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AREAS OF CONCERN by Adrienne Kirshbaum

I am a worrier by nature. I worry about my health, my husband, my children, my grandchildren. I worry about puppy mills and polar bears, climate change and nuclear proliferation. I worry about my country and whether or not it can survive the results of the recent elections. I worry about a populace so ill-informed that it can buy the big lies it hears and ignore the truth. And I worry about our president, a man I campaigned for and trusted who has given me lots of reasons, of late, to be concerned.

I keep telling myself that this man is much too intelligent to be saying the things he's been saying. I can't believe he is allowing the Republicans to make such a fool of him. He invites them to the White House; they stand him up. He offers to compromise; they say only if he agrees with them. He offers his hand; they slap

it! I keep waiting for him to lay his cards on the table, and for the world to realize that his meekness is just a ploy and that he's been waiting for the right time to squash the Republicans. But so far, that hasn't happened.

The Republicans had most of the power for eight years, and they nearly ruined the country. Barack Obama gave an inaugural address that signaled a return to honest government and liberal ideals. George W. Bush's plane was in the sky, taking him back to Texas, and for a moment I was free of worries. We had finally elected our president! Two years later, the Republicans are back.

I saw President Obama on television, recently. He was awarding the Congressional Medal of Honor to a brave veteran of the war in Afghanistan. My worries evaporated. There he was...

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Tenth News

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Prof. Dick Simpson Analyzes Democratic Wins and Losses at TDU Post-Election Event by Carolyn Cerf

Democrats turned out in large numbers at Tenth Dems University's post-election event on November 11, eager to analyze the results of the midterm election. Attendees from every corner of the 10th District poured into the Lincolnshire UAW hall to ponder the consequences of various wins and losses. Keynote speaker Prof. Dick Simpson, head of the Political Science Department at the University of Illinois, Chicago, presented a big-picture view of national trends that, to some extent, played out here in the 10th. A key slice of voters who swung Democratic in '08 held back or opposed the Dems this cycle. They voted Republican or Independent, with novel "Tea Party" candidates able to run under either banner. However, in Simpson's view, this was a "snap election, a transient swing of the pendulum," and not a shift to past decades.

According to Simpson, the Democrats' agenda of healthcare, education, and the environment was a sound policy choice, but strategically, these are some of the most expensive areas to attempt to reform. As Simpson put it, "Democrats are going to have to focus on less-expensive policies that really make people feel that life has improved."

Meanwhile, state and local Democratic incumbents were busy making pragmatic decisions regarding both policy and strategy, that seem to have paid off for their campaigns. See page 2 for



Tenth Dems Vice Chair John Hmurovic's post-election analysis, with a special emphasis on local offices within the 10th District.

During Prof. Simpson's Q & A session, attendees expressed concern about the Supreme Court's 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, which lifted restrictions on direct corporate campaign

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Prepare to Be Bowled Over at the Tenth Dems Winter Party at the Alley in Highwood on December 13. See p. 10 for more details.

Dick Simpson Analyzes *continued from page 1*

expenditures previously requiring disclosure under McCain-Feingold and other reforms, as well as about the emergence of the Tea Party and its successful branding as distinct from the GOP. Many felt this campaign cycle featured unprecedented mudslinging and negativity, disseminated by mailings, robo-calls, and expensive TV ads. Local candidates were not spared, and they became more

thankful than ever for the push-back provided by supporters and volunteers. As the victorious Rep. Karen May noted in a letter to the editor of the *Pioneer Press*, "I am especially heartened that so many people responded to the onslaught of negative attack mailers and television ads with offers of support and help. It was truly amazing that so many people rejected an unprecedented smear campaign as [an] inappropriate and gross distortion of my record." **TD**

GOP "Tidal Wave" More Like a Cold Splash of Water to the Face

by John Hmurovic

Election night didn't feel good. And, it wasn't. Democrats lost a Senate seat in Illinois, and in the 10th District we lost a chance to pick up a Congressional seat we thought we could win. We lost other congressional seats in Illinois, as well. But if you get past the national level offices, if you read beyond the big headlines, if you look at the whole picture, it wasn't as bad as it felt.

There's no way to sugarcoat what happened on election night. We lost ground on the national level. But if you believe this election was a Republican tidal wave, that description just doesn't wash.

In 10th Congressional District precincts, we did lose two freshman state legislators, Rep. Mark Walker of Arlington Heights and Sen. Michael Bond of Grayslake. But, on the positive side, Daniel Biss of Evanston won an Illinois State House seat that previously was in Republican hands. And despite huge sums of money spent to capture three other Illinois House seats, money that financed incredibly negative Republican campaigns, all three Democrats held on: Veteran legislator Karen May of Highland Park won by a comfortable margin; Rep. Carol Sente of Vernon Hills hung on in her first bid for election after being appointed to a vacant seat; and, first-time candidate Michelle Mussman of Schaumburg won a seat that had been held by a Democrat in a very Republican area.

These victories raise the question: if the Republicans can't win these seats in a so-called "tidal wave" year, in a year in which they targeted these races by spending massive amounts of money on negative campaigns, when can they win?

