

# The Democrat

A roundup of events, ideas, and opportunities for area Democrats and their friends.

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue #4 — April 2011

**Did you know?**

*Test yourself! See how your knowledge of current news and politics compares to others'.*

Page 11

**Opinion**

*Open letter, "Promises Kept," from Vice-President Joe Biden.*

Page 4

**Opinion**

*Critical response to Biden's letter by Melody Dimick, followed by a response from Kevin Winchell.*

Page 6

**Coming Events**

*Democratic Women's Club of Volusia's 3rd Annual Picnic & Politics gathering!*

Page 11

## A Word from the Club President

By Jeff Shepherd

A lot of Democrats, independents, and others are energetically voicing opposition to proposals by politicians in Tallahassee and Washington that weaken public education, strip workers of collective-bargaining rights, and drastically cut programs that many elderly and low-income people rely on to sustain their basic needs.



Statewide, groups of people who identify themselves with one of the movements unleashed widely on the Internet are organizing rallies on busy street corners, often within earshot of a targeted local legislator's office. One of

these groups is called *Awake the State*. Such a rally at a busy intersection in Daytona Beach attracted hundreds of teachers, students, public employees, and others who oppose what they believe are the misguided priorities of Governor Rick Scott and the Republican-controlled Legislature.

More recently, similar rallies have taken place at DeLand *City Hall*, along New York Avenue. The offices of state Representative Fred Costello and State Senator Alan Hayes are located in *City Hall*.

Typically, this phase of the election cycle is the doldrums. Activists are their least active in the months following a mid-term election. Unless there's a special election on the calendar, it is months before campaigns really get started. Budgets are the big agenda items in the legislatures, and it's hard to get your average citizens interested.

This year is different. What's happening in places like Wisconsin, Tallahassee, and Washington is clearly affecting everyday life for many people in every corner of America. Proposed legislation and executive orders are setting the clock back on social and economic reforms, including those that protect the rights of workers and women, plus stripping regulatory authority that protects our communities from bad development, and our ecosystems from harmful pollutants.

In states like Michigan, governors are deposing elected officials in cities and towns and replacing them with unelected

outside "czars" appointed by the governors themselves.

Recent polling indicates people aren't pleased with this turn of events. When three national news organizations asked Americans if they favor the changes, or cuts to *Medicare* in the budget proposal by U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), two of the polls showed 76 percent do not favor these changes and cuts, and the third poll showed 54 percent do not favor them.

According to a new *Quinnipiac* poll, the number of voters who disapprove of Governor Scott has almost doubled compared to a February 2 poll. At that time, 35 percent approved of Scott and 22 percent disapproved.

The negative number skyrocketed in the new poll, with 48 percent disapproval and 35 percent approval.

This is a good time for organizations such as our Democratic club to seize the opportunity to give this burst of opposition and activism a way

to channel their energy into meaningful and effective action. We can make new friends and members of those street-corner sign-holding fire fighters. Perhaps we'll find a good future candidate for local office among the teachers who are writing letters to the editor.

We should take this opportunity to reach out to our friends and neighbors. Ask them what they think about the direction of these new policies, and offer them an alternative, plus a way to connect and participate. Post your thoughts and opinions on *Twitter* and *Facebook*, and notice who responds favorably. Bring someone new to a club meeting.

If we do these things, then we're doing our part. If others in our positions are doing the same in their communities, then in 2012 we will really awake the state.

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*Jeff Shepherd is President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County.*



# Recent Activities

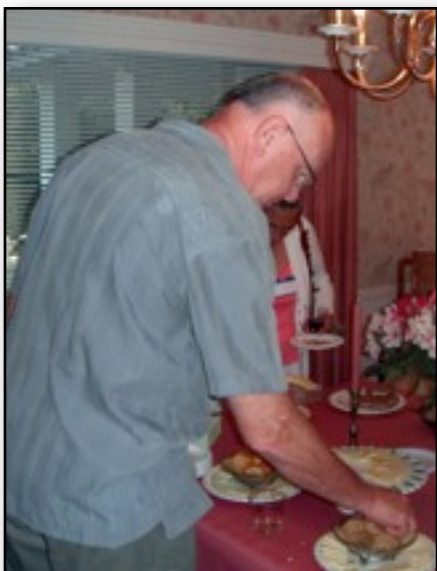
Wine and Cheese Fundraiser at the Home of Bob and Sylvia Perkins



