



GRASSROOTS

The Newsletter of the
Whatcom County
Democratic
Central Committee

Membership Meeting

Wednesday, March 11, 2009
7:00 – 9:00 pm
Shuksan Middle School

2713 Alderwood Avenue, Bellingham
(on Northwest Ave,
half-mile south of I-5 exit)

All Democrats Welcome

**PROGRAM: Are Civil Rights At
Greater Risk in a Border County?"**

Immigration raids, vehicle stops, surveillance

We'll look at what Homeland Security measures may be doing to civil rights in Whatcom County and the northwest corner of our state. How effectively do these compromises of our civil liberties and privacy actually achieve a more secure America? What is the cost benefit?

Whatcom Democrats will explore with invited representatives of our Congressional staffs and with law enforcement the purpose of border area enforcement. We will look at the impact on minority and immigrant groups here in Whatcom County. As the new federal administration begins its critical review of current practices, what are the questions they should be asking? Join the Whatcom Democrats for a rousing session March 11!

See related article on Jefferson County Border Patrol activities on page 3.

March 2009

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Stimulus Package to help local port and transportation projects

by Gretchen McFarland

At their February 11th meeting, Whatcom Democrats held a panel discussion on the potential impact of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. Panelists included Barry Buchanan, Bellingham City Council; Jim Miller, Council of Governments; Hart Hodges, Director of the Center for Economic and Business Research at WWU; and Vinit Jacdish, Economics Department at WWU.

Hart Hodges opened the panel discussion with some background on why we need a stimulus. He then asked, "How big does it need to be?" He emphasized that the stimulus needs to be large enough and quick enough to restore confidence in the American people. It needs to have a psychological effect.

Vinit Jacdish raised the question, "What metrics will we use to judge success?" It was stated that the measure of success is not "getting back to the way we were." And that coming out the other side of this recession there may be a "new normal."

Jim Miller reminded the audience of "the three Ts" of the stimulus plan as outlined by Larry Summers, head of the National Economic Council for President Obama. Summers has said that the plan must be timely, targeted, and temporary.

Using transportation as his example, Miller emphasized that the critical time is now and that existing programs and formulas will be used to get the money out quickly. At the time of the meeting, planners thought Whatcom County would receive \$4 to \$5 billion for transportation.

Barry Buchanan shared a brochure on seven "shovel-ready" transportation projects that could be funded in whole or part with federal stimulus money. He also spoke about a City-Port partnership which will be applying for \$50 to \$60 million of

competitive grant money from the Reinvestment and Recovery Act. There is a total of about \$5.5 billion in the competitive grant section of the act.

The large audience interjected many questions and comments into the discussion. The panelists answered most of the questions with decisive, factual information, but many questions about specific details of the act could not be answered until the House-Senate compromise details became available over the next several days.

Toward the end of the discussion, an audience member asked the panel, "How do we create the dialogue that can show success?" Hart Hodges set forth three important guidelines:

- First, get the facts right.
- Work to tell the most realistic story you can.
- Be honest going forward.

He emphasized that there are no quick fixes - give it time.

Barry Buchanan replied, "Believe that we were right in who we elected. Remember the power of hope."

Follow the Money

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will be carried out with full transparency and accountability – and Recovery.gov is the centerpiece of that effort. The website will track the Recovery Act's progress every step of the way.

Recovery.gov lets you, the taxpayer, figure out where the money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is going. The money is being distributed by Federal agencies, and soon you'll be able to see where it's going -- to which states, to which congressional districts, even to which Federal contractors. As funds are allocated, they'll display that information visually in maps, charts, and graphics.

Ericksen-Alert!

by Steve Lydolph, V-Chair, 42nd LD Dems

Here's the latest on some of the mischief 42nd LD State Representative Doug Ericksen (R-Ferndale) has been up to:

Ericksen is sponsoring House Bill 1209, which would buy five passenger-only ferries for \$25 million. The bill does not address how or where the boats ought to be used. Ericksen also doesn't explain where, in a State budget that will cut funds for existing ferry routes, those new ferries would do anything but sit tied to a dock costing taxpayers moorage and maintenance fees.

In the first week of February, the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association asked Puget Sound port pilots to back off from increasing their charges, citing the downturn in the economy as a reason for their requests. The following week, Ericksen introduced a bill that would regulate the pay of Puget Sound port pilots. What's the connection? Perhaps the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association giving the maximum amount allowed to Ericksen's '08 campaign has something to do with it.

Republican "free market" malarkey... as far as Ericksen's concern, the only time the marketplace is really working, is when the "invisible hand" is giving ordinary citizens "the finger". Somehow, he is blind to free market principles when it comes to having the government guarantee profits to private companies or restricting the rights/choices of working people.

