

San Ramon Valley Democratic Club Newsletter: December 2011

January Meeting: Thursday, January 26, 2012, 6:15 pm at Crow Canyon Country Club

Topic: "California Death Penalty and Prison Reform"

Speaker: *Jeanne Woodford- Former Director of the California Department of Corrections*

Jeanne Woodford, the former director of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation who as warden at San Quentin reluctantly oversaw four executions, has recently become the executive director of the nonprofit Death Penalty Focus. Currently she is a Senior Distinguished Fellow at the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy. She will be discussing her thoughts on the death penalty and the need to reform the California penal system.

Young Person Duet

Audrey Raine Butler and Casey Conlon will perform for us. Audrey is the daughter of our Treasurer, Ross Butler, and is attending Los Cerros Middle School as an eighth grader. Audrey is a prolific singer/song writer and is currently producing her first music album "Raine on Me," which will be released on I-Tunes sometime this Summer of 2012. Audrey will perform one of her songs written for guitar and a special musical piece called "Fix a Heart" by Demi Lavato, which will be accompanied by Casey Conlon on the Cello.

Dinner is \$25 per person for members and their invited guests, \$30 for others.

**RSVP: Mail checks, made out to Jim Donnelly, to 373 Century Circle, Danville, CA 94526
Or call him at (925) 570-9289**

Please RSVP no later than Monday, January 23, 2012.

Note: If you RSVP and no-show, you will be billed for the meal.

Presidents Corner

T'was the night before Christmas and Jim hasn't gotten out the December newsletter yet. For my tardiness I apologize. This is the time of year when I like to slow down and look back over the good, the bad, the highs and the lows of the past year, and to think about the goals I want to set for myself for next year. Unfortunately some of my clients have different goals which included me working much more than I had planned. Now I finally have some time to sit down, think about the past year and review some of the things we as a club have accomplished.

Looking back at our dinner meeting we had some very interesting speakers covering a number of different areas of interest. These varied from Joan Buchanan's budget discussion early in the year, presentations by two of our fellow club members (Bill Gagen and Karen Middleton), a discussion about rank choice voting, 15 things the Republicans don't want us to know about the

economy, California energy and climate change legislation all capped off by a presentation by Ian Ruskin presenting parts of his one act plays about Harry Bridges and Thomas Paine. We averaged almost 30 people per dinner meeting and the feedback I got about the presenters and topics was quite positive. I appreciate the support you have given these meetings this past year and am always looking for feedback to help us improve in the future.

Our Bar-B-Q in September was very well attended with over 70 people coming to honor Barney & Peggy Rubin for their efforts over these past years, to enjoy the good food, camaraderie and to hear some very interesting speeches by Rep. George Miller, Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan and others. Let me know if you would like us to have another Bar-B-Q in September of 2012.

Over 150 people showed up at our December Holiday Party with Jerry McNerney, Mark DeSaulnier, John Buchanan and other elected officials. Member of the Tri-valley, San Ramon Valley and Diablo Valley Democratic Clubs all worked together to make this a successful event. I would like to thank everyone who helped out in setting up for the party and more importantly for their help in cleaning up after the party.

We, the board of directors, have a challenge ahead to put on as many interesting meetings this coming year. We already have a good start with our speakers for January and February 2012. Jeanne Woodford, former Warden of San Quinton and former Director of the California Department of Corrections will speak to us on January 26 discussing her position on the death penalty and prison reform. Representative Pete Stark, who now represents San Ramon, will be our February speaker. We have a number of ideas for speakers for this coming year, but we also would really appreciate your input. Give us your ideas of who you might want to speak and what subjects you would like to hear about. We will do our best to address them.

As we started doing last year we plan to continue with more than just a single speaker at each meeting. We will try to get someone to discuss local issues or to brighten our day in some way. For January we are going to have two very talented young people Audrey Raine Butler and Casey Conlon perform some music for us. Audrey is the daughter of our Treasurer, Ross Butler, and is attending Los Cerros Middle School as an eighth grader. Audrey is a prolific singer/song writer and is currently producing her first music album "Raine on Me," which will be released on I-Tunes sometime this Summer of 2012. Audrey will perform one of her songs written for guitar and a special musical piece called "Fix a Heart" by Demi Lavato, which will be accompanied by Casey Conlon on the Cello.