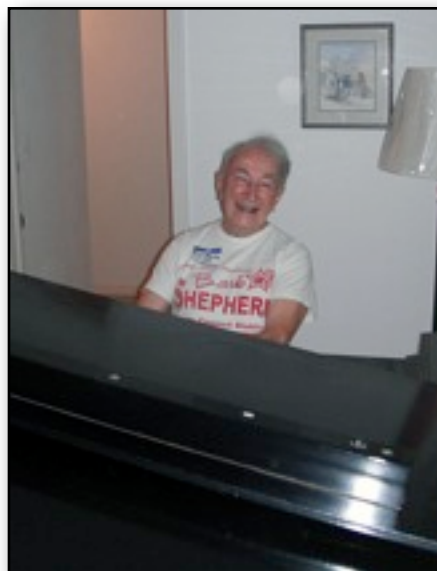
*Club Vice President Kevin Winchell and Treasurer Chip Wilson smile for the camera.*



*Commissioner Juanita McNeil of the W. V. Hospital Authority chats with DeLand City Commissioner Leigh Matusick.*



*Ian Williams fills his plate. The food was delicious.*



*Bill Weiss Displays a big smile along with his great proficiency at the piano.*

# Opinions



## PROMISES KEPT

*Vice-President Joe Biden*

It was two years ago today that Barack and I were sworn in, and I remember what he said like it was this morning:

"The challenges we face are real, they are serious, and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met."

Even then, we knew it would take time. We knew it would be hard. And we knew we would sometimes make mistakes.

But we did not lose sight of what we came to do.

Together, we took on difficult issues that had been put off for decades. And some say we have accomplished more in two years than any administration since Roosevelt's.

Take it from me, that's something you should take to

heart—because none of it would have been possible without your hard work.

But the job's not done.

I am reminded of that every time I travel to the small towns in Pennsylvania, Iowa, New Mexico—all over—and on the weekends I get home to Delaware. I meet folks who are still struggling, who want to know when the recovery will start to turn things around for their family.

These people are why we can't quit.

And moving forward with this new Congress, we will need to defend what we've achieved together as aggressively as we pursue the goals that remain.

I believe in the power of public service because I've seen what it has done throughout our country's history to combat social and economic injustice. And I am proud to say it's a story that continues in the remarkable progress we've

made in the past two years. To tell it, *Organizing for America* has written *Promises Kept*.

....



There's a whole lot to be proud of.

Of course, the big ones come to mind first: historic health insurance reform, which is reining in the insurance companies and helping control the cost of care for millions of Americans; Wall Street reform, which put in place the toughest consumer protections ever; and the end of combat operations in Iraq, which brought more than 100,000 troops home.

And there is so much more you've helped achieve that is right now improving lives across the country:

- We passed the *Recovery Act*, which saved and created more than 3 million jobs, provided the largest middle-class tax cut in a generation, and made landmark investments in clean energy, infrastructure, and education.
- We made critical investments in General Motors and Chrysler, saving tens of thousands of jobs—and perhaps the companies—and spurring a rebirth of the American car industry.
- We wrote into law student loan reform and credit card reform, which ended the worst abuses of the banking industries and are making lending fair for American families.
- We put two new Supreme Court justices on the bench—Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, who bring rich and diverse experience to the Court.
- We have begun to reset America's relationship with the international community, from the ratification of a new START nuclear arms treaty with Russia to tough new sanctions on Iran to

strengthening our long-term partnership with a unified Iraq.

- And we finally repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which was the right thing to do—not only because it makes our military stronger



at a time when it needs to be the strongest, but because we are seeking that military might with an abiding sense of justice.

Telling the story of the past two years will be critical to the fights ahead. And it's not just the story of this president or this White House—it's your story.

And it is literally proof that the organizing you do on the ground—the conversations you have with your friends and neighbors—is working.

Now, I'm not going to say the last two years were easy—and I

won't tell you the fights ahead are going to get any easier.

But I didn't sign up for a cake walk. And I'm pretty sure you didn't either.

We're here to move our country forward. We're here to lay a new foundation for this country—for our economy, for our politics, and for our children's and grandchildren's futures.

