



GrassRoots

Newsletter of the Whatcom County Democratic Central Committee

April 2008

www.whatcomdemocrats.com 647-7661

Vol 4, Issue 4

Democrats to Gather April 5 for County Convention, Delegate Election

Delegates elected at their precinct caucus in February will gather on Saturday, April 5, 2008 at Whatcom Community College for the Legislative District Caucus and County Convention. The delegates will represent the voters in their precincts in voting for a presidential candidate for the nominee of the Democratic Party. They will also debate and adopt a Whatcom County Democratic Party platform. Non-delegates are welcome to attend, but space is limited. Proceedings begin at 9 am and are scheduled to finish at 5:30 pm.

The Legislative District Caucus is the second step in a process duplicated all over the country to select delegates to the National Democratic Party Convention in Denver in August. The National Convention will nominate our party's candidate for President, and kick off the general election campaign.

Gov. Gregoire Headlines May 31st Dinner

Governor Christine Gregoire will be our guest of honor at our not-so-annual Eleanor Roosevelt Dinner on May 31st. Here in Whatcom County, we have big job to bring in the votes for the Governor's re-election, and having her here should inspire us to a great election campaign

Besides dinner, we will be doing a bit of fundraising, including a silent auction, starting at 6 pm at the Lakeway Inn in Bellingham. Funds raised will support a wide variety of campaign activities, such as voter registration, booths at local fairs and festivals, and get-out-the-vote mailing and phone-banking.

Tickets are \$35 for this dinner gala and will go on sale April 5 at the County Convention. Buy your tickets on-line through brownpapertickets.com, or at our office, 647-7661. Supporter tickets for \$50 and Sponsorship tickets for \$100 will also be available, along with special recognition.

More volunteers are needed to make this evening a special occasion and a financial success. Auction items are also needed. Anyone interested in helping should plan to attend the Finance Committee meeting on April 14th, 7-9 pm, at the Whatcom Democrats office, 215 W. Holly, Suite B-27, or call Roni Beall, co-chair, at 647-7661.

State Senator Harriet Spanel to retire

Our great State Senator and true-blue Democrat from the 40th Legislative District, Harriet Spanel, is retiring from the Senate at the end of her current term. While it is disappointing to lose such a great public servant, we look forward to Harriet's continued strong engagement in our Democratic community life.

Recently Senator Spanel has served as chair of the Democratic Caucus in the State Senate, one of the most important leadership positions in the legislature. Despite her high-powered responsibilities in Olympia, Harriet has always made time to be a true-blue grass-roots Democrat here in Whatcom and "her" other counties in NW Washington. Whether to chair a convention or to address a meeting, she has always been there to roll-up her sleeves and do the hard work for Democratic causes at home. Although it will be sad not to have her any longer as Senator, it will be great to have true-blue Democrat Harriet Spanel in our community.

There is a lot of interest in this 40th Senate seat, and the leaders of the 40th Legislative District Democrats will be holding events around the district for voters and candidates can meet. Because of the Supreme Court "top-two Primary" ruling, it appears that it may fall to our PCOs to choose a Democratic Party nominee prior to the primary election (see article inside). We're still awaiting clarification from our State Party, but know that things need to move fairly quickly. Check the Whatcom Dems website and the 40th LD website (link from Whatcom Dems) to find out about upcoming events and meetings. This is a big race for us as we very much want to keep Harriet's seat in the Democratic column.

Monthly Membership meeting

Wednesday, April 9th, 7 pm
Garden Street Family Center,
N. Garden at Holly, Bellingham

- PCOs will elect a new Recording Secretary
- All members will vote on Resolutions coming out of the County Convention

Top-two Primary Limits Voter's Choices

by Natalie McClendon and Steve Lydolph

The U.S. Supreme Court has found that, by changing the definition of a primary election from a nominating process to a "winnowing" process, the top-two primary initiative, I-872, is not unconstitutional on its face. Even though it is constitutional, it doesn't mean a top-two primary is good election or public policy. We oppose the top-two method, and support a process that allows Democratic voters to choose a Democratic Party nominee in a primary election, who will represent the party on the general election ballot.

