

GRASSROOTS

The Newsletter of the
Whatcom County
Democratic
Central Committee

Membership Meeting

Thursday, January 21

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Norway Hall
1419 N. Forest St, Bellingham
(between Champion & Magnolia)

All Democrats Welcome

Washington State Budget

*Former State
Senator
Harriet
Spanel will
lead us
through the
process of developing a state
budget. There will be an update
on the current progress of the
budget and thoughts from 42nd
Legislative District Representa-
tive Kelli Linville.*



Also:
Congressional nomination process,
Platform development (see page 4)
Dems Annual Budget (see page 2)

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info@whatcomdemocrats.com
www.whatcomdemocrats.com
360-647-7661

State Budget Challenges Our Problem-Solving Skills

Recently several of us met with Representative Kelli Linville to discuss the realities facing the State Legislature in the 2010 session. This will be another tough year for our state which is currently facing a 2.6 billion dollar deficit. Whatcom County's Rep. Linville (D-42nd), chair of the influential Ways and Means Committee, talked recently to us about how she sees the budget process unfolding:

1. \$500 million in cuts in the first 10 days of the session.
2. Closing loopholes in the tax code: are tax incentives working, obsolete, or justified?
3. Suspend I-960, for perhaps 3 years, which requires a 2/3 majority vote for tax increases. This severely limits our states ability to raise revenue in these tough times.
4. Qualify for every federal dollar possible.

Representative Linville explained that she will focus on the values and goals of the current budget, rather than specific programs. For example, the Basic Health Plan is one program that furthers the goal of access to health care. Some programs may not survive, but the Democratic lead-

ership will work to preserve what they were trying to accomplish. Linville's budget priorities are for those things only government can do:

- Access to health care
- Early -K-12 education system
- Criminal justice
- A lifeline for people in crisis

As soon as Governor Gregoire presented the "all cuts" budget in December, advocacy groups have been organizing to fight for their programs. The Governor doesn't approve of the cuts either, but they will be necessary unless we can muster the political courage and support for some judicious tax increases.

Adopting an income tax has been mentioned by some, but even if this was politically palatable, it is not a solution to revenue shortfalls during this recession. State that rely on income tax are in worse financial shape than Washington is right now.

Conservatives are salivating in anticipation of the chance to slash programs, promoting privatization, and criticizing regulation as "job-killers" It will be a challenge for all of us to stay focused on our Democratic values as we work to balance the state budget.

Dems Question Council Appointment

Losing a progressive majority on the Whatcom County Council wasn't our only bad news in November. Councilman Bob Kelly resigned in late November, to focus more on his full-time job with the Nooksack Tribe, and prepare for a run for the Nooksack Tribal Council.

After the County Council failed to find four votes for a replacement, County Executive Pete Kremen appointed out-going Councilman Ward Nelson to fill the vacancy until next November's election.

One January 6, Whatcom County Democrats requested that County Execu-

tive Pete Kremen seek a legal opinion from the State Attorney General on the legality of his appointment of Ward Nelson to fill the vacancy.

After two days of back and forth legal opinions by the Council Prosecutor's office, which did not address our main issue, Whatcom Dems Chair Natalie McClendon meet with County Executive Pete Kremen to try to clarify and focus the discussion. It was a very productive meeting and Mr. Kremen agreed that there were some legal concerns about Ward Nelson's nomination

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Membership to Vote on 2010 Budget

2009 was a challenging year for all non-profits financially, considering the state of the economy. The Whatcom Democrats committed to do more, not less, in 2009, and we managed to keep up with the bills.

We are very please with having a part-time paid office manager, who has really gotten the "background" work organized. This support staff allow us to maintain the level of activity we want to have, and our members and local Democrats expect from us. We will continue to seek commitments from donors to help with this expense.

Proposed Revenue

Member Dues & Donations	33,220
<u>Fundraising less Expenses</u>	<u>10,000</u>
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>43,220</i>

Proposed Expenses

Basic Operations	2,370
Payroll and Taxes	17,160
Physical Office	13,368
Newsletter	3,880
Party Building	4,150
<u>Caucus & convention</u>	<u>2,300</u>
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<i>43,228</i>

Campaign Fund, budgeted separately, averages about \$8,000 per year.

