

FEBRUARY 2006 NEWSLETTER

Editors: Jim Forsyth (581-5169) ; Peter Hendley (582-7011)

President's Message by Craig Williams

It's always painful hearing a Republican President's State of the Union speech, especially Bush's since he stole the last two elections. Maybe the best way to take his message is with a waste paper basket by your side in case you can't stomach his nonsense.

He spoke of his "long term commitment to end tyranny in the world;" strange words coming from someone who adds new meaning to the concept of a unlawful invasion of another nation. He also seems to be completely out of touch with reality. While most people are discussing an exit strategy, he is unencumbered by reality, claiming "I am confident in our plan for victory."

His lack of honesty also extends to the economy. He argues we have created "4.5 million new jobs" Our economy is unfortunately producing low end jobs. For all our wealth we are not even in the top 10 nations in wages and benefits.

He makes a attack on labor with his statement "protectionists want to escape competition." What we really need from our national leader is an effort to develop an industrial and economic policy that will address global competition. In relation to global competition, the "War on Terrorism" should be a much smaller priority . We are at war in Iraq, primarily to secure oil reserves for the major oil companies at the taxpayers' expense so oil companies can control that oil and sell it on the world market, especially to China and India at the highest possible price, to the detriment of American consumers.

Beyond working for the oil industry he's driven us into heavy debt by giving "tax relief of \$880 billion," primarily to the top one percent of the income bracket, the bracket who need less but get more, while the government racks up \$2 billion a day in foreign debt primarily to Saudi Arabia and China..

Like all heartless conservatives he also boasts of eliminating "140 programs that are not performing well." We starve the poor while spending \$250 million a week on a war that never had to happen. Talk about a program that isn't performing well. We, like criminals, invaded a country because of its oil, swayed world opinion against us, killed thousands of innocent civilians, brought tragedy to the lives of thousands of families of U.S. soldiers, raised the price of oil , tortured and kidnapped thousands of people. Quite a performance.

The highlight of the evening came when Democrats sarcastically rose and cheered when he stated "Congress did not act last year on my proposal to save Social Security." His eight year reign is more than five eighths over. Lets prioritize organizing our people and take back our country from the global elites and their lawless leader.

* * * * *

The Clean Money bill, AB 583, is on a roll. It passed the Assembly and goes to the Senate. If passed and signed, it will go before the voters in November.

President, Craig Williams 636-0643
Vice president Mike Villalba 636-1432
Secretary, Alison Corson 881-1802
Treasurer, Sandra Clark 581-5220
Membership Director, Al Mendall 441-7487
Phone Tree, Karen Illka 770-3844
Webmaster, Jeff Winkler At Large: Ginny DeMartini, Elsa Glines, Pat Kellner, Tom Kersten, Thom Kunselman, Mary Ann Reno, Harry Scott, Rick Trullinger,

Friday, February 24, 7 pm Membership Meeting
Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church
27287 Patrick Ave., Hayward (Across from Weekes park Library)
Take Back the House: Confirmed speakers are Gerry McNerney and Steve Filson, candidates in the 11th C.D. Democratic primary, and Charlie Brown, running in the Democratic primary in the 4th C.D. Pombo and Doolittle are the Republican incumbents in these two Northern California Districts. Both are strong supporters of the war in Iraq, both are among the worst environmental votes in the House, both support privatization of Social Security and Medicare, and both are deeply implicated in the Abramoff corruption scandal. Jeffrey Thomas from Congressman Barbara Lee's office will also sbe on the panel..

On Saturday, March 11, 11 am Demos will host a candidates' forum for the 10th Senatorial District matching Johan Klehs, Ellen Corbett and John Dutra. The meeting is cosponsored by the Castro Valley Democratic Club and the CALDO Democratic Club. The 18th Assembly seat race will bring together candidates Mary Hayashi and Bill McCammon. **On Friday March 24,** 7 pm the Club will hear candidates for Hayward City Council and Mayor; and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors 2nd District race between incumbent Gail Steele and challenger Richard Valle. Both meetings are at the Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church and are cosponsored by GLOBE.

