

Beach Cities Democratic Club



P.O. Box 2192, Redondo Beach, CA 90278

March, 2005

Next Meeting

Tuesday, March 22, 7:30PM
David K. Hayward Center
2000 Artesia Boulevard, R.B.

We're working on a post-election program. Come and thank our wonderful candidates and volunteers; check the web for speaker updates.

Mike Gordon

The planned Open House for our wonderful newly elected assemblyman Mike Gordon was postponed. As you have probably heard, Mike has been diagnosed with a brain tumor. We understand the prognosis is very good. He is a fighter and will win this latest battle. We look forward to having him back in Sacramento fighting for us. All our best wishes and prayers are with Mike. Send your cards to Mike's office at 1700 East Walnut Ave., El Segundo, CA 90245.

Victorious

Jim Aldinger greets well-wishers in Manhattan Beach as the vote count returned him to office.



True Reform in the Secretary of State's Office

BY SENATOR DEBRA BOWEN

There are few things more important in a democracy than the integrity of our electoral process.

That's why it's so important for California's Secretary of State—the one person responsible for certifying election results for all state and federal offices in California, as well as all of the statewide ballot propositions—to conduct the duties of the office in a nonpartisan fashion.

The first step toward meeting that goal is to pass conflict of interest laws that prevent the Secretary of State from endorsing or campaigning for candidates whose electoral results he or she is responsible for certifying. The Secretary shouldn't be co-chairing a presidential campaign and thanking donors for contributing to a particular candidate, which happened in Ohio in 2004, or chairing a presidential campaign while simultaneously ordering state elections boards to stop hand

counting ballots, which happened in Florida in 2000.

A second important reform would be to preclude the Secretary of State and candidates for the office from accepting campaign contributions from voting equipment manufacturers and vendors whose systems he or she is charged with certifying for use in California. The 2002 passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) created a new political player in the electronic voting machine manufacturers who are vying to get their voting systems installed in polling places throughout the country. Since the enactment of HAVA, the four major electronic voting machine manufacturers have given more than \$652,000 to candidates running for office, including Secretary of State candidates in four states.

Simply eliminating the party label next to the Secretary of State's name won't prevent him or her from getting involved in campaigns in a way that leads voters to question the Secretary's impartiality. That's because it doesn't reduce or eliminate the inherent conflict of interest between the Secretary's responsibility to ensure elections are conducted in a fair and nonpartisan manner, and partisan activities, such as supporting a candidate whose very election the Secretary of State will certify.

To minimize that conflict and instill confidence in voters that the Secretary is focused solely on the integrity of the electoral process, we need reforms that will change the very nature of how a Secretary of State is allowed to operate while in office. That means doing more than the political equivalent of putting a

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Visit our Website at lafn.org/politics/bcdc

From the President



Congratulations to Jim Aldinger for his reelection and to Nick Tell for being the top vote getter in the Manhattan Beach City Council race, thereby establishing an unprecedented Democratic majority on the council.

Winning election to the Redondo Beach School Board were Drew Gamet and Todd Loewenstein. Steve Gamet, running in District 1, and Dave Wiggins, for City Attorney, both qualified for runoff races.

Although not all our candidates prevailed, we're thrilled to have one proven Democratic leader and three new ones going to City Hall. I want to thank everyone who ran for such a strong Democratic presence on the ballot. I know what it takes to make that commitment to put yourself out there, and I hope you will stay engaged in the democratic process, we need you. And thanks to all our volunteers.

Now, after what seems like one continual election season, the recall-presidential-municipal marathon, what we all need is a day at the beach. Too bad it's March. I feel so happy to have had all the great experiences these races have provided and to have made so many wonderful new friends.

We now must find a permanent location to pursue those Democratic goals and have an ongoing presence in the South Bay. To that end, our AD Committee and all the local clubs are committed to finding ways to fund an office. We've started a Fundraising Committee, with Ranoo Shipper as Chairwoman. We all know how dedicated Ranoo is!! She has already started planning for a big "Cinco de Mayo" party on Saturday, May 7. She wants to have a garage sale too, so start your Spring Cleaning.

