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Politics 101 by Steven Steiner

It was an ideal day in Buffalo Grove, perfect fall weather, not too hot, not too cold. A slight breeze made for a comfortable Labor Day Parade. Hundreds of families and friends from the Buffalo Grove community came together to enjoy the yearly celebration. I have always found politics interesting, and my family has encouraged the interest. Two Democratic candidates for Congress running in the 10th Congressional District participated in this parade. Will Rivlin, a friend of mine, volunteered his support to Brad Schneider, a businessman from Deerfield, and I volunteered to help Ilya Sheyman of Waukegan, formerly of Buffalo Grove. Even though we were supporting different candidates, we were, overall, on the same team. Although I am 15 years old and, therefore, ineligible to vote, I am old enough to be involved in some way in the political system. Passing out candy,



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Tenth News

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OCTOBER 2011 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 9, Edition 10

LARGE CROWD CELEBRATES TENTH DEMS AWARDS

There were so many highlight moments during the Tenth Congressional District Democrats Annual Awards Dinner it would be hard to pick out just one. Maybe it was the reading by the young authors of three touching and evocative pieces that were winners of our May Poetry Slam. Or maybe it was the display of genuine affection by friends and colleagues of retiring State Senator Susan Garrett. Perhaps it could have been Illinois Senator Dick Durbin's top ten list of things we should know about Amy Klobuchar. Or the delightful Minnesota Senator Klobuchar, herself, whose entertaining keynote speech had us laughing and applauding to the very end. This eighth edition of our annual celebration was an evening to remember.

Held on Sunday, September 18th, at the Highland Park Country Club, the event featured a silent auction that included an array of exciting items, the raffle of an iPad, a delicious pasta buffet, and the presentation of three annual Tenth Dems awards. Honorees

by **Adrienne Kirshbaum**

"It was great!"



Event Photo Gallery Pages 5 - 10

were Adrienne Kirshbaum (Founders Award), Terry Blaurock (Volunteer of the Year Award), and Hon. Susan Garrett (Ab Mikva Political Courage Award). Hon. Abner Mikva, the last Democrat to represent the 10th District in Congress and himself an example of political courage, was proud to present the award that was named for him.

Many Democratic office holders and candidates were introduced, and the three men vying for the 10th Congressional District nomination spoke. Vivek Bavda, Brad Schneider, and Ilya Sheyman each took his turn on the podium to express his views to the crowd of over 200 attendees.

Ravi Ganapathy, Tenth Dems photographer, took the wonderful pictures displayed on these pages. The wide smiles of the participants are evidence of the good time had by all at this outstanding event!

FREE! Event Oct. 9th Jim Hightower in Northbrook See Page 3

YES, WE DID! RACE TO THE TOP and EDUCATION REFORM

by Eleonora di Liscia



To the inner city kids at Wilmington, Delaware’s Howard High School of Technology, President Obama’s Race to the Top has meant renewed pride in their school and their performance.

“After testing this year, kids were excited about their scores. They were excited about their performance. They wanted to represent their school in a positive manner,” said Principal Timothy C. Capone.

Delaware was one of the first two states to win a Race to the Top award in 2010 with its Vision 2015 Plan. Race to the Top allows states to compete for dollars to improve their schools. Under Delaware’s Plan, low-performing schools, such as Howard, were designated Partnership Zones (PZ). The Plan requires that the principal of a PZ school be replaced, which enabled Capone to take the helm last January. While many of the Plan’s other reforms are only now being implemented, the school’s designation as a PZ has already fired up students, leading test scores to increase by a third.

“We talk to students about the importance of the year before when the test scores were in the 40s. We tell them we think you can do better than that. You’re smarter than that. You’re going to have this national recognition. You can be the first in the nation to be a Partnership Zone School that comes out of school improvement,” said Capone.

Capone says he supports Race to the Top because it focuses on what’s important: ensuring students are performing at a higher rate and providing the resources to do it.

“This is a high needs school. About 70 percent of our students live at the poverty rate. The importance of education is it allows students to change their socioeconomic status,” said Capone.

Race to the Top is not perfect. The application takes a long time, and there have been concerns about its focus on charter schools and its ability to help rural communities. The administration last February tweaked the program to include a rural focus and to apply to school districts rather than states. Still, Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, initially stated that if done right, Race to the Top could promote innovation and promising ideas (www.education.com/print/pros-cons-race-to-the-top).

President Obama’s education agenda does not end with high school. Last fall, he called for an extension of the \$2,500 college tuition tax credit, which the Lame Duck Congress passed in December.

In March 2010, President Obama signed landmark legislation overhauling the student loan program. The new law eliminated fees paid to private banks as intermediaries. This savings will then be used to expand Pell grants and to make it easier for students to repay loans. Beginning July 2014, students can cap student loan repayments to 10 percent of their basic living allowance instead of 15. If payments are maintained, loan balances can be forgiven after 20 years instead of 25, and after 10 years if a student goes into public service, such as teaching, nursing, or the army. The new law also invested in community colleges to help retrain workers who have lost their jobs due to industry closures.