* * * * *

It is with deep sadness we mourn the passing of Larry Evans. Larry has been battling cancer for years. Despite his illness, he served until recently as program chair and enthusiastic member of the club. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Sue and members of the family.

Membership Director Al Mendall reports that there have been 139 2006 renewals. President Craig Williams has signed up 84 new members by going door-to-door to Democratic households. There are 222 members paid up for 2005, making a total of 445 2005-'06 members. Way to go, Craig and Al!

Anyone wishing to vote for Club endorsements at the March 11 or March 24 meetings must be 2006 members. 2005 members may renew at the March meetings to be eligible to vote. However non-members must pay 2006 dues by the February 24 meeting to vote in March.

We thank Jody Ginsberg for the new Demos masthead at the top of this page. She also designed our new membership brochure

Winning the War on Terror by Al Mendall

The Bush administration has got it wrong.

They believe that we will win the war against Islamic extremists by hunting down and killing all of the terrorists. And they are willing to spend huge sums of money on the U.S. military, the CIA and Homeland Security to do it. But that is not going to work. Why not? Because, as Thomas Friedman, New York Times columnist, frequently states: "we are funding both sides of the war on terror." The Islamic extremists are funded by petro-dollars – profits from the sale of oil. Those profits go to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Sudan and other nations whose governments and wealthy "princes" send much of those profits to terrorist organizations.

The net effect is that each time you fill up your car or SUV, you are, indirectly, making a donation to Al Qaeda. The United States spends billions of dollars each year on foreign oil. We are the world's biggest importer of oil and thus, indirectly, the world's biggest funder of Islamic extremists / terrorists. I would expect anyone who spends five minutes thinking about this situation to come to the same conclusion: if we are to win this conflict, then we must stop importing oil. Even President Bush pays lip service to energy independence. But his plan to get us there, drilling for oil in Alaska, is utterly pitiful. Experts agree that Alaskan oil will reduce the U.S. oil imports by about five percent. That is not enough to stop Al Qaeda.

So what would a real plan for winning the war on terror look like? It would do everything possible to reduce our consumption of foreign oil.

Require all automobiles sold in the U.S. to be more fuel efficient. For an extra \$3,000 - \$5,000 per vehicle, we can double the fuel economy of every vehicle sold in the U.S. This can be done using existing technology. Increase the tax on gasoline. This will encourage everyone to use less. In fact, we should use every penny raised by the increased gas tax to give rebates to anyone who buys a high efficiency vehicle. Harness renewable resources for energy production. Hydro-electric, wind and especially solar power must provide a larger share of our energy supply. Currently the U.S. generates less than 10% of its energy from renewable sources. Pitiful! We need a new Apollo-esque program to get this number up to 25% in 10 years. Require all new buildings to incorporate Green building standards for energy efficiency. Strengthen the Energy Star requirements for electrical appliances.

President Bush's unwillingness to set these very achievable goals displays an acute lack of political courage. We need leaders willing to tell us the truth even when the truth requires sacrifices. This nation has achieved its greatness in part through national sacrifice – it is time to do this again. We cannot win as long as we are funding both sides of the war on terror. The sooner we come to terms with this and elect leaders who will do what needs to be done, the sooner we will win this war.

I know some of these ideas will be unpopular and will require sacrifices from us all. But we are at war. And winning wars requires sacrifice. The "Support Our Troops" ribbons and bumper sticker are great. But if you really want to help our troops, then buy a Hybrid, install solar panels on your roof, do everything you can to reduce your consumption of oil. That is what would really make Al Qaeda nervous.

San Leandro Parcel Tax by Craig Williams

On April 11th the voters of San Leandro will vote on a Parcel Tax. Parcel Taxes have been used by school districts to raise funds because schools in general are underfunded under our current property tax structure. Since Prop.13 the tax burden has shifted more and more onto the homeowners. Our state also doesn't have a split roll, unlike 15 other industrial states, which taxes industry at a higher level than homeowners. The logic of split role is that businesses use their property as a profit making entity and should therefore pay a higher rate. Our state also has been unable under Prop.13 to reassess commercial properties in many cases since 1979.