Members will vote on the budget at the January 21st meeting.

Washington State Legislature

State Legislators

40th District*

Sen. Kevin Ranker
Rep. Dave Quall
Rep. Jeff Morris

42nd District

Sen. Dale Brandler
Rep. Doug Ericksen
Rep. Kelli Linville

Leave message for your legislator at the in-state toll-free Hotline number: 800-562-6000

To email your legislator, go to their webpage at www.leg.wa.gov/pages/home.aspx

Lots of information on bills, hearings, committee schedules, etc, at www.leg.wa.gov/pages/home.aspx

Track Legislative Action

State Senate Democratic Caucus

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

State House Democratic Caucus

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

Questionable Appointment Could Jeopardize Council's Legitimacy

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for a position for which he was not eligible.

At press time, the day before Nelson is scheduled to be sworn in, we are continuing to pursue the issue with Mr. Kremen.

"While we recognize Mr. Kremen's authority to fill the vacancy on the County Council, we question the legality of the Ward Nelson appointment.," said Natalie McClendon, Chair of the Whatcom Democrats. "We urge the County Council, the County Executive and the citizens of Whatcom County to seek a definitive legal opinion, to ensure that decisions of the Council, going forward in 2010, are not subject to a challenge on the grounds that Mr. Nelson was not legally appointed to the Council. The integrity of Whatcom County government requires that this issue be settled."

Mr. Kremen has commented that he wished, by his appointment of Ward Nelson, to "depolarize the community." McClendon asked Kremen in the letter to "consider how polarizing it would be if in the aftermath of a controversial vote by the County Council, someone challenged the validity of that vote. This would strike at the very core of the Council's legitimacy to govern."

The legal issue in question only applies to Mr. Nelson's nomination, because he was unique among the 25 nominees as being a member of the County Council. The legal point in question is whether Mr.

Nelson was eligible to be appointed on December 8, 2009, the date the County Council considered applicants for the position, made formal nominations, and voted to appoint one of the nominees to fill the vacancy. When the County Council was unable to reach a majority decision on any nominee, the list of nominees was forwarded to County Executive Kremen who was charged with making an appointment from that list of nominees.

Everyone seems to be in agreement that Nelson is barred from holding two positions simultaneously. If Mr. Nelson was not eligible to serve in two council positions simultaneously, then he was not eligible to be nominated for appointment on Dec. 8th while he still held another Council seat, and his name should not have been on the list of nominees forwarded to Kremen for consideration.

Besides the issue of eligibility, "we are disturbed that Mr. Nelson, as a nominee under consideration by the Council, voted for and against the other nominees," McClendon said. "He saw no need to recuse himself from the process despite the clear conflict of interest."

McClendon expressed disappointment that County Executive Pete Kremen failed to adequately investigate the legality and ethics of the nomination. "The citizens of Whatcom County deserve impartial and ethical governance. Ignoring the law and conflicts of interest is the fastest way to polarize our community."

Whatcom Democrats Executive Board

email: add@whatcomdemocrats.com

Chair	Natalie McClendon	671-6851	demchair
Vice Chair	Bill Newmon	733-5386	demvchair
Treasurer	Peggy Borgens	384-0861	treas
Recording Secretary	Michele Kammerer	398-2878	recsec
Corresponding Secretary	(vacant)		
State Committeewoman	Stephanie Kountouros	734-7340	staterwoman
State Committeeman	Hue Beattie	671-5597	staterman
Affirmative Action	(Vacant)		
Campaign	Jason Heck	220-5914	
Candidates	John J. McGarrity	738-9695	
Communications	Riley Sweeney	360-649-1801	
Finance	Roni Beall	756-1405	
Issues and Resolutions	(vacant)		
Membership	Steve Schuck	733-1063	
Technology	Shane Roth	922-0442	
WCD Women's Clubs	Catherine L. Chambers	647-3888	
Young Democrats	Andrew Lamb	(425) 374-9686	
40th LD Representative	Bob Burr	671-8862	
42nd LD Representative	Steve Lydolph	384-5414	

WTA Seeks Levy Increase from Voters

This spring, on April 27th, a levy will go before Whatcom County voters in WTA's service area, requesting a sales tax increase of 0.2% (2 cents for every 10 dollars) to help WTA maintain their current level of service in the face of budget shortfalls due to the reduction of sales tax revenues. WTA staff has already reduced expenditures as much as possible by delaying capital purchases, differing technology, and cutting program costs for advertising, professional services, etc. However facing a \$2.5 million annual shortfall, WTA is asking voters to chip in to cover the deficit, which would prevent dramatic cuts in service and the laying off of dozens of employees.