Beyond the state legislative races, very little changed locally. Democrat Brendan Houlihan lost in his first bid for re-election to a seat on the Cook County Board of Review, but Democrat Mark Levitt won a newly created Lake County judicial seat against a strong veteran Republican judge. In every other local race on the

ballot in 10th District precincts, nothing changed. The Republican tidal wave amounted to little more than an uncomfortable splash of cold water to the face.

The basic fact remains, despite everything supposedly going in their direction in 2010, Republicans are not as strong in the 10th District as the election headlines might make you think. Democratic Secretary of State Jesse White still won 70 percent of the vote in 10th District precincts. Democratic Attorney General Lisa Madigan still won 64 percent in those same precincts. A good Democratic candidate like Anne Bassi of Highland Park faced a strong Republican challenge, and still received 68 percent of the vote in her race for re-election to the Lake County Board. Even Dan Seals did better in 2010 than he had in the more Democratic-friendly elections of 2008 and 2006.

Fueled by the national trend, 2010 represented for Republicans their best shot to remake the political landscape in the 10th District. It didn't happen, and 2012 is unlikely to provide as good a chance for them. Instead of running against President Obama and Nancy Pelosi, they will have to give us reasons to vote for whoever they nominate for president, and whether it's Sarah Palin, Mitt Romney or someone else, they all have major weaknesses. Republicans in 2012 will also have to answer for the direction in which Speaker John Boehner takes Congress. On top of that, in 2012 we will have a new congressional district. The state legislature will redraw the congressional district boundaries, and thanks to the Democrats retaining control of the legislature the new boundaries should benefit Democrats in the next congressional race. And with a Democratic Governor, instead of Bill Brady, the maps will not likely get vetoed.

In the 10th District, Democrats hit what is probably our low-water mark in 2010. Still, our heads are above water; and the good news is, it will only get better for us in 2012.

Three-Time Winner Dan Seals

by Lee Goodman

Sadly and predictably, the day after the election a local Republican blog referred to Dan Seals as a "three-time loser." They couldn't be more wrong.

Three times, Dan had the rare honor of being his party's nominee for national office. Three times, he ran with distinction and earned the loyalty of volunteers and supporters who came to know him for the outstanding person he is.

Three times, Dan got to listen to voters tell him of their problems and their hopes, and three times he incorporated what he heard into the messages he delivered to the voters. Even on the most

recent election night, he was telling us about the students he had spoken with who were taking time off from college because they couldn't afford to continue their studies due to the slow economy. He told us about people he had met who couldn't get or afford health insurance. And as he told these touching stories and others, you could see in his posture and hear in his voice and read on his face that he had taken these stories to heart.

Losing an election is not like losing a job. It is much harder because the voters and the party regulars are very reluctant to give you a second chance, and there isn't anywhere else to go. But

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Areas of Concern *continued from page 1*

the man we worked so hard to elect, with his easy grace and dazzling smile. Nothing could possibly be wrong. But then, later that same day, on the radio, I heard that our troops would be in Afghanistan until 2014. That's three years past what the president promised. And I had another reason to worry.

It's like a bad dream, except dreams aren't true. You wake up from dreams, but this situation isn't disappearing. In fact, it keeps getting worse. This administration is circling the drain and no one seems to know how to rescue it. **TD**

Three-Time Winner *continued from page 2*

twice, after losing, Dan convinced his constituents that he was the right person to carry their message even though he had opponents who were vying for the chance to be the candidate. He was able to get a second and a third chance because he was that rare person who never seemed to be running just for himself. He was always there for the people.



Dan has not been elected, but he hasn't been defeated, and he hasn't lost anything. He has memories of the campaigns that will last him a lifetime. He has been given the precious gift of having people, most of whom were strangers to him before he ran, work tirelessly for him just because they believed in him. By his example, he has shown his daughters the righteous way to live one's life. He has had the day-in and day-out support of a loving wife who stood by his side, regardless of the pressures and insults that a vigorous campaign inevitably serves up. He has set a standard for ethical, decent campaigning that future candidates will be judged against for a long time.

And Dan has the knowledge that through three grueling campaigns he did what he could to help his fellow human beings and his country. He did this undeterred by the personal sacrifice that was necessary. He acted out of faith and conviction. He persevered when things were tough, and he didn't rest on those rare occasions when the going got a little easier.

Lived well, life makes us better people. Being a candidate is an intense lesson and a marvelous test of a person's character. Dan Seals is a three-time winner. **TD**

An Open Letter to the President *by Barbara Altman*

Dear President Obama:

Our nation is at a crossroads. We can keep on making right-hand turns and drive around in circles, or we can turn left toward progress. The Bush tax cuts cannot be extended, even temporarily. The growing gap between rich and poor in our country is turning us from a democracy to a plutocracy. Oppression of working people is not only immoral, but it is also economic suicide and, ultimately, unsustainable. You are a student of history, so you know that this is true.

Republicans are attacking energy policy, Social Security, Medicare, the college loan program (which you finally rescued from the clutches of the banks), education—the entire progressive agenda. The Dream Act may become a dead letter. The GOP will fight repeal of “Don’t ask, don’t tell.” Republicans will do whatever they can to sabotage the Affordable Care Act. Surely you recognize by now that the healthcare reform bill you signed was too timid, not too radical. I am a firm believer in the virtues of compromise. But Republicans offer two options—fight them or capitulate. And capitulating to more tax relief for the wealthy would be bad for the nation. Even David Stockman, President Reagan’s budget guru, has repudiated Reaganomics.

