



"Proud to be a Democrat"

Democratic Party of Door County

February, 2008 Newsletter

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School Funding: Solutions for a System in Crisis

At the January Membership meeting, Tom Beebe of the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) made a powerful presentation about the funding crisis in Wisconsin schools.

Despite a high statewide graduation rate and ACT scores comparing favorably to other states, inadequate school funding has led to cuts in educational programs throughout the state. Because of declining enrollments without a decline in costs, the current school funding system has forced our local schools to cut into personnel and programs. Sturgeon Bay Schools have eliminated 14.5 teacher positions along with other staff. Sevastopol Schools have eliminated 7 teaching staff.

These lost positions provided programs or services to past students that future students won't receive. Ultimately, this will undercut the value of a diploma, and the quality of preparation for further education or employment.

Some school districts have closed or disbanded because of inability to meet payrolls that constitute the majority of their budget. For others, there is a huge disparity in the adequacy of state aid. Gibraltar Schools, a district with high property values receives almost no state aid, in contrast to the average for the state of about half the schools' budget.

Coupled with the inadequacy of school funding is the growth of the residential property tax burden. In 1971 residential property taxes were 50 percent of the total WI property tax, and corporate property tax was 35 percent. By 2004, residential taxes comprised nearly 70 percent while corporate tax had fallen to 25 percent.

Contrary to the claims of the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, corporations in Wisconsin do not pay their fair share of taxes for the services they receive, including a well-educated high-quality labor force. In 2006, U.S. corporations paid an average of 45 percent of all state and local taxes. In WI, they paid only 39 percent. This represents a loss of \$800 million in state revenue and \$500 million in local revenue.

Many of the largest corporations in the state including Kimberly-Clark, McDonald's, PepsiCo paid *no* Wisconsin income tax, and Wal Mart and others paid a tiny fraction of the tax corresponding to their actual WI profits!

How can we turn this situation around? First by committing to the principle that school funding must be based on an "adequacy model". That is, the funding of a school district should be based on the *needs* to provide a quality educational opportunity to the students in that district, recognizing that the special educational needs are higher in some districts than others. These needs include small class sizes, quality well-paid teachers and up-to-date technology, textbooks and materials.

The second key principle is tax fairness. The tax burden for providing quality education must be shared by all those who benefit, including corporations that do business in our state. This will reduce the current unfair residential property tax.

Bills (AJR 35 and SJR 27) have been introduced in the state legislature calling for changes in school funding to reflect these principles.

To learn more, contact Mr. Beebe at tbeebe@wisconsinsfuture.org or (414) 384-9094.



Tom Beebe

Assembly Candidates Introduce Themselves to the Membership

Our First Assembly District is fortunate to have two candidates vying for the Democratic nomination for that seat. Comprising Door, Kewaunee and part of Brown Counties, this seat could be one of the three in the Assembly, currently held by Republicans, that Democrats could take over to give us a majority in both houses of the state legislature.

At the January membership meeting our two candidates, Christopher Baeb and Richard Skare, introduced themselves to the members and spoke briefly about their backgrounds and some of the issues they viewed as important.

Christopher Baeb is a lifetime resident of Luxemburg. Chris works at the Proctor and Gamble paper mill, is active in the union there and head of the Union Committee on Political Education. He is married with two children.



Christopher Baeb

He characterized the key issues in his campaign to be:

- The need for good jobs for the middle class;
- Affordable health care benefits for all; and
- Good quality education provided by adequately paid, competent educators.

Chris said that he demonstrates three qualities lacking in the incumbent. He is: more approachable; more available; and more responsive.

He asked the members to “put a working man working for you in Madison”.

“Raucus Caucus” February 17th

Mark your calendars for **Sunday February 17th**, 4:00 - 6:00 PM, at the Ladder House, two days before the WI Democratic Presidential Primary, for a “Raucus Caucus”. Hear local Democrats representing the presidential candidates seeking your support in the primary election. There will also be a “white donkey (elephant?)” silent auction. Admission is \$10 per person, \$25 per family, and please bring a treasure for the “white donkey” sale.

