



GrassRoots

Newsletter of the Whatcom County Democratic Central Committee

March 2008

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Democrats turn out in record numbers to caucus

Whatcom County's Democrats came out in droves to the Presidential Precinct Caucuses on Saturday, February 9, and voted three-to-one in favor of Barack Obama for the Democratic nominee for President. The local caucus planning committee planned for a 30 percent increase in turnout over record-setting 2004 crowds. Instead, turnout

Caucus or Primary?

Which system should Washington state voters use to determine their preference for President?

**Monthly Membership meeting
Wednesday, March 12th, 7 pm
Garden Street Family Center,
Garden at Holly, Bellingham**

By Tim Douglas

Washington State Democrats traditionally have argued that the caucus system is a strong Party and community-building tool. Proportional representation based on turnouts of supporters for each candidate replaced the old winner-take-all system of the 60s and before. But American lifestyles are changing. Work and child-care obligations make caucus attendance tough for some. Mail-only balloting in other elections has reinforced the convenience of voting at home. Some voters simply don't want to discuss politics face-to-face. But arguments for a State Presidential Primary have downsides, too. That would reduce the direct discussion of candidates' strengths and weaknesses. Debate of issues and priorities may be lost. The reduction of the nominating process to retail politics—slick ads and slogans—would avoid tackling the urgent issues.

In this year's hotly-contested presidential nominating process, both a primary and caucuses were held in our state. Debate rages on about the pros and cons of each. And voters who don't wish to declare a party preference find both systems objectionable. Whatcom Democrats will air their opinions on this matter at the March 12 Central Committee meeting. A panel representing each side of the question will make their case and answer questions. Don't miss it! This discussion should inform the Platform drafting process as we prepare for the April 5 County Convention.

was almost three times the 2004 numbers, totaling over 9,600 Democratic voters in Whatcom County precincts.

Preliminary delegate allocation for Whatcom County precincts is:

Hillary Clinton, 233 delegates, 22.71 percent
Barack Obama, 772 delegates, 75.24 percent
Undecided, 19 delegates, 1.85 percent
John Edwards, 1 delegate, .1 percent

Delegates will gather April 5 in Bellingham for the Legislative District Caucuses and County Convention. They will consider platform planks and proposals and will elect delegates to the next level on the road to the Democratic National Convention in Denver in August.

Best-laid Plans

When we started planning for the caucuses, we didn't know whether Washington's delegates would even matter. We ended up with three times the 2004 turnout, at least partly due to aggressive publicity on our part. Many precinct leaders dropped leaflets at every door in their precinct. Others got on the phone and called their known Democrats, and those voters we didn't know about.

One aspect that drove higher turnout was the ability of voters to register to vote at the caucus. This allowed participation by many renters and students, who ordinarily miss the boat on elections because they fail to register or update their address by the deadline. Two precincts that are made up mostly of WWU residence hall voters had over ten times the turnout of 2004.

We as a Party were caught off-guard by the criticism of the caucus process, particularly the issue of no alternative to being present to vote. Proxies are allowed for religious observance, military service, and disability. However, this was not common knowledge. Resolutions came from the February 2008 caucuses calling for a primary rather than a caucus approach to nomination. The resolution will be considered for possible adoption at the Whatcom County convention in April. (See article about March 12 Central Committee meeting.)

School Levy Election

Ballots due March 11

**Whatcom Democrats support
full funding of public education.**

Growth Management in Whatcom County and Bellingham

Highlights of February 13 Central Committee Program:

By Tim Douglas

Two new Bellingham City Councilmembers and a now-veteran Whatcom County Councilmember led Whatcom Democrats through the challenges ahead in managing the area's growth. Jack Weiss and Barry Buchanan of the City Council joined Carl Weimer of the County Council to discuss how each local government will proceed now that the county has decided to add just 286 acres to the Bellingham Urban Growth Area. This was the second in a series of presentations to bring together Democrats and the candidates we have elected to explore practicalities of implementing some of the planks we adopt in our Platform.

How to manage growth is one of the most perplexing issues for Democrats here. How can Whatcom County avoid the cookie-cutter subdivision of farm and forest land? How can Bellingham fulfill its infill objectives without diminishing the city's character and livability? To find solutions, elected officials rely upon both the understanding and support of Democrats (and others, of course) who live in the county and its cities.

Carl Weimer outlined the realities of existing platted lots and the property rights that go with them. He noted that while one residence per 20 acres is the typical rural zoning, much land has been zoned into five-acre parcels. This generally does not provide the acreage necessary for commodity agriculture (e.g. dairy production) and can increase suburban sprawl. One solution might be to purchase smaller parcels to protect them for timber and farming. However, the cost of each parcel is very high, and funds are limited. Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs), if we can make it work, is one answer. A property owner who benefits from rezoning the property to higher density could use some of the profit to purchase

development rights in a sensitive area like the Lake Whatcom watershed.

