

THE VOORHIS VOICE

A Liberal Voice of the Inland Empire

August 2008

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www.claremontdems.org

MEETINGS & EVENTS

On September 12, the luncheon speaker will be Don Williamson, who is the Democratic candidate for the 59th Assembly District seat. He has had a long career in business, government, teaching and volunteering. After many years as a real estate broker, Don worked as a Deputy Assessor for 12 years, and then operated his own real estate appraisal business for another 12 years. He was elected San Bernardino County Assessor in 1994 and was re-elected twice, serving a total of 12 years. During this time, his fellow Assessors elected him President of the Central-Southern California Assessors Association. Don also served on 2 FHA panels, one on foreclosures. Since 2006 he has taught real estate courses at San Bernardino Valley Community College. In his spare time, Don has been an active member of the Kiwanis, elected President of his chapter twice and Lieutenant Governor of the region. Don has been married for 39 years and has 3 sons.

Luncheons take place on the second Friday of each month in the rear banquet room of the China Star Restaurant (now called Captain KJ), 921 W. Foothill Blvd. in Claremont. The event begins at noon and ends at 2 pm. Food is served family style. The menu is 50 percent vegetarian and contains no pork. Attendance is free, but the lunch costs \$10, which includes meal, tax, and tip. There is plenty of free parking, and there are no stairs to climb.

On September 29, at Porter Hall (Pilgrim Place), 7:30 p.m. our speaker will be Rosemary Radford Ruether, speaking about her book *America, Amerikka: Elect Nation and Imperial Violence*. Rosemary and her husband are club members and residents of Pilgrim Place. She is a retired professor of religion. She was one of the 3 speakers at our rally against an attack on Iran in front of the Claremont city hall on June 19, 2006. At that time she was identified as a "Senior Scholar, CGU."

Rosemary Radford Ruether has been a pioneer Christian feminist theologian for over three decades, and among the most widely read feminist theologians in North America. Her book, *Sexism and God-Talk*, a classic in the field of feminist theology, remains the only systematic feminist treatment of the Christian symbols to date. To categorize her as a feminist theologian, however, is to risk neglecting the broad scope of her interests. With wide-ranging scholarship and a penchant for finding the hidden connections among seemingly disparate fields, Ruether has written and edited close to twenty books and hundreds of articles and reviews. She is seemingly at home in such diverse fields as patristics, the historical and theological roots of anti-Semitism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the history of women in American religion, liberation theology, the mythology of the Ancient Near East, and ecology.

Watch your e-mail and/or the website for information on the opening of the election headquarters (details not available at press time)!! Volunteers are needed to staff the headquarters operations. If you have a few hours between now and the election, call Gar Byrum at 621-9730 or email VolunteerDemHQ@gmail.com.

LOSSES IN THE DEMOCRATIC FAMILY

In June we lost Jay Harber, a member who spent his life working for equality, education, affordable housing and domestic and international peace, as a minister, teacher, organizer, mediator and administrator. The world is poorer without him. The Courier had a wonderful account of his generous life in its July 12 issue.

Club member Don Hokanson died on July 31. Don was a long-time member who was a regular at our monthly luncheons and kept the speakers on their toes with his questions and comments. He was also very active in senior organizations and was appointed to various committees on aging. The Daily Bulletin contained a fine obituary on August 6. We'll miss his challenges to our thinking.

OUR CABLE TELEVISION PROGRAMS

Our DCC programs to be aired on Time Warner Cable channel 29 during the month of August feature two of our candidates for state offices and two distinguished Democrats.

Our Thursday evening program, "Claremont Democratic Forum" airing at 8:30 PM, presents interviews with Joe Lyons, candidate for the 29th State Senate seat, and with Donald Williamson, candidate for the 59th Assembly District. Our Friday evening program, "Democrats: People and Ideas" airing at 8:00 PM, focuses on the observations and deeds of two local activists, David Levering and Terry Masl.

Our local Democratic candidates, if elected, will bring knowledge and experience to their respective offices. Joe Lyons, in his interview with Ivan, discusses his background, upbringing, and family, along with his experience in the field of medical research. These experiences impact his priorities of quality health care, funding of public education, environmentally conscious living, and clean renewable energy resources. Donald Williamson, meanwhile, has had a career as an elected assessor and as a realtor. While discussing his qualifications for office with Ivan, Donald offers advice to those homeowners in danger of having their property repossessed. Learn more about our candidates and their positions through their dialogues with Ivan.

