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## Tenth Dems Officially Opens Grayslake Office; Treasurer Mike Frerichs Keynotes

by Laurence D. Schiller

It seemed appropriate that on the 71st anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy Tenth Dems opened its third office in the 10th Congressional District. At the dedication in Grayslake on June 6, speakers reminded a packed house that the ideals that the New Deal generation fought for in

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# Tenth News

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JULY 2015 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 12, Edition 7

## What Kind of Man Thinks That Way?

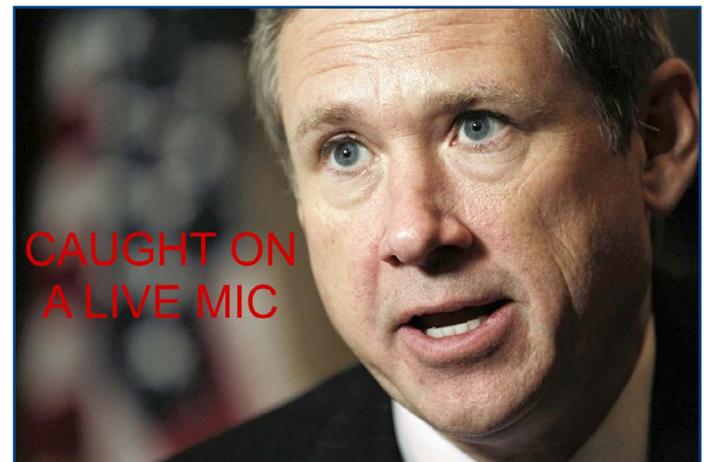
by Barbara Altman

It's been said that the definition of a gaffe is when a politician accidentally tells the truth. In mid-June, Mark Kirk gave new meaning to this political axiom.

Actually, Kirk's now infamous quip that unmarried Republican presidential hopeful Sen. Lindsey Graham is a "bro with no ho" was not quite a gaffe. What Kirk did was more consequential than accidentally telling the truth; he accidentally revealed how he thinks. When he carelessly allowed his real voice to be picked up on a live microphone, Mark Kirk unwittingly showed us the kind of man he really is.

When he called the never-married Graham a "bro with no ho," Kirk was referring to the fact that if the Senator from South Carolina realized his ambition to become President of the United States, he would have neither a wife nor a daughter to serve as his First Lady. He later explained, through staff, that he "was joking with his colleague..."

Joking? Kirk thought it was funny to refer to a hypothetical First Lady of the United States as a "ho"? Was he likening the role of the First Lady to that of a prostitute? Or did he mean to call all women whores? (According to Dictionary.com and



other sources, "ho" is "disparaging and offensive" slang that means "prostitute or whore" and also may be used simply as a crude synonym for woman.)

According to the June 12 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*, Kirk's full statement about Graham was, "He's a bro with no ho. That's what we'd say on the South Side." Kirk, of course, is not from the South Side of Chicago. He was born in Champaign and attended New Trier East, in Winnetka. Did

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GO TO PAGE 4 TO READ ABOUT CHARLES TROY, TENTH DEMS' VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH.



# Senator Lindsey Graham – A Lightning Rod for GOP Hypocrisy

by Steven Gan

Now that I have your attention, as most of you already know, Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) threw his hat into the ring in early June and is now one of the many Republican candidates for President of the United States vying for a position on the Fox News debate stage. Personally, I've never been impressed with Senator Graham, since he represents and promotes many of the conservative Republican issues that I feel are diametrically opposed to the best interests of this country.

But, as a gay American, what recently grabbed my attention was Graham's response to a question about the former Olympian Bruce Jenner's transition to Caitlyn Jenner.

"I haven't walked in her shoes. I don't have all the answers to the mysteries of life," Graham said. "I can only imagine the torment that Bruce Jenner went through. I hope he's -- I hope she has found peace."

Graham continued, "I'm a pro-life, traditional marriage kind of guy, but I'm running to be President of the United States. If Caitlyn Jenner wants to be a Republican, she is welcome in my party."

I was awestruck by his response, which is not in line with the usual mocking and sin-baiting that some of the other ultra-conservative Republicans, like former Governor Mike Huckabee, are keen to do (<http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/03/opinions/kohn-huckabee-caitlyn-jenner/>). I also thought there was actually a little bit of compassion in his comment, which again is not part of a conservative Republican's DNA.