As of June 2011, President Obama issued new rules that require career colleges or certificate programs to better prepare students for gainful employment or risk losing access to federal student aid. The new rules address the problem of for-profit programs that promise careers but leave students jobless and mired in debt. At least 25 percent of these programs receive 80 percent of their funds from federally-financed student aid. Under the new law, a school must show that its program leads to gainful employment by using certain student loan repayment criteria.

TDU Brings Jim Hightower to Northbrook

by Sharon Sanders



Tenth Dems University is fortunate to have a very special guest on October 9, 2011—and it's free! Jim Hightower of Texas, national radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and *New York Times* best-selling author, has agreed to come to the Chicago area and talk to us about the real powers that be, the money behind the right-wing agenda, and what life would be like under a President Perry or Romney, now the Republican frontrunners. This event will occur on Sunday, October 9, 2011, at 2:00 p.m., at Pinstripes, 1150 Willow Road, Northbrook, in

the Willowfest Shopping Mall. Do not miss this special occasion, which is brought to you by Tenth Dems and Tenth Dems U. in conjunction with the MoveOn Councils of Greater Chicago and Chicago Progressive Talk Radio, WCPT.

In case you're unfamiliar with Mr. Hightower, he has written seven books, including *Swim Against The Current: Even A Dead Fish Can Go With The Flow*, which will be available for purchase on October 9. Jim has spent three decades battling the Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That Ought To Be—consumers, working families, environmentalists, small businesses, and just-plain-folks. He broadcasts daily radio commentaries that are carried on more than 150 commercial and public stations, on the web, and on Radio for Peace International, and has been a frequent guest on the Bill Moyers show. Currently, he is seen on MSNBC. Each month, he publishes *The Hightower Lowdown*, which is the "fastest growing political publication in America"

As a public speaker, Jim Hightower is fiery and funny. During the 90s, he developed his radio commentaries and hosted two radio talk shows, all while writing books, launching his

newsletter, giving rousing speeches coast to coast, and otherwise speaking out for the American majority that's being locked out economically and politically by the elites. As the late great political columnist Molly Ivins said, "If Will Rogers and Mother Jones had a baby, Jim Hightower would be that rambunctious child—mad as hell, with a sense of humor."

For those of you who would like to have dinner with Mr. Hightower in the main dining room of Pinstripes following his speaking engagement, there will be a cost of \$130.00. The food is excellent, and the conversation will be enlightening and funny. Reservations are required, and seating will be limited. Checks for the dinner portion of the evening can be made out to Tenth Dems and either mailed to the organization c/o PO Box 523, Deerfield, IL 60015, or brought to the event (we will have no credit card capability). To sign up for the speaking engagement and/or for the dinner afterwards, call 847-266-VOTE(8683), sign up at www.tenthdems.org, or for more information, email us at info@tenthdems.org.

Politics 101 (continued from page 1)

stickers, and flyers is a way to ease into it. People came from all around the Tenth District to support Ilya. Supporters from Deerfield, Glenview, and Waukegan were "fired up and ready to go!" Only a few of the volunteers for Sheyman and Schneider were too young to vote but still wanted to be involved in their campaigns. Because I am not from Buffalo Grove, I only knew one person walking with Ilya but still saw familiar faces in the crowd. While smiling and waving, I realized this is how candidates stump for votes—by reaching out to everyone they can. This is a grassroots campaign. As I walked, I also did a lot of listening to people's



concerns about jobs, the environment, and the foreclosure problem, to name a few of the current issues. In addition, I listened to the pros and cons of what others had to say about politics in Illinois and in the United States. It was a good opportunity to hear other people share similar opinions to those discussed, and sometimes debated, around my family's dinner table. Whether either Brad Schneider or Ilya Sheyman ultimately becomes the Democratic nominee in the 10th Congressional District, it is clear and known that left is right.



Republican Fantasies and Other Fallacies

by Karim Pakravan

“Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery.”
(Mr. Micawber in Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*)

“Government should be run as a household or a business” is an oft-repeated mantra of Republican leaders as well as candidates running for the presidency. Both of these ideas are superficially attractive—who would argue that the government should not live within its means and spend only what it earns—such statements make great political sound bites. But, they are based on a misunderstanding of the way private economic actors make financial decisions.

Let’s start with households. Milton Friedman, one of my professors at the University of Chicago and the acknowledged prophet of free-market economics, stated the “permanent consumption hypothesis.” Friedman’s idea simply stated that individuals and households’ consumption patterns are not driven by their current income, but by their income expectations over a longer life cycle. Therefore, there are periods when the typical household accumulates debt to support consumption or investments (housing, education, etc.). So, even for a household, living within its means does not mean a strict adherence to keeping spending within the limits of current income but managing spending, borrowing, and saving over the life cycle.

