

The Democrat

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

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue #5 — May 2011

Did you know?

Opinion

Opinion

Coming Events

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

Income and Social Values by Bill Hall.

Voter Suppression: A Serious Threat to Democracy, by Wayne Dickson.

Democratic Women's Club of Volusia's meeting.

Page 9

Page 3

Page 5

Page 9

Report from the Vice-President

Kevin Winchell

This has been a very active month in politics, hasn't it? As I write this, there is too much going on to allow this article to focus on only one subject from this past month. So, to borrow a page from many journalists, I present to you a "Top Ten" list:

"The Top Ten Reasons Why We Will Win Volusia County for Democrats in 2012".

10. Rock Star Volunteers.

We have some amazing people who believe deeply in our shared Democratic values. Beeg Camarota served as our Headquarters Manager in 2010 for 50 hours a week over four months because she knew what was at stake in the election.



Keith Allen calls fellow Volusia County Democrats for 90 minutes every two weeks to recruit new volunteers and raise funds because he knows how important those are for our campaign efforts.

Wayne Dickson compiles and writes articles each month for this newsletter because he understands the importance of connecting our members.

Time and time again, we step up and do what we can to elect good Democrats, and it is because of rock star volunteers like Beeg, Keith, and Wayne that we are successful.

9. Organization.

Sound bites don't persuade voters; personal relationships do. That's why one of our chief goals for this year is ensuring that all of our precincts have people who are responsible for meeting their neighbors and making sure that those neighbors get out and vote.

8. Fundraising.

Unfortunately, fundraising is an important part of winning elections. We are making great strides in our fundraising efforts, and should be able to open up our 2012 headquarters one month earlier than we would normally be able to afford. That's one more month's worth of votes for our Democrats - and could make the difference for local elections.

7. The State Alternatives.

The Republicans in Tallahassee have overplayed their hand, and the public will hold them responsible for it. Although legislation from Tallahassee has been dreadful this year, we can at least be sure that Democrats certainly won't sit on the sidelines in 2012 (or 2014 when we can really give Rick Scott a pink slip!).

6. Networking.

We're on [Facebook](#). We've built this newsletter. We've started a conversational [blog](#). We've got an informative [website](#). If there are more or better ways that we can communicate with each other, e-mail me to let me know. And, if you are on *Facebook*, be sure to "Like" our club's page by following [this link](#).



5. The National Alternatives.

The Republicans who have declared their candidacy for the Presidency have based their platforms on the following: President Obama's birth certificate, reducing *Medicare/Medicaid*, privatizing *Social Security*, busting unions and demonizing teachers, repealing our health care reforms, giving Big Oil huge subsidies, defunding *Planned Parenthood*, defunding public broadcasting (see elsewhere in this newsletter) and giving permanent tax cuts to the rich.

Does that sound like an appealing platform to moderate voters who are struggling to make ends meet?

4. Vision.

Although it helps to contrast ourselves to the alternatives, it is more important to know what we stand for. We believe in the power of education, in the security of retirement, in the guarantee of health, and in the value of fairness, opportunity and equality for all - and we know that those positions provide the best opportunity for us to achieve "liberty and justice for all."

3. Stakes.

We can't afford to fail. Our teachers, our police officers, our fire fighters, our working families, our children and our seniors all need for us to be successful. We have no choice except to fight for every vote and sacrifice our time and resources to elect Democrats in 2012, for we can't settle for anything less than victory when the stakes are this high.

2. Candidates.

We have immensely talented and dynamic local candidates for office who are city commissioners, county council members, or who make other

great contributions to civic and private endeavours. There is no shortage of strong, electable Democrats here in Volusia County. Let's make sure that they are "hired" in 2012.



will have even more license to push a strong progressive agenda for his final four years, enhancing what have already been monumental accomplishments from his first two years.

1. Obama.

He got Bin Laden. Now, he's re-found his voice and his fighting-for-the-little-guy attitude. If we work hard and give this election all we've got,

he and all of the Democrats on his coattails from DeLand to D.C. will be representing our values come 2012 - and Obama

Kevin Winchell is the Vice President of the DCNWVC. He can be reached at kwinchel@stetson.edu.