I then started to think that maybe Lindsey Graham's open-mindedness toward Jenner was in part based on his expectation that Republicans might start to judge his own marital situation, now that he's a presidential candidate. Here's a 60-year-old man who has never been married, does not seem to have a special person in his life at the moment, does not have any children, and talks about having a "rotating first lady" in the White House, should he be elected. His bachelorhood may not sit well with a large segment of his party's voters – those very conservative Republicans who never miss an episode of *19 Kids and Counting* and worry that religious liberties in this country are being quashed by the gay agenda.

From my standpoint, especially as a gay American, I couldn't care less about Lindsey Graham's marital status – or any other aspects of his personal life. However, unfortunately for Graham, despite how far we have come in this country on marriage equality and understanding diversity in general, many in his party will still view his lifetime bachelorhood as "weird" enough to constitute a big minus against him on his running-for-President report card.



## Kirk's Comment

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In response to Mark Kirk's "bro with no ho" quote, Stephanie Schriock, President of Emily's List, observed that in November 2016, Mark Kirk would be "a bro with no votes."



Schriock, far right, with (l. to r.) State Rep. Laura Fine, State Sen. Melinda Willen Bush, former State Sen. Susan Garrett, and former State Rep. and Tenth Dems Founding Chair Lauren Beth Gash at a recent Emily's List Chicago event.

he intend the remark as a snide reference to First Lady Michelle Obama, who did grow up on Chicago's South Side?

Ultimately, it doesn't matter what Kirk meant by his crude and tasteless wisecrack. What he said "joking with his colleague" provides remarkable insight into how he thinks—who he really is. Caught on a live mic, Mark Kirk unwittingly has given Illinois voters a glimpse into his heart. It's not a pretty sight. ■

Just take the comment from our own illustrious Senator Mark Kirk. On June 11, he was caught on a hot mic calling Graham a "bro with no ho." And to compound what Kirk later claimed was a silly joke, he followed it up with the explanation, "That's how we would say it on the South Side." Kirk's comments were anti-woman and anti-African American. But that's not all.

Kirk, too, lacks traditional Republican marriage credentials: he married at age 40, was divorced eight years later, and has no children. Given his own marital history, Kirk is a perfect example of the hypocrisy we've come to expect from the GOP—Republicans who will find Graham's singlehood noteworthy, despite their own divorces and other marital and parental anomalies.

Bigotry toward Graham's lack of a perfect family photo by many in his own party will dog him during a long and arduous campaign, which once again will highlight the GOP's true colors. As for me, I'm glad that my party cares about candidates' policies and not their family photos. ■

# Treasurer Mike Frerichs Speaks in Grayslake

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World War II are imperiled by a new generation of robber barons, headed in Illinois by Governor Bruce Rauner. The main message? If we are to fight the onslaught of money and disinformation from GOP billionaires, we need funds. And we need lots of volunteers to talk to their neighbors about our core Democratic values. When the curtain is pulled back from the GOP's anti-people agenda and folks understand that the Democratic Party that has championed the legislation that has helped most Americans, Democrats win elections.

Two Tenth Dems interns welcomed the standing-room-only crowd, which flowed to the outdoors on what, fortunately, was a beautiful June afternoon. Grayslake Democratic leader Lowell Jaffe then posed the question of the afternoon: "Why an office here in Grayslake?"

The proud answer is that Democrats have made inroads at every level of government in Lake County and there is now a growing constituency to serve. Stephen Ark, a former Tenth Dems intern, intern coordinator, and communications director, talked about the progress Tenth Dems volunteers have made over the last several election cycles, and Tenth Dems University Dean Sharon Sanders previewed upcoming programs that would help folks understand the issues of the day and how progressives have the answers to those problems.

Next, Tenth Dems Founding Chair Lauren Beth Gash introduced State Senator Daniel Biss (who is running for Illinois Comptroller). Biss addressed the domination by the top one percent of the post-Bush recession recovery. Referencing the big money in politics intended to ensure that Congress protects the interests of the oligarchs, Biss pointed out that dollars don't cast votes; people do. The 2016 election will be critical to preserving and extending the progressive agenda against those who would drag us back to the 1920s.

After his remarks, Biss introduced his former State Senate colleague, Illinois Treasurer Mike Frerichs, the afternoon's keynote speaker. The first Democrat in years elected to state office from downstate (and by the slimmest of margins), Frerichs, too, spoke about the need to protect working people, the poor, seniors, and the middle class from the Republican agenda.

Former 10th District Congressman Brad Schneider and Highland Park Mayor Nancy Rotering, who will be facing one another in the 2016 primary as they vie for the Democratic nomination for the 10th District's Congressional seat, also attended the event.