You must stand firm during the lame duck session. If Republicans will not support a bill to extend the Bush tax cuts temporarily for middle class families, and middle class families only, then ALL the tax cuts must be allowed to expire. There should be a vote for extension of tax cuts on the first \$250,000 of joint taxable income. If the Republicans vote against this, they will be voting against tax cuts applying to all taxpayers. Let the GOP stand on a platform of “Unless we get all the cuts extended for the wealthy, then the middle class will have to pay more taxes.” Let Republicans explain to the middle class why their taxes are going up. Dems still control both houses of Congress. We need to use our power while we have it.

If you capitulate during this lame duck session, your presidency is probably over. If you can't win when you hold all the cards, how can you dream of prevailing with the Republicans in control of the House and able to stop all legislation in the Senate? Americans love a winner, and you're starting to look like a loser. If you abandon the progressive agenda, you will sound the death knell for liberalism and the Democratic Party. You will have a primary challenge in 2012; the Republicans will sweep Congress and regain the White House, and we'll be right back where we were at the beginning of this century, with the GOP in possession of all three branches of government. And that, ultimately, will be the end of our democracy.

Mr. President, stand strong. Stand up for your convictions. Keep your campaign promises. Stand up for the middle class. Move this country forward. **TD**

What Really Happened on November 2, 2010

by Jack Altschuler

Once again, Dan Seals is not the next 10th Congressional District representative, Mark Kirk did not get fired, and the Republicans will control the House. That is to say, once more Democrats did not get the job done.

Jimmy Carter won in 1976 because of revulsion over Watergate. Bill Clinton won in 1992 because Ross Perot split the Republican vote. Barack Obama won in 2008, in part, because of Bush backlash. That is to say, if we don't get help from Republicans shooting themselves in the foot, we don't win. Perhaps it's time to ask ourselves what that's about.

In Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*, he makes a strong case that human beings make decisions emotionally and then justify their decisions rationally. My casual observations have borne this out.

On November 4 *The New York Times* ran an article by Bill Clinton about Yitzhak Rabin, assassinated 15 years ago. In it, Clinton gives us a peek into what drives decision making. Have a look at Clinton's opening words:

"Today marks 15 years since an assassin's bullet killed my friend, Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister. Since his death, not a week has gone by that I have not missed him. I loved him and his wife, Leah, very much."

Note the visceral sense of caring he conveys in just a few words. Love him or hate him, the humanness he consistently projects is a big piece of what got him elected twice. Voters believed he really did feel their pain. Similarly, in 2008, Obama connected with voters' frustrations and growing fears.

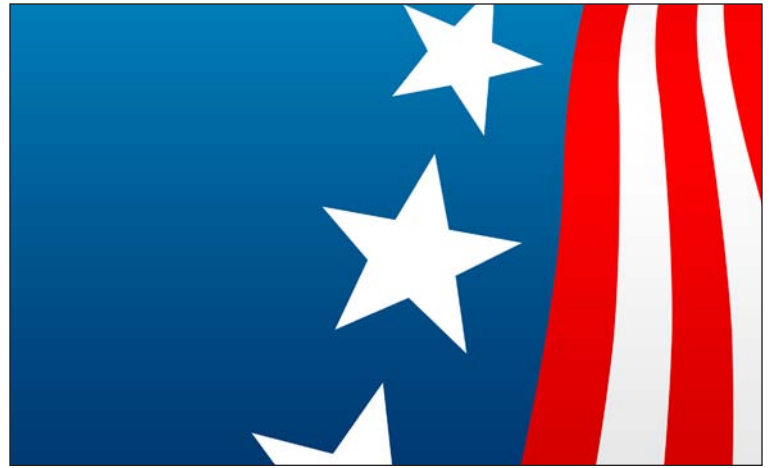
And that's a big part of what happened (or did not happen) on November 2.

This was not an election of ideas or reality or truth. It was an election of the brain stem in this Year of the Reptile Brain—perhaps this Age of the Reptile Brain. This election and these times are not about sense. They are about emotion—frustration, anger, despair, helplessness, and the terrible feeling that nobody in a position to make a difference is listening.

Some of us keep trying to make sense while others appeal to emotion. Guess who wins that competition.

Emotion is where the power is, and the extremists are doing a really good job of using it. The reptile brain doesn't have any sense or logic, which is why the extremists get away with the lies, distortions, and stupid stuff.

That anyone thinks Christine O'Donnell has a single neural pathway in her brain that could function effectively in the Senate is beyond me, but there are many thousands who voted for her. Millions think that cutting taxes will balance the budget, even as that makes no mathematical sense. People carry signs demanding that government get off their backs, yet they still want their Social Security, Medicare, good roads, national defense, fire protection, and all the rest. There is no logic to be found there. What can be found is a blast furnace of emotion. And that is where President Obama and most of the Democrats failed to connect—again.