Member's Opinions



Income and Social Values

Bill Hall

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the mean annual wage of physicians and surgeons is \$173,860. Forbes magazine puts those wages into a social perspective: Phil Michelson, a professional



golfer, was paid \$46 million last year. Kobe Bryant, professional hoops shooter, got \$15.5 million. Tom Brady, quarterback of the New England Patriots, knocked down \$18 million while Tiger Woods hauled in \$105 million (down from \$120 million the prior year).

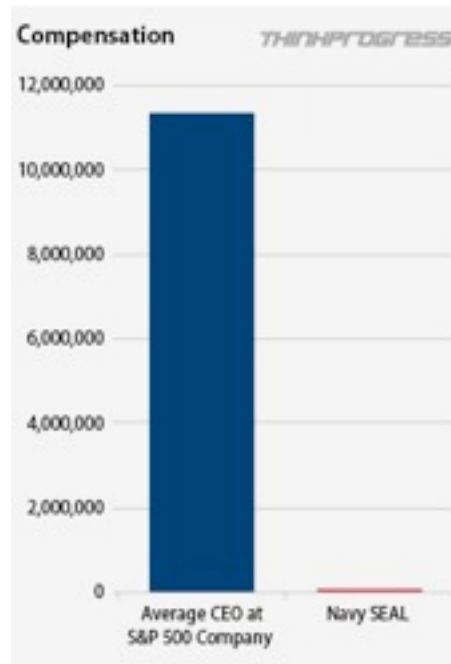
On Wall Street, remuneration is as grand as ever, even as unemployment stagnates. According to the Wall Street Journal, 456 CEOs of the top

500 companies saw their salaries, bonuses and stock options rise to an average of \$7.2 million with 91 year old Ray Irani, CEO of Occidental Petroleum grabbing \$52.2 million; Larry Ellison of Oracle (already a billionaire) took home another \$68.6 million and Cable TV baron Gregory Maffei is getting by on \$87.1 million.

To put this even further into perspective, consider that every week Tom Brady is paid twice as much as the average physician or surgeon earns in an entire year and Brady only works half a year. Then again, Tiger Woods makes 1-1/2 times the average doctor's annual wage every day.

This is clear evidence that the recovery is running at full throttle for superstar athletes and the CEO class. The question is: When will the "trickle down" show up? Unemployment is highest in Nevada and Michigan (13 percent) and lowest in the Dakotas (4 percent), where oil shale has created a boom in the badlands. So what does this say about our society, its values and job creation? Michigan is the poster child for the post industrial era that Ross Perot accurately forecast and the entire State of Nevada is, well, a casino – not substantially different from Wall Street.

It is fashionable just now to rant about "entitlements" as the cause of our economic malaise. However, Ross Perot more correctly identified our employment problem when he opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992. The sad truth is that high unemployment will likely be a permanent fixture as machines and cheap foreign labor continue to erode our once flourishing domestic economy.



After the mission that ended Bin Laden's life, it's interesting to compare the compensation of an average CEO and that of the men went into harm's way in Pakistan.

In the preamble to the United States Constitution certain words were highlighted by the framers with capital letters, the purpose of which was to draw

our attention to those things the founders wanted emphasized. The capitalized words are: Order, Union, Justice, Tranquility and Welfare and are collectively called the Blessings of Liberty! What we have now is rampant greed on a scale that would have astonished Charles Dickens as the top 1 percent of Americans take in 23.5 percent of the nation's pretax income. The 19th Century philanthropist (and industrialist) Peter Cooper framed the issue succinctly:

"The production of wealth is not the work of any one man, and the acquisition of great fortunes is not possible without the cooperation of multitudes of men...therefore, the individuals to whose lot these fortunes fall...should never lose sight of the fact that they hold them by the will of society expressed in statute law, so they should administer them as trustees for the benefit of society as inculcated by moral law."

– Peter Cooper, circa 1875.

Bill Hall was until recently a regular columnist for the West Volusia Beacon. He can be reached via email at carderw@cfl.rr.com.