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February Recap

Gov is Vulnerable

Speaking to our February attendees, Senator Debra Bowen said that Arnold Schwarzenegger's popularity is starting to erode. The Democrats who first supported him did not intend to start a war with teachers or jeopardize the police and firefighter force in our state. But the governor's ability to command the media and send out paid signature gatherers—who receive up to \$12 per signature—has changed the political landscape in California and launched a historic battle for our future.

With his star power, Schwarzenegger is pushing for measures that would have gone nowhere under another administration. He is threatening to hold a special election to let voters decide on merit pay for teachers, privatization of pensions, and changing the rules of redistricting.

What's wrong with merit pay? It

may seem like a good idea, but exactly who gets to decide what constitutes merit? Four members of the State Teachers Retirement System who opposed the idea—people who were appointed by Schwarzenegger—have seen those appointments rescinded.

Bowen has recently introduced bills in favor of fairer elections. SB 469 would require signature gatherers to tell people whether they are being paid and by whom. Meanwhile, the Governor has gone to court to sue the Fair Political Practices Commission that keeps him from raising unlimited funds to support ballot initiatives.

She has also introduced SB 1050 to prevent a repeat of the San Diego ballot controversy (called "Bubblegate"), in which over 5,000 votes for write-in candidate Donna Frye were not counted because voters didn't darken the oval next to the write-in line. Her bill would require votes to be counted as long as the voter's intent could be

The candidates

RB Mayoral candidate Kurt Schmalz gave an update on campaign events and said he had been endorsed by the police and firefighters. He thanked BCDC for our endorsement.

Lee Fink read from a flyer put out by the South Bay Republicans mentioning BCDC and saying they feared that the Democrats had a plan to take over the city council. Lee has also been endorsed by the police and firefighters.

Two of the candidates for city attorney spoke: Steve Colin encouraged people to use and promote absentee ballots, the safest way to get your vote counted. Dave Wiggins predicted a large turnout in his district over the open space issue.

We also heard from Drew Gamet, a teacher running for Redondo Beach school board. Gamet says he has the support

of his fellow teachers and thanked us for our endorsement.

Todd Loewenstein reminded us that he is running on a partnership program to include teachers, administration, and the school board. He said the Daily Breeze and Easy Reader have run stories saying that the superintendent appears to be involved in electioneering, which is against the education code.



(Top), Bob Pinzler, Lee Fink, and Kurt Schmalz. (Right), Drew Gamet, Steve Colin, Todd Loewenstein

determined.

Electronic voting is under discussion, most recently due to the close gubernatorial election in Washington State. In that race, Democrat



Senator Debra Bowen

Christine Gregoire appeared to lose by 200 votes on election day. But in the recount, a tray of uncounted ballots was discovered, awarding her the governor's seat. This would have been impossible had the voting been 100% electronic.

Bowen said a bill is also in the works to allow instant runoff voting, which ranks votes and eliminates the need for runoff elections.

The Manhattan Beach candidates were participating in a forum and could not be present. Bobbi read a letter from city council candidate Eric Mah apologizing for sending out a "No Solicitors" campaign door hanger. Some people feared this message would hurt our precinct walking effort.

It was reported that PZ Associates is again canvassing in Redondo Beach to draw more members to the club and help our candidates.



The Senator plans to run for Secretary of State in 2006. There is a move to turn this into a nonpartisan office, but she believes that would keep voters from holding people accountable. Instead, she favors prohibiting the officeholder from certain activities that lead to a conflict of interest such as certifying the vote count ("who can forget Katherine Harris?").

The Governor's plan for redistricting bears an eerie similarity to what happened in Texas. He proposes to "randomly" appoint a panel of retired judges. Republicans who favored redistricting in the past were voted out of office as overly partisan.

Assemblyman Alan Lowenthal is working on an alternate bill that would prevent one party from dominating by creating a redistricting commission made up of appointees of the governor, the senate pro tem, and the Speaker.

Mustapha reported from the 53rd AD Committee that they cannot give money to the club but can donate to endorsed candidates.