And, as Barack says, what we will be able to accomplish together is in your hands.

It's how hard we all work, and how well we all tell this story.

Take a few minutes to read [Promises Kept](#)—and let's keep moving.

Thanks for everything,

Joe

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*Joe Biden is Vice-President of the United States of America.*

# Member's Opinions



## One Personal Response (another to follow):

### A Critical Response to Vice-President Biden's Letter by Melody Dimick.

During the recent budget crisis, Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-MD) quoted the White Stripes lyrics. "...if you're heading to the grave, don't blame the hearse." I won't fault the Obama administration for the inherited debt; however, I cannot congratulate President Obama for promises kept either. Rather than securing universal health care, Democrats wasted political capital with a health care plan that makes few happy and resulted in the loss of the House and Democratic governorships.

Candidate Obama promised to let Bush tax cuts expire. In a crushing blow to the middle class, he extended cuts to the richest Americans showing a

weakness that inspired the Republicans to go for blood. Labor unions are being decimated. Cuts to education and government workers are unfair, and don't create jobs. The median pay for American C.E.O.'s rose to \$9.6 million last year; however, American companies aren't hiring—trickle down doesn't work! Unemployment remains high at 8.8%.

When I listened to candidate Obama in Daytona Beach in 2008, he promised to move America in a fundamentally different direction empowering women and strengthening families. He promised to increase the minimum wage to \$9.50 by 2011; it remains at \$7.25. I commend the administration for the Lilly Ledbetter Act (which mandates equal pay for equal work) but women still make 77 cents for every dollar men make, and workers are punished for

mistakes made by banks and Wall Street.

President Obama did not create automatic workplace pensions or expand retirement saving incentives as promised. Instead, he allowed negotiated pensions to be reduced. Rather than cutting contributions to *Social Security*, the administration should have ensured that anyone who earns above \$107,000 is taxed on their total earnings. Should those who make the most be expected to contribute the smallest percentage? Instead of Draconian domestic cuts, why not reduce foreign aid? Borrow to give? Ludicrous!

We got into trouble because Bush reduced taxes without making cuts, and because he started two wars. Cutting taxes does not create jobs. It just makes the rich richer. The gap between the rich and the poor grows! President Obama should have stopped this trend.

To increase jobs, outsourcing must be stopped. Eliminating tax breaks to companies that outsource and changing the corporate law that enables corporations to have only one purpose—making the most profit for their shareholders—is a beginning. This law should be replaced by a law that states corporations should owe something to their workers and the communities in which they operate, and should sacrifice some profit to make things better. Present law mandates

executives maximize profits even if it means taking jobs out of our country! Last year corporate tax loopholes allowed *G.E.* and *Exxon* to pay no taxes despite huge profits. The President must stick to his proposal and close these loopholes.

Candidate Obama planned to end the war in Iraq. The war has been declared over, but troops remain. We are now involved in a third “conflict” costing money we need on the domestic front. If we bring our

National Guard home, we can use our troops to guard our borders against illegal entry. We have immigration laws; they should be enforced.

Our President has campaign promises left to keep. In an attempt to appease Republicans, he has moved off course.

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*Melody Dimick is a retired teacher who lives in DeLand. She can be reached at [bdimick@cfl.rr.com](mailto:bdimick@cfl.rr.com).*

# Member's Opinions



## A Different Response to Vice-President Biden's Letter from Kevin Winchell.

In May of 1961, President John F. Kennedy remarked, "When we got into office, the thing that surprised me most was to find that things were just as bad as we'd been saying they were."

I can imagine President Obama sharing that sentiment.

I volunteered and voted for President Obama in 2008, and have already begun volunteering what will be hundreds of hours for his re-election in 2012. However, there is one difference this time around: my support now is not grounded in the hope and change that symbolized our

fight in 2008, but rather a sober acknowledgement that President Obama, while he didn't deliver on every promise he made, has accomplished a significant amount during his first two years in office and represents our best chance at preventing the likes of Sarah Palin, Scott Walker and even Donald Trump from occupying the White House.

I want to talk about each of those points with some detail, beginning with the promises. Is it true that President Obama has not fulfilled every promise that he made to voters and his strongest supporters during his campaign? Yes. However, it is also true that President Obama inherited a big mess: an economy in freefall, two wars, and an unhinged minority refuse to even acknowledge his citizenship. To say that President Obama had his work cut out for him is perhaps the understatement of our century.