Casey Conlon is an eleventh grader at Monte Vista High School. She has been playing cello for five years and is currently studying with Ariel Witbeck. In her school orchestra, she is first chair of her section under the direction of her conductor Ed Cloyd. Casey appreciates the opportunity to play for everyone here and hopes you enjoy the performance.

Now as I take the time to look back on the year, I can say that, for me, it was a very good year. I worked as much as I wanted to (maybe even a little more), I'm pleased with the programs we put on as a Democratic club, I enjoyed two main vacations (fishing in Alaska and visiting my daughter and friends while finding time to fish a bit in Denmark) as well as other short trips in California to visit beautiful scenery or to visit friends and relatives. My darling wife and I celebrated 45 years of marriage and continue to grow old together, both of us enjoying reasonably good health. All in all it was a very good year.

I'm looking forward to a full but god year in 2012. We as Democrats have our work cut out for us. We need to get our local politicians re-elected and work hard to get President Obama re-elected. They will likely be some initiatives on the ballot that deserve our efforts to get passed (especially ones dealing with raising taxes to refund California) and others that we need to work hard to get defeated. All of us can help, whether it is by volunteering for voter registration work, making phone calls and/or walking precincts. Remember this, the other side is going to be very well funded with big corporation money playing a role as we have never seen before.

I'm looking forward to working with each and every one of you to advance our commonly held beliefs next year. I have enjoyed meeting some many new people this year, getting to know many of you at a higher level and want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and all the best in 2012. Together we can achieve greatness. I must run now and go watch the 49ers play Seattle.

Happy Holidays,

Jim Donnelly- President SRVDC

"The world stands aside to let anyone pass who knows where he is going"- David Starr Jordan

SRVDC Website

Just a reminder that our website <http://www.srvdems.org> is up and running. Visit it to see upcoming events and to learn more about the activities of the club. Your comments on our web site, both positive and constructive, are appreciated. Let us know what additional information you would like to see included on the site.

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 major concerns for our members are. Surely there are things going on that make your blood boil. Let it out, express your opinions here.

Do you ever wonder where your taxes go? See below for how the largest part of our national budget is spent.

A Little Straight Talk on National Defense

—By [Kevin Drum](#)

| Fri Dec. 2, 2011 3:00 AM PST- Mother Jones Email Newsletter

A paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division's "Devil Brigade" aims his M240-B crew-served machine gun. [Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod/US Army](#)

The Economist's Roger McShane is unimpressed with all the doom-mongering over [proposed cuts to the Pentagon budget](#):

So by how much will the defiance budget decline over the next decade? That could be seen as a trick question, because in nominal terms it will grow. Prior to the supercommittee's failure, the defense budget was slated to increase some 23% between 2012 and 2021. Now, according to Veronique de Rugy, the Pentagon will have to make do with a 16% boost ...Or to put it another way, as Lawrence Korb does, the "sequestration will return defense spending in real terms to its FY 2007 level, the next to last year of the Bush administration, when no one was complaining about devastating levels of spending."

But these numbers have not quieted the critics. And perhaps the most ardent among them has been [Defense Secretary Leon] Panetta. My colleague cites a statement from the secretary, in which he lists the tragic results of a 16% increase: "We would be left with our smallest ground force since 1940, the fewest ships since 1915 and the smallest Air Force in its history." Here's another fact: America already has the fewest ships since 1916, despite a 70% increase in defense spending between 2001 and 2010.

We could, of course, have thousands of ships and tens of thousands of warplanes if we wanted. But that would mean buying lots of PT boats and swarms of F-4s instead of a dozen Nimitz- and Ford-class supercarrier groups and a few hundred F-35s. We don't have a small number of ships and planes because we're too cheap to buy more, we have them because that's what the Pentagon wants. Modern war makes a small number of superadvanced weapons systems more effective than a bunch of cheap cannon fodder.

Defense hawks like to insist that we should judge the Pentagon budget as a percentage of GDP. The Bill Kristol contingent, for example, claims that we should never allow defense spending to fall below 4 percent of GDP. But is this a sensible way of looking at things? For some programs it is. Social Security and Medicare, for example, are both inherently tied to population growth and living standards, so as those go up so will outlays. But in other areas this doesn't make so much sense. Do we need more embassies overseas just because our GDP has grown? Not really. There will be some increase in wages that's tied to economic growth, but that's about it.