Should the levy pass, current levels of service will be maintained and no staff members will be laid off. All of the progress WTA has achieved over the last decade, including the extremely successful "Go Lines," will be preserved. However, if the

Health Reform in Final Negotiation

We are in the last leg of this historic effort to pass health care reform and now it is down to the last round of negotiating. In the last month, the Health Care Reform bill (HCR) has passed the Senate, but with many key features removed. It no longer contains a public option but it does have the Al Franken amendment which requires that 85% of your insurance premium go to providing you care, and the Bernie Sanders attachment which provides money and structure for community health care clinics.

This weaker bill will be merged with the stronger bill from the House (which does include the public option and increased access to Medicare) in a process playfully called "Ping Ponging". Here a series of informal negotiations are hosted by Senate Majority leader Harry Reid between key politicians in both bodies of the legislature before the final version is considered by both full houses. and then handed to President Obama for his signature. We do not know what provisions will make its way into the final merged bill, but you can help that by contacting Sen. Harry Reid's office today at 202-224-3542 and letting him know what you think should be in the final bill.

levy fails, WTA will have no choice but to cut service: 9% this year and 32% over the coming two years. This will mean no Sunday service at all, limited evening runs and reduced breadth of coverage, which will only shift more of a burden onto the Federally-mandated paratransit system.

As Democrats, we value the role that public transit plays in our lives: environmentally and socially. Offering all citizens a viable alternative to the single-occupancy vehicle is laudable but there is also the ability to allow young people, seniors, those who can't afford a car or fuel prices—and all others who don't drive—the chance for autonomy, to participate in the work force and our community, and to support themselves. To deny a grandmother her ability to visit the grocery store on Sunday, or a teenager a way to get to his first job, or a blind person who cannot drive in a reliable manner to get around is to limit their freedom and their ability to contribute to the world.

Maintaining our current level of service is a crucial social justice issue, and it is going before the voters in a tough economic time, so we ask the Whatcom County Democrats for their endorsement, because there are so many people out there relying on the outcome of this levy. Thank you so much for your consideration!

For more information, to contribute to the campaign, or to volunteer, please contact Jason Heck at (360) 220-5914, or at Jason.b.heck@gmail.com. We could use all the help we can get, and are always looking for yard sign locations, sign captains, doorbellers, phone bankers, letter-to-the-editor writers and house party hosts!

Women's Club Discusses Attorney General's Office

Whatcom County Democratic Women's Club will be meeting at the On Rice Thai Bistro, in Fairhaven, 1224 Harris Ave, in 2010. On Rice has an inexpensive lunch menu. They continue to meet on the second Monday of each month, starting at 11:30 am.

February's meeting will be about the Attorney General's Office; what they do and how does that work in our local community. Issues include access to opinion's, women and safety and do not call list.

New Talent Joins Board

With the new year comes some changes in the Whatcom Democrats leadership. We are pleased to have three new committee chairs fresh from the campaign of 2009.

Jason Heck has been appointed Campaign Committee chair. He replaces Adam Day, who graduated from WWU in December and has taken a job with a state legislator in Olympia. Jason has considerable campaign experience under his belt, having directed Kevin Ranker's successful bid for State Senate in 2008, and Ken Mann's 2009 campaign. He was also an integral part of the Democrats' get-out-the-vote effort, so he has a solid understanding of the party's operations.

Riley Sweeney has been appointed Communications Committee Chair. Riley arrived on the Bellingham political scene as Catherine Chambers' campaign manager last year. He's a recent graduate of WWU, with a degree in communications and loves marketing. We're glad someone does! Riley will be helping us get our message out to the public more often and more effectively.