Rather than going into the legal and constitutional issues of this ruling, here's how it affects the up-coming state and legislative races.

Women's Suffrage, Legislative Brunch on tap for Women's Club

April's Women's Club guest speaker will be Shanna Stevenson from the Washington Women's History Consortium. She will speak about the centennial of the Women's Suffrage Amendment to the Washington State Constitution. The luncheon begins at 11:30 a.m. at Espinoza's Restaurant in the Sehome Village Shopping Center; the program at 12:15. All are welcome to attend.

State Rep. Kelli Linville will again host the Whatcom County Democratic Women's Club annual Legislative Brunch on April 19th at the YWCA Ballroom from 10 a.m. - noon. Anticipate visits from other legislators and candidates. Tickets are \$10.00 and will be available April 1st by contacting Lynn Evich at 650-1453 or on-line at BrownPaperTickets.com.

For information or questions contact Catherine Chambers at 360-381-5091.

The right of Washington's voters to "vote for the person and not the party" has never been threatened. The General Election has always been the time for all voters to express their preference. Unfortunately, now with the top-two system, the general election will only have two candidates to choose from, rather than one from each of the political parties, and even an independent or two. The voters' choice has been severely limited.

To have the best chance of winning elections, it makes sense for any party to pick a single person, their nominee, and put their time, energy, organization, and money behind just that one candidate. The Supreme Court reaffirmed our right to nominate our candidates by whatever process we choose. Because the top-two primary process winnows the list of candidates, but does not provide a mechanism for parties to nominate a single standard-bearer, the Democratic Party has adopted rules to move the nomination process outside the electoral system.

For 2008 partisan primaries, the new party rules generally provide that Precinct Committee Officers (precinct-level representatives elected by the Democrats from each precinct) will vote on nominations at meetings held prior to May 23, 2008.

It is ironic that instead of giving voters more choices, the top-two primary has the effect of limiting general election ballot choices to two candidates, and removing the voters from direct participation in the party nomination process. The Democratic Party supports a primary system that allows Democrats to vote for a Democratic Party nominee, who will represent the party on the general election ballot. After experiencing the top-two primary, perhaps a majority of Washington's voters will agree.

Run for PCO election!

Spring in even-numbered years is the time for precinct committee officers (PCOs) to think about who will be running for re-election, and what slots we need to find candidates for. As elected officials, PCOs have to go through the same filing procedures as candidates for legislature or senate, which happens in early June. They then stand for election in the Primary, and take office on December 1, for a two-year term.

All the precinct caucus captains who led a caucus are encouraged to run for election as PCO, but any Democrat may run.

I urge you to consider this essential grassroots position. We had every precinct, all 119 of them, with a leader for the caucus, and we need every precinct with a leader for this upcoming presidential election year.

Carole Jacobson, PCO coordination, 734-5019, [carolejacobson \[at\] comcast.net](mailto:carolejacobson[at]comcast.net)

Whatcom Democrats Executive Board

Chair	Natalie McClendon	671-6851
Vice Chair	Abe Jacobson	734-5019
Treasurer	Peggy Borgens	384-0861
Recording Sec.		
Corresponding Sec.	Roni Beall	756-1405
Affirmative Action	Rosalinda Guillen	738-0893
Campaign	Dave Willingham	224-5628
Candidates	John McGarrity	738-9695
Finance (Co-chairs)	Roni Beall	756-1405
	JoAnn McNerthny	441-2728
Issues/Resolutions	Tim Douglas	676-8530
Membership	Steve Schuck	733-1063
Communications		
Technology	Satpal Sidhu	398-7906
State Committeewoman	Maggie Hanson	733-2539
State Committeeman	Hue Beattie	671-5597
Women's Club	Catherine Chambers	756-6759
Western Democrats (WWU)	Annie Jensen	wwudems.org
42 nd Legislative District Rep.	Frances Badgett	527-1097
40 th Legislative District Rep.	Tom Pasma	(360) 661-4485

Caucus or Primary:

How Should WA State Democrats Pick a Presidential Nominee?