Other elected officials and candidates present at the grand opening included State Senator Melinda Bush, State Representatives Sam Yingling and Elaine Nekritz, Lake County Board members Diane Hewitt and Terry Wilke, Avon Township Clerk Jeanne Kearby, Grayslake High School Board Member Hal Sloan, Wildwood Park District Commissioner Jim Neel, and Associate Judge Mitch Hoffman, who is a candidate for Circuit Court Judge. ■



Grand Opening: 1. and 4. State Senator Daniel Biss, one of the many elected officials who spoke to the overflow crowd; 2., 3. Highland Park Mayor and Democratic Candidate for Congress Nancy Rotering and former Congressman and Democratic candidate for Congress Brad Schneider chat with voters.



## The Wages of Sin: Volunteer of the Month Charles Troy

by Eleonora di Liscia

Charles Troy is paying for his sins---by volunteering at Tenth Dems! Since 2013, Charles has served as a graphic designer for the newsletter.

In 1992, Charles had his own graphic design/copywriting business. An Evanston client asked Charles if he would mind doing work for a political candidate: a Republican running against Congressman Sid Yates, who was then 88 years old.

"I read this guy's positions, and I thought, 'That sounds all right.' I could make a case for a younger guy against a guy who is past his prime. I believe in a two-party system. The guy then lost to Yates 60-40. Yates got the message to step down in 1994, and Jan Schakowsky ran and that was that," Charles explained.

"Then I forgot about it until 2010 when we were living in Mundelein and represented by Melissa Bean, who I liked a lot. There was a Republican primary, and I was horrified to see one of them was the guy I had done work for in 1992. It was Joe Walsh. I saw what his positions were now, and I thought, 'How sad. Eighteen years ago I did work for this guy, and now I wouldn't want to shake his hand.' And he won. I was in agony for two years being represented by this jerk."

In 2012, Mundelein was redistricted into the 10th. "Then Brad Schneider won in my new district, and I was so appreciative and grateful that as expiation for my doing work for this awful Joe Walsh 20 years ago, I offered my services to Tenth Dems to do the newsletter," Charles said.

But volunteering for Tenth Dems isn't all penance. Charles appreciates the chance to give back "by using the skills I have developed, in support of the local outpost of the national political party that I strongly support."

Born in Chicago, Charles was raised in Skokie, graduating from Evanston High. "My parents were Stevenson Democrats, and I remember being very excited about the election of 1952 when I was 6 years old. That conditioned me to Democrats losing," he said.

Charles attended the University of Michigan, earning a B.A. in English. He had hoped to become a musical theater lyricist but, because of Vietnam, Charles went on to obtain a Master's in English from New York University.

Returning to Chicago in 1969, Charles eventually worked for Foote, Cone and Belding, one of the largest advertising agencies. But the job was nothing like *Mad Men*. "I was on the least glorious account. I was on International Harvester. I wrote about farm implements. It was talking about manure spreaders and combines," he said.

In 1972, Charles joined the family textile distribution business, but he was never happy. After his mother died in 1990, he decided "there was no one left to please except myself," so he

hung his own shingle as a graphic designer and copywriter in desktop publishing. "I was basically a creative fish out of water, badly cast as a businessman," he said.

Charles worked out of his Highland Park home from 1990 until 2003, when he got an account laying out the catalog for OASIS, a senior learning center in Northbrook.

"I saw they had a number of classes in musical theater, and I thought, 'Oh, this is something I should be doing,'" he said.

Charles let his accounts "wither away by attrition. What I'm doing now is something different and very exciting." He creates and shows multimedia presentations on musical theater topics.

"I do the stories behind the show or the stories behind the songwriters who wrote the great musicals. I do the research, I do the graphic design, and I put them together in a program called Keynote with audio tracks and film clips. That's what I do mostly these days," he said.

Charles presents monthly at the Skokie Theater. His most recent production is "The Creation of *A Little Night Music*," the show by Steven Sondheim. He also appears at an annual Cole Porter festival and has done presentations on Christmas songs from the Great American Songbook and a recent collaboration with the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band on the history of Yiddish theater, which included a live band.

Essentially a lifelong Democrat, Charles remembers "when you could legitimately think of voting for the man but not the party. And I don't think that has been possible for 20 years. I think anyone who calls themselves an independent now is fooling themselves," he said. "I never had a time where I was flirting with the basic precepts of Republicanism, although there are certain things like welfare in the extreme, people not relying on themselves, that's where it gets sticky for me."

