symbolic) speech. The true test of one’s support for the right to free speech is the recognition of a right to express abhorrent ideas equal to the right to broadcast popular thought.

In the present case, through opposition to the proponents of the planned mosque and community center, all Muslims are scapegoated as the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack, not just the irrational al Qaeda terrorists who commandeered and crashed the planes. To many Americans, Muslims are the Other, those whose rights should be forfeit to the demands of the majority who feel uncomfortable with the Muslim presence near “Ground Zero.” This summer of a political year has been filled with campaigns against Others: undocumented immigrants in Arizona, innocent children whose citizenship should be stripped because their parents entered the country illegally—all modern-day replacements for the Communists who bedeviled the conspiratorial imaginations of



Republicans of a previous generation. Yet, the Constitution does not have a suspension clause for our fantasies. All citizens are protected equally, regardless of beliefs or origin.

It is easy to express support for the Constitution in the abstract. Who is against the freedom to worship? It is much more difficult to support the hard cases, to support freedom of speech for those whose ideas we abhor. We’re all in favor of our own right to worship, but when it comes to those pesky Others, we are more ambivalent. The current controversy presumes that the feelings of those damaged and traumatized by the 9/11 attack can be balanced against the right of Muslims to build a place of worship and community. How can feelings be balanced against rights? How can Muslims be denied the free exercise of religion that Americans take for granted?

When it comes to the inalienable rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, carving exceptions erodes the bedrock. We Americans should never allow erosion of our fundamental rights.

Soap *by Jack Altschuler*

When I was a boy I didn't lie much, but when I did, my mother would cleanse the lie from my "filthy mouth" by washing my mouth out with soap—hand soap, laundry soap, any bar that was handy. That pretty well explains why I didn't lie much. That was in the days when there was shame in having done wrong and there were consequences to lying. Perhaps you remember those days. And, no, the soap exorcism of my lie did not make everything okay. Eventually, Mom would come around to forgive me, but she didn't suddenly develop amnesia and she didn't forget. Neither did I.

Mark Kirk lied about his military record, official commendations, and even where he served and whether he was in combat. And, he lied repeatedly, over many years. Strangely, he lied in spite of the fact that the truth would have been quite satisfactory. Perhaps the lies sounded good, making him seem like a warrior draped in red, white, and blue. They may have filled the hearts of his supporters with love, admiration, and respect for him. They may have helped Mark Kirk to promote Mark Kirk. Nevertheless, they were lies.

Since being caught in his lies, Kirk has said he "wasn't thinking" when he misrepresented his military service. "I simply misremembered it

wrong." Yes, he really did say that.

On July 8, there was a short essay in the Pioneer Press publication, the *Northbrook Star*, headlined, "Kirk scores points for integrity." Does that mean that his refraining from still more lies about his lying is all that it takes for him to have integrity and garner political support? Should we now develop collective amnesia about his repeated lies? Mom wouldn't have and I don't think we should, either.

It seems that now we believe that a politician, at last stopped from his lying solely because he was caught in his lies, is somehow worthy of the term "integrity." Is that okay with you? If not, drop that passive thing and speak up.



Lies and 'Misrememberings' *continued from page 1*

Kirk couldn't be more disingenuous. The Republican Senate candidate who tried to pass off a series of exaggerations in his military record as honest errors now is smearing his Democratic opponent, Alexi Giannoulias, with a blatantly misleading TV ad that links him to the Gulf oil spill."

The nonpartisan Factcheck.org concluded that Kirk's ads "make unsupported claims about the role Giannoulias played at his family's troubled bank and strain to tie him to BP, among other dubious statements."

The Pulitzer Prize-winning non-partisan Politifact.com concluded that Kirk's ads were "partly true" and "barely true" while Alexi's ad was "true."

Character counts. Kirk has proven again and again that he will say or do anything to get elected. As Alexi Giannoulias has noted, "like a weather vane, Mr. Kirk's votes on the issues can be predicted by the direction the political winds are blowing at this time."

