

Newsletter: November/December 2012

Next Dinner Meeting: Holiday Party Friday, December 14, 2012, 6:30 pm at the IBEW 595 Hall 6250 Village Pkwy, Dublin

The Tri-Valley, San Ramon Valley, & Diablo Valley Democratic Clubs invite you to join your fellow Democrats and local elected officials in celebrating the holidays and our recent election victories!

The clubs and our elected officials will provide the main courses and refreshments. We ask that you bring either a dish to share as noted below.

Last Names beginning with A – H bring a Salad or Appetizer

Last names beginning with I – R bring a Side Dish

Last names beginning with S – Z bring a Dessert

Please bring some canned or dry food to donate to our local food banks or a warm coat or blanket for “Christmas for Everyone.”

RSVP no later than Monday, December 10 to Sharon Goldberg ShGold237@aol.com

Volunteer for Check-In, Set-Up and Clean Up contacting Ellis Goldberg Ellisg237@aol.com

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Presidents Corner

Wishing you all the best during this holiday season! And Congratulations on a stunning victory in last month's election. I would like to personally thank each and every one of you who worked and supported our local Democratic candidates in these elections. We put Obama back into the White House, we won almost all of the important ballot initiatives, we elected a super majority in the California legislative bodies and we returned all of our local Democratic candidates to office. That in my book is a very impressive victory and a slap in the face to the big moneyed interests that tried to buy this election. Now we have to push President Obama to hold firm in his negotiations with the Republican house on tax increases and protecting Medicare and Social Security.

I trust you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with family, friends and loved ones. I am so thankful to be living in Danville and in California. Many times I have left the state to live in different environs and each time I have longed to get back to the bay area once again. As we head into the holidays, let us not forget those who are less fortunate. Once again my wife, and I are planning to work the kitchen on Christmas Day serving a full traditional Christmas dinner to the less fortunate. We are also collecting coats, blankets and other clothing for "Christmas for Everyone", so if you have anything to donate please drop it off on my porch before December 16 and we will make sure it gets to the right people. Christmas for Everyone was started 27 years ago by Mary Perez as she saw a need to help others. The first year she served dinners to about 250 people. Last year over 2500 showed up for a coat, blanket, dinner and a gift for every child, all because one person cared and has worked hard to make her idea a reality.

This is the month when we begin our membership drive so please be sure to remit your dues for 2013. We need a count of current members for our re-chartering process in January. It is also a month of holiday parties and I hope to see many of you at one of these parties honoring our members, other democrats and our local officials. I will be preparing smoked tri-tip for both the San Ramon, Tri-Valley & Diablo Valley Democratic club's Holiday Party on December 14 and for the Contra Costa County Democratic Party's party on December 20.

As we go into the New Year the Board would like to thank all of you for your support this past year and we look forward to many interesting and informative meetings in 2013. We want your input! Please email or call me with any topics you would like to see discussed at one of our upcoming meetings and we will try to make it happen

Have a good month!

Jim Donnelly- President SRVDC

Membership Drive

It is that time of year again; time to renew your membership in the San Ramon Valley Democratic club. Dues are only \$25/person or \$40/family. These dues support us in presenting our programs throughout the year. Also, as this year is an election year we need your dues to help our local candidates in their efforts to get re-elected. The primary goal of the SRVDC is to aid in informing voters and concerned citizens about issues of the day and how they may impact

our lives. The SRVDC serves the communities of Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville and San Ramon. We provide a vehicle for persons interested in your communities to come together for interesting and informative meetings about issues facing all of us. We provide a voter registration and information table at the Danville Farmer's Market and other venues. We also send out a monthly newsletter presenting updates from our elected officials and provide a forum for our members to express their views.

We need your continued support for these efforts. Dues are \$25/ person and \$40 per family. Please complete the form below and mail it to address below:

Renewal or New Membership Singly or Family Membership

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____

Home Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Please indicate the activities that interest you

____ Voter Registration

____ Get-out-the-vote activities

____ Fundraising

____ Publicity

____ Local Government

____ Newsletter

____ Hospitality

____ Programs & Functions

**Make checks payable to: San Ramon Valley Democratic Club
P.O. Box 1218
Danville, CA 94526**

Thanks.