Similarly, businesses don’t limit their expenditures to their revenues—otherwise, there would not be any corporate debt. The purpose of business is profits—the more,

the better. Not that there is anything wrong with that. We live in a capitalist economic system, which has proven to be the greatest engine of wealth creation and prosperity. Financial management of a business is based on two main considerations. In the short term, a business wants to make sure it does not run out of cash. In the longer term, businesses want to fund their long-term strategic plan, which requires investments in research and development, job training, physical plants, etc. Once again, spending and borrowing decisions are made over a long cycle. At the same time, both households and businesses need to be able to meet contingencies and crisis situations (think Hurricane Irene). That is why we have lines of credit.

Government is no different. Living within its means does not mean running a balanced budget (no end to fudging on that concept!) year in and year out. It means managing the country’s fiscal affairs (revenues and spending) over a longer cycle. It means investing in infrastructure, education, healthcare, science, and technology. It means funding the social



safety net. It means an efficient and equitable tax system, and it also means, just like households and businesses, to keep the national debt within prudent limits.

Of course, the GOP is a recent convert to prudent fiscal management (circa January 2009!). Prior to that, two Republican presidents (Reagan and George W) were responsible for the biggest increases in our deficits and national debt in decades. So either the Republicans live in a parallel reality, or the real objective is to “starve the beast” and make government “inconsequential,” to quote Texas Governor Rick Perry.

TENTH DEMS
WE WELCOME
AMY KLOBUCHAR
DEMOCRATIC SENATOR
FROM MINNESOTA

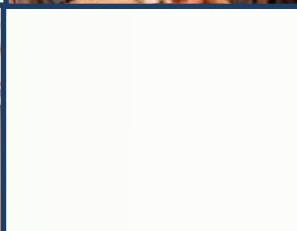
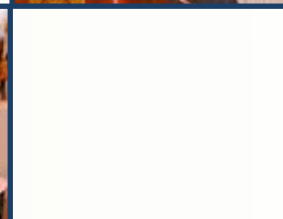
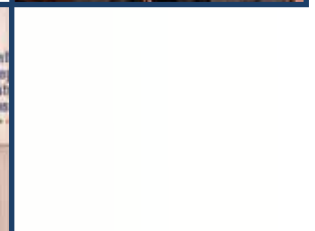
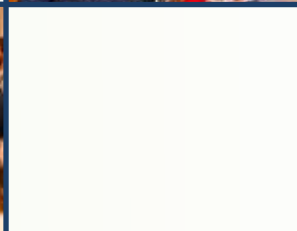
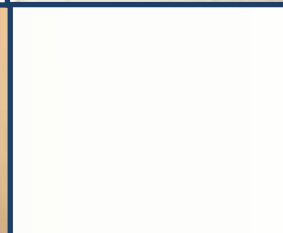
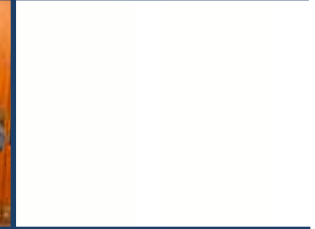




STATE SENATOR
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APPRECIATION
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ACCOMPLISHED









Robert Dold

Votes

with Republican Majority to Undermine Consumer Protection

On July 21, the House of Representatives, with the support of 10th District Congressman Robert J. Dold, passed H.R. 1315—also known as the Consumer Financial Protection Safety and Soundness Improvement Act of 2011. The Orwellian-named bill passed the House largely along party lines, with 230 Republicans voting for it and 172 Democrats voting against it. While 10 Democrats also voted for the bill, only a single Republican—Walter Jones of North Carolina—voted against it.

H.R. 1315 was touted by its five Republican sponsors as an effort to strengthen consumer financial protections. But, in truth, this partisan bill is one of numerous Republican proposals aimed at weakening the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—the federal agency created in 2010 to regulate consumer financial products, such as credit cards, mortgages, and student loans, and to ensure that consumer financial transactions are clear, transparent, and fair.

Specifically, H.R. 1315 would amend the 2010 consumer protection legislation to:

- Replace the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s director with a five-member commission and
- Make it easier for other banking regulators, who failed to protect consumers for years, to undermine the Bureau’s rules by allowing the Financial Stability Oversight Council to overturn the Bureau’s regulations with a simple majority vote, instead of the two-thirds majority required by current law, while expanding the list of conditions that would allow such consumer protection regulations to be overruled.

The amendments would seriously delay the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s ability to protect consumers; weaken its decision-making power; and return authority for consumer financial protection to the same regulators who spectacularly failed to protect the American public from the unfair, deceptive, and abusive practices that led to the 2008 financial crisis.

The Obama administration strongly opposed the bill’s passage precisely on this ground, saying that “H.R. 1315 would needlessly delay the transfer of Federal consumer financial protection responsibilities from seven other agencies to the CFPB, thus continuing the fragmented approach to consumer financial protection that existed prior to the enactment of Dodd-Frank.”