Nothing sums up Kirk's unprincipled politics better than his reversal on the American Clean Energy and Security bill (ACES), also known as cap and trade. When Kirk voted for cap and trade, he justified his vote by saying, "It is time to break the boom and bust cycle of high gas prices and the need to deploy three separate armies to the Middle East (Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom). As you may know, I am a veteran of the Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom missions." Of course, we now know that Kirk isn't a veteran of Desert Storm, but putting that aside, Kirk's justification seems pretty compelling—if he believed it. Read Kirk's couldn't-be-clearer explanation of why he voted for cap and trade here:

<http://lakecountyteaparty.com/2009/07/01/congressman-mark-kirks-response-on-cap-and-trade-vote/>

Given that, you'd think if anything was set in stone, it was Kirk's support for cap and trade. Then the political winds shifted, and Kirk totally flip-flopped, claiming that he only voted for cap and trade because "it was in the narrow interests" of his congressional district. I never realized that high gas prices and national security were "in the narrow interests" of only the 10th Congressional District. There was nothing in Kirk's lengthy original explanation that even remotely suggested that these issues were unique to the 10th District. If you have just 19 seconds, you can see the essence of Mark Kirk: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kplOdIL2BD8>

Contrast Kirk's unprincipled statements with the composed and dignified way Alexi Giannoulias handled the controversy over Broadway Bank. Contrast Kirk's flavor-of-the-hour issues management with Alexi's consistent stands in support not only of Israel but also of the other issues we care about, including abortion rights, women's issues, LGBT issues, environmental issues, and economic issues.

Alexi beats Kirk on character, and Alexi beats Kirk on the issues. Kirk's career in Congress is proof positive that one's military record has little to do with how one performs in Congress—but Kirk's dishonest attacks on Giannoulias do prove that lies about one's military record speak volumes about a candidate.

NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood, the Human Rights Campaign, the Sierra Club, and the League of Conservation Voters—all bipartisan organizations, some of which have backed Kirk in previous elections—are now backing Alexi Giannoulias for U.S. Senate over Mark Kirk. So if you're supporting Alexi, you're in very good company.

Let's Talk Politics *continued from page 1*

not an option. Many felt 2010 is our year to consolidate the 2008 win and express our confidence in progressive leadership. Otherwise, the past two years will be lost.

Margaret Mead once stated that we should "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Events like *Let's Talk Politics* embody that spirit perfectly. A small group of neighbors join together to share

their views, learn from each other, and find ways to address the issues most crucial to our society.

This *Let's Talk Politics* event was held on August 5 at the Vernon Area Library in Lincolnshire. Planned by Sharon Sanders and Phyllis Goldman, Tenth Dems *Let's Talk Politics* events bring together citizens to discuss current political issues, on a federal level, state level, or here at home.

Bon Voyage, Stephen!

Not many teenagers can qualify as political organizers, but 18-year-old Stephen Ark can and does.

A Gurnee native, Ark first headed for Chicago's North Shore in 2008 to work on the Obama campaign for president and soon became involved in local electioneering. Last summer he interned with Tenth Dems, doing research, canvassing, and marching in parades, working out of the Moraine Township Democratic Organization (MTDO) office in Highland Park. This summer he returned to manage the internship program — a staff position. Along the way, he redesigned the web sites of MTDO and Tenth Dems.

"I wanted something I could learn from—not like slinging subs at Quiznos," Ark explains. "I'm glad I did it."

"All of our interns are impressive," says Democratic State Central Committeewoman Lauren Beth Gash, who chairs MTDO, "but Stephen stood out from the very beginning as a true leader. Stephen can oversee projects from vision to completion, excels at every step,

and can motivate, garner respect, and cultivate friendship from not only the rest of the interns, but the adult volunteers with whom he works as well. He is an important part of the Tenth Dems team."

Ark, a May 2010 graduate of Carmel Catholic High School, has never formally studied either politics or web design—he learned by doing. That may change now that he is off to Macalester College in St. Paul, where he plans to study political science and economics and perhaps go on to law school. Eventually, he hopes to return to Illinois, which he likes for its diverse landscape and ethnic mix. In particular, he appreciates the North Shore and its people, who are politically aware and involved and take their politics seriously.