Americans need leadership that cares about them. Obama isn't showing it and that coattails to other candidates. For example, millions don't know about Republican obstruction to the jobs bill that would have helped Americans because Democrats at the top talk about it in heady, emotionless words. They demonstrate little concern for the terrible fear in which millions of Americans live. Worse, they stand idly by while Republicans spin the administration's accomplishments into failures. Democrats don't smack down the Republican lies, so the lies become people's reality and people feel sold out by Democrats.

So many candidates and the administration have given soft-spoken, thoughtful responses to lunacies like Chuck Grassley claiming, "They're going to pull the plug on Granny"; but the responses are deeply NOT moving. And Obama frustratingly continues to talk to the teleprompters instead of to the people, so there's no connection. And as the top Democrats fail to connect with the people, the Republican spin machine lies, distorts, and fantasizes Democrats into perceived incompetence (not to suggest there hasn't actually been incompetence).

There will be an election on November 6, 2012. Even if the unemployment rate gets much better, I'm afraid for the results of that election. Because we don't seem to be able to craft a coherent message that connects with people, Americans will once again vote against their own interests and those of the nation.

It comes down to this: Americans need leaders to connect with them where they live—on an emotional level, speaking to their hearts, their fears, and their frustrations. Americans need leaders who have starch in their spines, who fight for what's right and who stand up to bullies.

Einstein said that insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. Q: What do you suppose will happen if Democrats continue to behave the same as Democrats have been behaving? A: Tomorrow will look pretty much like today.

Democrats got "shellacked" on November 2 because we fought the fight wrong. So, our choice for 2012 is simple: We can continue to be right and have our thoughtful ideas ignored or we can wake up to reality. Americans don't want to hear our brilliant ideas or see our 2,500-page bills. They want us to care that they hurt and to believe that we will go to the mat for them. **TD**

Still Recovering from the Election by Steve Sheffey

I still can't believe it. I thought Dan would win, and I really thought Alexi would pull it out. The hubris of some politicians still amazes me. Listening to Dold and Kirk, you would have thought they won by a landslide. Kirk talked about a "mandate." He got less than half the vote in Illinois and if about one percent had shifted, he would have lost. That's a win, but it's hardly a mandate. Dold won by less than 5,000 votes, 51-49. They were both swept in by the Republican/Tea Party tsunami.

Dan gave it his all three times in a row. He really cares about us and the issues, and his perseverance is a model of good citizenship for all of us. He's just a great guy. We should all be proud to have been associated with Dan and his campaign. Dan once again assembled a superb campaign team. I hope they don't second-guess themselves.

Illinois is likely to lose a congressional seat because of the census. The new boundaries will take effect in the 2012 election. The Democrats will draw the boundaries, and with any luck, one way or another, we'll have a Democratic member of Congress following the 2012 elections.

Alexi lost a very close election, and one wonders how much closer it would have been if there were no third party candidates. Or if it weren't such a Republican year. Or if Rod Blagojevich.... But there was and there was and there was. Alexi's concession speech was about as classy a concession speech as I've ever seen. I wish more people could have gotten to know him personally. He would have been a great senator. Poor Sen. Durbin. Six years.

Why did the Republicans win so many races? The best theory I've heard is simply that voters have short memories. They're concerned about the economy, so they voted against the party in power, regardless of whose fault it really is. President Obama could have done a much better job of communicating. He should have asked for the stimulus package we really needed rather than the package he thought would pass. Then he could have made the country understand whose fault it was that the economy is not recovering faster.

It's true that the stimulus bill that was passed, and that nearly every Republican (including Mark Kirk) opposed, averted a second Depression, but as Nancy Pelosi pointed out, it's hard to take credit for preventing something from happening. Or as Barney Frank said earlier, "It's like wearing dark pants and pissing down your leg. It gives you a warm feeling, but no one knows you did it."

Some people say that Obama should have been firmer, more partisan. Let's remember that Obama campaigned on a platform that included less partisanship. He didn't campaign to be a Democratic George Bush or Newt Gingrich. Let's also remember that while it's possible he could have rallied the country and passed even more reforms if he used partisan rhetoric, it also could have backfired and created an atmosphere where even less could have been accomplished.

Obama accomplished much we can be proud of in two years, including healthcare reform, financial reform, and tax cuts for 95 percent of Americans. Did he squander the opportunity to do even more? We'll never know. Even though he had a large majority in the House, not all Democrats were aligned, and the Senate was a vote away from a filibuster.

Those who say party labels don't matter are going to learn some hard lessons in the next two years. At the national level, party affiliation is extremely important: It's not only the best single indicator of how a congressman or senator will vote (even the most "independent" members vote with their party more than 80 percent of the time), but the party in control sets the agenda.

The Republican agenda is simple: Make Obama a "one-termer," as Kirk put it. And they'll stop at nothing to achieve their goal. Now is the time for vigorous advocacy. Let's hope that President Obama spends the next two years using his communication skills to educate the nation about what is really going on and what is at stake, but let's not count on it. We have to do all we can do to help voters understand what is at stake. We can't afford to have this happen again in 2012. **TD**

Face to Face by Ron Levitsky

Most of us love stories. As children we'd scoot close to our parent or teacher to hear about slow but steady tortoises winning races and rabbits running through a briar patch. These tales were exciting, often dramatic, and were used to illustrate a lesson regarding how one human being should treat another. And, although fictional, they pointed to what could be the best within ourselves.