Jim Donnelly

California Democratic Party Delegate Caucus

The caucus to elect delegates from Assembly District 15 will be held on Saturday, January 12, 2013 at the IBEW 595 Hall, 6250 Village Pkwy, Dublin.

Twelve delegates (6 men & 6 women) will be selected to represent our Assembly District at the CDP Convention and one person will be selected to represent us on the CDP Executive Board. For more details on how to apply go to <http://www.cadem.org/page?id=0080>

There is a sot of \$20 to run for a delegate seat and a donation of \$5 is requested to attend the caucus.

Registration will take place from 10:00 until noon. Voting and counting will take place from Noon until 2:00 PM

Please save the date and come out to support your fellow club members who are running for these delegate seats.

January 2013 Dinner Meeting

Our January dinner meeting will be held at the Crow Canyon Country Club on Thursday, January 24, 2013. Our speaker will be Lamar Thorpe, Director of development, College of Education, San Jose state University. Save the date. More information will be forthcoming.

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.

The following is the beginning of an article recently published by one of our members that may be of interest to many of you.

The Best Estate Plan is No Match for Unprepared Heirs

By Nancy L. Powers, Esq.

Over the course of my career, I have encountered many families who were unprepared for the inevitable aging and loss of parents. These families experienced unexpected rivalries that threatened to cripple or destroy the very family unity and wealth that the parents and their estate planning attorney hoped to protect. Well-drafted estate plan documents are designed to reflect clients' instructions for passing their legacies to the right beneficiaries and providing for care of clients and their families. However, the best estate plan is no substitute for preparing heirs to deal with: changing care needs of aging parents and other family members, the complexities of estate and trust administration, and how to avoid elder financial abuse and prevent or resolve conflict among siblings. Rivalries and conflicts may arise out of innumerable scenarios. For example, consider what can happen when one sibling steps into a fiduciary role while the parents are living and no longer able to manage their affairs unassisted or when a parent passes on. The new fiduciary and other siblings have no idea what Mom or Dad promised to other siblings. Misunderstanding and conflict can arise when monthly cash "gifts" from Dad to one sibling are suddenly cut off without notice or discussion because the trustee had no idea Dad was making these gifts; or a daughter claims Mom had always promised her all of the family jewelry plus an equal share in the balance of the estate. Without a process for communication and resolution, the next step is too often costly litigation and permanent breakdown of family unity.

Conflict is inevitable. Anticipate it.

Decide on a process for resolving it. There will be disagreements among family members. Whether disagreements are over relatively small or very significant issues, they are inevitable. What is not inevitable is that the family will know how to deal with disagreements and manage conflict. It's how families prepare for and manage conflict that makes the difference. Few

parents want to think about conflicts among their children, but successful families engage in foundational processes that prepare heirs for parents' inevitable aging and loss. Working with a neutral mediator in a confidential setting, these families engage in education and planning, anticipate and discuss possible conflicts, and institutionalize conflict resolution. These processes help families and their estate planning attorneys avoid or at least significantly reduce family discord, which in turn helps protect and preserve family unity and wealth. Estate planners have a unique opportunity to integrate estate planning mediation into the estate planning process and educate clients and their families about its benefits

If you are interested in reading the balance of the paper go to:
<http://www.wealthcounsel.com/newsletter/Nancy-Powers-The-Best-Estate-Plan-is-No-Match-for-Unprepared-Heirs.pdf>

This is a column Peter Scully recently wrote for the award winning, widely circulated Rossmoor News.

Please feel free to pass it on to all those who believe in Truth, Justice, and the American Way.

Dear Tea Party Members:

So your organization has rallied around the idea of TEA – Taxed Enough Already. Who are you referring to? The 400 highest income earners in 2007 averaged \$345 million and paid an average tax rate of 16.6% versus the 29.4% they paid in the 1990's. Their taxes were cut by 44%, thanks to the Bush tax cuts. How many of you had your taxes cut almost in half? Where are the jobs that were supposed to "trickle down" from the tax cuts for the wealthy?

