

SRV DEMOCRATIC CLUB NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2011

Presidents Corner

Where do I start? There have been so many items that has gotten my ire up this past month. The serious assault on women's reproductive rights, the congressional republicans assault on the poor and downtrodden, the lies and assault on social security, the president's budget which hurts the poor and doesn't do anything about the continued tax give-a-ways for the rich, the rightwing response to the shootings in Arizona last month, or about some of the really crazy things republicans are proposing around the country. Sometimes it is hard not to let it get me down or to let it drive me into becoming a raving angry lunatic. There is so much injustice to what I see being proposed by our leaders.

A couple of thoughts:

1. Social Security (SS) is not in financial trouble and is not a cause of our deficit. The answer in making it more secure for the future is to eliminate the ceiling on SS taxes. People making over the maximum taxed earning can more easily afford the tax than the people who depend on SS to survive can afford the cuts. Privatizing SS is not the answer to fixing it but is a plan to destroy it.
2. How can one justify the proposed cuts to programs that help our poor and disadvantages while at the same time justify the recent extension of tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans? Why is someone making \$1,000,000,000 on stock transactions allowed to pay taxes at a 15-17 % tax rate while a worker earning \$100,000 pays at a 35 % rate? It is no wonder that over the past 30 years we have seen one of the biggest re-distributions of wealth in our history, from middle and poor to the rich. People accuse me of being a socialist when I say we need a redistribution of wealth in the other direction, but I believe if we don't somewhat level out the wealth of this country soon we will either become a country I don't want to live in or we will see a revolution. Remembering the stories of my father and uncles, it took a Roosevelt the last time to keep the country from a revolution.
3. How can we justify spending approximately 60 % of our total budget on the military? Right now our military and the two wasted wars we are fighting are costing each and every person living in the USA over \$2,000 per year. Think what good if even 25 % of that money went to improving our infrastructure and creating jobs.
4. The assault on women's reproductive lives is almost unbelievable. Imagine changing the definition of rape to only include "forcible" rape. Imagine trying to pass legislation that would make killing an abortion doctor "justifiable homicide". The far right will only be happy when we go so far as to eliminate birth control. After all didn't god say; "Go forth and multiply"?

Because of what we are hearing in the news, Elaine Baldwin has put her opinions down in writing and they are presented later in this newsletter. Also next month we are having Melody Howe Weintraub, Chair of Planned Parents Affiliates of California talk with us about the Recent Assault on Women's Reproductive Rights"

On a more positive note did any of you read an article in the San Ramon Valley Times on Monday about Governor Jerry Brown's recent trip on Southwest Airlines to Los Angeles. He traveled alone! No body guards, no press people, no entourage at all. The "Governator" couldn't travel without at least 10 SUV's full of staff waiting on him. People actually had a chance to come up and talk to the Governor- what a democratic concept. When asked where his entourage was, he said they were back in Sacramento doing the work of the people. He

was quoted as saying; “ If you have too much on an entourage and a bubble, it begins to corrupt and contaminate your mind, so you think you’re a big shot ... and slowly but surely, you get more distance from the people you’re supposed to be serving.” This is someone who gets it; our elected officials, at all levels, are servants of all the people, not just of the rich and powerful.

It is a lot easier for me to accept the idea of making hard cuts to social programs from someone like Jerry Brown, who lives an austere life style himself then it is to accept the same cuts from someone who is so rich they could never fathom the pain they are causing.

Our meeting last month was well attended and the feedback I got was very positive. Thank you to all that could participate. We are once again having two speakers this month and I hope to see many of you at our meeting.

Regards,

Jim Donnelly
President, SRVDC

Member Editorials

Each month we invite you to present your views on about any subject you wish to discuss. This is an important way to understand what are major concerns for our members. Surely there are things going on that make your blood boil. Let it out, express your opinions here.

This month Elaine Baldwin has written the following excellent editorial about the current assault on women’s rights by republicans in the congress and in state governments.

Speak Out Now for Women’s Reproductive Rights!

Women’s rights, specifically reproductive rights, are once again under assault by the Republicans in the House of Representatives, and now that the House leadership has passed to the GOP, we need to be aware of this new danger and take swift action to thwart it.

The House is moving very quickly on several bills, so I urge Club members and friends to immediately contact your Representatives, and also communicate your opinion through organizations such as Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and Emily’s List.

At least two factors—renewed determination by the GOP to pursue a conservative social agenda, and their zeal to cut spending—are at play.

Republicans campaigned in 2010 primarily on the issue of the economy, specifically on jobs and government debt, perhaps lulling Democrats and independents into thinking that they were putting aside their customary emphasis on social issues, such as restricting access to family planning, contraception, and abortion. But they also campaigned on a pledge to overturn the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare” as they call it) and much of what they are now proposing comes under that rubric.