California is also carrying over 30 percent of the countries' English learning students while making up 12% of the national population. San Leandro has the lowest dollar per student rate in the county. What makes this a glaring structural problem is that it is rich in businesses, having a huge industrial base. Ironically Richmond also has a huge industrial base anchored by Chevron which produces over 8 million gallons of gasoline a day. Its schools are in even worse shape than San Leandro's. There's something wrong with this picture.

As a state we fund our children's education at almost half the level of other industrial states. Our kids in effect get short changed \$20 a day in education funding compared to students in states with split roll. Day in day out, year in year out, that's a lot of \$20's!

Although close to 60 percent of the population support split roll and property tax reform, we live under the 'tyranny of two thirds' a law which requires tax related legislation to get 66.6 percent of the vote in order to pass. This undemocratic vote structure has held our state back on many funding initiatives.

The Parcel Tax faces the two thirds up hill battle as well. The business community in San Leandro has come out against the Parcel Tax, while many of their members pay ridiculously low property taxes. If they're counting on support to stop the measure I wonder how many of the 'No' votes come from people who view the public school population as being too diverse racially. Conservatives have gotten a lot of mileage from the "southern strategy" over the years where ill informed poor white voters think they are voting their race instead of their economic self interest by voting Republican. The southern strategy may well come to San Leandro to defeat our modest funding proposal to help our kids.

The progressive forces need to do their best at door knocking, communicating the issue and getting out the vote. We need to know every 'yes' and know every 'no' vote in every voting home in the city. Fortunately we have a potentially tremendous base of volunteers in the parents and teachers of our kids. It's time for our kids to tell us "do your homework!"

* * *

Calendar

Sunday, March 5, 5-9pm Hayward Councilmember Kevin Dowling's Academy Awards Party. Hill & Valley Club. \$25 Call Barbara Sacks for information and tickets. (783-8176)

Sunday, March 12, 1 pm. Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade program- Songs Against War. Berkeley Little Theater. \$35 Call Corine (582-7699) for info and tickets.

Thursday, March 16, 6-9 pm United Democratic Campaign St. Patrick's Day Dinner, Carpenters Hall. Call Robin 635-2668.

The following review appeared in the San Jose Mercury News February 10, 2006:

The documentary "Why We Fight" - begins with Dwight Eisenhower's farewell speech as he was leaving the presidency in 1961. In stark language almost unimaginable from a head of state today, Eisenhower cautions against the rise of what he ominously dubbed "the military-industrial complex." Ike was the most revered wartime general to be elected president since George Washington, who had warned in his farewell address against standing armies. A prophet may be without honor in his own country -- neither warrior's warning was heeded, as a defense budget that would account for 15.8 percent of all federal spending next year would seem to prove -- but Jarecki's film argues persuasively that a *profit* is honored above all else. That is particularly true in the matrix of defense contractors and military procurement officers who are about to become defense contractors.

The heart of Jarecki's case is chillingly affirmed by former CIA analyst Chalmers Johnson. Referring to the defense industry's 2003 fiscal year, he says, "Profits went up last year well over 25 percent. I guarantee you, when war becomes that profitable, you're going to see more of it."

Republican Sen. John McCain, another veteran of war, says that Eisenhower's fears that the nation's defense policy eventually would be set by corporations "have come true." To drive home the point that weapons systems are funded by a revolving door between government and the defense industry, Jarecki follows that with a reminder that Dick Cheney was CEO of the giant military contractor Halliburton before being elected vice president. "It is our system of legal corruption," says Charles Lewis of the Center for Public Integrity.