Surrogate candidates, highly knowledgeable in Senators Clinton and Obama’s views and positions on issues, will debate and answer your questions with the goal of winning your vote.

Will the straw vote at the end of the meeting presage the results of the WI primary election? Come and participate and find out.

Richard Skare is owner of The Cookery restaurant in Fish Creek and a community activist. Dick has served as a member and chair of the Gibraltar Town Board, as well as a director of numerous civic organizations. He is married with two adult children. He particularly enjoys bringing people together to solve problems.



Dick Skare

If elected, he pledged to:

- Be an advocate for small businesses and family farms and their workers;
- Work to ensure affordable access to health care for all;
- Promote *sustainable* economic development by considering the environmental impact of development.
- Promote affordable workforce housing in Door County.
- Support Great Lakes protection;
- Promote use of renewable energy;
- Work to ensure access to higher education for all;
- Promote more transparent government.

On behalf of the DPDC Executive Board, Bill Perloff welcomed both candidates and indicated that the DPDC would be supportive of both, and expected a campaign focused on the issues. He also asked that when a nominee has been selected that both candidates unite behind him.



“We need change in Washington. I have always put country before party!”

Message from the Chair:**Look to Our strengths, not Our Weaknesses,
in Restoring “Public Policy for Public Good”**

If you have been reading this column, you know that I am fully aware of the difficulties we face as a Party. Despite our slim majority in key places during the past year, we have not yet been able to establish a progressive alternative to regressive policies concerning war, taxes, health care, jobs, trade, education and infrastructure.



**Estella Lauter,
DPDC Chair**

Democrats in our legislatures and executive branches of government will have a monumental task to perform even with substantial majorities next year. But the good news (dare I say, great news?) is that *people are stepping forward for the task*.

Although I am saddened that Edwards and Kucinich have left the Democratic presidential field, I am heartened by the fine performance (noted by Bill Moyers in his PBS Journal for Feb. first and third) of Clinton and Obama in their first two-way debate.

People who study presidential elections say that the winners over the long term have had to stay close to the center (among other necessities that upset Progressives), so we must resist the temptation to despair when they don't say just what we want to hear about our own litmus-test issue. *It is going to take time to reverse decades of unrealistic supply-side economic theory and dangerous illusions about our ability to “enforce” democracy across the world.*

But Progressive strength is building across the country in ways we have not seen since at least the 70s, and perhaps not since the 30's. It takes many forms. The critique of Bush, for example, that began with jokes about the Yahoo who couldn't speak in complete sentences has deepened to the point where he is widely acknowledged by people of all political persuasions to be our worst-ever Executive.

The Presidential candidates have spoken out about issues that had no traction in 2004: environmental degradation, the real cost of the war, the need for universal health care, increased poverty, loss of civil liberties, and the marked loss of American influence overseas.

The rhetoric of fear that had us by the throats from 2001-2005, is being replaced by facts and analyses from a variety of regional, national and international sources that recognize terrorism as only one of many serious problems we face on this planet.

Right here in Wisconsin, the Democratic Governor, two Senators, five of the eight members of Congress and the majority of the WI Senate will likely remain in office in the '08 election, and *we are poised to take back the WI Assembly*. We are within three seats of a majority there.

Assembly District # 1 (that's us) has two candidates for one of those seats: Christopher Baeb from Luxemburg and Dick Skare from Fish Creek. Since our Primary is not until September, they have plenty of time to develop their ideas and their different constituent bases before facing the (R) incumbent in the fall. As a Party, we have asked each one to pledge support for the winner of that Primary so that we present a united front against the status quo in the representation of Assembly District #1.

In case you think the Assembly race doesn't matter, think again! “Healthy Wisconsin” is at stake, along with the rights of all domestic partners, school funding, and many other issues that affect us and our children every day.

Also right here in Door County, we have the opportunity to elect Progressive candidates to the County Board, the Sturgeon Bay City Council, the School Boards, and an array of other non-partisan offices. Ben Meyer has asked for our support in his bid for the County Board from Sturgeon Bay, and we invite other candidates to let us know the Progressive issues they plan to address if elected.