In addition, by making the head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau a five-person commission rather than a single director, the bill would seriously weaken the Bureau’s decision-making power, hampering its ability to respond to rapid changes in the dynamic consumer financial products and services market.

Finally, H.R. 1315 would compromise the independence of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which is already the only banking regulator whose rules can be set aside by a council made up of other federal agencies. H.R. 1315 would go beyond this already stringent limitation by making it easier to set aside the Bureau’s rules and regulations. This would significantly impede the Bureau’s ability to protect American consumers from unfair, deceptive, and abusive financial

practices. H.R. 1315 was also opposed by Americans for Financial Reform, AARP, Consumer Federation of America, Consumers Union, Center for Responsible Lending, AFL-CIO, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, National Council of La Raza, NAACP, Public Citizen, US PIRG, and SEIU. “[House] members who supported HR 1315...voted to protect Wall Street banks from oversight at the expense of their own constituents,” said Illinois Public Interest Research Group director Brian Imus. Bob Dold is one of the House members Imus was referring to. By his party-line vote, Dold has demonstrated his willingness to expose American consumers to the same risks that led to the 2008 financial crisis—all for the sake of protecting big bank and financial industry profits.



The Real Dope

by Ron Levitsky



One of my favorite poems is Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," in which the narrator marvels at his neighbor's inability to question the purpose of maintaining a stone wall between the two properties—one growing pine and the other cherry trees.

"He moves in darkness as it seems to me, Not of woods only and the shade of trees, He will not go behind his father's saying... 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

This inability to go behind the beliefs of earlier generations can turn tradition into dogma. My generation—at least those of us who were white—grew up believing that U.S. foreign policy was always fair, benefiting those struggling for democracy, and that ours was a society based on equality. The Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement shook us awake and made us question long-held assumptions. Then and now, these awakenings rarely come from political leaders, too timid to challenge what their constituents have grown used to believing.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle is the exception. As a Chicago alderman, Preckwinkle was known for her progressive views on such issues as affordable housing and a living wage. She recently asked Chicago Police Chief Garry McCarthy to end arrests for possession of small amounts of marijuana. She stated in a recent *Sun Times* article, "It's pretty well known within the criminal justice system that the judges will dismiss those charges [involving] very modest amounts of illicit drugs."

Since Richard Nixon, every American president has led a "War on Drugs." Our presidents have proclaimed that, since drugs like marijuana, heroin, and cocaine are bad for individuals and society-at-large, we need a war with punitive, often draconian laws to prevent their being used. Americans are familiar with these amorphous wars, like the War on Poverty and the War on Terror. Slogans are easy to mouth, just like the saying of Robert Frost's neighbor.

Preckwinkle looked behind the saying. On average, for someone arrested who can't make bail, it takes from five to 21 days for a preliminary hearing. The vast majority of charges are dropped, usually because the arresting officer doesn't show up. It costs \$142 per day for incarceration, money, Preckwinkle argues, that would be far better spent on education and drug treatment programs.

The *Chicago Reader* quotes defense attorney Chelsea Robinson agreeing on the futility of such arrests. "It's not deterring anybody, and it's wasting the court's time and resources." The *Reader* notes that in 2009-2010, Chicago police made 47,400 busts for low-level marijuana possession—one-seventh of all arrests made during that time period. Not only do the Chicago police waste valuable resources on these arrests, but also so do Cook County Jail, the State's Attorney's office, the Circuit Court, and—if the accused is convicted—the Department of Corrections.

Moreover, as reported by CBS (July 28, 2011), 70 percent of all Cook County Jail inmates are incarcerated for non-violent offenses. Does it really help our society to give individuals who happen to be holding a small amount of marijuana instead of a beer a criminal record and expose them to prison?

There are other concerns as well. CBS also reported that a disproportionate number of those convicted of nonviolent offenses are minorities—78 percent African-American, 17 percent Hispanic, and only five percent white. Could these arrests be racially motivated?

Tracy Siska of the Chicago Justice Project believes that these low-level pot arrests are part of Police Chief McCarthy's "quality of life policing" policy, which he brought with him from his experiences in the New York area. Such a policy's focus is to get the "bad guys" off the street for a short time, even if the vast majority of arrests don't lead to convictions.

In these difficult economic times, don't the savings in time, money, and manpower justify Preckwinkle's request?

Other political figures have been sympathetic to Preckwinkle's view. In 2004, Mayor Daley supported the idea of issuing tickets for minor pot violations. In 2010, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law the reduction of minor marijuana possession from a misdemeanor to an infraction,

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The Real Dope

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which carries a \$100 fine, but does not require a court appearance nor permit an arrest record. That same year Jocelyn Elders, President Clinton's first Surgeon-General, came out in favor of legalizing marijuana, stating, "I think we consume far more dangerous drugs that are legal: cigarette smoking, nicotine, and alcohol." This doesn't mean that supporters of decriminalization necessarily believe that pot is good, although a number of states, such as California, permit the use of marijuana for medical reasons. In fact, a friend, who is a psychologist and teaches a course on addiction, believes that the marijuana available today is far stronger and more potentially damaging to the individual than what many baby boomers smoked decades ago. However, he also condemns criminalizing this behavior instead of treating drug abuse as a health issue.