Member's Opinions



Voter Suppression:

A Serious Threat to Democracy

Wayne Dickson

To win an election, you get more people to vote for you than to vote for your opponent. Yeah, I know. Duh! Stay with me, though. One way to accomplish this is to make sure your own supporters turn out to cast a ballot. But another way is to make sure your opponent's supporters *don't* turn out. The term for that is *voter suppression*.

Voter *suppression* should not be confused with voter *fraud*. Fraud refers either to votes cast by unqualified persons, or to subsequent manipulation of votes that were legitimately cast. **It's rare for the former type of fraud to be carried out successfully.** It's essentially a non-issue. So beware! When you hear politicians wailing and gnashing their teeth about voter fraud by others, what they're really doing is providing a smokescreen to

disguise voter suppression by themselves.

Arguably the most massively successful act of voter suppression was the destruction of ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now).

One of ACORN's most important projects was to help voters register—especially minority and disadvantaged voters. In other words, the kind of voters that are more likely to vote Democrat than Republican. So Republicans decided ACORN had to go.



[James O'Keefe](#), the “attack film maker” known for deceptive editing of video footage.

And go it did. The organization was demonized in a coordinated campaign whose fulcrum was a faked video in which [James O'keefe](#) dressed in a comically Halloween-like costume and pretended to be an urban pimp helping one of his “girls” obtain a mortgage.

That made a big splash, but the campaign continues. For example, just this morning I heard an [ad](#) in which Debbie Georgatos, a candidate for chair of the Dallas County, Texas, Republican Party, claimed this: “[W]e must fearlessly confront one of Dallas County's most pressing problems: voter fraud.”

Remember! When you hear a politician like Georgatos talk about preventing voter *fraud*, what you're hearing is coded language calling for voter *suppression*.

Voter suppression takes many forms: ex-felon disenfranchisement, partisan election administration, inequality in election day resources (like the number of

voting machines or stations assigned to a given precinct), [“caging” lists](#), on-site intimidation, etc. Arguably, however, the type of suppression that’s most insidious and destructive to our democracy is the modern resurgence of what used to be called [“Jim Crow”](#) laws.

Today’s versions of these laws are specifically designed to make it difficult if not impossible for many likely Democratic supporters to register or vote. Those specifically targeted for such suppression include Blacks, Hispanics, Latinos, and college students. As I said, one false pretext often cited is prevention of voter fraud, and the measures are presented as seemingly quite reasonable.

Example? Picture voter ID. Why were they needed? They weren’t! Remember that

individual voter fraud is a non-issue. So why have Republican controlled state legislatures required them? You suppose it’s mere coincidence that the IDs will be relatively easy for likely Republican voters to obtain, but frequently difficult and complicated for likely Democratic voters?

How sad this must be for those who worked so hard to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. That law was intended to prohibit requiring any “voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure ... to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.” Specifically it was aimed to remove literacy and other tests intentionally designed to disqualify potential Black American voters.

Voter suppression is alive and well right now in our day and our state. And just as before it’s clearly intended to disenfranchise American citizens of color.

Here’s what the [New York Times](#) said about HB 1355: The bill “would tighten the rules on third-party voter registration and limit the number of days early voting can take place, an effort that Democrats portrayed as blatant voter suppression.” [Emphasis added.] The Florida Senate passed the bill last week, 25-13. It will most likely pass in the Assembly.

Wayne Dickson is editor of this newsletter. He can be reached at wdickson@stetson.edu.



Calls to Action

Different Style

Same Objective

Richard Wood

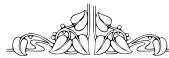
Do you love PBS?

Have you heard that WMFE-TV, the Orlando affiliate of PBS (Public Broadcasting System) may be sold to a religious broadcasting network? If you are as upset as I am with the prospect of losing PBS programming in our area, there is still time to act if you do so quickly. The Federal Communication Commission is taking comments on the proposed sale before approving it.

Unless another local TV station, possibly WDSC in Daytona Beach or WBCC in Cocoa would be willing to pick them up, we could lose the amazing variety of PBS programs many love—the *PBS Newshour*, *Frontline*, *Need to Know*, *Nova*, *Sesame Street*, concerts, programs for the Hispanic community on WMFE-Vme, and many others.