Like individuals, nations have their own stories. Historians label such stories as grand narratives. Neta Crawford, a political science professor at Boston University, identifies several grand narratives in U.S. foreign policy. For example, in our early history, "Prophetic Manifest Destiny" indicated that God favored American expansion across the continent. Under President George W. Bush, the "Benevolent Empire / Pax Americana" sought to bring the world happiness through free trade and American power. Domestically, the idea that American democracy was formed on the frontier through individual effort and courage helped to formulate the American dream.

However, grand narratives never tell the entire story. In contrast, counter narratives—what Crawford calls, "the stories we don't tell ourselves"—include slavery and other forms of racism as well as bigotry. We are uncomfortable telling these narratives because they require a more complex understanding of how our nation was formed. For this, both narratives need to be understood.

Like many Americans growing up in the Fifties and Sixties, especially Jewish Americans, I was excited, even swept away by another national history—the David and Goliath story of Israel's creation. A people decimated by the Holocaust, Jews returned to the Promised Land. (Remember the *Exodus* movie theme song—"This land is mine, God gave this land to me"?) They took a barren land and made it bloom. They fought several wars against overwhelming odds—foes calling for their annihilation—and emerged victorious. They created the first democracy in the Middle East. Their astonishing

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achievements in the arts and sciences have benefited the world.

This is Israel's grand narrative. As a social studies teacher, when I taught the Middle East, I did my best to present a balanced view of the area's conflicts but was confident that my students, like me, saw the righteousness of Israel's position. Israel's enemies were Arab states and "terrorist" organizations like the PLO. They were not at all like us and, therefore, even easier to condemn.

Then in the late 1980s, I had a Palestinian student in class. She was very bright and personable, one of my best pupils. We never discussed her family's history or her view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, I invited her mother to speak on Palestinian culture. I felt I was doing something vaguely subversive and wondered if there would be any blowback. When we met face to face, the mother was as delightful as her daughter. She avoided politics, instead discussing her rich Palestinian culture—food, music, clothing, etc. At the time I was relieved. Looking back, I wish she had shared her family's story. It was a story neither my students nor I had ever heard and, therefore, needed to hear.

History is the most important course in a democratic nation's school system because it helps people think critically about the past and its relationship to the present. Students are encouraged to examine information the way real historians do. Sourcing—who is responsible for the information and what is the person's background? Contextualizing—when/where was the information said/written? Multiple perspectives—are several people commenting on the same event; what/why are there similarities/differences?

In my social studies curriculum, and I suspect in those of many other teachers, the one area where this didn't occur was Israel and the Palestinians. Even when I used a "balanced" lesson from a book on the Middle East, Israeli arguments for its right to the land in question were juxtaposed to those of "Arabs." Palestinians weren't specifically mentioned.

Edward Said, who died in 2003, taught English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He was a Christian Palestinian who, in many of his books, offered a counter narrative of Israel's creation and, therefore, of the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In his book, *The Question of Palestine*, Said asserts that there has been a Palestine ("Filastin") since the seventh century and that as late as 1945, only 30 percent of the area's population was Jewish. He contests the belief that Palestinians were only a few nomads (there were hundreds of thousands, most of whom lived in villages) or that, in 1947-48, they left their lands voluntarily or at the behest of Arab leaders. In *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with Edward Said*, he states, "My entire family was thrown out . . . were all driven out of Palestine in 1948."

He puts the Zionist struggle for Israel within the larger context of Western imperialism, in which Americans and Europeans viewed African and Asian peoples as "the inferior native Other," each with

a "stationary, stagnant culture." Therefore, Palestinian inhabitants were not seen as being really there or, if so, were assumed to be wasting the land by underutilizing it. Either way, there was no place for them in the new nation of Israel.

Said understood how European anti-Semitism, and especially the Holocaust, propelled the Zionist movement to seek a Jewish homeland. He sympathized with this struggle. However, he argued that the creation of Israel led to a cruel irony—"Zionism is the first liberation movement that resulted in the de-liberation of another people." Or, put another way, the Palestinians became "victims of victims."

Said urged other Palestinians to recognize the existence of Israel. He not only denounced Palestinian terrorism but also what he considered to be Israel's "disproportionate retaliation." He had hoped for a secular, democratic state in which both peoples could live in peace, for he believed that "...neither Israelis nor Palestinians have a military option against the other...." Rather, a political settlement is the only way "...to relieve

the mutual siege."

In this past election, the term "pro-Israel" was used a great deal. What does this term mean? Certainly most Americans want a strong and secure Israel at peace with its neighbors. But just as "pro-U.S." didn't necessarily mean supporting President Bush's war in Iraq or the use of torture as an interrogation tool, "pro-Israel" doesn't have to mean supporting the current policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Today, the hope of many "pro-Israel" Americans is a two-state solution, recognizing the sovereignty and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. The United States supports such a solution, but decisions by successive Israeli governments to expand settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank can only frustrate American diplomacy.

