

DEMOCRATIC DIRECTIONS

CITY OF ALAMEDA DEMOCRATIC CLUB

NOVEMBER 2009

Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker to Speak

At its Nov. 11 meeting, the Alameda Democratic Club is very pleased to have as its featured speaker Alice Lai-Bitker, President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. Alice was appointed to the Board in 2000 and then elected to it in 2002. During her tenure as Supervisor, she has been a strong advocate for increasing healthcare for children, spearheading the "No Wrong Door" policy in Social Services. Her work on domestic violence includes "A Day of Remembrance," honoring victims of domestic violence, and assisting in getting federal funds for a Family Justice Center. Alice will speak on the present state of County services and how they affect all Alameda citizens.

The meeting, which begins at 7:00 pm, is held in Conference Room A (2nd floor) at the Alameda Hospital, Willow and Clinton Sts. The meeting is free and anyone who is interested in the democratic process is invited to attend. Refreshments are provided. For more information, call 522-3361 or visit www.alameda-demo.org.

WE WILL ALSO BE VOTING ON OUR OFFICERS FOR 2010. TIME FLIES!

HARRY TRUMAN

Harry Truman was a different kind of President. He probably made as many, or more important decisions regarding our nation's history as any of the other 32 Presidents preceding him. However, a measure of his greatness may rest on what he did after he left the White House.

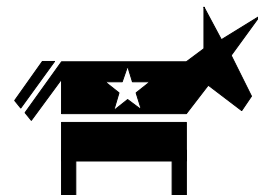
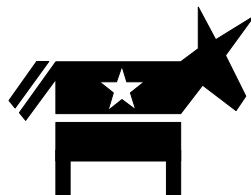
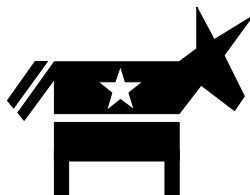
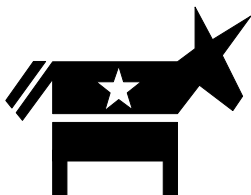
The only asset he had when he died was the house he lived in, which was in Independence, Missouri. His wife had inherited the house from her mother and father and other than their years in the White House, they lived their entire lives there. When he retired from office in 1952, his income was a U.S. Army pension reported to have been \$13,507.72 a year. Congress, noting that he was paying for his stamps and personally licking them, granted him an "allowance" and, later, a retroactive pension of \$25,000 per year..

After President Eisenhower was inaugurated, Harry and Bess drove home to Missouri by themselves. There were no Secret Service personnel following them.

When offered corporate positions at large salaries, he declined, stating, "You don't want me. You want the office of the President, and that doesn't belong to me. It belongs to the American people and it's not for sale." Even later, on May 6, 1971, when Congress was preparing to award him the Medal of Honor on his 87th birthday, he refused to accept it, writing, "I don't consider that I have done anything which should be the reason for any award, Congressional or otherwise." As president he paid for all of his own travel expenses and food.

Modern politicians have found a new level of success in cashing in on the Presidency, resulting in untold wealth. Today, many in Congress also have found a way to become quite wealthy while enjoying the fruits of their offices. Political offices are now for sale. (sic. Illinois)

Good old Harry Truman was correct when he observed, "My choices in life were either to be a piano player in a whore house or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference!"



State of the State Party

By Mark Briggs

I started this year thinking that it would be a low tempo year politically. But lately, I'm beginning to think that this year might just prove to be more important to progressive democratic politics than any, ever. We shouldn't look at this year as a "vacation." Instead, if we keep up the activity level from last year, we can begin to create a new "normal," pushing that "center arrow" more firmly to the left. If we Democrats look at this year as one of opportunity, then we can go a long way to achieving the country that we've all worked so hard to get. Here are some ideas:

We have a new president in office that is actually trying to do all of the things that he promised in the campaign. Really, all of it. He is making small adjustments along the way, but so far hasn't deviated too much in making his compromises.