How about the deal that "Richie Rich" got? Here's a guy who never worked a day in his life but receives one million dollars or even a hundred million in the form of dividends from stocks and pays only 15% versus the 35% he paid prior to the Bush tax cuts. His taxes have been cut by 57%. No wonder the billionaire sponsors of the T party are glad to pick you up in buses and bring you to rallies to fight for more tax breaks for themselves.

Many people own stocks in their pension plans and 401K's where they don't receive the benefit of the 15% dividend tax or the 15% capital gains tax. Payouts from 401K's and pension plans are taxed at the individual's top rate (up to 35%).

The top 1% are doing very well during these tough times that supposedly require shared sacrifice. They now receive 23.5% of the nation's total income vs. 9% in 1979. You have to go back to 1928 to find another time when the top 1% got 23.5% of the income. The top 1% also have 40% of the wealth. Those are numbers you find in a Banana Republic and not in a country that needs a thriving middle class to be successful. It's also evidence that there has been a redistribution of wealth to the top 1% since 1980 when the top tax rate was 70%.

The T Party is upset that 47% of the households don't pay Federal Income Tax. Assuming that's true (it's not) how many make less than \$20 thousand? How many are retired, living on Social Security or modest pensions? How many are unemployed? How many have incomes of more than a million dollars? The real disgrace is not that almost half don't pay Federal Income Tax, but that the bottom 50% get only 12.3% of the income.

If you include payroll taxes, then 86% of households pay taxes and if you include all of the many regressive taxes such as real estate, sales, utilities, gas, etc. then 100% pay taxes. In fact, the U.S. tax system is the most regressive in the developed world.

Many people believe that a value added tax (VAT) or a consumption tax should replace the income tax. The billionaires couldn't agree more. Let's go back to the top 400 and their \$345 million. How much of that income would they spend? Even if they spend 20% of it and pay a VAT of 25% that means they are paying 25% on 20% of their income which is a 5% tax rate. Meanwhile the middle class worker who makes \$100 thousand and spends it all would be in a 25% bracket. Just imagine what adding a 25% VAT to the cost of everything would do to our economy.

In fact the VAT is similar to the sales tax which is an important source of revenue to most of our state and local governments, in some cases totaling close to 10%. To illustrate the "Fairness" of this tax, let's look at the person making \$20,000 who buys a car for \$10,000 and pays \$1,000 in sales tax. That's 5% of his income. Meanwhile, someone earning \$1 million buys a car for \$50,000 and pays \$5,000 in sales tax or 0.5% of his income.

As much as the billionaires favor the VAT, they don't like the Estate Tax or as they like to call it – the Death Tax. Since this tax is levied only on estates over 5 million for individuals and 10 million for couples, it affects very few people. Despite the efforts of the propaganda machine to confuse the issue, the vast majority of millionaires will not be subject to the estate tax.

It would seem that the same logical argument about welfare should apply to the estate tax. Since we all agree that people feel better about themselves if they work for a living, why would we allow the billionaires to pass on their wealth tax free so that the next 10 generations don't have to work? This concentration of wealth can have some disastrous consequences.

Osama Bin Laden is an example of someone using his inherited wealth to try to destroy the U.S. The idea of allowing someone to inherit \$50 billion to spend as he pleases is a bit scary. Perhaps that's why Teddy Roosevelt advocated "a graduated inheritance tax on big fortunes increasing rapidly with the size of the estate".

The Flat Tax is another favorite of the super wealthy since most versions call for zero taxes on dividends, interest and capital gains. Good old "Richie Rich" would pay zero and all of the tax burden shifts to the working class. Paul Ryan's Flat Tax would eliminate many deductions including mortgage interest. That would lead to another collapse in the housing market and a deep recession. That's his plan to reduce the deficit?

One final question. Do you think it's fair that many in the middle class are in a higher tax bracket than Romney(14%) and the top 400 (16.6%)? If the goal is fairness and helping those who are actually bearing the burden in today's economy, maybe you should be joining the Nuns on the Bus and get off the Billionaire's Bus.