New positions *Ranoo Shipper*

Edna Murphy has volunteered to help Shirlee Browne in her duties as treasurer and a motion was passed to approve her in this capacity. Ranoo Shipper is heading our fund raising committee. She is looking for donations for an upcoming rummage sale.

Lori Geittmann reported that she will be running for chair of the State Party Senior Caucus and invited everyone to attend the State Party Convention at the Los Angeles Convention center in April.



Monroe's Corner

A few days ago I received a note from a good friend, a Republican who believes in self-reliance,

optimism, & independence. In the light of President Bush's proposals, he asked, "Whatever happened to the American spirit of independence & self-reliance?" He feels the idea of personal savings accounts is excellent & even his heirs will benefit.

I wrote him a lengthy reply, which I am using as my column this month. I've given a fair amount of thought to the attempt by George Bush to make Social Security into something it was not created to be. Do you recall the Depression years before World War II? In those times jobs were impossible to find, businesses were closing & going bankrupt, money was scarce, people were on bread lines, starving Okies were migrating into California, and Communism was a monstrous dragon beckoning to the helpless.

Now we come to the crux of the matter. FDR & his administration developed a plan under the NEW DEAL to sign a social contract under which we all owed something to each other. To quote Ben Franklin, "We must all hang together or surely we will all hang separately." The plan for Social Security was that the average 'Joe' would not find himself in old age without assets, without healthcare, & too poor &/or sick and destitute. The plan was to provide elderly Americans with a guaranteed source of retirement income, and certainly not to be an investment vehicle.

What prevents anyone today from investing over & above his Social Security deductions? How do we protect people from making poor investments? Who really knows the sure way to invest for profit & no chance for loss?

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Beach Cities Democratic Club



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We also just heard about a contest to modernize our clubs statewide. State Controller Steve Westly has announced a \$5000 grant for the best idea for using technology to provide innovative solutions to issues facing all of us. We need some great ideas and we need them now—the submission deadline is April 5. The winner will be announced at the State Convention April 15-17 at the LA Convention Center.

State Chairman Art Torres says it will be “different and unique,” with interactive and educational programs, state and national leaders, grassroots organizers, and possibly Howard Dean. Our own Lori Geittmann is running for State Chair of the Senior Caucus. If you are not a delegate but would like to attend, there are a few observer spaces. Stay tuned, and start brainstorming that winning idea.

As we go to press, our dear friend and Assemblyman Mike Gordon is still in the hospital. All our love and prayers are with you Mike.

Bobbi Buescher

(Bowen, continued from page 1)

fresh coat of paint on a house with a crumbling foundation. If California wants a Secretary of State who operates in a nonpartisan fashion, we need true reforms that will repair that foundation and help rebuild the voters’ trust in our electoral system.

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Investment is a coin-flip for people with no financial background. If you are ill, do you go to medical school for 7 years to learn the cure, or do you go to a doctor? If you want to invest, do you need an accounting degree, or do you go to a financial advisor? In my not-too-humble opinion, the vast majority of Americans need the blanket of protective coverage of a plan that guarantees something in their old age, even if the returns are less than sensational.

The plan suggested by President Bush in truth is a weapon aimed at dismantling & destroying Social Security! It is a blatant attempt to undo 70 years of stability. It has kept millions of

old folks off the charity rolls & eased the burden for their children. And I haven’t even touched on the multi-trillion dollar cost for converting to personal accounts. If we follow Bush down this road, we scrap something that works & we buy into a guaranteed failure! We also, incidentally, build a huge kitty of funds for Wall Street.

You have said that the things that made America great are optimism, independence & self-reliance. That sounds grand & noble, but it is not how the real world works. How far has the Black Community gotten? or women? or Chicanos? or any minority? or even the disabled? Large corporations can hide behind rules & devices, and we all take advantage of tax breaks like homeownership deductions.

If we make the changes suggested by President Bush, we will put the USA back to the horse-and-buggy days of Warren Harding & Calvin Coolidge & Herbert Hoover. And what’s wrong with helping thy neighbor? Isn’t that a religious principle for all major faiths?

Monroe Weinstock