Charles sees government as having a role in balancing "off the baser impulses of human nature. That to me is the core of what the Democratic Party stands for. We simply cannot tell government to stay out of everything. It doesn't work." ■

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Charles gives multimedia presentations about the behind-the-scenes stories of the creation of famous Broadway productions. ([www.charlestroy.com/](http://www.charlestroy.com/))

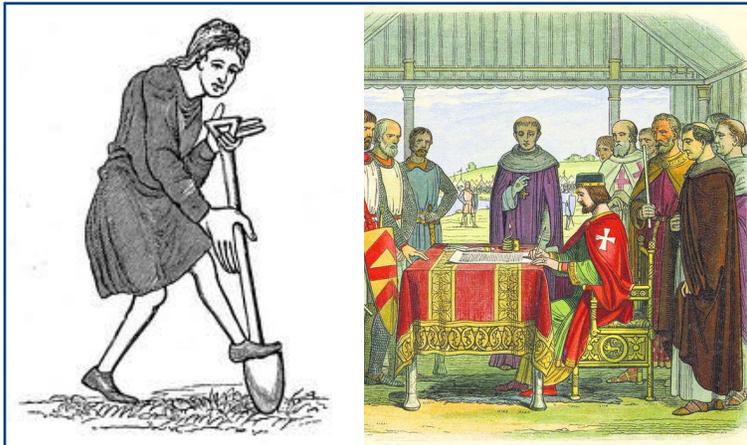
# A Very Short History of Labor

by Eleonora di Liscia

Once upon a time, there was an era called the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages were kind of like the teenage years: a bunch of sullen peons having to listen to the dictates of their overlord parents.

In the Middle Ages, wealth and government were basically concentrated in the same hands. Sort of like having a bunch of corporate execs running the government with the CEO as king. But even being a corporate exec had its problems. Just 800 years ago this June, in 1215, a bunch of the execs known as barons, got together and said to the English CEO, King John: "Hey, we're like the vice presidents here, and we don't appreciate that when you say, 'Jump,' we have to say, 'How high?' We want rights!"

As a result, CEO King John was forced to sign Magna Carta, the forerunner of all corporate charters and our system of government.



The Middle Ages continued with the occasional hostile takeover. During one particularly bloody period, known as the Wars of the Romneys, the CEO of England changed seven times, if you count when King Richard sort of disappeared his nephew, the rightful king, thereby inventing vulture capitalism.

Society in the teenage years was based on class. Not the secret-donation-to-charity kind of class, but the I-get-the-Christian Dior; you-get-the-gunny-sack kind of class. You had to be born into power and money, much like if your Dad went to Yale and became President, then you got to go to Yale and become President. Occasionally, a CEO would marry someone out of the steno pool and then decapitate her. But otherwise, you were pretty much stuck in your social stratum.

Eventually, there were these people called Puritans who didn't want to listen to the CEO about how they worshipped. Instead, they came to America so they could tell other people how to worship.

The really cool thing about America, though, was that your standing in life was no longer based on heredity; it was based on contract, on the relationships you made. You could become a CEO even if you weren't the son of a CEO! (Unless you were a woman or a slave. But that's a whole other story.)

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## Rauner "The Blunderer" (with apologies to Dion)

(Sung to the Tune of "The Wanderer" by Dion)

Newly-elected Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner has been flexing his muscles. He is refusing to negotiate budget issues with General Assembly Democrats unless they also make major concessions on his non-budget economic and social agenda.

Although potential government shut-downs are nothing to sing about, Rauner's style of governing does lend itself to doggerel. So feel free to put words to music, as we present:

Parody lyrics by Eleonora di Liscia

Oh well, he's the kind of guv thinks he's been elected God  
Wants to change the law, all he's got to do is nod  
Tried to pay his crony, took it out of the wrong fund  
In the public sector, that just isn't how it's done.  
He's the blunderer, Bruce the blunderer  
He stomps around and around and around...

$2 + 2 = 5?$

Oh well, he wants to cut the budget, slashing items left and right  
Making cuts to social services -- some poor kids won't eat tonight  
Thought he'd take some out of pensions, they don't need it anyway  
But his wife wants a helper, so the state has got to pay  
He's the blunderer, Bruce the blunderer  
He stomps around and around and around...