To let your voice be heard, go to the following website: <http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs> and enter the number “11-75” under “Search for Proceedings.” Then enter your comments in the space provided as instructed.

Richard Wood is a member of the DCNWVC, and an economist at Stetson University. He can be reached at rwood@stetson.edu.



Alan Grayson

Want to save Big Bird?

For 46 years, Orlando, Florida, has enjoyed public television and radio. [But] if the Religious Right has its way, that's over.

Why should we care? Well, Big Bird helped teach my five children how to read. Maybe yours, too. My children have enjoyed *Arthur*, *Dinosaur Train*,



Bob the Builder, the Magic School Bus, and Teletubbies. And I've enjoyed the PBS News Hour, Frontline, The American Experience, and Nova.

If the Religious Right gets what it wants, that will be replaced in Orlando with the hateful spewing of John Hagee. Five days a week.

This is the John Hagee who called Catholicism a “Godless theology of hate.” Who attributed Hitler’s anti-Semitism to Hitler’s Catholic upbringing. Who has referred to the Catholic Church as “the Great Whore.”

This is the John Hagee who claims that all Moslems have a “scriptural mandate to kill Christians and Jews.”

This is the John Hagee who has called Jews “poisoned,” and “spiritually blind.” Who claims that the Holocaust was punishment for Jewish “disobedience” and “rebellion.”

I would rather have my children listening to Big Bird.

Unfortunately, however, the “Daystar Television Network,” a Christian broadcasting outfit, has waved \$4 million under the noses of the directors of WMFE. (Due to inflation, what cost 30 pieces of silver in biblical times now goes for \$4 million.) And the WMFE directors want to sell – to sell out.

But you can help to stop them, and keep Big Bird on the air in Orlando.

The sale requires FCC approval. The FCC has solicited public comments. Please submit your comment to the FCC, and save public broadcasting in Orlando.

Here’s how: You write your views in a Word document. You fill out the form at this website:

<http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs/upload/display?z=3lna5>

If the Proceeding isn’t already identified, then in the ‘Proceeding Number’ field, type 11-75.

And then you attach the Word document to that form, following the instructions on the screen.

Tell the FCC whom you prefer to see on TV: Big Bird or hate-spewing John Hagee. The deadline for comments is

tomorrow (Friday) night. It will take you five or ten minutes. And it will make a big difference.

Everyone always complains about the media. Well, here’s something you can do about it. Let’s keep good TV on TV. Please help.

Alan Grayson is an attorney and former congressman from Central Florida. He can be reached at alanguardson@graysonforcongress.com



Editor’s Note:

For those who may have forgotten, John McCain accepted John Hagee’s endorsement of his presidential campaign ... but just for a short time. A storm of protest erupted, and McCain quickly renounced the endorsement.



Did you know?

What's your knowledge of American history?

This month's quiz is again about American history. Be sure to read carefully!

[Take the Quiz!](#)

Sample Question

The Alaska Gold Rush started in 1897.

- True.
- False.

[Answer: True. The California Gold Rush began in 1849; "Seward's Folly" (purchase of Alaska from Russia) was negotiated in 1867 and made final in 1868; and the Klondike or Yukon Gold Rush began in 1897.]

Coming Events

Next Club Meeting

Thursday, May 26th, 7:15 p.m. at the *DeLand Police Department Community Room* (219 W. Howry Ave., DeLand, 32720)

Agenda:

Representative Dwayne Taylor (Florida's 27th District) will be coming to speak about current issues and informing our members about how they can help him get some legislative victories in Tallahassee.

You can learn more about Rep. Taylor and his ideas by visiting his [website](#).



Rep. Dwayne Taylor

Coming Events Cont.

The Democratic Women's Club of Volusia County Meeting

Wednesday, May 25, 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at *Perkins Restaurant*, 1405 N. Woodland Blvd., DeLand, FL 32720.

All Democratic women and men are invited. If you would like to have dinner, please arrive at 5:30 p.m. For more info, contact Leslie Pearce, President, at (386) 717-0289 or lpearce6@cfl.rr.com.

Links

[Northwest Volusia Democratic Club](#)

[National Democratic Party](#)

[Florida Democrats](#)

[Blog for informal Democratic conversation](#)