Then there is the hypocrisy of regulating cigarettes and alcohol, both of which cause death and suffering on a massive scale. And we have the failed policy of Prohibition, in which normally law-abiding citizens flaunted the law and criminals like Al Capone became little Caesars.

There are much larger issues involving America's 40-year-old War on Drugs. Not only is there no end in sight, but also the war hasn't made a significant

difference in Americans' use of drugs. Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP), an organization of past and current police and prosecutors who oppose our nation's current drug laws, notes that in the United States there is one drug arrest every 19 seconds. In 2009, this totaled 1.6 million arrests; 82 percent were for possession alone. While the United States accounts for five percent of the world's population, it incarcerates 25 percent of the world's prisoners. Enforcement strategies have grown 70 percent over the past nine years; in contrast, treatment and prevention programs have increased only 14 percent. Yet, only 10 percent of those drug users needing substance abuse treatment are receiving assistance.

In an era of increasing deficits, the libertarian CATO Institute argues that the legalization and regulation of drugs would actually boost the U.S. economy by \$80 billion yearly, through increased tax revenue and savings on law enforcement. LEAP also argues that U.S. street gangs, Latin American drug cartels, Al Qa'ida, and the Taliban—all of which use drug money to help finance their activities—would be weakened. While legalization (and regulation) of drugs is a divisive issue, it is also one of the few issues that find supporters across the political spectrum. Seeming to agree with Jocelyn Elders, the late William F. Buckley, Jr., stated, "It is the

duty of conservatives to declaim against lost causes when the ancillary results of pursuing them are tens of thousands of innocent victims and a gradual corruption of the machinery of the state." John Kass, the conservative *Chicago Tribune* columnist, condemned the media's attempts to ignore the beliefs of Republican Congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul, "...such as the view...that we should legalize drugs rather than fight the drug wars...."

In 2001, Paul wrote, "For the first 140 years of our history, we had essentially no Federal war on drugs, and far fewer problems with drug addiction and related crimes was a consequence. In the past 30 years, even with the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on the drug war, little good has come of it."

In fact, Ron Paul recently joined Representatives Barney Frank and Barbara Lee in supporting legislation that would end federal prohibition of marijuana, allowing states to fashion their own laws and enforcement policies.

Ron Paul and Barney Frank! If these two Representatives—neighbors on either side of the Congressional aisle—can look beyond "their father's saying" about the efficacy of a failed 40-year drug war and, instead, work together on the issue of marijuana decriminalization, maybe there's hope yet for our dysfunctional Congress.

Or am I smoking something?

Drink Starbucks with a Grain of Salt

by Steve Sheffey

“Republican irresponsibility and refusal to compromise threaten the American and global economies.”

Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz is shocked, SHOCKED that members of Congress are partisan. Schultz sent an email decrying partisanship in Washington and asking business leaders to “withhold political campaign contributions until a transparent, comprehensive, bipartisan debt-and-deficit package is reached that honestly, and fairly, sets America on a path to long-term financial health and security.”

Warren Buffett called upon the rich to pay their fair share of taxes. Schultz is calling on the rich to keep even more for themselves by not participating in the political process. The only way to change Washington is to change who represents us in Washington. That takes money. Incumbents generally have better name recognition than their opponents. Incumbents have more opportunities to garner free media. Incumbents receive more institutional contributions. Challengers rely more on individual contributions to overcome those advantages. Schultz’s proposal is an incumbent protection plan. If Schultz really wants change, he should call on people of means to give more money, not less money, to political candidates. But that would deprive CEOs of a high-minded excuse to disengage from the political process.

The obvious problem with Schultz’s proposal is that as important as the economy is, there are other important issues, too. Should we stop giving financial support to candidates who agree with us on foreign policy, choice, the environment, and gun control because Howard Schultz thinks there is not enough bipartisanship in Congress? But the problems with Schultz’s proposal are deeper. Schultz illogically blames Washington’s problems on

partisanship. A policy is not good because it is bipartisan (the Iraq War started with overwhelming bipartisan support as did the Vietnam War). A policy is good if it makes sense, even if it passes on a party-line vote.

Both parties bear some blame for our economic straits, but the Republican Party bears far more blame. To pretend that both parties are equally responsible makes as little sense as pretending that the Arabs and Israel are equally responsible for their conflict.

The debt-ceiling crisis had an obvious solution: raise the debt ceiling. Congress previously raised the debt ceiling in Republican and Democratic administrations without making headlines. This time, the Republicans manufactured a crisis to push their less spending, less taxes for the rich agenda. Michael Grunwald of *TIME* magazine reminds us of the key facts:

“President Obama inherited a \$1.2 trillion budget deficit. And: Republican leaders supported the tax cuts and wars that (along with the recession, another pre-Obama phenomenon) created that deficit. Also: Republicans engineered this crisis by attaching unprecedented ideological demands to a routine measure allowing the U.S. to pay its bills. Finally, Obama and the Democrats keep meeting those demands—for spending cuts, then for more spending cuts, and even for nothing but spending cuts—but Republicans keep holding out for more.”