Shane Roth has been appointed Technology Committee Chair. Shane is a recent transplant (refugee?) from Las Vegas, and came to us through Laurie Caskey-Schreiber's campaign. He was instrumental in producing our very first TV ad last fall. This position has been vacant for some time now, although we have a number of volunteers doing pieces of it. It will be good to finally have someone at the helm.

We win some and we lose some. **Carole Jacobson** has resigned from both the Corresponding Secretary position and as PCO Coordinator. She will continue to be involved by reporting the action at city and county council meetings.

Tim Douglas has also resigned, as Chair of the Issues and Resolutions Committee. He will remain an involved and valued advisor to the party on a less formal basis. We heartily thank Carole and Tim for their service over the years, with many years to come.

These open positions, plus the Affirmative Action Chair, can be filled at any time. The Secretary position must be elected by the membership. If you are interested in stepping up your involvement in the party, please contact Natalie McClendon, 671-6851, to discuss your interests.

Mark Calendars for March 6th Caucuses

All Democrats are encouraged to attend the party's informal precinct caucuses March 6th to help craft the Platform that describes the values and priorities of the Party. This platform guides the party leadership in knowing what to put their energy and focus on.

The 2010 Caucuses will not actually be formal caucuses. We will not need to divide up into groups based on precincts, so we can be more flexible about when, where and how we meet and work on developing the platform. Locations will be all over the county on March 6th for Democrats to meet with their neighbors.

After we've heard from you, a Platform Committee will pull the ideas and points of view together into a proposed County Platform. Then the participants of the Whatcom County Democratic Convention, on April 10th, will vote on it. All county Democrats are welcome to participate in the convention decision-making.

We need people to help plan the caucuses and develop the platform meeting processes. Please contact chair Natalie McClendon, 671-6851, to volunteer.




Whatcom County Democrats

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

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January/February 2010 Check whatcomdemocrats.com for details

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
10	11 Legislative Session Begins 11:30am - Women's Club Mtg. On Rice in Fairhaven	12 7pm – Drinking Liberally, Horseshoe Cafe	13 12n - World Issues Forum, Fairhaven College Auditorium, WWU, Bham	14	15	16 9 am – Lynden Democrats, Homestead Farms restaurant 9:45am – League of Women Voters Mtg, Bellingham Public Library 10am - MLK Human Rights Conf. WCC Syre Center
17	18 Office Closed for MLK Day. 9am -People's Summit, Olympia 10am - MLK Brunch & March, St. Paul's Episopal Church 12pm - MLK Celebration, Municipal Court Bldg, Bham	19 1pm - Great Decisions, 1 st Congregational Church 6:30pm - Whatcom Progressive Grassroots Network, 1700 N. State 7pm - "Local Media: Endangered Species", RE-Sources 8 pm –Young Dems, Rudy's Pizza, 1232 N. State, Bham	20 12pm - World Issues Forum, Fairhaven College Auditorium, WWU, Bham	21 7 pm - Monthly Membership Mtg, See page 1	22	23
24	25 Environmental Lobby Day	26 7pm – Drinking Liberally, Horseshoe Cafe	27 12pm - City Club, Northwood Hall, Bham 12pm - World Issues Forum Fairhaven College Auditorium, WWU, Bham 7pm - E-Board Mtg, Dems Office	28 Transportation Advocacy Day	29	30 WA State Dems Mtg
31 7pm - "Travel as a Political Act" Rick Steves, 1 st Congregational Church, Bham	1 Reproductive Health Lobby Day	2 8 pm –Young Dems, Rudy's Pizza, 1232 N. State, Bham	3 12pm - World Issues Forum, Fairhaven College Auditorium, WWU, Bham. 5pm - Green Drinks	4	5	6
7	8 	9 Special Election 7pm – Drinking Liberally, Horseshoe Cafe	10 12pm - World Issues Forum, Fairhaven College Auditorium, WWU, Bham	11	12 Olympics Start, Vancouver	13 10am - 42 nd LD Dems Membership Mtg, 2064 Vista Dr., Ferndale