David Levering, a longtime resident of this area, a retired professor of history, and now half-time resident of Australia, has just returned from there. He talks with Ivan about the political climate in that country with its new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, elected as a result of the former prime minister's close political ties to George W. Bush. David discusses Australia's cultural problems with its indigenous people, the withdrawal of its troops from Iraq, and its concern for and response to the energy crisis and global warming.

Terry Masl has been an effective spokesperson for the homeless of Ontario's Tent City. His almost yearlong efforts have led to Ontario's recognition of the situation and a solution, which can be offered as a model for other cities to emulate.

Because of post-production work that includes adding the introductory graphics, names, and titles to the tapes, specific airing dates for any of the programs cannot be given. However, the programs will alternate on Thursdays and Fridays throughout the month of August.

LISTENING TO AMERICA: DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

Discussions in Rancho Cucamonga, California July 19, and July 26, 2008

Scribe: Terri Shaw and Roslyn Yeomans

Moderator: Barbara Frantonius

Preamble: The participants in this discussion view America as a commonwealth in which we, and our fellow citizens, work together for the common good and for our individual fulfillment. We believe that our lawmakers and administrators should be informed and guided by this principle.

We passionately believe that if we are to have the funds for needed changes in Environment, Energy, Healthcare, Education, et al, it is essential that our nation change its view of "our" role in the world. We believe we must significantly reduce our international peacekeeping role and likewise, the defense budget.

A PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

Energy & Environment

We are concerned about the effects of climate change on life on planet Earth, our common home. *We believe* that we are all interdependent and that we should seek solutions in cooperation with all nations.

We are concerned that our dependence on imported oil has driven unwise foreign policy decisions.

We are concerned that the United States is lagging behind other industrialized nations in the utilization of existing alternative energy technologies.

We are concerned that public transportation systems are not adequately supported and encouraged by the federal government.

We are committed to the principle that our Federal, State and Local governments need to lead by example, and thus, *require* all fleet vehicles and government properties to convert to non-fossil fuel based energy sources, and that all governmental agencies should be required to restrict and conserve water use.

We recognize that there is no one technology that can provide us with energy independence and that a range of alternatives must be developed.

We believe that developing sustainable sources of energy should be pursued with the same determination and investment as programs such as the Manhattan Project, the Marshall Plan, and putting a man on the Moon.

We believe that development of renewable energy sources will create many new jobs and contribute to the dynamism of our economy.

We recommend that our party's goal should be to reach energy independence within a decade and that such a program would include the use of renewable sources, recycling, conservation, and improvements in public transportation.

We recommend that environmental impact should always be analyzed and considered before any legislation is passed or policies made concerning exploitation of natural resources.

We recommend the adoption of legislation and regulations that discourage speculation in oil futures.

We recommend that federal agencies develop plans based on the assumption that severe weather will occur more frequently.

War In Iraq

We endorse Barack Obama's stated position that not only should this war be ended, but, also, that we should strive to end the mind-set that started the war.

Foreign Policy

We are concerned that the policies and actions of the Bush Administration have weakened our country's standing and influence in the world.

We believe the new administration should seek to re-establish America's moral leadership in the world.

We recommend that "Americans Abroad" programs, such as the Peace Corps, be strengthened and expanded.

We recommend that the United States foster and participate in international peacekeeping efforts.

We are concerned about the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ***We believe*** this continuing conflict threatens our national security and hinders our country's ability to improve relations with the Muslim world, including Arab and non-Arab nations with significant Muslim populations.

***We recommend* that the United States actively foster an equitable and viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.**

***We recommend* that a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the only viable alternative and that such a solution must be based upon the following principles:**

- International guarantees of both physical and economic security to both Israel and Palestine,
- A border along the 1967 Green Line, except for mutually agreed upon land swaps,
- A fully contiguous Palestinian State, including a connector to Gaza,
- Jerusalem as a shared capital, with both States having access to the Old City,
- An equitable resolution to the Palestinian refugee issue via:
 - ✓ Moral acknowledgement of the right of return
 - ✓ Reasonable internationally financed compensation to those not allowed to return to Israel, and
 - ✓ Assistance to those who wish to return to Palestine
- An equitable sharing of water resources via a Regional Water Authority, and
- Guaranteed access of both nations to world markets and travel via their own air and seaports.