National defense falls into this category. The United States is no harder or easier to defend when our economy grows, so it's foolish to pretend that defense spending as a percentage of GDP should remain constant. It should go up when we're at war, or when external threats are high for some reason, and it should go down in other times.

This is one of those other times. Despite the best efforts of defense hawks to jangle nerves over China, the plain fact is that China remains a minuscule military threat and probably will remain so for the foreseeable future. We aren't going to start a land war in Asia, after all. Spending on cybersecurity will increase in the future, but it's still a nit in the grand scheme of Pentagon spending. On other fronts, Al Qaeda is all but dead, and our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are winding down. We'll continue to keep troops in the Middle East and (for better or worse) we'll continue with our drone wars in Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere. But those are pretty cheap. As scary as terrorism might be, the fact is that it's primarily an intelligence expense. On a pure military basis, it's simply not a big-ticket threat.

So can we afford to reduce defense spending to 2007 levels? Of course we can. The world is not more dangerous today than it was in 2007, and there's no a priori reason it should cost more to defend the security of the United States today than it did in 2007. We might spend that money differently, of course. Perhaps the Pentagon will decide it would rather have a thousand more drones instead of a single additional supercarrier group. That might well make sense since the

mission of supercarrier groups is becoming fuzzier all the time in an era of primarily asymmetric warfare.

The supercommittee sequestration will require the Pentagon to find additional cuts of about \$50 billion per year in its budget. To pretend that this would make us virtually defenseless is to insult our collective intelligence. We can make that cut and still have the most powerful military on the planet by a factor of five or six. If that doesn't make you feel safe, nothing will.

Reports from our Elected Officials

Congressman Jerry McNerney

Contra Costa receives \$500,000 DOE solar grant

Political Blotter *December 6, 2011*

A Contra Costa economic development partnership was awarded a \$521,529 Department of Energy grant to help streamline and digitize the permitting process for solar system. Read on for the news release issued earlier today:

A clean technology initiative of the Contra Costa Economic Partnership has been awarded a major grant through the U.S. Department of Energy Rooftop Solar Challenge, a national program to encourage cities and counties to compete to streamline and digitize solar permitting. (See the DOE news release here: <http://energy.gov/articles/doe-awards-12-million-spur-rapid-adoption-solar-energy-rooftop-solar-challenge>.)

The Economic Partnership, in collaboration with the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County (www.wdbccc.com), officially launched a business-led effort in June 2011 to stimulate economic growth and job creation throughout the Greater East Bay. This initiative led to the formation of the Diablo Innovation Alliance (www.diabloinnovationalliance.org), a regional collaboration focused on driving economic growth and job creation in the clean technology sectors.

The DOE funds will be used to develop the first phase of a solar permitting process within Contra Costa County that encourages local jurisdictions to standardize permit requirements so they are easily understood, consistent, timely and cost effective. Subsequent phases and funding would involve the three-county region; successful implementation would serve as a best practice model for statewide adoption.

"The Economic Partnership is working closely with industry to accelerate market adoption and to reduce barriers to innovative solar and other clean energy programs throughout the region," said Partnership Chair Alex Mehran. "We want to become a global center of clean technology and innovation, and this grant will help us begin to get there."

"We are extremely excited about this new award and the boost that it provides to spur innovation and job creation in our region," said Stephen Baiter, Executive Director for the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County. "By continuing to develop and promote policies that support sustainable and efficient energy sources, we will fuel increased demand for

our rapidly growing solar industry cluster and get more people in the East Bay back to work.”

A second initiative involves development of a regional energy procurement plan that focuses on public-sector aggregated procurement of solar and other forms of clean energy, and is modeled on the successful Silicon Valley Collaborative Renewable Energy Procurement Project. Bay Area legislators John Garamendi, Jerry McNerney and George Miller have been big proponents of the economic development initiative from its beginnings, and were part of the launch event on June 29 at Bishop Ranch.

“I am proud to have supported the Contra Costa Economic Partnership application for the Department of Energy SunShot program grant, and I congratulate them on winning the award,” said Rep. John Garamendi (D-Walnut Creek). “This program will move our country one step closer to energy independence. By streamlining the permitting process, the Economic Partnership will cultivate an environment for businesses to grow and create jobs in our community. Smart public-private partnerships like this will help us to Make It Locally and Make It In America.”