The debt-ceiling debate proved the silliness of “voting the person, not the party,” as supporters of Rep. Robert Dold (R-Kenilworth) urged us to do in the last election. The party a candidate chooses to affiliate with speaks volumes about his or her beliefs and principles or the lack thereof. Jonathan Chait, of *New York* magazine explains that “it’s not ‘the politicians in Washington’ who don’t understand the risks of failing to raise the debt ceiling. It’s the Republican Party. It was the Republican Party’s idea to turn the debt-ceiling vote from a symbolic opportunity for the opposition party to posture against deficits into a high-stakes



negotiation over budget policy. It’s the Republican Party, and only the Republican Party, which has numerous elected officials dismissing the dangers of failing to lift the debt-ceiling, and it’s only the Republican Party, whose elected officials do understand the dangers, that is cowed by an angry default-denialist base. The Democrats are willing, and have been willing from day one, to pass a clean debt ceiling increase. That’s a partisan account, but it’s completely true.”

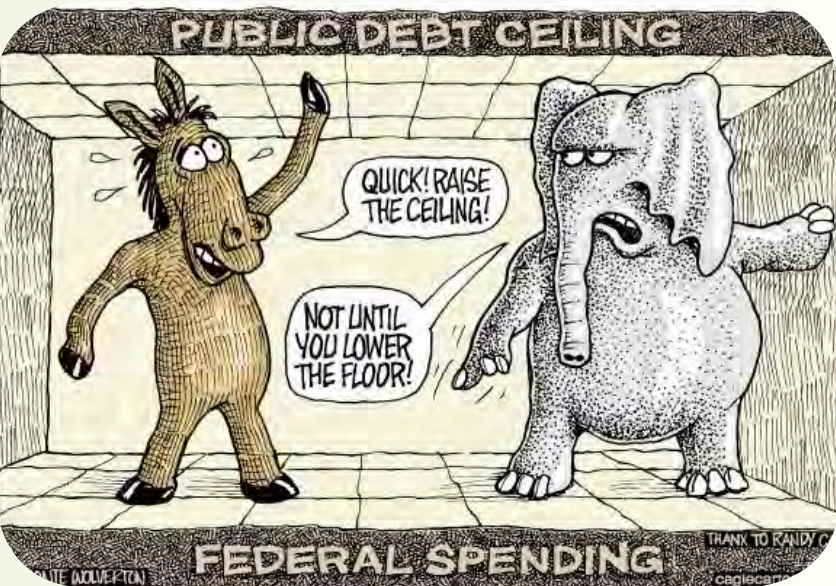
Dold, by the way, votes the party line over 80 percent of the time, according

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Drink Starbucks with a Grain of Salt

(continued from page 14)

“The kind of partisanship I’m advocating means standing up not only for your beliefs but also for those who share your beliefs.”



to *The Washington Post*. In nearly all cases, the person is the party. There is no single indicator that better predicts how a member of Congress will vote than party affiliation.

Republican irresponsibility and refusal to compromise threatens the American and global economies. Andrew Sullivan of the *The Daily Beast* writes that the Republican refusal to countenance any way to raise revenues to tackle the massive debt incurred largely on their watch and from a recession which started under Obama’s predecessor makes one thing clear. They are not a political party in government; they are a radical faction that refuses to participate meaningfully in the give and take the Founders firmly believed should be at the center of American government. They are not conservatives in this sense. They are anarchists.

Their fiscal anarchism has now led to their threat to destabilize and possibly upend the American and global economy because they refuse to compromise an inch. They control only one part of the government, and yet they hold all of it hostage.

As critic and educator Stanley

Fish points out, “Voting the person rather than the party is about the dumbest thing you can do. Voting the person, however attractive or impressive he or she may be, could very well get you four years of policies you detest. In other words, policy differences are party differences, and it is hard to see how you could be a responsible voter if you held your nose at a whiff of party politics.” Calling oneself an independent is a nice feel-good affirmation, but we live in a two-party system where partisan politics are the only politics that matters.

There is nothing wrong with uniting behind the one party that supports your beliefs. If Schultz wanted to take a more effective and intellectually honest approach, he would stake out an actual position instead of calling for “bipartisanship,” and he would support candidates who join the party that

supports his positions.

There are major differences between the parties. Israel is not one of them, but if you care about the economy, stem cell research, reproductive choice, separation of church and state, or the environment, it does not make sense to support candidates whose election will empower the Republican Party.