In support of the *Primary* system

by Bob Burr

John Kerry once said, “politics has been divided by two types of people: those who want more people to vote, and those who want fewer people to vote”. That pithy statement neatly summarizes the difference between those who favor primaries and those who favor caucuses. Voter participation is ALWAYS higher in primaries than in caucuses.

Just look at Whatcom County. We had record turnout at the caucuses—over 9600. For the totally meaningless primary, the figure was over 24,400. On Super Tuesday, 6% of the registered voters turned out in caucus states and 30% in primary states. Surely, the system that allows the greatest number of people to participate is both more democratic and more Democratic.

Caucuses are not democratic. Democracy is about power to and rule by the people. To me, our party has always been the party of the people. Some argue that caucuses are highly democratic given their face-to-face and interactive nature, and that truly is a plus for caucuses. But democracy of the few, however interactive, is not democracy. It is aristocracy. And yes, it is elitism of a sort.

The numbers themselves provide clear evidence of disenfranchisement. Caucuses result in voter suppression; and, as such represent democracy in its most corrupt form—institutionalized disenfranchisement.

Caucuses are exclusionary, and the groups that they systemically exclude have long been the base of our Party. The elderly and lower wage folks are the ones that the Democratic Party is supposed to protect; yet, the caucus system discriminates against them. In our state, it disenfranchises those who must work on Saturdays (primarily in retail, care giving or police work), those like me who had to travel on that day, out-of-state students, those without adequate transportation, and effectively the military, the sick and disabled and those who observe Saturday as the Sabbath, as well as those not proficient in the English language.

Caucuses ignore the desires of voters. The electorate wants primaries that count. The most recent poll by the University of Washington shows that those who prefer purely primaries outnumber those who prefer purely caucuses by a margin of 5 to 1. This is a public relations nightmare for the party.

Demographically, people who vote in primaries are much more reflective of the people who vote in general elections than are caucus attendees. Thus, the caucus process is less likely to nominate someone that will draw the greatest support from Democrats in the general election.

When I was growing up, electioneering at the polling place

was not permitted. At caucuses, it is institutionalized and applauded. In most states, caucuses also deny the basic precept of a “secret ballot”.

Caucuses no doubt foster a greater sense of community and help in party building. These benefits, however, do not excuse disenfranchisement.

My solution? Apportion delegates solely on the basis of primary results. Then, a week or two after the primary, hold caucuses to select the actual delegates (the number for each candidate having been predetermined by the primary) and to have a much more thorough discussion of resolutions and platform issues.

In support of the *Caucus* system

by Peggy Borgens

The most important reason I see for continuing to use the caucus system for our parties presidential nominating process is to rebuild our desperately needed communities. We have an opportunity to build on record turnout of citizens to rebuild our civic involvement. We have awesome values described in our platform. I want to meet with like-minded neighbors and mix it up at least every 2 years. I hope we embrace the opportunity and insist on the democracy we believe in.

Pragmatically, the question between the \$9,700,000 taxpayer funded primary and continuing with the Democratic member supported caucus, we have always used, is, whether it matters if it's Democrats who decide who we put forth in the November election. In the taxpayer supported primary (open primary state) it will be whoever wants to. It could be anyone in the caucus system also. The bar is only slightly higher. All one has to do is show up once every 4 years for 3, maybe 4 at the most, hours.

As it stands now, there are 3 cases where a person can request to register their presence by proxy (disability, military service, or religious reasons). Anyone can make themselves available to be a delegate by proxy.

I propose we make proxy available to anyone who wants to register their preference. There would be deadlines, as now, to allow the proxies to be forwarded to the precincts. This answers the many complaints heard, allows anyone to participate in presidential preference, and as a potential delegate (as they can now). The only caucus function they would miss is electing delegates.

The advantage of this, in our open primary state, is we maintain control of the process. It is my opinion, if we give up the caucus, under current conditions, we are turning our voice over to the corporate media. We will never get it back. They still market to us with the caucus system, as they do now, but we will continue to meet and decide, as Democrats, who we offer the voters in November.