During a recent Legislative Committee hearing, Ericksen supporting a failed Republican amendment to add road construction to the light rail bill, gave a hyperbolic speech claiming that light rail is anti-child, anti-American, anti-soccer practice, and that apartments don't count as homes.

Steve Lydolph blogs his personal opinions at 'Washington Outsiders' washouts.blogspot.com. You can keep up with his musings on Rep. Ericksen throughout the Legislative session.

Track Legislative Action

State Senate Democratic Caucus

<http://blog.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/>

State House Democratic Caucus

<http://hdcadvance.blogspot.com/>

Top-Two Primary To Be Reviewed By District Court

by Natalie McClendon, Chair, Whatcom Democrats

Washington State's political parties are expected to be back in court in March 2009 in the on-going court case over the state's so-called Top-Two Primary election method. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last spring that the Top-Two Primary was constitutional "on its face," and that the state should go ahead with implementing the primary system, and see if it is unconstitutional in practice. Now the U.S. District Court will determine if the primary method, in practice, is constitutional, by evaluating how Sec. of State Sam Reed conducted the election.

Todd Nichols, a practicing attorney and chair of the Rules Committee of the Washington State Democratic Party spoke to the quarterly meeting of the 40th Legislative District Democrats in February about the progress of the case. Nichols explained that in order for the Top-two Primary to be constitutional, as claimed by its proponents, it would have to be conducted completely without political parties, which is the reason the primary ballot used the unusual wording of "prefers Democratic Party" rather than straightforward statements of party affiliation. The court will be looking at whether under a purely non-partisan primary, the political parties can still exercise their constitutional rights to select their own party nominees, and that

these nominees can be considered on the General election ballot.

The Democratic Party conducted "nominating conventions" in the spring of 2008 to select party nominees, to show the court that it's desire to choose it's own candidates was genuine. If the party had skipped this step, it would have undermined the party's argument that their constitutional rights to choose their party's nominee would be infringed by the Top-Two method.

In evaluating the constitutionality of the Top-Two Primary of 2008, U.S. District Court Judge John C. Coughenour could determine that the harm to the voters is too great and issue an injunction against use of the Top-Two, pending the final outcome of the court case, Nichols said. He predicted that the case could take up to four more years to resolve.

While party conventions have been used for centuries to choose nominees, partisan primary elections are more common in the U.S. today. Washington's political parties support a partisan primary like the Open Primary, Private Choice ballot, used in Washington from 2004-2007. This method asks voters to choose one party's ballot to vote for their preferred party nominee, and each party's nominee advances to the General Election ballot.

Many editorial writers and Washington Secretary of State Sam Reed have

continued next page

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email: add @whatcomdemocrats.com

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Democrats Oppose Border Patrol Highway Checkpoints on Peninsula

by Audrey Mei-Yee Tsui

The Jefferson County Democrats (Port Townsend to Hood Canal) have unanimously passed a resolution calling for suspension of expanded U.S. Border Patrol activity on the Olympic Peninsula. The Bush-era law allows for warrant-less Border Patrol activity anywhere within 100 miles of a US border or coastline.

"We acted in response to the establishment of random highway checkpoints and first-hand reports of Border Patrol surveillance of churches, farms, schools, stores, parks, neighborhoods, etc. — everything from boarding buses to carrying out ordinary crime control without respect for warrants or probable cause." says Matt Sircely, Chair of the Jefferson County Democrats. They are working to document incidents, along with indications that both racial profiling and quota-driven detentions are occurring.

The resolution states that the number of agents on the Olympic Peninsula has increased from four in 2006 to 25 today with projected growth to 125, and an expensive new facility in Port Angeles. This comes "at a time when basic government services such as K-12 education have been cut, long-term local public employees laid off, best practices abandoned

for lack of funds, and local officials, the U.S Attorney and the FBI have expressed budgetary concerns". Sircely reports that "our county sheriff and city police chief have spoken eloquently in their denial of this federal funding. Virtually all of our local elected officials have expressed concern." There is concern that this expanded Border Patrol will also intrude into local law enforcement jurisdiction, hampering local agencies' crime control and community policing strategies which build long-term relationships of trust and accountability.

The Jefferson Democrats call for a suspension of expanded Border Patrol activity away from the border "until the utility, legality and constitutionality of the expansion has been determined by the Congress and the courts," and an evaluation of its opportunity-cost in light of governmental service budget cuts. The resolution calls on elected officials "to foster a reformed approach toward securing our border which focuses on interdiction at the border, preserves constitutional protections and respects local law enforcement," and urges local law enforcement to "continue to uphold their sworn oath to protect the rights and liberties of the members of our community."