Let's do it! Let's keep this sea change going in the county, the state and the country. No candidate will be perfect, but many of them will be excellent in some important way, and carrying out a progressive agenda depends upon electing Democrats to office.

Senators Clinton and Obama both emphasized in their recent debate that the differences between them (and by extension other Democrats) are tiny compared to the differences between Democrats and Republicans. If we all push for some form of excellence, as Rep. Steve Kagen says, *“Together we will ”* all be winners in the long run.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

DPW Founders Day Gala, Saturday, February 16, 2008, 6:00 PM, Midwest Airlines Center, Milwaukee. For more info (608) 260-221, or by email at founders@wisdems.org.

February Membership Meeting and Fundraiser, Sunday, February 17, 2008, 4:00-6:00 PM, the Ladder House Restaurant upper floor, 38 S. 3rd Avenue, Sturgeon Bay. Presidential Primary Mock Debate Fundraiser. See article on page 2. **Note change in date and time from 4th Thurs.**

Democratic Presidential Primary Election, Tuesday, February 19, 2008. Be sure to vote.

League of Women Voters Forum for Candidates for Door County Board, Wednesday, March 5, 2008, 6:30-8:30 PM, Sturgeon Bay Library, upper level.

March Membership Meeting, Thursday March 27, 2008, 7:00 PM, Nasewaupee Town Hall, Discuss and vote on resolutions to be submitted to the 8th CD Convention; Democratic National Convention Delegate selection training.

Deadline for submission of Declaration of Candidacy forms for would-be delegates to the Democratic National Convention, Friday, April 4, 2008. See article in the January Newsletter.

First tier (County) Caucuses for delegate selection for the Democratic National Convention, Sunday, April 6, 2008, 2:00-4:00 PM. Location TBD.

8th CD Convention, Sunday April 27, 2008, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM, at The Woods in Green Bay (details of location will be in the March newsletter).

Second tier (Congressional District) Caucuses for delegate selection, Wednesday, May 4, 2008, 2:00-4:00 PM. Tentative Location is UWGB.

DPW State Convention, Friday, June 13 - Saturday, June 14, 2008, Stevens Point. Detailed info to follow.

Please Don't Forget - Renew Your Membership for '08

It is close to the time when the State Party determines the number of delegates that Door County can send to the 8th CD and State conventions. This calculation depends on the number of paid-up members of the County Democratic Party.

If you haven't renewed yet for 2008, please do so while it is fresh in your mind. The form for this is in the January newsletter. If you need a form please contact Bill Perloff, wperloff@dcwis.com, 839-9282.

Letter from Senator Feingold

Dear Wisconsin Progressive,

I hope that everyone had a safe and happy holiday season. While I will continue to stand up for the values we share, the New Year brings with it increased opportunity to get our country moving in the right direction.



And while we must fight hard this year to take back the State Assembly, increase our seats in the State Senate, get veto-proof majorities in Congress, and elect a Democrat to the White House in November, there is an election in April that deserves our attention.

If last year's volatile State Supreme Court race was any glimpse of things to come, outside special interests will do everything they can to unseat Justice Louis Butler.

Justice Butler is a highly regarded legal scholar who attended Lawrence University in Appleton and law school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the last 11 years, he has served with distinction as a faculty member of the National Judicial College, where he teaches criminal law to judges from across the country and around the world. Justice Butler has spent the last 15 years as a judge, building a record we can all be proud of as he's worked to make our state stronger and safer.

There are so many important issues that the Wisconsin Supreme Court rules on every year, and the Justices that serve on the Court make decisions that can have a dramatic influence on our state for generations to come. We need leaders like Justice Butler to continue to bring his values, experience and independence to the highest court in Wisconsin.

I'm going to fight to keep him on the State Supreme Court and I hope you will join me. For more information, or to join our effort to support Justice Butler, please contact Butler Campaign Coordinator Peter Knudson at peter@louisbutler.com or (414) 755-2067.

With high hopes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Russ".

Russ Feingold
United States Senator
www.russfeingold.org