The purpose of this piece is not to defend Edward Said's view of history but rather to support his assertion that there will never be peace until the Palestinian counter narrative is understood and the Palestinians given the dignity of a commonly accepted history. And just as Jews yearned for a homeland of their own, so too do Palestinians seek self-determination.

In a way, Israeli history and Palestinian history need to meet face-to-face, as I did with my student and her mother. As Said stated, there needs to be "an acknowledgement of Palestinian and of Jewish history—in fierce conflict with each other for periods of time, but fundamentally reconcilable if both peoples make the attempt to see each other within a common historical perspective."

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Buddha said, "To understand everything is to forgive everything." This is nearly impossible for anyone, let alone two peoples locked in a long and bitter struggle. However, for Israelis a good beginning might be to stand face-to-face with their Palestinian neighbors by recognizing a people who have also suffered and who yearn for their own homeland. Rather than seeing a stranger or an enemy, it may be more like looking into a mirror. **TD**



The Sales Pitch Proves the Point

by Ellen Beth Gill

Something about our federal deficit crisis and the austerity solution seems familiar. Maybe it's the thin factual arguments used to identify the problem and formulate a solution. Maybe it's the advertising. The whole thing reminds me of the sales pitch and media frenzy that led us to invade Iraq.

War was For Sale and It Made Sense, So We Shopped

The Iraq invasion was sold to Americans in the wake of a disaster. It began almost immediately after 9/11. Americans were bombarded with images of the 9/11 attacks interlaced with American flags. A PSA appeared on television just days after the attacks showing a row of houses flying American flags with the tagline "everything changed." We were reminded that "freedom is not free," and they even sold jewelry that said so. They also sold lots of American flags and those plastic magnetic yellow ribbons for our cars. Then they sold us Iraq.

The country's mood for knee-jerk security and patriotic shopping was a good thing for President Bush and his advisors because they had a problem. They wanted to invade Iraq, but the 9/11 villains didn't live in Iraq. The problem was easily solved by making it up. So, they cherry-picked facts that fit and created a simple logic. The 9/11 culprits bent on destroying us were Muslim. Iraq has Muslims. Iraq was caught with some weapons after the first Gulf war and was resisting ongoing inspections. Iraq's leader liked to brag about his strength and hide his weaknesses. So, as the logic went, Iraq must have weapons of mass destruction and is bent on destroying us.

Problem Facts and The Media Blitz Fix

An analysis by researchers with the Fund for Independence in Journalism for the Center for Public Integrity tracked the comments of eight top U.S. officials, including President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of State Colin Powell from September 11, 2001 to September 11, 2003 and found 935 false statements used to sell the Iraq War to the American people. Many of the false statements involved charges that Iraq had a stockpile and continued to make weapons of mass destruction, the famous WMD.

False claims that Iraq had WMD and the ability to use them were repeated and amplified by Bush Administration officials on the Sunday talk shows, lower level officials in their districts and home towns, the television networks, and the 24/7 cable news system until we were in a media frenzy of mushroom clouds, fake vials of anthrax, and portable and/or underground weapons facilities. The sales pitch worked, too. Our 9/11 enemies became our Iraqi enemies, and we invaded Iraq. Even when WMD were not found in Iraq, there were few recriminations and no consequences for the war salesmen. We were already in Iraq, so the solution fixed the facts.

Another Disaster

In 2008, we had a crisis of a different sort. It was a financial crisis

brought on by the big Wall Street financial houses, hedge funds, and insurance companies betting both for and against residential mortgage borrowers. Those borrowers had been sold inappropriate loans on dishonest terms by mortgage bankers and mortgage brokers. The bankers and brokers made bonuses and yield spread fees for putting people in risky and complex teaser rate, adjustable loans, often sub-prime when the borrower qualified for prime. The homes were overbuilt and overpriced, causing neighboring homes to be overbuilt and overpriced. Inflated values encouraged second and third mortgages to support the level of spending that had been encouraged after 9/11.

Added to the mix of too much debt and over-inflated home values were massive layoffs from the ailing financial sector, unsupported by any significant manufacturing sector, and a healthcare crisis that increased medical debt. Both fueled the mortgage defaults and foreclosures that collapsed the investments, threatening the very existence of Wall Street.

Everything came to a head in 2008 when the big investment houses started to go down, the companies that insured them started to go down, and the number of foreclosures on Main Street became noticeable to the average American. It was a crisis, but that didn't end up being the real problem for our nation's leaders. The TARP bailout passed quickly with barely a peep of dissent. Big banks were forced to purchase failed banks and investment houses, and they started to pay off the TARP debt to avoid regulation of their operations.

Whom to Blame?

The real problem came later when people, still suffering from their own versions of the crisis, looked for someone to blame. When people on Main Street saw Wall Street bailed out without a similar bailout for them, they began to brew tea and ask questions. Americans knew that investment managers, hedge funders, insurers, mortgage bankers and brokers were a large part of the problem. There was initial talk of capping fatted compensation packages and regulating mortgage and financial products. That led to a backlash largely funded by corporate campaign donations. These stronger voices told us that the regulations people were demanding in reaction to the economic crisis would stifle innovation, kill jobs.