Our hopes soared upon President Obama's election. That was our mistake - our mistake for forgetting the magnitude of the mess that we brought him in to fix, and our mistake for forgetting that he is human and can't make everyone happy.

Despite these enormous challenges, President Obama has accomplished more in his first two years in office than many presidents have in their entire tenure. The following stand out to me:

The historic health care reforms that, though not perfect, still ushered in unprecedented protections to consumers while affording care to more than 30 million more Americans

The Recovery Act and related stimulus and regulatory

measures that, though not perfect, still created or preserved millions of jobs, reigned in many of Wall Street's most predatory practices, and stabilized state budgets needed to pay teachers, police officers, fire fighters and other local heroes

America's restored credibility in the world community - without sacrificing our national security or interests

Equal rights through the Don't Ask Don't Tell repeal and the declaration of the Defense of Marriage Act's unconstitutionality

Set exit strategies and timetables for troop withdrawal for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

Now, let me remind you: we are barely two years into President Obama's administration. That's it. Let's be realistic with our expectations and realize that President Obama has, indeed, had a successful Democratic presidency thus far.

So, going in to 2012, the choice is clear: we either continue our support for President Obama and give him a chance to continue making good on his promises, or we face putting one of the new breeds of Republicans in the White House. Do you like the right to assemble in unions? The right

to a quality public education? Affordable health care? Retirement? Freedoms of choice for women and same-sex couples? Clean energy and efficient transportation? Say goodbye to all of those if your choice isn't President Obama in 2012.

Don't say I didn't warn you: we have seen how a lack of support for Alex Sink last year has hurt us here in Florida with Rick Scott getting elected. Imagine if that happens to the entire country because we sit on the sidelines again? If you are ready to fight for our shared progressive values, then join me when I make phone calls and knock on doors for President Obama's re-election in 2012.

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*Kevin Winchell is Vice-President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County.*

# Member Profile

*Jerry "Chip" Wilson*



Chip Wilson is Supervisor of Facilities Maintenance and Operations at *Stetson University*. He moved from Missouri to Florida in 1979 with his parents and two sisters. His mother was an educator, his father a construction supervisor. Chip attended school at *DeLand High*, the *University of Florida*, and *UCF*.

Before coming to Stetson he worked in construction for many years ("genetic flaw," he calls it, referring to having followed in his dad's footsteps). Following graduation he went into television for a time at *Channel 2 News*. He was doing video editing, which he considered a dream job ... except for the fact that it paid only minimum wage.

Chip married late—at least according to DeLand standards, he says jokingly—but he finds that the wait was worth it. He lives now in DeLand with his wife Magda, and his daughter Wyatt. He enjoys the

small town feel DeLand retains, and likes living in town.

He has always been a regular voter, but remained "on the fringe" in his words until 2008. He worked actively during the Obama campaign, and subsequently on the campaign committee of his friend Vonzelle Johnson. He serves now as treasurer of our club. He feels it's much better to be personally involved in politics than to allow career politicians to decide what's good for us.



*Chip Wilson with DeLand City Commissioner Vonzelle Johnson.*

Chip says with conviction that every citizen should be active in politics because it's our right as Americans. He notes that every day on TV we see countries struggling to gain the rights that we overlook. Indeed, they are fighting and dying for the mere possibility of having what most of us take for granted. He observes that we have the right to speak out and make changes in our society, and he wishes more people would take advantage of that privilege.

Chip says he's a Democrat because he came from a middle class working family, and this party best represents him and the standards and beliefs with which he grew up. He's getting more active in local politics because those beliefs are crucial in responding to the issues that can affect him most from day to day: local taxes, utilities, schools, zoning, etc. He feels that this is where we all need to have a choice, and that here at the local level we can make

more of an impact if we speak with one voice.

Speaking with one voice means organizing, and that's why he's agreed to serve as treasurer of our club. He credits his involvement to two persons especially. First, Kevin Winchell, whom he credits as his "political mentor." Second, Judy Thompson, whom he "adores for her business sense, for her political values, and for how she gives so much to the community.