Spurred on by the large number of Republican freshman in the House, many of them avowed members of the Tea Party who campaigned on the promise to cut \$100 billion from the current (2011) budget, many programs that protect women's health are on the chopping block. According to a February 9 press release from the House Committee on Appropriations, cuts proposed in the Continuing Resolution bill include: family planning (\$327 million), community health centers (\$1.3 billion) and maternal and child health block grants (\$210 million).

Buried in this press release are dire implications for women's health, but other bills now in committee, H.R. 217, H.R.3, and H.R. 358, make it very clear what is at stake.

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) is the primary sponsor of H.R. 217, which would completely eliminate the Title X Family Planning Program, in existence since 1970 and administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. Title X funds Planned Parenthood and other health centers, which provide millions of low-income women throughout the country with annual exams, family planning advice, contraceptive services, screenings for cervical and breast cancer, and STD screenings and treatment. By law, Title X funds may not be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning, but Planned Parenthood does also perform abortions in separate programs with other monies. Pence has vowed to cut off all funding for any organizations that provide abortions, targeting Planned Parenthood in particular.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) is the primary sponsor of H.R. 3, which would impose tax penalties on private employers who provide health care for their workers if their plans cover abortion services, and prohibit women from using pre-tax flexible spending accounts for reproductive health care. But the worst part of this bill is Smith's proposal to change the provisions of the Hyde Amendment, which makes exceptions for providing federal assistance to women requiring abortion services due to life-threatening pregnancies, rape or incest. Under considerable pressure from many organizations, Smith has said he would remove the egregious proviso that only women who have been "forcibly" raped could be covered, but his bill still seeks to redefine the "health of a mother" to a much narrower standard. The bill summary states that exception would only be made for a "life-endangering physical condition caused by or arising from the pregnancy itself."

Then there is H.R. 358, sponsored by Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA), the so-called Protect Life Act, which proposes to ban abortion coverage in the state-based health insurance exchanges established under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act enacted in March last year. The health law currently allows government-subsidized policies to cover abortion, but beneficiaries must pay separately for that coverage. Pitts' bill stipulates that people whose premiums are federally-subsidized would have to get a separate policy to cover abortions.

Planned Parenthood states that a recent Hart Research poll shows that the vast majority of Americans do not want elected officials imposing new restrictions on women's health care benefits. The poll shows that 71 percent of all voters, including 60 percent of voters who voted for the Republican candidate for Congress in 2010, disagree with the Pence Amendment to defund Planned Parenthood. And 74 percent of voters, including 71 percent of voters who voted for the Republican

candidate for Congress in 2010, disagree with the provisions of the Smith bill. In addition, according to the Wall Street Journal, right after the election, leaders of state and local Tea Party groups, joined by GOProud, a gay conservative group, wrote to John Boehner and Mitch McConnell, warning them to avoid social issues and focus on the budget.

Please join in this vitally important debate TODAY, and protect women's hard-won rights.

Elaine Baldwin

Senator Mark DeSaulnier on the Budget

It seems that the state budget is continually out of balance and once again cuts to vital services are on the line. Last month, Governor Brown released his proposed 2011-12 State Budget and gave his 2011 State of the State Address. The message in both of these was clear: Getting our fiscal house in order is a critical first step to improving the economy. The budget is a balance between cuts and revenues. This includes potentially shifting program responsibility and service delivery to the local level to create more accountability and provide better services.

In the last few weeks, the Senate has held dozens of hearings to closely review the Governor's proposed cuts and determine how they will affect the quality of life for Californians. As chair of the Budget Sub-committee on Health and Human Services, we took several days of public testimony on these cuts. The testimony was powerful. Those most in need may be facing the most dramatic cuts.

The Governor has proposed a balanced approach to the budget of half cuts and half tax extensions. He promised on the campaign trail that any taxes would be put before the voters for their approval. The Legislature must place the tax extensions on the ballot. We are aiming for a June special election.

Republican lawmakers have publicly said that they will not support sending any type of tax proposal to the ballot in June. They are saying they don't trust the voters to make an educated decision. If Republicans hold firm, and the tax extension is not an option, this could make the cuts even more severe.

We need serious solutions in these very serious times. Governor Brown has proposed a budget which recognizes that our state's fiscal condition is severe, and that Californians face a defining moment in our history – a moment when lawmakers and the public will have to make difficult choices that will determine what we value as Californians and the economic future of our state.