Health Care

***We are concerned* that not everyone in our country has health care coverage.**

***We are concerned* that our citizens who have health insurance and governmental programs that serve our uninsured citizens are paying too much for the quality of the care that is being delivered.**

***We are concerned* that health care in our country does not compare favorably with health care in other industrialized nations.**

***We recommend* the achievement of a cost-effective universal health care system within Barack Obama's first term as president.**

Our goal is to have a Universal Health Care System with the government acting as the single public insurer for all Americans and with all Americans free to choose their own private providers. We recognize that the single payer system is essential to reduce administrative costs and provide affordable pricing. Current administrative costs are more than double that of other modern nations.

The plan adopted should include a role for private firms to continue to provide health insurance. All such firms must be treated as "public utilities," meaning that:

- Their prices and profit margins will be closely regulated,
- They must adopt administrative efficiencies such as nationally standardized computerized claim procedures,
- They must offer coverage to all persons regardless of age or health or income level,
- They must offer such coverage on an affordable single-rate schedule to pool the risks and costs to young and old, the ill and the healthy, and,
- They must provide coverage for all risks, including but not limited to:
 - ✓ Physical and mental/emotional
 - ✓ Pregnancy and end of life

- ✓ Vision and dental
- ✓ Prescription drugs
- ✓ Preventive, curative and recuperative care

The Economy and Poverty

We believe that the Economy and Poverty are inexorably tied. We are most concerned, that once again, we find ourselves in a position to which we MUST say, that no child in America should be ill-housed, ill-clothed, or un-fed.

We are concerned about the effects of the widening disparity between rich and poor in our country.

We are concerned that the middle class is suffering undue burdens as a result of the policies of past Republican administrations.

We believe that the policies of past Republican administrations have undercut federal protections for such vital necessities as clean air, clean water, safety of the work place, safety of food and consumer goods, and safety of drugs.

We believe that our tax code has contributed to economic injustice by shifting wealth to the rich.

We believe that the widening disparity between rich and poor, between the compensation of workers and their CEOs, creates dangerous volatility in our economy.

We believe that a capitalist economy requires regulation.

We believe that the primary source of poverty in our country is the low wage labor system.

We believe that a livable minimum wage standard should be 50% of the national median income and adjusted annually for inflation.

We believe that our nation's workers and our economy have been disadvantaged by the failure to include certain protections in NAFTA and other free trade agreements.

We believe that our nation's workers ought to be encouraged by being rewarded by increased wages for increased productivity.

We recommend that it is in the best interest of the nation to improve the national infrastructure, including public transportation systems, by combined public works and government funded and private efforts.

We recommend that all communities, both urban and rural, have a centralized, "Neighborhood Center" which should be open 24/7, as a safe zone for anyone in need, with pre-school, sports facility, reading room, and counseling available.

We recommend that our party commit to tax reform and other programs that will broaden and strengthen the middle class.

We recommend that our party reform the present taxation system to make it more fair and progressive.

We recommend that our party repeal the Bush tax cut for the wealthy.

We recommend that NAFTA and other free trade agreements our country enters into must mandate livable wages, environmental protections and safe working conditions.

We recommend that our party commit to the enforcement and reinvigoration of existing federal safety regulations.

Housing Crisis

It is our belief that the government must focus on the key goal of allowing individuals, faced with foreclosure, to stay in their primary residence. While a stable banking environment is desirable and necessary, the first priority must be the protection of American families in their homes.

To achieve this goal we recommend:

- *Mortgage interest rates should be re-set and held at affordable levels*
- *Principle amounts on mortgages should be re-set to reflect current market value*
- *Previously foreclosed homes, wherever possible, should be returned to the original owner; or compensate those forced from their homes.*
- *All new homeowners should be required to complete a consumer education class on mortgage loans, credit and indebtedness.*

Free Trade

It is our belief that all existing Free Trade agreements should be reviewed and renegotiated. All treaties to provide free trade agreements should require that all parties to the agreement guarantee:

- *Livable minimum wages*
- *Safe working conditions*
- *No child labor*
- *No barriers to the rights of labor to organize for collective bargaining*
- *Production processes which are environmentally sound*

We further recommend that we continue support of the World Trade Organizations' prohibition on agricultural subsidies.

Veteran's Benefits

It is our belief that all Veteran's benefits be augmented to include housing support and educational benefits to the children of those who gave their lives, or, who have been critically wounded and disabled in military combat for their country.

We recommend that physical and mental health benefits, adjusted for inflation, be on par with benefits received by Veterans of WWII.

Social Security and Medicare

We are fully in agreement that there should be NO privatization of either Social Security or Medicare.