Chip says that our current president is an inspiration to him. President Obama has fought adversity his entire life and is currently making major changes in our world through health care and through his ability to communicate. He says it's amazing to him that the Republican Party spends as

much time trying to stop the President's forward thinking and ideas as they do on anything else. The current split in Washington is horrendous to him. That they've stopped moving forward merely to spite the other party seems to have become the norm.

He feels that Democrats and others should join our club because we have an organization with a voice, and we also have ties to a lot of other organizations with even bigger voices. If you want to help in making a change, he says; if you want to be heard, this is a great base for getting out there and being exposed to what's happening.

For example, Chip says that he's heard more politicians talk one on one in our club meetings than he ever did in his entire

life. Seeing them face to face and talking with them is a totally different experience.

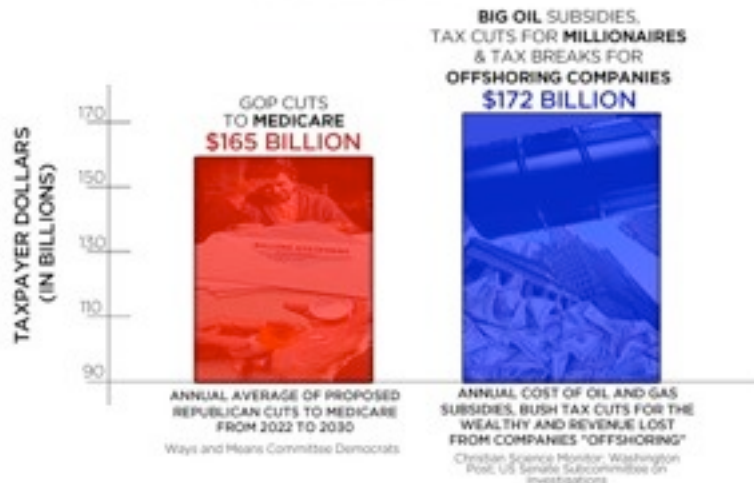
This opportunity alone has had a tremendous influence on how he feels about our party and about politicians in general. He says, "I guess my feelings about politicians is clearer. I see that they're all just people. Some are



like preachers; some you feel can change the world; and

*Always helpful to know the facts when discussing issues with others, regardless of whether they share your political values.*

**GOP PRIORITIES EXPOSED**  
 HOUSE REPUBLICANS' BUDGET SUBSIDIZES  
 MILLIONAIRES, OFFSHORERS AND OIL COMPANIES  
**BUT ENDS MEDICARE**





## Did you know?

### What's your knowledge of American history and government?

This month's quiz is drawn from the exam one must pass in order to become a naturalized U.S. citizen. Could you qualify? Try the questions on others, just for fun.

[Take the Quiz!](#)

## Sample Question

*What percentage of the federal budget is spent on earmarks?*

- Less than 1 percent
- About 5 percent
- About 10 percent
- About 25 percent
- About 50 percent

[Answer: Less than 1%.]

## Coming Events

### Next Club Meeting

April 28th, 7:15 p.m. at the DeLand Police Department Community Room (219 W. Howry Ave., DeLand, 32720)

### Agenda:

- Diane Smith (Member of *Volusia County School Board*), Andrew Spar (President of *Volusia Teachers Organization*, our teachers' union), and Dr. Robert Moll (Administrator on the *Volusia County School Board*) will be speaking about issues concerning our public schools, what changes are coming from Tallahassee and D.C., and what we can do to help our teachers and school board fight for the future of our education system here in Volusia County and Florida.
- Our club will conduct its annual recertification to remain in good standing with the *Volusia DEC* and *Florida Democratic Party*.

## DWC Barbecue:

A reminder about the upcoming *Democratic Women's Club of Volusia County's 3rd Annual Picnic & Politics* gathering: Saturday, April 30, 11 a.m. 'til 3 p.m. At Cracker Creek, 1795 Taylor Road, Port Orange, FL 32128.

Tickets costs \$18 each.

Mouth-watering BBQ and the fixin's plus a healthy portion of stump speeches will be served!

For further information contact Lisa Walker: ph. 386 956-6926; email [lisa@paraproductions.com](mailto:lisa@paraproductions.com).

## Links

[Northwest Volusia Democratic Club](#)

[National Democratic Party](#)

[Florida Democrats](#)