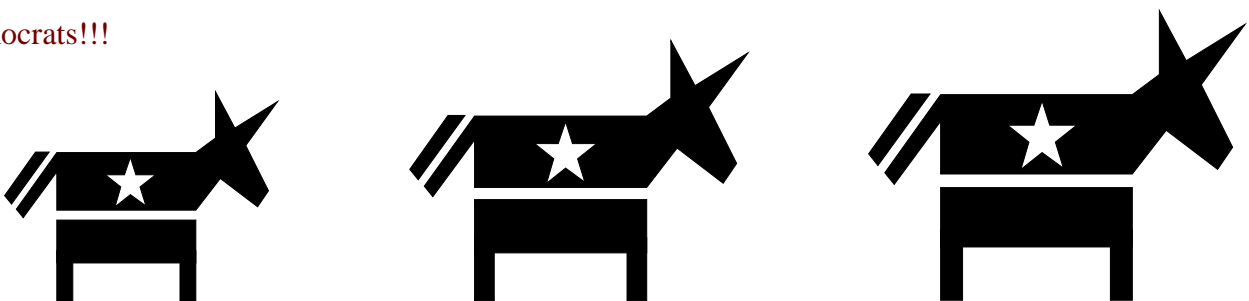
Of all the issues President Obama has taken up so far, I believe that the healthcare issue is the most important. This issue touches every one of us. It affects our economy, our national well-being, and our sense of who we are based on our common morality. All who are at the table debating this issue are coming to common ground around the "universal" aspect of this issue, but where there's disagreement is with the "public option." The public option, the back door into Medicare, is the way to a single payer healthcare system. The insurance companies don't want it. They want us to be mandated to buy their products like Connecticut does. Remember Mitt Romney? I think that we have to "make Obama do it." We have to show him that the will of the people behind him can enable him to make the right choice. The wrong choice could take another generation to fix.

The CADEM convention in Sacramento a couple of weeks ago was a great success for progressives. My friend, Mal Bernstein, said that this was the most successful convention he's ever been to (and that goes back to the 1950's). We elected great progressive women to the party's Controller office (Hillary Crosby), to the Women's Caucus (Karen Weinstein), and to the Progressive Caucus (Karen Bernal). We stopped the party leadership from endorsing Prop. 1A. We have new leadership up and down the party. The Obama inspired delegates are fired up. The Dean inspired delegates are fired up. The old progressives are fired up. The convention's theme was "California Democrats-A New Era."

All of the candidates running for new offices next year were at the convention. Newsom and Brown for Governor. Dave Jones and Hector De La Torre for Insurance Commissioner. Ted Lieu and Alberto Torrico for Attorney General. If you want to shape the policy future of our state, then get involved in one or more of these campaigns and make a difference. Let yourself be heard. Don't forget, we'll also elect a new mayor next year.

While I've been trying to get a political training program to come to our city, without much success so far (not giving up though), there seem to be a lot of training sites coming up that may be of interest to you. All of the details are at the issues blog. I would really encourage everyone to attend at least one of these events sometime in the near future. The tools that they give you will empower you in ways that will strengthen your ability to persuade. Check out the blog, and while you're there, leave a comment or two. Who knows, you might just start a discussion.

Go Democrats!!!



OUR CONGRESSMAN, PETE STARK

Excerpted from an article in the LA Times by Faye Fiore

Stark's colorful tirades don't offend the working-class Fremont district that has sent him to Washington 19 times. Years of Beltway brawling only seemed to raise Stark's stature in his largely blue-collar district, a Democratic stronghold wedged between Oakland and the Silicon Valley that last year gave him his biggest win yet, 77%.

Stark, long known as an antiwar crusader and champion of the disadvantaged, once called the American Medical Assn. a bunch of "greedy troglodytes." He assailed one Republican colleague as "a whore for the insurance industry," called another a "fascist" and a third a "fruitcake."

"Oh, yes, oh, yes, I personalize it and I shouldn't," Stark says, confronting what he calls "my outbursts" like a chagrined schoolboy who might do it again anyway. "A member has a right to have a position different from mine without my challenging their mental capacity, their integrity, their manhood, or their womanhood."