Buchanan and Weiss both see the need for the city to put more detail to design and infrastructure for new urban centers where infill can occur. These need to respect the character of the existing neighborhoods. They cited Mayor Pike's expected announcement of a citizen task force to identify key character elements of the City's older neighborhoods. The Councilmembers pointed to the Fountain District, Samish Way and Old Town as examples of citizen-led efforts to create higher-density, mixed use areas within the city limits. Redevelopment of the central waterfront presents yet another opportunity.

PCOs and others expressed some concern that there are neighborhoods which may discriminate against people who live in rental housing or in groups that don't look like the norm of the neighborhood. This will make it difficult for many to find affordable housing when land costs are soaring. Others asked for alternative transportation systems like improved WTA bus service and more walkable neighborhoods.

All three Council members agreed that City and County must collaborate much more closely. Already, their respective planning committees have agreed to meet together to discuss how to harmonize what are sometimes inconsistent development and land use approaches in the urbanizing areas around cities in Whatcom County.

Help wanted:

Share your management talent

Whatcom County is blessed with many civic-minded Democrats who are willing to pitch in and help when called on. What we are in short supply of are "middle managers" who will make an on-going but minor commitment to leadership of some aspect of the organization.

Volunteer Coordinator: We've got the volunteers; we just can't always use them efficiently and effectively. We need one person (or maybe two) who can work smarter, not harder, using web and email to connect volunteers with the jobs that need to be done.

Office Coordinator: We have a great office staff and lots of others who can be called upon to help. We just need someone to keep an eye on the big picture, including training and communicating, facilities and equipment, as well as record keeping, so that the office is an efficient and effective work place for all our volunteers.

Contact Natalie McClendon, Chair, 671-6851, or email vicechair@whatcomdemocrats.com, to discuss these volunteer opportunities.

Whatcom Democrats Executive Board

Chair	Natalie McClendon	671-6851
Vice Chair	Abe Jacobson	734-5019
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State Committeeman	Hue Beattie	671-5597
Women's Club	Catherine Chambers	756-6759
Western Democrats (WWU)	Annie Jensen	www.udems.org
42 nd Legislative District Rep.	Frances Badgett	527-1097
40 th Legislative District Rep.	Tom Pasma	(360) 661-4485

Meet our Whatcom Democrats Executive Board

The following Executive Board profiles completes the series begun in the February issue. When we compiled these profiles, we were struck by the breadth and depth of the life experience, knowledge and expertise, and lifelong commitment to the goals of Democratic Party that each brings to the Board.

Road to the White House

It's not too late to become a delegate

At the February 9 precinct caucuses, we began a process that will not only choose our candidate for President, but will also define what Democrats stand for. The flow chart below shows the steps from your neighborhood to the national convention, where Democrats from all over the country will come together to develop a national platform. This process will pump up our party for the second half—the general election campaign—and a victory in November.

Any Democrat may still jump into the delegate election process by running for delegate at the Legislative District Caucus. You will not have a vote in that delegate election, but you may be a candidate. Anyone, not just delegates and alternates, may attend the Legislative District Caucus and County Convention and speak in turn and in accordance with the rules of the meeting.

Each of the candidate's campaign organizations will receive a list of the people elected to represent that candidate, so they can be in touch with their delegates before the LD Caucus. All delegates and alternates will receive in the mail an official call and agenda about two weeks prior to the April 5 event. Agendas and platform proposals will also be posted on our Web site at whatcomdemocrats.com.



Satpal Sidhu (Technology, 360 398-7906) is Dean of Professional Technical Education at Bellingham technical College since 2002. Satpal, recipient of Fulbright Grant in 2005 for Workforce education project in India, is a licensed engineer and worked in petroleum industry for over 20 years. Satpal currently serves on the board of Whatcom Counseling and Psychiatric Clinic, St Joseph Hospital's Citizen Advisory Council and Ethics Committee and the NW Clean Air Agency's Advisory Council. He is also a spokesperson for the Sikh Community of Whatcom County. He has lived in Whatcom County for the past 20 years with his wife Harmandir and three boys.

Maggie Hanson (State Committeewoman, 360 733-2539) reports, "I'm passionate about worker rights, social justice, and individual freedoms. I grew up on a farm on Smith Road, graduated from Meridian High in 1948, and worked as an accountant for Morse Hardware. I became an Air Force wife and lived in Del Rio, Texas, where I learned about civil rights. I managed my brother's supermarket at Guide and Smith Road for twenty years. I now own and manage rental houses, travel around the world, and spend as much time as possible with my wonderful four children and three grandchildren, all Democrats."