Info: <http://www.jeffcodemocrats.com/>

Top-Two Primary, contined from page 2

claimed that a partisan primary is unpopular with the voters. However, the Washington State Presidential Primary election was conducted as a partisan primary in February 2008, with strong public support for it over a caucus process. If the state continues to use the Top-Two method for its regular primaries (in August), the parties will be forced to choose nominees in a caucus or convention process.

Nichols said the strongest legal argument against the Top-Two method is that in order to make the primary non-partisan, and acceptable to the court, the Secretary of State ignored state law on the conduct of elections for political party's Precinct Committee Officers. Reed ordered county election officials to declare as winners the top vote-getter, even though they did not meet the state law requirement that they receive at least 10% of the number of votes cast for the top vote-getter of the same

party in that precinct. Write-in candidates receiving one vote were declared winners. The reason for the 10% requirement is to ensure that PCOs of the political parties be at least nominally representative of the party voters in that precinct.

Another constitutional argument against the Top-Two method will be that candidates on the general election ballot in November 2008 were not the nominees of the parties, in some cases. This situation shows that a political party was denied the right to select their own nominee to be considered by the voters in the general election. Having a constitutional right to select your own party's nominees becomes meaningless if that nominee cannot be considered by the voters on the general election ballot.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit are the Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian Parties.

Plant Sale

Time to Dig for Democrats

tentatively set for April 17-18

Help us reach our 2009 fundraising goal by potting up your extra plants. We'll even help you if you've got a lot to offer us.

Peggy Borgens will be leading the digging and potting crew, and we need someone to coordinate the sale itself.

To let us know you will have plants to donate, if you would like help digging, and to volunteer for this project, call our office at 647-7661 or email event@whatcomdemocrats.com

Task Force to Review '08 Caucus & Primary

The State Central Committee has charged a task force with to review the lessons learned from the 2008 presidential selection process and to propose improvements.

The first meeting of the task force will be in Tacoma on the Sunday, April 26th, 9am – 1pm, in conjunction with the Spring state central committee meeting. Seventeen members have been appointed, with DNC Member Sharon Mast serving as the Chair. The only member north of Everett is Richard May, 42nd LD Dems State Committee Man.

The Task Force is charged with holding hearings around the state to gather information about how to improve our state process. You can reach Richard at electionproof@aol.com.

Growth Management Topic For 42nd Meeting

The program of the monthly meeting of the 42nd LD Democrats will be *Whatcom 2031 - Comprehensive Plan Update*.

The program will focus on the Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and Rural Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Among the panelists will be County Councilman Carl Weimer and former County Planning Commission member Dave Pros.

The meeting is Saturday, March 14, 10am-Noon at Machinists Hall, 2064 Vista Dr. Ferndale, WA. The public is welcome.

Here's to the Women



Suffrage Celebration & Tea

Sunday, March 1st, 2-4 pm

Join the kick-off of a year-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in Washington State.

Free, and open to the public.

Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham. Sponsored by the Whatcom Democratic Women's Club



Whatcom County Democrats

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March 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 2 pm – Here's to the Women, Whatcom Museum, see above	2 5-7pm – Communications Cmte Work Session, office	3 7 am - 7pm – Call Larsen Lobby Day for United for National Health Care 8 pm – Young Dems, Rudy's Pizza, 1232 N. State, Bham	4	5	6	7
8 International Women's Day	9 11:30-1pm – Women's Club, Anthony's Hearthfire Grill 5-7pm – Communications Cmte Work Session, office	10 7pm – Drinking Liberally, Horseshoe Cafe	11 5 pm -- PCO Steering Cmte, Cordata Food Coop 7 pm - WDems Membership Mtg, SEE PAGE 1	12 7pm – League of Women Voters Lobby Day, Olympia	13	14 10 am -- 42nd LD Dems Membership Mtg, SEE PAGE 3
15	16 5-7pm – Comm. Cmte, office 7-9 pm -- Finance Cmte mtg, office	17 1 pm – Great Decisions, 1st Congregational Church, B'ham 8 pm – Young Dems, Rudy's Pizza, 1232 N. State, Bham	18 12n – Engaged Citizen Book Group, Village Books, Bham	19	20 Newsletter copy deadline	21 9am -- Lynden Dems, 405 Front Street, Lynden 9:45 am -- National Presidential Popular Vote Forum, Bham Library, downtown
22	23 5-7pm – Comm. Cmte, office	24 7pm – Drinking Liberally, Horseshoe Cafe	25 12n – City Club, Northwood Hall, Bham 7 pm – Whatcom Dems E-Board Mtg, Office.	26 7pm - United for National Healthcare, 1700 N. State St, Bham	27	28
29	30 5-7pm – Comm. Cmte, office	31	We don't have room to give you lots of details on these community events, so go to our website calendar (whatcomdemocrats.com) or call our office 647-7661 for more information.			