Oh well, he hasn't got a clue  
He goes through life without a care  
He don't think about me or you  
He's an autocrat made of iron, and he's taking us nowhere

Oh yeah, he told Illinois workers 60 thou's too much pay  
Coming from the guy who makes one forty-five grand a day  
He's made war on all the unions; big business sings his praise  
And his buddies in the state house they just got a big fat raise  
He's the blunderer, Bruce the blunderer  
He stomps around and around and around...

Yeah, cause he's a blunderer  
Bruce, the blunderer  
He stomps around, around, around  
Cause he's a blunderer  
Bruce, the blunderer  
He stomps around, around, around  
Cause he's a blunderer  
Yeah, a blunderer... ■



# Labor History

continued from page 5

So the people running the government did not have to be born CEOs. But history abhors a vacuum, so eventually the CEOs, while not necessarily running the government, decided to do



the next best thing and turn their workers into peons.

This meant that workers slaved all day and night; their children slaved all day and night; they didn't get weekends or any other time off, ever; and they were still really

poor while having to listen to people like Ron Paul tell them they weren't working hard enough. If they got hurt on the job, well, too bad! You should have been more careful and not let those phosphorous matches you work with rot off your jaw.

Eventually the peons thought that something about this situation wasn't quite right. It wasn't terribly, well, democratic, and after all they had been taught on television that America was a democracy. They didn't want to be peons any more than people in the teenage years wanted to be, but unlike people in the teenage years, they could do something about it.

Because in America, the government and the CEOs were not necessarily one and the same. For starters, the peons in the modern age could decide not to go to work. En masse. "Find someone else to make your cheap consumer goods! Ha!" (China was not yet a viable alternative.)

The first American general strike was in Philadelphia in 1835. You see, the carpenters wanted to work only 10 hours a day. As a matter of fact, so would many of our friends today, but we'll get to that later. The powers that be—in this case the liberal media—felt that less than a 60-hour week would hurt the working man who would have too much time to get into trouble, perhaps creating more employment for DUI attorneys. The carpenters said, "Thanks for your concern, but we'll take that risk."

Oddly enough, many other working groups at that time actually showed something called "solidarity." This means that when one group went on strike, other groups, not having Facebook



accounts upon which to "like" the carpenters, thought it might be a good idea to go on strike, too.

In 1842, the Massachusetts Supreme Court in *Commonwealth v. Hunt* came to an amazing realization. The court woke up one day and said, "By golly, we're not in England anymore!" Therefore, the English common law, which made "combinations" to increase wages illegal, need not apply. Thus, forming a union to increase wages was not an illegal conspiracy in the U.S. To which we say, it's about time!

In 1866, the first national labor federation was formed, the National Labor Union, the daddy of groups like the AFL-CIO. Not satisfied with a slothful 10-hour day, the NLU pushed for eight hours—even more time off for working people to get into trouble and line the pockets of DUI attorneys.



In 1909, the women of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory went on strike. Why? Nitpicky complaints about working conditions. Like being locked into a poorly ventilated workroom 65-75 hours a week at low wages while having to buy their own supplies and equipment. The women were fined if they were tardy or damaged a garment. Sometimes they were fined more than they made and went into debt to their employers. And the women actually had to ask permission to use the restroom, as breaks were only allowed once a day. Often, these requests were denied, forcing the women to pee on the floor. Such working conditions are now known as "Gov. Scott Walker's dream universe."

In 1932, Congress passed the Norris-LaGuardia Act, which protected workers' rights to form a union by barring employers from requiring workers to sign a pledge not to form a union on pain of execution. This breakthrough was followed by the Wagner Act, or National Labor Relations Act, which further protected unions and set up the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The NLRB gave workers a place to go if their employers were really, really mean, which is sometimes called an "unfair labor practice."



In 1971, the Occupational Safety and Health Act was signed by radical left-wing President Richard Nixon. OSHA was intended to help those persnickety workers who were making a fuss about

breathing toxic chemicals all day or losing a limb or torso to faulty equipment.

All these reforms came at a price. People were beaten, even killed, while fighting for the right to earn a decent wage without having to pee on the workroom floor. In the 1913 Ludlow Massacre, 20 people, among them 13 women and children, were massacred during a coal miners' strike. It took unions, and eventually government, to balance the power of the CEOs and make the world just a little more fair.

And what about our friends who are working those 10-hour

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# Labor History

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plus days today? Well, thanks in part to the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, the corporate execs are taking over the government (hello, Bruce Rauner!), dismantling the unions, and undermining labor laws.

Here is the part where we say "all kidding aside." All kidding aside, do we want to go back to the teenage years? Because, all kidding aside, that's where we're headed.