I am not advocating mindlessly supporting one party’s positions over the other or condoning behavior from one party that you would not excuse in the other party. Neither party is correct on every issue. There are some people who would vote to have the garbage picked up on Tuesday solely because they knew the Republicans supported Monday pick-up and would switch positions if the parties switched positions. That kind of stupidity gives genuine partisanship a bad name. The kind of partisanship I’m advocating means standing up not only for your beliefs but also for those who share your beliefs. Rather than apologizing for supporting one party over another, we should point out that “independence” too often means independence from rational thought and an understanding of one’s own interests. There are major differences between the parties. Party labels matter and should matter; otherwise, we wouldn’t have parties. A candidate’s party affiliation is itself a position that intelligent voters should consider. Voters should hold their elected representatives accountable for the party those representatives have chosen to affiliate with, and if that’s what Schultz means by partisanship, I’m all for it.

Why I'm Not Running for Congress—And More

By Jack Altschuler

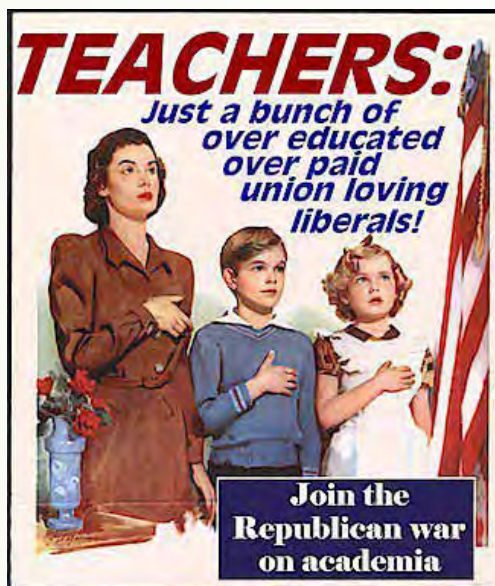
"Did you know that America is the only G-20 nation where new workers have less education than retiring workers?"

September 25, 1979 was quite a while ago. It was the last day that the Illinois 10th Congressional District was represented by a Democrat, Abner Mikva. Since then, and especially most recently, the people of the 10th have been poorly represented by Republicans who seem to be disconnected—out of touch with us. The last two want to take down the very things we hold dear and take away the things we've already paid for. They want to break their word to you and have voted to hand over America to the rich and leave the rest of us to fight over the scraps that are left. That isn't okay with you and it most certainly isn't okay with me.

I've contributed to the pages of the *Tenth News* nearly every month for a long time, so you may already be aware of some of my views. They're pretty much like yours, mainstream progressive and sick at heart over the theft of the American Dream. There is so much to push back against, like the attempts to end social security and Medicare, and the complete abdication by this Republican Congress of the responsibilities of government. Be clear that "government" means all of us banding together to create the systems that ensure, for example, that Americans have jobs and the dignity that comes of that because we are able to take care of our families and ourselves. The Republicans talk jobs, jobs, jobs and they talk about reviving our national economy. But these very same Republicans have done absolutely nothing to make things better. They have focused instead on trying to make President Obama fail, and in their cynical obsession they have abandoned America.

We've been incensed together over the bailout of Wall Street banks, because it was done without any regulation to ensure that they don't crash our economy yet again. There are no safeguards, because Republicans hate all regulations. We've yelled at the idiotic lies of some of the Republicans as they've told us that rich people create jobs, so we can't increase their taxes. It isn't rich people that create jobs; it's demand that creates jobs. We all know that, and so do the Republicans. They tell us an absurd fairy tale?

More than anything, though, we are sickened by the absolute paralysis in Washington created by a small minority who don't care if this nation goes down. Let me say that again: They don't care. And nearly the entire Republican Party lacks the spine to stand up to those bullies, so they behave as if they don't care either, including the current Congressman from the Illinois 10th. They want to take this country back to Robber Baron days and steal the American Dream from you, your children, and your grandchildren.



It's time to rededicate ourselves to creating a better America. Businesspeople understand the need to continuously reinvest in their businesses if they are to succeed in the coming years, and it's that way for countries, too. We're either green and growing, or we're ripe and rotting.

Did you know that America is the only G-20 nation where new workers have less education than retiring workers? The only one. Recently, it was announced by the College Board that this year's high school graduates have the lowest SAT reading scores since they began testing. How in the world can we compete, much less be the world leader, when our people aren't prepared to compete and lead?

We have to invest in the education of our children for both them and for America. We have to invest in our schools and our entire education system. And we have to leave behind that perversely named No Child Left Behind Act that has left so many thousands of our children behind. And there's so much more we have to do.

It's time to restore our bridges and our roads, our energy systems and our factories—the core of what makes America work—and at last deal with our self-defeating trade agreements—and create the America we want to leave to future generations. It's time to reaffirm the rights of our citizens—your rights—the very same rights that are under attack by Republicans now in at least 34 states.

We are at a turning point and this is a battle for the very soul of America, every bit as critical as the darkest days of our Revolutionary War. It's no time to be a spectator and, to quote Thomas Paine,



Part of America's Dumbing Down Process

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Why I'm Not Running for Congress—And More

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"Have you noticed that when you see people speaking from the floor of the House or Senate that the chairs behind them are always empty?"