We recommend that the "donut hole" loophole for prescription drugs be closed.

We recommend that we remove the cap on Social Security and Medicare taxes for those earning over \$250,000.

We endorse Senator Obama's proposal regarding tax relief for wage earners under \$50,000.

Terrorism and Torture

We believe that the United States government return to a position which is respectful of our Constitutional Right to no cruel or unusual punishment, and is supportive of the Geneva Accord on humane treatment for all.

We believe that no arm of government, or its' representative, should be immune to the law.

We believe that no President should sign statements abrogating obligation to enforce congressional laws that the executive branch chooses not to enforce.

Civil Rights

We believe that the current laws for equal rights to education and earnings based on race, creed, and gender still provide loopholes which need to be addressed.

We support vigorous enforcement and expansion of legislation which prohibits any discrimination based on Race, Creed, Gender and Sexual Orientation.

Border Security and Immigration

It is our belief that a secure boundary is necessary, but we also believe that walls and fences do not make good neighbors. Enforcing border crossings and strengthening required visa and work permits is important, but it is equally important to preserve our open borders and free range for wildlife.

We recommend that employers be held accountable for hiring illegal aliens.

We recommend that those who here illegally, who have been in the United States for more than two years, who are gainfully employed and who have no criminal record, be allowed to pursue a path for citizenship.

POINT OF VIEW

(The following was submitted by Club President Bob Gerecke to the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin and published, in response to a previous “Point of View” article attributed to Anthony Adams. –Editor)

The recent “Point of View” article (July 2) by guest columnist Republican Assemblyman Anthony Adams includes several blatant factual errors and fails to deal seriously with a topic of great importance to this State and to the entire country.

The first false statement is that “Democrats talk about wanting to close ‘loopholes and tax breaks’ but they fail to specify whose taxes they would raise and by how much.” In fact, some Democrats have advocated closing the loophole that permits people who purchase yachts to avoid paying sales tax. Republicans have resisted this effort and rarely talk, at least publicly, about their ludicrous position on this issue. Republicans fail to explain to the people who need to buy cars in order to get to work why they should have to pay sales tax on their necessities while the wealthy escape the sales tax on their luxuries. Many Democrats also propose to raise our state income tax rate on very high incomes to where it was raised by Republican governors Ronald Reagan and Pete Wilson. This would be wiser for the state than raising the tuition for college students, which taxes middle and lower income families instead, discourages education and leaves young graduates with bigger debts. Unfortunately, Republican state legislators like Anthony Adams have prevented the wiser course.

Adams follows with allegations that Democrats want to eliminate the mortgage interest tax deduction, the senior citizen tax credit, and the dependent child tax credit (parroting a similar charge by Assemblyman Bill Emmerson in a previous “Point of View” article a few months ago). On the contrary, Democrats support these provisions. We challenge Inland Empire Republicans to stop making unsubstantiated accusations, which are simply a distraction from their failure to get their own house in order by purging their party of people charged with serious crimes and malfeasance while they hold public office.

Perhaps more important, however, is Adams’ failure to deal in any serious way with the critical issue of the purpose of government. Any sixth grader can repeat the phrase “We don’t have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem.” It requires a little more depth of analysis to ponder the cost of providing essential government services and to decide on a rational basis how to apportion those costs fairly among all Americans who benefit from such services, directly or indirectly. We challenge those Republicans who refuse even to contemplate these important questions to justify the continual reduction of services to children who need a quality education, to people with disabilities, and to those without access to medical care (just to name a few).

Yes, it’s true that many (not all) wealthy people pay more in taxes than working people; but it’s also true that they benefit disproportionately from the stable society that government helps to maintain by ensuring public order and the preservation of property rights, by providing universal education, and by

protecting public health. We believe the wealthy are actually getting a pretty good deal. We believe that they know it, since they choose to remain wealthy.

In fact, if you have a choice, would you rather be a wealthy person who grumbles about high taxes on your way to your yacht, or would you rather be the working person who prays that nobody in your family gets sick because you can't afford the medical bill?

Let's stop bombarding people with lies and simplistic "solutions" to complex adult problems. Let's work together to make California and the United States a better place to live for ALL Americans, not just the yacht owners.

Bob Gerecke is President of the Democratic Club of Claremont

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P.S. – Matt Lyons is past president of the Democratic club in LaVerne and San Dimas. He donates part of his sales commission to our club if you become his client and tell him you saw his ad here.

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