Scully0663@aol.com

Reports about/from our Elected Officials

Congressman George Miller

New Miller Legislation Would Help Shorten Voting Lines, Strengthen People's Ability to Vote

Nov 15, 2012

Washington, DC – Citing widespread reports of hours-long waits and blocks-long lines at polling places around the country during Election Day, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) today announced that he will introduce new legislation intended to shorten wait times at polling stations and enhance the ability of all citizens who want to vote to cast their ballots.

Miller's bill would require early voting in all states for federal elections, for a minimum of 15 days prior to Election Day. Today, 15 states do not have any form of early voting and for states with early voting the number of days varies from state to state and in some states, like Florida, the number of days was shortened in this last election. In addition, Miller's bill would also require states to ensure that all voting precincts have adequate resources to ensure that no voter must wait in line for more than one hour to vote.

The Streamlining and Improving Methods at Polling Locations and Early (SIMPLE) Voting Act would reduce wait times at the polls, enhance all voters' opportunity to cast their ballots, and ensure that even the busiest working families can exercise their sacred constitutional right.

"The right to vote is among our nation's most sacred rights, surely we can do a better job of ensuring that voters do not have to choose between meeting their daily responsibilities to their families or employers and exercising this solemn responsibility," said Miller. "There are a number of well-documented impediments to voting that must be corrected. My bill is in no way intended to solve all of our voting problems but it does offer two simple and clear-cut solutions that experts agree will make voting easier and help to reduce inexcusably long wait times for people casting their ballots in person."

"Americans shouldn't have to wait for hours and hours to cast a ballot – and the fact that they had to do so in the 2012 election is absolutely unacceptable," Miller added. "Voting is one of the most fundamental rights in our democracy and we must ensure that that right is protected. What we're proposing here is a very simple solution. We're saying give voters in every state the opportunity to vote early so that they won't be left out on account of a last minute illness, a change in work schedules, or unavoidable emergencies, and make sure that there are enough resources on Election Day so that voters casting their ballots in person are not forced to choose between waiting hours to vote or not voting at all."

The proposed legislation:

- Requires all states to provide for a minimum of 15 days of early voting in federal elections.
- Requires states to ensure that each voting precinct has sufficient poll workers, voting machines and other resources to ensure that voting lines do not exceed one hour, whether on Election Day or during periods of early voting.
- Requires states to have contingency plans in place to resolve situations in which long lines nevertheless develop.

This year, in early voting days and on Election Day itself, media reports from a number of states indicated that it took some voters several hours to make it through the line to vote. The Associated Press reported, for example, that "[h]undreds of voters stood in line to cast ballots for well over four hours past the 7 p.m. closing times in Miami-Dade County, Fla., even after President Barack Obama was projected Tuesday night as winning re-election."

A number of leading civil-rights organizations have called for improved access to early voting and more efficient processes on Election Day, including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights, and the ACLU.

Congressman Jerry McNerney

Veterans Push Congress To Extend Wind PTC

San Jose Mercury News: Silicon Beat

November 28, 2012

Veterans from California flew to DC Wednesday for a high-profile push to get Congress to extend the wind industry's production tax credit, or PTC, which is due to expire at the end of this year.

Forty veterans from around the country joined Sen. Mark Udall (D-CO), Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA) and Rep. Steve King (R-IA) at a press conference urging Congress to extend the PTC. Many of the veterans have found post-military careers in the wind industry.

"The production tax credit for wind is working and should be part of the effort in Washington to help get more Americans – and more veterans – working," said Sen. Grassley in a statement.

The PTC pays wind power developers 2.2 cents per kilowatt-hour, and is seen as a vital tool for attracting investment. But future projects have ground to a halt because the credit is crucial to making wind power cost-competitive with other energy sources like natural gas. Denmark-based Vestas, which makes wind turbines, has already trimmed its U.S. workforce by roughly 20 percent due to on-again, off-again U.S. policy about clean energy.

"If the PTC isn't extended you'll see very little, if any, development in 2013," said Steve Stengel, director of communications for NextEra, during a spring event celebrating the repowering of the Altamont Pass. "That is a fact."