“This grant will put people in the East Bay back to work, creating jobs that we need in the region,” said Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton). “The work of the folks at the Contra Costa Economic Partnership is a wonderful example of how American ingenuity can get our economy back on track. I look forward to seeing the progress that will result from this grant. In today’s economy, the federal government needs to be a partner in spurring economic growth.”

“This announcement is great news for our community. I congratulate the Contra Costa Economic Partnership on their work to create jobs, help homeowners and businesses, and invest in the sustainability of our cities by making it easier to install clean energy in Contra Costa,” Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez) said of the project.

About the Contra Costa Economic Partnership (CCEP): The CCEP is an association of business, education and public sector leaders dedicated to creating and retaining quality jobs in the Greater East Bay to maintain the region’s quality of life. It is the nonprofit arm of the Contra Costa Council

Congressman George Miller

Bay-Delta Members of Congress respond to BDCP Statement on Transparency December 20, 2011 10:44 AM

Members had advocated for a more open and transparent BDCP process

WASHINGTON, DC -- California Members of Congress who have led the effort to make the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) a more transparent and accountable process reacted today to the statement by Governor Brown and U.S. Interior Secretary Salazar.

U.S. Representatives George Miller (CA-7), Mike Thompson (CA-1), Doris Matsui (CA-5), Jerry McNerney (CA-11) and John Garamendi (CA-10) wrote to Salazar in October, calling for the rescission of a signed MOA that was developed behind closed doors. In response, the process was opened up to brief public comment. The lawmakers submitted several public comments, as did hundreds of other individuals and local, state, and national organizations.

The lawmakers released the following statements after today's announcement:

"While the Secretary and the Governor are right that the Bay Delta Conservation Plan must be more open and transparent than it has been to date, they still haven't addressed the plan's fatal flaw: at the end of the day, this planning process is tainted as long as it's beholden to the special interests who are funding it," said Miller. "Sanding off some of the rough edges won't cut it. That's a real problem for California, and for the hundreds of people and organizations who wrote in to request further changes – including water and wastewater utilities, local officials, hundreds of conservation organizations, commercial and recreational fishermen, the League of Women Voters, and other stakeholders across California. A new plan for the Bay-Delta won't work if the water exporters in the Central Valley and Southern California maintain their undue influence over what must be a public process. Today's announcement is just one small step in what must be a serious effort to improve the BDCP. It's going to take real leadership from the federal and state governments to truly re-balance this process."

"Today's announced agreement by Governor Brown and Secretary Salazar is nothing more than lipstick on a pig," said Thompson. "This backroom deal creates a flawed process for moving forward that is not based on science and puts the interests of South-of-Delta water contractors before our farmers and fisherman. If this moves forward, families and small businesses that depend on the Delta would have their livelihood stripped away and the Delta's diverse wildlife would be destroyed. We need a BDCP plan that is transparent and based on sound science so that our Delta communities, businesses, wildlife and environment are not harmed."

"Unfortunately, the revisions made to the MOA do not address the potential detrimental consequences of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan to Northern California," said Matsui.

"Northern California, and the Sacramento region in particular, continue to be left out of the real decision making process. I am particularly concerned about impacts of the BDCP to the Sacramento region's flood protection. Without a study of the impacts of the proposed changes in the Yolo Bypass there is no way to determine how our flood system will change. Additionally, the plan calls for five water intakes to be constructed in Sacramento County, but no study has been done of these intakes that will forever change our landscape and river flow. Further, the indirect impact of guaranteeing water for South of Delta exporters, the beneficiaries of the BDCP, could have a tremendous impact on Northern Californians who do not stand to benefit from the BDCP. I am not satisfied that the BDCP has been properly vetted, or that its consequences for Sacramento and the entire Northern California region thoroughly examined."