A recent *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* reported that 98 percent of our clothes are made overseas. To maintain their huge profits, clothing outfitters use overseas sweatshops mirroring many of the same conditions that led to the Triangle Shirtwaist strike. Conditions at a Chinese sweatshop making Apple products were so bad that nets had to be placed around a building to catch suicidal workers.

Think how much more profitable these companies would be if



*Tenth Dems volunteers join organized labor in Madison, Wisconsin, to support the recall of anti-worker Governor Scott Walker.*

they could save those overseas shipping costs by using forced labor at home!

What stops these companies is our unions and our labor laws. For example, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries website reported that "Working families lose billions of dollars to wage theft each year, when crooked employers fail to pay legal minimum wages or overtime rates, require off-the-clock work, or simply bounce checks." Our state's Attorney General recently filed criminal charges against one such employer.

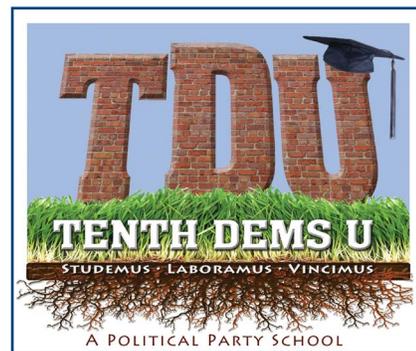
Republicans want to go back to the teenage years, running their corporations without annoying union or government interference. Why, Wisconsin Republicans have introduced a bill to abolish an employee's right to have at least one day off a week.

For most of us, the teenage years were a bummer. Let's not relive them. ■

# Let's Talk Politics: Michael Golden Tells How to Unlock Congress

by Carol Hillsberg

According to Lawrence Lessig, Harvard Law Professor and author, *Unlock Congress* by Michael Golden "offers the most powerful and concise account of the deep failure that is Congress today." The book also offers solutions. In Professor Lessig's words, it "gives hope."



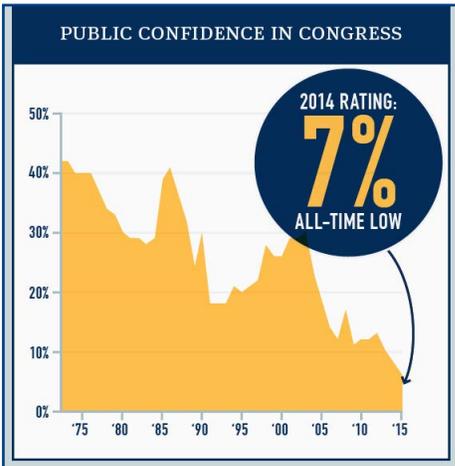
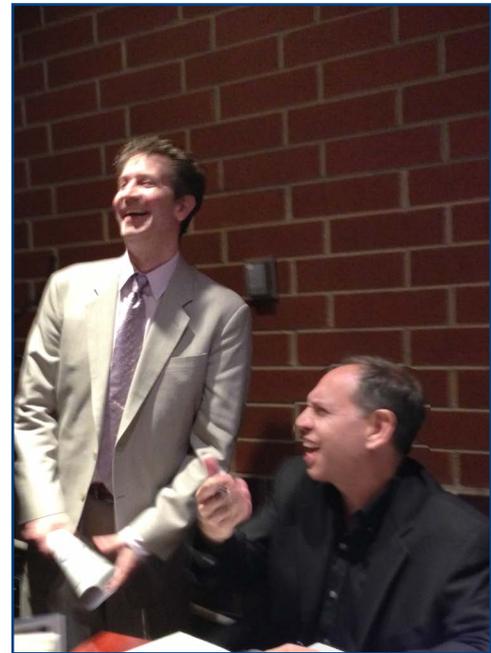
Golden spoke about his ideas on Thursday evening, June 11, at the latest installment of Let's Talk Politics, a series hosted by Tenth Dems University.

Sharon Sanders, Tenth Dems University's dean, introduced Golden to a crowd of more than 50 at the RAM Restaurant and Brewery in Wheeling. He began his presentation by stating that there are good people in politics and that the system is the problem. He then thanked Tenth Dems for promoting many of the ideas he advocates and for providing a forum for political conversations.