Whatcom County Democrats Calendar

All events at 215 W. Holly St, Suite B-27, unless otherwise noted

April

- 5 LD Caucuses & County Convention, Whatcom Community College, 9am - 5:30 pm, see P. 1
- 7 Campaign Cmte mtg, 6 pm
- 9 Monthly Membership Meeting. Garden St Family Center, Holly Street. 7-9 pm. See page 1.
- 10 Office Volunteer orientation, 10:30 am.
- 12 42nd LD April mtg, 10 AM - noon, Machinists Hall, 2064 Vista Dr., Ferndale. Frances Badgett, 527-1097.
- 14 Women's Club Meeting. Espinoza's Restaurant 11:30 am-1 pm. See p. 2.
- 14 Finance Cmte Mtg. Roni Beall, 756-1405. 7-9 pm.
- 16 Affirmative Action Cmt Mtg, 6 pm.
- 19 Legislative Brunch, hosted by Rep. Kelli Linville, YWCA Ballroom, 1026 N. Forest St., B'ham, 10 AM - noon. RSVP, tickets, Lynn Evich 650-1453. (see p 2).
- 30 WD Executive Board. 7-9 pm.

May

- 14 Monthly Membership Meeting. Garden St Family Center, Garden and Holly, Bellingham. 7-9 pm. ALL DEMOCRATS WELCOME
- 31 Eleanor Roosevelt Dinner, see P. 1



Whatcom County Democrats
215 Holly Street, Suite B-27
P.O. Box 3095
Bellingham, WA 98227

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Stay in touch in 2008

Sign up for email
notifications at
whatcomdemocrats.com

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE PAID
BELLINGHAM, WA
PERMIT NO. 28

How to Get Involved and Make a Difference

The Whatcom Democrats is constantly collecting information about what sorts of volunteer work our members and supporters are willing to do. Even though you've given us your name and interests, the best way to get involved on a decision-making level is to show up at committee and Executive Board meetings, listen and learn what's going on and volunteer to help on the spot.

For our part, our committee chairs will make an effort to plan meetings well in advance and publicize them to all who have expressed an interest in their work. Please check the calendar, above, for meeting dates for the Campaign, Finance (fundraising), 42nd Legislative District, Communications (newsletter, email, website, etc), Affirmative Action, office volunteer orientation.

Other Allied Events in April

- 3 B'ham Planning Commission public hearing on proposed ordinance to weaken Comprehensive Plan. 7 PM, B'ham City Council Chambers. Abe Jacobson, 734-5019.
- 5 Clinton-delegate meetup, 6 PM+, Cascade Pizza, 2431 Meridian, food & drink. Catherine, 381-5019 or Maggie, 733-2539.
- 18 Michael Moore's SICKO Road Show, Mt. Baker High School, 4936 Deming Rd., Deming, 7 PM. United for National Healthcare, 714-8999.
- 22 Clinton-supporter meet-up to watch PA-primary results, 5 - ? PM, Horseshoe Café, W. Holly in B'ham.
- 26 Michael Moore's SICKO Road Show, Lynden Library, 216 4th St., Lynden, 2 PM.

Time to start your Spring cleaning

Start gathering your donations for our annual yard sale, again at home of Gene and Eleanor Hogan. It's a great location, and there's plenty of lawn space to show our wares. See if you can put aside a box of goodies to donate to help this year's yard sale beat last year's surprisingly good earnings. Our goal is less clothing; more house wares, plants, small pieces of furniture; CDs and books, and small working electronic items. We cannot take monitors or CPUs, or large or stuffed furniture. The date has not yet been set, sometime mid May to early June is a good bet. Stay tuned.

Drop boxes of donated items at the Democratic office beginning April 17, or to Central Committee meetings where someone will transport them to our office.

Obama local contacts:

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

Clinton local contacts:

Maggie Hansen 733-2539 or
Catherine Chambers 360-381-5019