In California, the vast majority of wind turbines are clustered in three regions: the Altamont Pass between Livermore and Tracy, Tehachapi near Bakersfield and the San Geronio Pass near Palm Springs. Solano County is now home to several wind projects as well.

Congressman John Garamendi

Garamendi Praises Senate for Voting for Due Process and Afghanistan Withdrawal Amendments to National Defense Authorization Act

Nov 30, 2012:

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Garamendi (D-Fairfield, CA), a Member of the House Armed Services Committee, today praised the U.S. Senate for voting for amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that prevent U.S. citizens from being detained indefinitely without trial and call on the Administration to pursue a steady pace drawdown in Afghanistan through 2014. Barring unforeseen procedural obstacles, final passage of the NDAA in the Senate may occur on Monday.

The Afghanistan amendment by Senator Jeff Merkley, Amendment 3096, passed by a 62-33 vote. It is almost identical to an amendment Congressman Garamendi introduced to the House

version of the NDAA, which unfortunately failed to secure a majority vote. The amendment to end indefinite detention, which was authored by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Rand Paul, Amendment 3018, passed by a 67-29 vote. It is almost identical to Congressman Garamendi's first indefinite detention amendment to the NDAA, which the House of Representatives also failed to pass.

"Lawmakers have now sent a clear bipartisan message: it's time to end the longest war in American history," Congressman Garamendi said. "I was proud to introduce an amendment similar to Senator Merkley's in the House, and I'm going to be on the phone today telling my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee to keep the Merkley amendment once we negotiate an NDAA that bridges the House and Senate versions."

"When any of us are accused of a crime, we all deserve our day in court. Our due process rights, the belief that none of us should be detained indefinitely without a fair trial, is a fundamental American value enshrined in our Bill of Rights," Congressman Garamendi said. "The Senate passed an amendment that secures these rights for American citizens and legal permanent residents detained on U.S. soil. I'm encouraging my House colleagues to include the amendment in final NDAA negotiations. However, I remain concerned that the NDAA is still alarmingly vague with regard to non-citizens detained in America. I think it sets a dangerous precedent to include language that could allow vacationers, foreign business representatives, or migrant workers to be swept off an American street without trial and detained indefinitely."

Garamendi is the author of the Civil Liberties Act of 2012, H.R. 5936, which would make sure that all individuals suspected of criminal activity detained on U.S. soil by federal agents would be transferred immediately for charge and trial to federal courts, established by Article 3 of the Constitution. Over the past decade, over 400 terrorists have been successfully charged and tried before Article 3 courts.

Congressman Elect Eric Swalwell

After 14 months of campaigning, including knocking on more than 91,000 doors and making 26,000 phone calls with our volunteers, I had the opportunity to attend the New Member Orientation and learn the ropes of Congress.

I greatly appreciate the trust the voters have placed in me as their next Representative in Congress and many of the decisions I made during orientation, on staffing, office setup and constituent communications, were made with you in mind.

My class, the 113th Congress, has 86 members. It's one of the largest classes ever and certainly the most diverse.

The force of our class size makes the 113th congress the youngest, least-experienced Congress ever. I believe this is a good thing and that it will provide us an opportunity to build new partnerships and friendships and finally get something done in Congress.

Many of us ran to be problem-solvers and promised to do our part to end the gridlock. I was encouraged talking with many of my colleagues that we can work together to solve problems and lead the country forward.

My first priorities are the same ones I campaigned on: enabling local, “Made in America” jobs and opportunities and supporting and promoting green energy policies that will provide local jobs, improve our local economy and contribute to energy conservation and a cleaner environment.

I have already hired key staff, including a Chief of Staff and District Director, to help me be responsive to constituents and enact our goals and priorities for the district. I also hope that technology, including video-conferencing and telecommunication and other technology tools, can reduce staffing costs and make it easier than ever for constituents to communicate with me.

Washington, DC is a beautiful city that is a living history of our country’s story. But it is also a place that can suck you in and never release you to where you came from. I will always remember that Washington, DC is not my home. It is my office. It’s where I go to work for you, after listening to you back here in the East Bay.