His friends and colleagues at MTDO and Tenth Dems wish Stephen success in this new phase of his life. We are glad that he will be only a phone call or email message away!



Common Good *continued from page 2*

2. As grim as the situation in Illinois appears to be, positive change can be made through committed action. The Adult Community Transition Program, the Illinois After School and Youth Development Act, and the mental health courts are examples of caring people making our state better. Don't give up!
3. Political parties are less important to these advocates than results. People like Helen, Kathy, and Hugh eschew political posturing, finger-pointing, and other elements of the blame game. Instead, they work with all stakeholders to build consensus. Although all three have been Democrats, party labels become meaningless when people are hungry, ill-housed, lacking appropriate medical care, and without respect.

4. Defining one's civic duty simply as voting on a regular basis seems inadequate. Even working on political campaigns, while laudatory, places too much trust in government officials whose preeminent concern is often the next election. I'm reminded of one of my favorite movies, *Viva Zapata!*, in which Zapata says, "A strong man makes a weak people. Strong people don't need a strong man." Perhaps what we do between elections is far more important than the elections themselves.

In times like these, with weak leadership at the state level, we need to be a people strong enough to follow the prophet Micah's words, as well as the examples of Helen, Kathy, and Hugh, to live, not just for ourselves but also for others.

Congress Watch *continued from page 4*

In both houses of Congress, the bill passed, essentially along party lines. In the Senate, it just barely garnered the 60 votes needed to avert a filibuster, thanks to Olympia Snowe, Scott Brown, and Susan Collins—the only three Republicans to vote for it. Senator Russell Feingold of Wisconsin was the only Democrat to vote against the bill, saying the measure didn't go far enough.

The bill passed the House in a 237:192 vote. As was to be expected, Mark Kirk stood with his party and voted to protect the Wall Street firms

and big banks whose reckless lending and bad bets caused the tide of mortgage defaults that led to the 2008 financial crisis. His vote against this legislation, which, despite all the compromises and limitations, still does much to protect the American public, is consistent with his repeated refusal to support proposed extensions of unemployment benefits in the midst of the worst recession since the 1930s.

Mark Kirk's consistent failure to work for consumers, or to cast his votes in support of consumers, is one of the principal reasons why we must not allow him to become a United States Senator.

Palin *continued from page 3*

an editorial titled, "We Need Our Own Palin." Feeling more prescient than usual, I read the article with great interest—as well as concern about my premise being usurped, or worse, presented in a much more compelling way.

As it turned out, this particular article (co-authored by Rebecca Traister with whom I'm familiar from her writings on Salon.com, and Anna Holmes, the founding editor of the blog Jezebel), takes a distinctly feminist point of view. It decries Palin's, "greedy grab at claiming feminism as her own," noting that her new twist, "allows her to both distance herself from and accentuate the movement's maligned reputation."

This piece also brings us 360 degrees back to my earlier reference to the mission of Emily's List, but not in a good way, suggesting that, "Since the 2008 election, progressive leaders have done little to address the obvious national appetite for female leadership."

I believe that Sarah Palin's powerful hold over a certain segment of the American psyche is actually rooted in the fact that she clearly is *not* a viable candidate for higher office (despite political prognostications to the contrary). And, as such, she has the freedom to really bring on the crazy.

To prove my point, just look at how the Republican National Committee is busily sanitizing the website of Sharron Angle—Tea Party darling and Republican candidate running against Sen. Harry Reid in Nevada—removing or softening some of her more outrageous positions.

Sarah Palin is not running for any office. In fact she ran *from* the office she actually held. When I say that we need a Sarah Palin for our side, I'm not saying we need an actual candidate like her (though I do agree that more women in high office is the only reasonable response to fixing the larger troubles of our world). I'm saying we need a Democratic spokesmodel, someone who can bring on the sanity as a counterpoint to Ms. Palin's crazy.