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." The "he that stands by it now" means you and me. That is why I have explored running for the Illinois 10th Congressional District seat—our seat – to represent the true values of the people of this district.

For the 2010 campaign, each candidate in the general election for the 10th raised \$3 million. It was that expensive. For the 2012 campaign it's estimated that it will



likely require as much as \$5 million—per candidate. That is for one congressional seat to be held for just two years. And the day after the election next November, the money mining will start anew.

Here's a little known fact about what goes on in and around the Capitol Building. Have

you noticed that when you see people speaking from the floor of the House or Senate that the chairs behind them are always empty? Perhaps you thought that the people who belong in those chairs were back in their offices doing important work for their constituents. Maybe you thought they were in committee meetings dealing with the nation's business, but you likely would have been wrong.

At the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee office, located just a block from the Capitol Building, half of the office space has an array of booths—workstations – and each has a telephone. You can visit there any day and see dozens of senators and congressmen sitting there for hours, making calls to solicit contributions. You can see exactly the same thing at the counterpart Republican offices. The service provided by these agencies is necessary because it's illegal for our legislators to solicit contributions from their offices in the Capitol Building. So, our legislators hike a block to sit at those desks and use those phones to dial for dollars in order to raise the money they need for their next campaign. That is to say, our legislators spend half their time focused on keeping their jobs instead of actually doing their jobs. That's a big problem.

It is hideously expensive to run a political campaign. And that is the mother of all the dysfunction in Washington.

The McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 was thoroughly gutted by two earlier lawsuits and, most recently, by the *Citizens United* case. Since then, it has been raining greenbacks in Washington

from the hard-right, multimillionaire Koch brothers and others like them. The pharmaceutical industry alone has spent, on average, over \$287,000 per member of Congress per year since 1998 "lobbying" our senators and congressmen. The number for the insurance industry over that same period is over \$205,000 per member of Congress per year.

The result of that enormous influx of campaign cash is that we wind up with a Congress populated by the best fundraisers, rather than the best legislators, and the elected are seen as being beholden to the rich. That has to stop if we are to make things better for all Americans.

The fire in my belly is to make a difference, to redirect America back toward its True North, and serving in Congress looks to be a good way to make that difference. Over the past nine months, I've met with campaign experts. I've attended training sessions, listened to those who have run, both those who have won and those who fared less well. The learning has been both rich and deep, and I am so very grateful to all who have contributed their expertise and their caring.

There are costs to everything, and one of the most significant I've foreseen of serving in Congress is the personal cost. It takes a special person to be able to handle that well. For me, the decision about running for office came down to a very personal choice and also whether I'm willing to continuously ask for money for the next three years. Sadly, I'm not. Yet there remains a need for action.

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Why I'm Not Running for Congress—And More

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"Be a part of something so much greater than any one of us."

It's not enough to rail against the big money thieves, and we simply cannot stand by while the Republicans and their rich sponsors plunder us and all of America. We cannot have someone in Congress who is disconnected—out of touch with us—so we must put a progressive Democrat in Congress to represent us.

It's time to pull harder on that rope to move the American wagon in the right direction. That is to say, we have to do more than write a check and attend a fundraiser.

There are scores of Tenth Dems volunteers – kudos to all. Keep it up and insist upon making your contribution. Yet, what is needed so acutely now—what is always needed—is leadership, people who are willing to be responsible for making things happen. People with organizational skills. People who will be a part of making permanent this wonderful accumulation of Democratic bedrock. There is so much to do and you have skills that will help you and help all of us. Step up. Step into leadership.

Just get this: The majority of Democrats sat on their Barcaloungers on voting day of 2010 and we got Bob Dold and the rest of the Republican road blockers in Congress. The way to change that is to get out the vote. That takes you and me knocking on doors, stuffing envelopes, making phone calls and, most important, it takes your leadership to get these things done. That is how democracy works and that is how

we get a Democrat to represent us and put America back on track.

Recently, I listened to Ted Kennedy's concession speech at the Democratic National Convention in New York in 1980. He had just lost the nomination to Jimmy Carter and he knew that would spell the end of his chances to become president. He began by saying,

"My fellow Democrats and my fellow Americans, I have come here tonight not to argue as a candidate but to affirm a cause.

"I'm asking you—I am asking you to renew the commitment of the Democratic Party to economic justice.

"I am asking you to renew our commitment to a fair and lasting prosperity that can put America back to work."

His words that night are eerily applicable to this moment in America.

He closed his comments that night with words he had spoken so many times before,

both in victory and in tragedy. He said, "For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die."

That fire in my belly to make a difference burns bright. The only question is where I can best make that difference, and I've decided that it's with you. This is a call to action. We have just 14 months to do what must be done.

Pay attention to the fire in your belly to make this the America we want it to be for our children, for our grandchildren, and for us. Step up. Take action. Be a part of something so much greater than any one of us. Together we'll put America back on track.



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