Elected in 1972 on an antiwar platform, Stark built a reputation as a tax law reformer and a fierce champion of universal healthcare. Among his legislative achievements: the COBRA law that lets workers keep health insurance coverage for a time after leaving a job; improved unemployment compensation; and legislation banning emergency rooms from dumping patients who can't pay.

Stark seems to thrive as the odd man out, the only self-declared atheist in Congress, a septuagenarian soccer dad and grandfather of eight. His 6-foot-2 frame is now just a hair over 6 feet. "As you get older, you shrink," he says.

But not from any fights.

His fans cheer Stark, an MIT-educated ex-banker and retired Air Force Reserve captain. His targets are usually Republicans who, as he sees it, put the wealthy before the poor, send other people's children off to war or fail to practice what they preach.

Growing up in Wisconsin with Republican parents, Stark shared their politics even while his liberal leanings simmered. The aptitude tests he took as a teenager told him to become a social worker. "It didn't take a kid very long on my block to see the guy at the YMCA drove a Model A and the banker on the next block drove a Buick," he says. "So I became a banker."

A graduate degree from UC Berkeley brought him to the Bay Area. Vietnam changed his politics. Stark switched to the Democratic Party to back the 1968 protest candidacy of Eugene McCarthy. He put little peace signs on the checks of his Security National Bank and plastered a giant one on the roof of its Walnut Creek headquarters; the resulting attention launched his political career. He sold the bank and has been an outspoken war critic ever since.

One of only two House members who voted in favor of a draft, Stark reasoned that his colleagues would think twice before sending their own children into combat. "It's great to wave the flag and say go get 'em, but if their kids were going to go, they might think differently."

REVITALIZING ALAMEDA POINT [Barbara Kahn, Editor's Opinion]

"Flip-Flops" in Alameda. First, the mayor supported the Alameda Point Initiative, hyping it through robocalls and featured mailers. Now, she supports the development but not the initiative. Frank Matarrese is saying the same thing. It seems like these two city council members did not do their homework. Did they not read the initiative? In which case, can they be trusted in their current judgments? Frank Matarrese is talking about taking SunCal's plan and highjacking it.

While I'm the first to be suspicious of developers, SunCal is apparently doing what they have said they would do, with city support, and has produced a plan that incorporates years of community comments and the latest in city planning expertise. They offered a plan with sustainable out-of-the-box thinking that moves us toward a 21st century development.

The council was unable to come up with an initiative to deal with the limitations of Measure A for the development of Alameda Point, and left the job to the developer. Seeing the opportunity to build a significant contemporary community on the old Naval Air Station, the developer has invested time, money and relied on the good faith of the City Council to move ahead.

One developer has already dropped their plan for utilizing this enormous resource because of problems with the city. Can we rely on pie in the sky scenarios that are being offered in lieu of this well thought out plan? Do we think that another developer will come along and risk time and money again? Are we willing to move backward under the leadership of two waffling elected officials who have demonstrated, if nothing else, an inability to render rational, consistent and sound judgments?

To be sure, there are valid questions about the proposal, but the City Council, with the support of the Mayor, Frank Matarrese and Doug DeHaan have eliminated the possibility for a fair and open consideration by our community of this potentially last chance to make something positive out of the relic of our war years. Regardless of whether one supports the plan or not, this action to schedule the election to scuttle the issue is not good government, nor is it good leadership.

**Our Annual Holiday Luncheon is
Next Month -- Come and Celebrate with Us**

On Sunday, December 6, we will come together to celebrate the accomplishments of Obama’s first year in office and the end of a busy and fruitful year for the club. And as is our tradition, newly elected officers for 2010 will be sworn in that day.

The luncheon will be held at Pasta Pelican from 12 noon to 3:00 pm. Complete details and a coupon to use when ordering your reservation are provided on the attached Invitation. If you have trouble reading or downloading it, please contact Lucille Cannata @ 264-0405 or by email at: lcannata@sfo.com.



Pictured is the home of Mary and Tom Miller, decked out for Halloween. Tom and Mary are professional artists who will be lending their talents to designing and building our Fourth of July parade entry next year.

Expect something Spectacular!



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