Hue Beattie (State Committeeman, 360 671-5597) represents Whatcom County at the State party's quarterly meetings and runs a mobile locksmith business with son Tom. Involved in Democratic Party politics since the early 60's, a Navy "cold war" veteran with 8 years in the Submarine Service, two years as a Vista Volunteer with the Lummi Nation and the Opportunity Council. Lived in Happy Valley since coming to Bellingham to attend Huxley College in 1973. Long time P.C.O., former county vice-chair, 40th LD state committeeman and has served on the national platform and credentials committees. In 2004 Washington State Democratic Party Man of the Year.

Catherine Chambers (Women's Club, 360 381-5091) serves on the E-Board as the president of the Whatcom County Democratic Women's Club. A 30-year resident of Whatcom County, she is a political activist who has worked on issues like women's rights and peace. She enjoys music, sewing, knitting, reading, and movies. Catherine lives with her 15-year-old son Dmitri at the Bellingham Co-housing. She hopes to travel to the Democratic National Convention this year, and perhaps a vacation abroad after the election!

Frances Badgett (42nd LD contact, 360 527-1097) is the PCO for Precinct 206 and chairs the 42nd Legislative District. She is secretary of the Columbia Neighborhood Association, serves on the boards of the Whatcom Chapter of Washington Conservation Voters and the Bellingham Bay Foundation, and is the outgoing Executive Director for the Bellingham Bay Foundation. She discovered the Whatcom Democrats through her work on the steering committee for the Healthy Bay Initiative. She is currently finishing her first novel, *Pale Mother*.

Whatcom County Democrats Calendar

March

- 1 Platform Committee Work Session. Garden Street Family Center, Holly & Garden, Bham. 1:30-4 pm.
- 3 Rules Committee. Initial Meeting. WD office. 5-7 pm.
- 3 Convention Planning Mtg. WD office. Will meet in conjunction with Rules Committee. 5-7 pm.
- 10 Women's Club Meeting. Espinoza's Restaurant 11:30 am-1 pm.
- 10 Convention Planning Mtg. WD office. 5-7 pm.
- 10 Finance Cmte Mtg. Roni Beall, 756-1405. 7-9 pm.
- 12 Monthly Membership Meeting. Garden Street Family Center, Holly Street. 7-9 pm. See page 1.
- 17 Convention Planning Mtg. WD office. 5-7 pm.
- 22 District-Only Voting Forum. Bellingham Public Library- lower level. 10 am-12 pm.
- 24 Convention Planning Mtg. WD office. 5-7 pm.
- 26 WD Executive Board. WD office. 7-9 pm.
- 31 Convention Planning Mtg. WD office. 5-7 pm.

April

- 5 LD Caucuses & County Convention
- 9 Monthly Membership Meeting. Garden Street Family Center, Garden and Holly, Bellingham. 7-9 pm. ALL DEMOCRATS WELCOME



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Obama local contacts:

Stephanie Kountouros, 734-2686
www.whatcom4obama.com
email whatcom4obama@gmail.com

Clinton local contacts:

Maggie Hansen 733-2539 or
David Narsico 714-1258

Thank you to our vital volunteers!

A HUGE thanks goes out to all the volunteers who helped make the caucuses a success. There are too many to name individually and there are many who just pitched in anonymously, but we'd like to acknowledge the roles volunteers played:

Reserving facilities, recruiting precinct leaders, creating and preparing written materials, training precinct leaders, site planning, paying the bills, staffing the office, answering the phone, doing media contact and publicity, designing posters and flyers, designing and maintaining web pages, writing newsletter copy, editing, printing, mailing newsletters, answering more phones, calling voters, doorbelling voters, distributing flyers (in the rain), making signs, assembling yard signs, counting out paper supplies, collating and stuffing precinct packets, setting up rooms, staffing information tables, posting signs, making

coffee, making cookies, showing up, taking minutes, tallying votes, running as a delegate, voting for delegates, filling out forms, collecting information, cleaning up, stacking chairs, locking the doors, Phew, it's over.

Oops, I guess not: Sorting out paperwork, opening donation envelopes, counting money, turning in voter registration forms, tallying county results, reporting results to the media and State Party, copying official records, delivering records to Seattle, depositing money, entering data for Public Disclosure Reports, customizing computer programs, entering membership records, compiling Platform Issue surveys, entering attendance and delegate information, serving on the Credentials Committee, tracking down missing information, planning Platform Committee meetings, booking facilities for the LD Caucus/Convention...