These are difficult economic times, and we need to hear your thoughts. To facilitate this, my office will be convening a Budget Town Hall in Pleasant Hill on Thursday, February 24th. The town hall will take place at the Pleasant Hill City Hall, Council Chamber, 100 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill, 94523 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Senator Mark DeSaulnier

Contra Costa Democratic Party

The Contra Costa Democratic Party (DPCC) also called the Central Committee is looking for associate members. The Party meets in Martinez at 7:30 PM on the third (3rd) Thursday of each month. Annual dues are \$24 . The Party has a lot on their agenda this year. Governor Brown is going the need a lot of help in getting his tax proposal on the ballot and passed. The Party has plans for registering more Democrats to Vote By Mail. People who vote my mail are almost twice as likely to vote in an election and we need all of the Democratic votes we can get to move forward our Democratic principles. We are also planning in the next couple of months, a Health Care forum presented by our elected officials to help us better understand the Health Care Bill and the challenges by the Republicans in congress.

Come join us for our next meeting and see if you like what we are doing. For more information call Jim Donnelly @ 925 570-9289

Reports from our Elected Officials

Congressman Jerry McNerney

Time to focus on the needs of our Veterans

February 17, 2008

Tomorrow we will recognize an important milestone. It's been one year since the revelation of substandard facilities and excessive bureaucratic red tape faced by recovering soldiers and their families at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Reports of squalor, rodent infestations, disengaged and under qualified hospital staff, an inflexible bureaucracy and a support system sagging severely under the pressure of providing treatment for so many injured service members shocked all of us.

Our soldiers, who put their lives on the line for our country and returned injured, deserve better. So do our veterans, who long after their years of military service have been completed, can still face the physical and mental wounds of combat.

We can never fully repay our debt of gratitude to these heroes, but we all have a moral obligation to support them with our words, and more importantly, our deeds.

For those of us in Congress, it is vital that we offer support not just with our speeches, but with our budgets. After years of VA budgets that barely kept up with inflation, this new Congress has kept its promise to honor veterans with historic spending increases.

In 2007, the new Congress increased health care and benefits funding for veterans by \$11.8 billion, which was \$5.5 billion more than requested by the president. This is the largest funding increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration and a larger increase than the combined total of the six previous years in Congress.

Our veterans have earned every dime of this funding.

For 5.8 million veterans in the VA health care system, it will mean better care, more doctors and shorter wait times for medical appointments.

For the 400,000 veterans backlogged in the VA claims processing system, it will mean 3,100 new claims processors to reduce the unconscionable six-month delay for those waiting to receive their earned benefits.

For Iraq and Afghan war veterans, it will mean screenings for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury as they enter the VA system. It also means increased support and care coordination in making the transition from active duty to veteran status.

For the most severely wounded vets, it will mean modernized polytrauma centers.

For veterans from all wars with mental health issues, it will mean a minimum of \$2.9 billion dedicated to better mental health care services, a \$700 million increase over last year.

For veterans in rural areas far from VA hospitals, it will mean more VA clinics closer to home. And for the first time since 1979, when gasoline prices were 95 cents per gallon, it will mean a more than doubling in the travel reimbursement from 11 cents to 28.5 cents per mile. For thousands of homeless veterans, increasing the homeless program by \$23 million will mean the dignity of a roof over their heads and hope for the future.

For all Americans who never want to see a single veteran living in the squalid conditions Army soldiers were subjected to at Walter Reed last year, it will mean nearly \$1.5 billion in new funding to do preventive construction and maintenance at our VA hospitals and clinics.

Our service members and veterans have done so much in the service of our country. We owe them the best possible care and all the benefits they have earned through their service.

I am proud that in just the past year, this new Congress has come a long way in keeping the promise to our veterans, but we should do more. In the weeks, months and years ahead, let us all work together to thank our veterans with our words and our deeds. They deserve no less.

Jerry McNerney

Congressman John Garamendi

Congressman Garamendi Says Republican No Jobs Budget Proposal Would Harm Millions of Americans and Stifle Innovation

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Garamendi (D-Walnut Creek, CA) today issued the below statement about the House Republican continuing resolution and President Obama's proposed budget. On [Twitter](#), Garamendi is posting 14 tweets a day – one tweet for every million Americans looking for work – about ways the House Republican budget harms America.

Garamendi's statement is below:

"The more I read through the House Republican continuing resolution, the more I'm convinced they designed this destructive 'budget' with a dart board. This reckless, irresponsible, and dangerous bill threatens American jobs and America's future prosperity by blindly slashing critical investments in education, research, transportation, and public safety. We need to [Make It](#)

In America and bring back good manufacturing jobs in this country, but this no jobs budget destroys hundreds of thousands of jobs at a time when 14 million Americans are still struggling to find work.