State Senator Mark DeSaulnier

Editorial: State's peer review panels for Bay Bridge, other megaprojects require revamping
Published Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2012

Panels of experts assigned to review major state projects are only credible if they are transparent and independent.

Because the one that Caltrans trotted out to look at bridge safety was far from the ideal, it's imperative that state lawmakers explore how to make the panels better.

The Senate Transportation and Housing Committee plans to do that at a hearing today. Chairman Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord, says legislation may be needed to make sure peer review panels are properly playing their oversight role.

There are two core principles.

One is transparency. While private sessions may be needed so that there can be frank dialogue and so that Caltrans and other state agencies aren't put at a negotiating disadvantage if contract changes are needed, there ought to be some meetings held in public. Also, there should be a public record of what is discussed, any recommendations and any action taken on that advice.

The second is impartiality. While the pool of top-notch experts may be somewhat limited, much more effort should go into finding individuals without conflicts of interest.

By those standards, the Caltrans Toll Bridge Seismic Peer Review Panel – which examines the design and construction of the new San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and which is looking at other toll bridges getting seismic upgrades – has fallen woefully short.

The panel did not let the public into any of its meetings on the Bay Bridge. The Bee's Charles Piller found out that it typically met at the offices of T.Y. Lin International, the lead designer of the bridge.

Don't they realize how bad that looks?

Three of the panel's four members had prior financial or professional ties to Caltrans or bridge contractors; three served on another committee that chose the Bay Bridge design. According to the transportation committee's staff report, panel members were not required to file financial disclosure statements until July, four months after they submitted their report on the bridge.

How can the public trust that they did a clear-eyed evaluation of Caltrans and its contractors?

It came as little surprise that the panel agreed with Caltrans that there are no safety problems with the tower of the new Bay Bridge, even though an investigation by The Bee found significant design and testing concerns.

Some outside experts have disputed the peer review panel's conclusions. At the request of DeSaulnier and two other senators, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office is putting together a second panel of experts who will look at the Bay Bridge's safety, probably early next year. The \$6.5 billion eastern span, the most expensive public works project in state history, is scheduled to open by next Labor Day.

Caltrans stands by the work of the bridge panel, which it says has included some of the most esteemed engineers in the field. It also says that its overall peer review system isn't broken.

There is definite room for improvement, however. This is important not just for the Bay Bridge. There is already a peer review panel for the \$68 billion high-speed rail project, and there could be ones for other mega-projects on the drawing board, including the Delta tunnels. Peer reviews can make sure these projects are built right, but only if the panels, themselves, are put together correctly.

Assembly Woman Joan Buchanan

Buchanan named by Speaker Pérez as Chair of the Assembly Education Committee

(Sacramento, CA)—

Speaker John A. Pérez has named Assemblymember Joan Buchanan (D-Alamo) as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Education. The Speaker announced yesterday changes to his leadership team and appointed new committee chairs. The changes take effect this Friday, August 10th.

"I am honored that the Speaker has chosen me for this position," said Buchanan. "I look forward to working with my colleagues and with stakeholders in the education community on legislation that will make the best use of our resources to benefit California's students."

Assemblymember Buchanan has been a member of the Assembly Education Committee since she was first elected in 2008. Before being elected to the State Assembly, Buchanan served on the San Ramon Valley School Board for 18 years. She is also a member of the State Allocation Board and the Assembly representative on the State Advisory Commission on Special Education.

“We currently are facing unique challenges in funding education in our state,’ Buchanan continued, “but we will hold steadfast to our mission of preparing students to be the workers, leaders, and innovators of tomorrow’s global economy.”

Education has been a lifelong priority for Assemblymember Buchanan. While raising her five children, she was very involved in PTA, was a youth soccer coach, and classroom computer mom. A graduate of San Francisco public schools and UC Santa Barbara, Joan has first-hand knowledge of California public schools at every level as a student, parent, community advocate, and elected school board member.

Contact: Susanna Schlendorf, (916) 319-2015