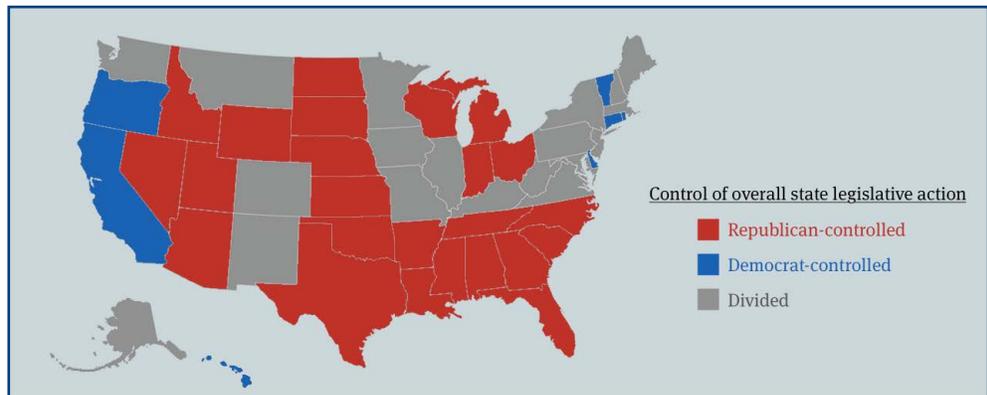
Golden's goal in his book and his talks is to educate and inform about dysfunction in government and to propose effective remedies for this problem. At the center of *Unlock Congress* are what he identifies as structural defects that individually and in combination lead to negative effects on Congress' performance. As Carol Marin wrote of Golden in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "*Unlock Congress* is about making bipartisan politics operational once again...His book is readable, and needs to be read. It offers a vial of vaccine for the diseased politics that is crippling us."

Among the defects Golden perceives are a flood of money into elections, rigged Congressional races, and two-year House terms. He said that such structural defects in our system drive counterproductive outcomes, deter negotiation and compromise, and distort fair representation. For example, due to Supreme Court decisions such as *Citizens United*, the money flood has produced an oligarchy in which the wealthiest 10 percent of the population have 15 times more influence on policies than the other 90 percent. Golden opined that two-year terms have led to a state of constant campaigning and fundraising, to the detriment of governing. Primary elections that lead to winner-take-all general elections, along with gerrymandering, have increased polarization, Golden said. He pointed out that in the last two decades the number of "moderates" who cross party lines in the House of Representatives has dropped from 113 to 26. And even though Democrats received a clear majority of House votes nationwide

*continued on page 9 (more photos on page 8)*



# UNLOCK CONGRESS



*As this map shows, the Republican Party's REDMAP project turned control of governors' offices and state legislatures in 2010 and, thus, redistricting, into Republican control of Congress.*

# CONGRESS WATCH: Kirk and Dold Endorse Latest Republican Efforts to Undo Obamacare



by Laurence D. Schiller

The last Congress Watch column reviewed the GOP budget passed on a party-line vote a month ago and pointed out how 10th District Congressman Bob Dold and Illinois Senator Mark Kirk have conveniently passed over the draconian cuts made to social programs while telling their constituents that they did no such thing. ("Congress Watch: Dold and Kirk Vote To Gut Medicare and Other Health and Social Programs, Increase Defense Spending, and Lower Taxes on the Wealthiest Americans," Tenth News, May 2015, <http://www.tenthdems.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Tenth-Dems-newsletter-May-2015-v4.pdf#page=2>.)

In a May 18th newsletter to constituents, Kirk defended his vote by stressing the cold black-and-white numbers of the budget rather than the pain it was going to cause. Apparently to Mark Kirk, balancing the budget on the backs of the middle class and working poor is just fine, as long as military spending isn't cut. Paul Ryan couldn't have stated it better.

Kirk also wrote of the budget: "It stands as a referendum against President Obama's budget by laying out a plan to repeal and replace Obamacare."

Kirk's glossary is as wrong as his facts. A referendum is a direct vote by the electorate on a single political question. That's pretty much the opposite of a party-line budget vote in Congress. The closest thing we've had to a referendum on Obamacare was the 2012 presidential election, which Obama won by millions of votes. And polls show that if there were a national referendum on Obamacare today, approval of the Affordable Care Act would be overwhelming.

And note how Kirk repeats the tired line that the GOP has a plan to replace the ACA. Yet no one, not Kirk, nor any one of the now nearly dozen declared Republican presidential candidates, has presented any alternative plan. Certainly there's nothing of the sort in the Republican budget Kirk supports. Nor is any proposal

## Unlock Congress

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in the last two cycles, the larger number of Republican-drawn districts has given Republicans the majority of seats in the House.