"The House Republican continuing resolution cuts threaten to stifle job creation by gutting key investments. Instead of moving America forward, the GOP budget proposal would put this country in reverse. Under the House Republican plan, more than 200,000 children would be kicked out of Head Start and thousands of teachers would lose their jobs; 20,000 fewer researchers would be supported at the National Science Foundation, stifling the innovative research that creates next generation jobs; 25,000 new construction jobs would be lost and 76 projects in 40 states would be cancelled; there would be 1,330 fewer cops on the beat and 2,400 fewer firefighters on the job; AmeriCorps' effective services to our country would be eliminated; and needed food programs like WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) would be decimated.

"As President Obama said at his State of the Union, we must out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world. We Must Make It In America if we're going to make it in America, and that requires many of the smart investments found in the President's budget proposal. I'm especially pleased to see the President renew his commitment to education, transit systems, and energy research. Unfortunately, there are parts of the President's budget that give me significant reservation – including deep cuts to critical food assistance, job training, and home heating assistance. If we're going to talk about 'shared sacrifice' as we mandate deep cuts in basic food and shelter needs, let's at least revisit the wasteful war in Afghanistan, tax giveaways for millionaires and billionaires, and subsidies to Fortune 500 oil companies.

"The teachers that educate our children, the firefighters and police officers that protect our homes, the nurses and doctors that manage our clinics, the construction workers that maintain our roads, the engineers that design jobs-creating clean energy, and the middle and working class parents raising the Americans of tomorrow – they're all at risk in this budget battle. I am only one of 535 voices in Congress, but so long as I represent thousands of people desperately seeking a job in this difficult economy, I will do all I can to make my voice heard."

State Senator Mark DeSaulnier

DeSaulnier Recognized by California Environmental Voters
Wednesday, February 16, 2011

DeSaulnier Voted 100% on Key Environmental Bills in 2010 According to CLCV

The California League of Conservation Voters has recognized Senator Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord) for his 100% voting record on environmental bills in the 2010 legislative year.

"The story of the 2010 Scorecard is twofold; it's about how the environmental community stopped multiple attacks on the environment and how we passed strong laws that protect our quality of life," said Warner Chabot, CLCV Chief Executive Officer.

"The good news is that, with the help of champions like Senator Mark DeSaulnier, the environmental community successfully defeated the bills that posed the most serious threats to the environment and public health," said Chabot. DeSaulnier was one of just 12 state Senators to receive a perfect score on the California Environmental Scorecard in 2010.

"I applaud CLCV for their advocacy and I will continue to be a strong voice in Sacramento on environmental issues," said DeSaulnier. "Reducing children's exposure to toxins, increasing recycling and reducing waste, protecting our coast line from environmental hazards, and

promoting sustainable energy are priorities to me and to those I represent. Voting to protect the environment is voting to protect the future for our children and generations to come. It just makes sense.”

“The bad news is we expect more of these attacks in 2011,” said Chabot. “CLCV calls on high-scoring legislators to continue to lead the way in 2011 on improving water quality, increasing clean and renewable energy opportunities, protecting parks, limiting exposure to toxic chemicals, and resisting demands for rollbacks of environmental laws that protect California’s natural heritage and the public’s health.”

The CLCV is the nation’s oldest grassroots environmental political action organization. CLCV publishes the annual California Environmental Scorecard, which rates the actions of every state legislator and the governor on the state’s environmental priorities each legislative year. To learn lawmakers’ scores and read excerpts from the 2010 Scorecard, visit www.ecovote.org.

Assembly Woman Joan Buchanan

Monday, January 31 2011

Assemblymember Buchanan Issues Statement on Governor Brown’s State of the State Address Sacramento, CA—Assemblymember Buchanan issued the following statement today following Governor Jerry Brown’s State of the State address.

“Less than a week after assuming office, Governor Brown presented us with a budget that does not rely on accounting gimmicks or inflated revenue projections. He continued the dialogue tonight by talking honestly about the difficult choices all of us must make—Democrats and Republicans. It also is clear that the Governor understands the tremendous potential of California and the contributions that critical programs like education have made to our economy and our life styles. I share his vision and his optimism.

I was born in California at a time when we were the leader in education, aerospace, research and many other industries. Anything was possible in our state then because we made critical investments in our infrastructure, and we were disciplined in how we spent our money and repaid our debt.

I believe the Governor has been very forthright about the tough road that lies ahead and we must come together as Californians and be willing to make the sacrifices required to right our financial ship and rebuild our infrastructure, our schools, our colleges, our roads. It is both a fiscal and a moral imperative if our children are going to have the same opportunities as our generation.

The Governor has repeatedly shared his commitment to education and to creating good jobs. These are two of my top priorities. As a budget subcommittee chair, I am holding hearings to review the Governor’s budget to allow for a thorough review and public comment as well as timely action. I am looking forward to continuing my work to help our great state regain its place as a leader in our nation.”