"Why We Fight," which won the grand jury prize at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, threads several personal stories through its larger narrative. A retired New York police sergeant, whose son was killed in the attack on the World Trade Center, works to get his boy's name inscribed on a bomb that is to be dropped over Iraq. We meet the pilots of the two Stealth fighters who dropped the bombs that were the opening shots in the invasion of Iraq. And there is a young man who feels that the all-volunteer army is the place to escape the troubles that have dogged him in civilian life. After an under-title informs us that between 2002 and 2003, the Pentagon spent \$1.2 billion on advertising to increase recruitment, retired Pentagon systems analyst Franklin Spinney describes the financial incentives to enlist as a kind of bait and switch. "We appeal to people's self-interest," he says, "then put them in a situation that is based on self-sacrifice." He asserts -- provocatively, but convincingly -- that the war in Vietnam lasted longer than it otherwise would have because the draft sent a much larger percentage of the country's underclass to do the fighting and dying. ~~"We got out of Vietnam (Continued next Column) —~~

when the lottery started and middle-class kids started getting killed," Spinney says. Occasionally the discussion seems to veer away from why we fight to a more argumentative question: Should we fight? Jarecki's point of view here is likely to be more persuasive to people who are anti-war and horrified by unchecked military spending -- which is to say political liberals -- but neo-conservatives such as William Kristol and Richard Perle are amply represented among the film's thoughtful talking heads. There is plenty here that should worry members of both political parties. Why we fight is a thorny moral question from which politics cannot be easily separated, and at times Jarecki doesn't even try. The Bush doctrine of pre-emption -- in which unfriendly regimes can be toppled -- is saluted by a couple of the neo-cons who devised it, then swatted down by just about every other speaker.

After President Bush is shown finally admitting that Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with the attack on Sept. 11, 2001, the cop, who was a supporter of the war in Iraq, is first incredulous, then furious. He says he feels betrayed, and regrets having his son's name put on a bomb. But he also gives himself the same cover that the politicians would later use: faulty intelligence. Lack of good intelligence seems to be what drives the military-industrial complex, but it is not a problem that afflicts "Why We Fight."

* * * *

The Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) urges opposition to the Governor's proposed bond measure: Governor Schwarzenegger has tried to create a new vision for California with his California Strategic Growth Plan, unveiled at his State of the State address. By far the largest part of his proposal was for transportation investment, with a total of \$26 billion worth of transportation bonds between 2006 and 2012. With over 98% of the total bond funds going to highways and ports/trade expansion, it is hard to imagine a less balanced, more damaging proposal. The Governor has said this is just the beginning point for his proposal, but with 98% of total bond funds going to highways and ports/trade expansion there is no way to see how this plan could be changed enough to promote sustainability and social equity instead of subsidizing sprawl. TALC's Board of Directors has voted to oppose the Governor's plan, and TALC staff is now working with groups around the state to develop a positive alternative.

Read TALC's 11-page analysis of the Governor's transportation proposal, written at the request of statewide environmental and social justice communities.

Learn more:

www.transcoalition.org/legislation.html#senate

Demos membership: Low Income, \$10
Regular, \$15

Democracy is not a Spectator Sport by Thom Kunselman

If you were at our Demos potluck you already know about Ann Fagan Ginger of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute. Ginger provided information on a little known tool for Americans to use to fight federal government abuse and corruption. Individuals like you and me can use the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to file complaints about abuse and corruption that are required to be investigated ending with a report issued to Congress about their findings. Since hearing about the OIG, I've been trying to think of a good first test case in order to make a complaint. This morning I found a good case to file a complaint about in the Say No to Pombo blog <http://saynotopombo.blogspot.com/> According to the LA Times, "Reps. John Doolittle and Richard Pombo joined forces with former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas to oppose an investigation by federal banking regulators into the affairs of Houston millionaire Charles Hurwitz, documents recently obtained by the Times show. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation was seeking \$300 million from Hurwitz for his role in the collapse of a Texas Savings and Loan that cost taxpayers \$1.6 billion. That investigation was ultimately dropped."

This sounds like something the FDIC's Inspector General should investigate.

So how do we file a complaint with the OIG?