A More Acceptable Villain

The financial sector needed to deflect blame and consequences. What better villain than an old one? The federal deficit. The federal deficit had been on the national radar since Clinton reversed the one created by Reagan and Bush 41. It was reintroduced as villain during the 2008 presidential campaign with Obama blaming Bush for mortgaging our children's future and John McCain promising to cut the deficit like Reagan did, but really didn't.

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Our Own Truth Squad

The disappointing outcome of the November 2 midterm election makes it more imperative than ever that we keep a close eye on the votes cast by our representatives in Congress. Republican candidates Bob Dold and Mark Kirk won their races largely by convincing moderate Democrat and Independent voters of their intention to represent their values in the House and Senate. But, as always, the proof will be in the pudding—or, in this case, the voting record.

As the Obama administration attempts to implement an ambitious agenda to revive the American economy, restore fiscal sanity, and implement health insurance and financial services reforms, it will need support from both sides of the aisle. The votes cast by newly elected Congressman Bob Dold, Senator Mark Kirk, and long-time Senator Dick Durbin (who long ago proved his commitment to policies that benefit the American public) will help set our nation's course for years to come.

This is why we're committed to scrutinizing the statements and actions of our representatives in Congress. We'll tell you whether they work to bring progressive legislation forward, or if they try to block these important measures from even coming up for debate. And we'll tell you how they vote and what their votes say about where they really stand on the crucial issues that will impact the quality of life for most Americans. These issues include:

- Reforming health insurance
- Repealing "Don't ask, don't tell"
- Preserving a woman's right to choose

Sales Pitch *continued from page 7*

There's Always Some Truth and A Little Fuzzy Logic in A Good Lie

Sure, there's a huge federal deficit. It was created during the Bush Administration by unchecked war and military contractor spending, earmarks, corporate welfare, and tax cuts. Few not in the anti-war movement made a peep during the almost decade long run-up.

The logic is simple. If we have to tighten our belts to avoid personal bankruptcy, foreclosure, and bill collectors, the U.S. government must tighten its belt to avoid new taxes and Chinese bill collectors. There is really no difference between a family of six and a country of over 300 million people. Microeconomics is macroeconomics. Don't ask how or why.

Problem Logic, Problem Facts and the Media Blitz Fix Part II

So, as the logic goes, just as your kids have to spend less on their cell phones, MP3 players, and computer games because you're on a salary freeze, public benefits provided through the federal government must be cut. The largest public benefits program we have, social security, is a huge part of the problem and must be cut, but there's a catch. The facts don't really work out. Social security is not paid out of the general budget that's in deficit. By law, it's paid out of a trust fund created by the specific social security payroll taxes. The Trust Fund is not broke, and it's not just full of IOUs. The Trust Fund is invested in treasuries just like other investments held by fiduciaries (people or



- Reforming financial services
- Protecting social security
- Creating jobs
- Developing alternative sources of energy
- Making available unemployment insurance for workers displaced by the recession
- Extending tax cuts for wealthy Americans
- Realizing the Dream Act
- Finding paths out of Iraq and Afghanistan for our military

How our representatives in Congress vote on these critical issues will determine whether our nation moves forward on a path towards prosperity and justice or reverts back to the failed, economically reckless, and anti-democratic policies of the Bush years.

Congress Watch is seeking additional researchers and writers to help with its ambitious agenda. If you are interested in being part of our team, please write to the editor at newsletter@tenthdems.org or call 847-266-8683. **TD**

entities with special duties to the people for whom they hold funds). If the Wall Street financial houses sold bundled treasuries rather than bundled sub-prime mortgages, there would have been no crisis.

So, what do American leaders do when the solution doesn't fit the crisis? They do what they did when al Qaeda and WMD had to be placed in Iraq. They blitz the media.

This year, deficit talk exploded. Suddenly, there was a flurry of news stories on the deficit, and candidates debated its causes and solutions in their campaigns. Here in Illinois, Mark Kirk, who voted for every Bush deficit budget, suddenly became a fiscal hawk. Even many of our Democratic candidates were talking deficit. It fit well with the talking points about Bush's runaway spending, which makes it easy to use progressive arguments against progressivism.

Now we're on notice that we have a huge federal deficit, our children are going to have to pay it back, and at the same time, we're going to have to borrow to pay it back because our Chinese debtors want to be paid back now. In fact, things are so bad that we're going to have to borrow more from China to pay back China even though that doesn't really make any sense.

Enter the Fiscal Responsibility Commission and Long Time Austerity Advocate, Pete Peterson

By executive order, President Obama established a bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, sometimes referred to as the Deficit Reduction Commission, and other times

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Tenth Dems Reaches Out With Community Connections

by John Hmurovic

The purpose of the Tenth Congressional District Democrats' Community Connections program is to help others build better lives for themselves. We do this by connecting the residents of those communities in which a Community Connections Center is located with the resources that are available to assist them. These resources include government (national, state, county, city, and township), not-for-profit agencies, businesses, and more, including the hundreds of volunteers who make up the membership of the Tenth Dems.

In today's world, there is an abundance of information. In fact, there is an overload of information, which sometimes makes it difficult for people to understand all of their options. The result is that resources that can be tapped into are sometimes not utilized by those who need them the most. Community Connections is designed to give members of the community a place to go if they want to understand their options and connect with those who can help them.