Golden has recommended remedies for the ills he perceives. Among other things, he advocates extending U.S. House terms from two to four years, coinciding with presidential elections; unrigging Congressional races by instituting a system of proportional representation in which voters can vote for more than their first choice; and establishing campaign finance rules to counteract money's influence on Congress. Regarding gerrymandered congressional districts, the evening made clear that any effective remedy would have to be federal; otherwise, progressive states that reformed their redistricting processes would only be ceding more undemocratic power to the less-progressive states that continued to gerrymander.

Following a brief question-and-answer session, Golden remained at the RAM Restaurant to continue the conversation informally while signing copies of his book, which can be found at [www.unlockcongress.com](http://www.unlockcongress.com). ■



to replace Obamacare on the agenda of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Like Kirk, Congressman Bob Dold, who already has voted to repeal the ACA some 30 times, refuses to quit his assault on this law. Most recently, Dold voted for HR 30, perversely called the "Save American Workers Act." It's an anti-worker piece of legislation that increases the number of hours that employees must work to be covered by employer group health plans from 30 to 40 per week.

Like most in the Republican Party, Mark Kirk and Bob Dold do not believe that Americans have a right to affordable health insurance or affordable healthcare. And in the wake of the Supreme Court's June 25 decision rejecting the most recent challenge to the ACA, neither Mark Kirk nor Bob Dold has even suggested that he intends to abandon efforts to repeal or gut the law. Don't we in the 10th District have a right to better representation in Congress? ■

# Happy Birthday, Medicare

By Mark Rosenberg, M.D.

During the long debate about healthcare in 2009, a constituent famously told a U.S. Senator, "Keep your government hands off my Medicare!" This exposed a misconception among those Americans who don't think any government program can be any good. Since they love Medicare, such Americans reason that the Federal government must not be in charge. But they're wrong. The Medicare program is administered and funded by the U.S. government.

Medicare is 50 years old this month. It's appropriate to celebrate by taking a look at just what the Medicare program has become and what it has accomplished. Despite the criticisms by many, including members of my own profession, and despite repeated attempts by Republicans to gut the program, Medicare has achieved its intended goals. Medicare ensures access to healthcare for the program's elderly and disabled beneficiaries and protects them from financial hardship.

To understand the importance of Medicare, it is important to return to 1965, when the program was enacted. At that time, half of American seniors over the age of 65 were without health insurance; many were underinsured; and seniors paid over half of healthcare expenses directly out of pocket. The result was that over 20 percent of seniors lived below the Federal poverty line.

Today Medicare covers 55 million Americans, representing 17 percent of the population, and it is expected that by 2030 80 million Americans will be covered by Medicare. Yet that success has been accompanied by a cost that continues to increase as both the numbers of seniors and the complexity of their illnesses rise.

One point of legitimate controversy is the administrative costs of Medicare. While the actuarial cost is approximately three percent, compared with upwards of 20 percent in many private insurance plans, there are questions whether spending more on Medicare might actually save the program money in the end. For example, additional upfront expenditures could address more effectively some of the concerns related to Medicare fraud, which is costly to the program. And paying for more effective disease management programs would mitigate end-of-life expenditures. With increasing burdens of chronic illness among the Medicare population, cost of end-of-life care is certain to be one of the big issues as Medicare enters its next 50 years.



One more thing. Since the passage of Obamacare (the Affordable Care Act, or ACA), the law's opponents, i.e., Republicans, have claimed that Obamacare threatens the viability of Medicare. The claim is, to put it bluntly, false. In fact, the ACA specifically prohibits cuts to guaranteed Medicare benefits.

Here are some of the specific facts:

First, Medicare is not part of the Federal Marketplace and is not purchased on the individual state health insurance markets. Just as it was before Obamacare, enrollment in Part A (hospital and post-hospital benefits) does not require payment of any premiums.

Second, Medicare coverage has improved since enactment of the Affordable Care Act. Medicare now covers most recommended screening, including colonoscopies and mammograms. In addition, one wellness visit per year is included without charge, although not a physician visit.

Third, the Affordable Care Act increased prescription drug benefits under Medicare and provides that the "donut hole" that led to high mid-year drug costs for many seniors will be eliminated by 2020.

And fourth, for those physicians and clinics that participate, Obamacare makes improvements in care coordination. This feature is especially important to seniors with chronic conditions.

Another important benefit of the ACA is that taxation of certain very high premium health plans, with the revenue earmarked to Medicare, will allow Medicare to remain financially solvent until at least 2029.

Happy 50th Birthday, Medicare. ■



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