There are two ways to do this. First, you can call the hotline number, 1-800-964-3342, press 2, and then wait for the message to complete. It will tell you how to contact them via U.S. post or e-mail, but after that the message stays on the line if you want to speak to a real person. The second way is to send an e-mail to ighotline@fdic.gov When you make contact please ask them to investigate the congressional influence involved in pressuring the FDIC to drop the \$300 million court case against Charles Hurwitz based on an article in the January 8 LA Times. Also ask if it was appropriate for the FDIC to drop the case.

If asked, here is the article information. On January 8, 2006 the LA Times published an article, A Donor Who Had Big Allies, DeLay and two others helped put the brakes on a federal probe of a businessman. Evidence was published in the Congressional Record." By Times staffwriters Richard A. Serrano and Stephan Braun.

Please help pressure the FDIC Office of Inspector General into investigating this apparent abuse of power by three Congressmen and negligence by FDIC employees in dropping the court case by e-mailing a complaint to ighotline@fdic.gov or calling 1-800-964-3342.

I'm counting on you to help make this one more successful campaign to fight corruption in government. Thank you. If you'd like more information on what I did check my blog at <http://www.thisiswhatdemocracylookslike.com/node/101>

* *

SJR 10, Senator Liz Figueroa's anti-Patriot Act resolution has passed the Assembly. Due to a technicality, it now goes back to the Senate.

While President Bush delivered his vision for America from the halls of Congress, the nation's political left had to settle for a dimly lit conference room in the Democratic National Committee's building three blocks away.

At a small gathering Tuesday hosted by the Nation magazine, the Congressional Progressive Caucus -- which represents 62 of the body's most liberal members -- announced their "Alternative State of the Union," an agenda they would pursue if they could wrest control of Washington from Republicans.

Among their top priorities: a speedy withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq; universal health care coverage; public financing of political campaigns; earned amnesty for illegal immigrants; debt relief for countries struggling with poverty or disease; a shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Unlike Bush's speech, the event wasn't broadcast live by the major networks, although Air America and Pacifica public radio stations covered it. But liberal leaders said the left's ambitious agenda could be revived, depending on the outcome of this fall's congressional elections.

"If Democrats retake the House, 10 members of the Progressive Caucus would become chairmen of committees," said Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of the Nation.

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., would take over the Judiciary Committee -- the panel that produced the Patriot Act -- and Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez, would run the Education Committee. [Pete Stark would chair the committee in charge of health care.

Five other members of the Bay Area's congressional delegation are part of the caucus -- including the two co-chairs, Rep. Lynn Woolsey of Petaluma and Rep. Barbara Lee of Oakland -- and they represent a region that voted overwhelmingly for Bush's Democratic opponents in the past two presidential elections.

"Poll after poll shows that Americans are more progressive on core fundamental issues," vanden Heuvel said. "They want to increase the minimum wage. They want national health care. They want a secure foreign policy, not a crusading one."

The progressives also want something else: an early end to the Bush administration. Rep. Maxine Waters and Rep. Diane Watson, both Los Angeles Democrats, called on Congress to censure or impeach Bush because of his alleged abuses of power.

"Why should we treat President Bush any differently than President Clinton?" Watson asked. "Breaking the law is breaking the law." But liberal lawmakers will first have to convince their Democratic colleagues of their agenda. Many prominent Democrats, including Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., are strongly resisting calls for a quick pullout from Iraq or cutting funds for the war.

Progressives hope to seize on the administration's missteps -- especially the bungled federal response to Hurricane Katrina -- to persuade voters to support the idea of a bigger, more active government to address social needs.

"The aftermath of Katrina has demonstrated the bankruptcy of the Bush administration's idea of the role of government," Lee said. Woolsey, a leader in the effort to withdraw troops, said she believes the war in Iraq is driven partly by an effort to "Christianize" Muslim countries -- a view often aired by America's critics in the Arab world, but rarely by Western politicians. Discussing the underlying reasons for sending soldiers to Iraq, Woolsey said: "One is oil, of course, controlling it. The other is controlling the Mideast in general. And the third is -- and, you know what, we don't talk about this -- I believe it's a crusade to Christianize the Middle East. And they say all this under the guise of democracy and democratization."