But we are more than that. We are also a resource center for the community. As such, we will bring government closer to the people by providing office space for

public officials to connect with those they serve. We will facilitate discussion of community issues by providing an open meeting room where residents who share common concerns can connect with one another to talk. We will help residents find solutions to the problems that affect them by connecting them with experts in law, job seeking, financial management, health and wellness, and other fields who will offer free advice and support on a one-on-one basis. We will give residents the skills they need to improve their own lives by connecting them with volunteers we bring in to teach and train them.

As Democrats, we believe that government is a tool that should be used to build a better life for all the people. We do not believe, however, that it is the only way. We believe that the best route to the life we all desire for ourselves and our families comes through our own efforts. But all of us need a helping hand sometimes. Some of us receive that help through the family and support systems we were born into. Many of us, however, are not so fortunate. Most who fall into that category are willing and able to take the initiative and build a better life, and they will do so if they have access to the kind of support

system that all of us need. The Community Connections program provides a link to that support system, and in the process it will help others build better lives for themselves.

We need more Tenth Dems volunteers to be a part of Community Connections. We are looking for lawyers, teachers, personal financial consultants, health and fitness professionals, small business consultants, job counselors, and much more. What skills do you have that you are willing to share with others? We need your talents and your desire to volunteer some of your time to work with people who share your dreams, who want to build better lives for themselves and their families. Contact us at volunteers@tenthdems.org, or call us at 847-266-VOTE (8683) and tell us how you might be able to help.

Sales Pitch *continued from page 8*

referred to as the Fiscal Commission or even the cat food commission. The Commission has been haunted by problems and skepticism from the beginning. It was created by executive order when a gridlocked Congress was unable to legislate its existence. Controversy continued when it was learned that working group meetings would not be opened to the public and that many of its members had already concluded that government programs, including social security, would be changed or cut, before investigation and discussions had even begun.

Another criticism of the Commission is that multi-billionaire hedge funder Pete Peterson had somehow insinuated himself into the action by providing the underfunded Commission with staff. Peterson is now promoting the effort (or his version thereof) with a \$20 million advertising campaign. The campaign is called OweNo.com and boils down the looming debt crisis and spending-cut solution to sound bytes. The introduction of the campaign was timed just one day before release of the Commission Co-Chairs' proposal, or was the odd timing the other way around?



OweNo.com tells its story through a fictional politician named Hugh Jidette (huge debt) who is supposed to mock the conservative arch villain, the tax and spend Democrat. Jidette's message is that we've (mysteriously) run up a deficit that amounts to about \$13.6 trillion. We have to borrow to pay our debt. Borrowing (like freedom) is not free.

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Sales Pitch *continued from page 9*

The deficit will harm the U.S. economy and future generations will inherit the problem. The campaign provides no details, no calculations, no charts, no projections. It's all mushroom cloud and no WMD.

Peterson is selling austerity just like Bush sold Iraq. While Peterson isn't selling any anti-social security jewelry yet, he does have e-cards you can send to friends and family.

The message uses several already well-known progressive arguments for improvements to government programs but twists them around. OweNo.com acknowledges that we pay too much for healthcare but insinuates that it's the federal government paying twice what the rest of the world pays and not individuals like you and me. The site uses all the verbiage and imagery of the mortgage and financial crisis, applying the same logic to federal debt and spending as if Medicare, Medicaid, and social security are the same thing as you or me buying a house we cannot afford with a sub-prime loan on bad terms. Peterson himself talks about "rising above partisanship" but fails to acknowledge that his claims are no different than conservative talking points, refusing to acknowledge that social security has its own trust fund and that it has not been depleted.

Recently, the Commission co-chairs introduced their proposal to the American public in a press conference. Co-Chair Erskine Bowles started by calling the deficit "a cancer." "We are on the most predictable path to an economic crisis that I can imagine," he added. Then, they rolled out the cuts. Social security, not part of the federal budget and not in crisis, is cut by increasing the retirement age, indexing to a lower inflation rate, means testing, and increasing the contribution ceiling. Other recommended reductions include cuts to Medicare and Medicaid while our healthcare remains in crisis, eliminating student loans while education is in crisis, and ending the mortgage interest deduction while homeowners are in crisis.

It doesn't matter whether the deficit is the problem or cuts the solution. The cuts have been set down on paper and released to the press. A huge advertising campaign supports the whole thing. The problem is proved by the solution, and the solution is proved by the sales pitch. **TD**

A version of this article was written for the Campaign for America's Future and can be found on CAF's blog at <http://www.ourfuture.org/blog-entry/2010114510/sales-pitch-proves-point>

Wanna Knock Something Over?

Party with Tenth Dems on **December 13**

If you are like us, you are angry at the federal election results. You are ready to knock something over. Knocking over pins at the Tenth Dems Winter Membership Party is the best (i.e. safest, legal) way to do so.

On **Monday, December 13th at 6:00 pm** we will eat pizza and enjoy each other's company at the Alley in Highwood. Billiards and bowling will be available.

Stay for a special Tenth Dems University awards ceremony at 7:30 pm.