"I am disappointed and upset that the Department of the Interior has decided to move forward with this Memorandum of Agreement," said McNerney. "Despite a few changes, the MOA remains deeply flawed and is an affront to the people of the Delta communities. From its inception, the Bay Delta Plan has been crafted by, and for, water exporters from Southern California. They have used their economic power to influence the state and federal governments, and the Delta communities will suffer as a result. Make no mistake, the Delta communities and I will never accept a Bay Delta Plan that includes a peripheral canal that was conceived without our input. I will continue to stand with the families, farmers, and small business owners of the San Joaquin Delta whose livelihoods would be destroyed by a peripheral canal."

"The Bay Delta Conservation Plan process remains deeply flawed, and the voices of Northern California communities, farmers, fishermen, and recreation enthusiasts are being shut out from the conversation," Congressman Garamendi said. "I will continue to raise concerns about this process so long as it continues to be controlled by well-connected water receivers who are more

interested in draining the Sacramento River and Delta and less interested in smart, comprehensive water policies.”

Congressman John Garamendi

Congressman Garamendi Sends Letter to President in Support of Attorney General Harris' Investigation of Mortgage Fraud

December 16, 2011 12:20 PM

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Garamendi (D-Fairfield, CA) joined more than 30 Congressional Democrats from California in sending a letter to President Barack Obama urging the Administration to support California Attorney General Kamala Harris' efforts to investigate and crack down on fraud in the mortgage industry. Congressman Garamendi's district was especially hard hit by the housing crisis and Great Recession. Solano County continues to have the nation's second-highest foreclosure rate, and Contra Costa County communities like Antioch and Oakley have also been hard hit by foreclosures.

"The abuses and fraud need to be fully investigated, and I commend Attorney General Harris for taking appropriate leadership in helping homeowners," Garamendi said. "I hope the President uses the power of his Administration to aid Harris. We need to make sure that these rip off artists are exposed for their crimes, and to whatever degree we can help working families keep their homes, we should."

32 California Democrats signed the letter to President Obama. Text of the letter is below. A pdf of the letter, including signatories, is available [here](#).

Dear President Obama:

California homeowners, and those throughout the country, continue to suffer as a result of the irresponsible and fraudulent actions of the mortgage industry. We write in support of California Attorney General Kamala Harris' continued investigation into the potential misconduct and fraud by the mortgage industry. Her determination to provide meaningful relief for California homeowners led to her decision in October 2011 to leave the multi-state settlement negotiations with the major banks. Attorney General Harris recently announced that she would be aligning her efforts with Nevada's, with each state committing more resources and energy towards holding the mortgage industry accountable for their actions.

In October 2011, California ranked second in the country, behind Nevada, in percentage of housing units that entered the foreclosure process—with nearly one in every 243 California homes entering the foreclosure process in that month alone. We know that California has been home to a myriad of abuses as we catalogued numerous constituent cases in a letter we sent to your Administration last year urging an immediate investigation.

We support Attorney General Harris' recent decision to pursue an independent investigation. We believe that any meaningful settlement must provide assistance for struggling homeowners—particularly those underwater—and should not grant banks a broad release from liability for abuses that have not been investigated and are not remedied by the settlement. The current multi-state settlement under review would relieve the banks of further liability without fully investigating the alleged wrongdoings. Furthermore, it would not provide meaningful relief to homeowners as it would apply to only 13% of the mortgages serviced by banks nationwide. It would likely result in \$5 billion in penalties to mortgage servicers, with the rest of the settlement

coming in the form of non-cash accounting losses that servicers would have experienced anyway, as the borrowers they declined to assist went into foreclosure. We can and we must do better for our constituents.

Attorney General Harris' commitment to delivering a fair outcome for those who have been wronged by the mortgage industry should be commended. We hope that you will join her and advocate for stronger terms that will have a real impact for hard-working Americans who were victimized by the mortgage industry.

Sincerely,

State Senator Mark DeSaulnier

DeSaulnier to Evaluate Performance of Critical Health and Human Services Systems

December 20, 2011

Senator Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord) today sent a letter to Diana Dooley, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency asking for her help in evaluating the safety net “to ensure that we are still meeting our missions and verifying performance through measurements and outcomes.”

In his letter, DeSaulnier, Chair of the Subcommittee #3 on Health and Human Services for the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, wrote, “As we plan for this next cycle of budget hearings . . . these responses will enable us to focus more directly on how individual budget decisions are feeding in to the overall mission of our health and human services systems.”

DeSaulnier asked Dooley to identify goals and objectives of the most critical outcomes of our health and human services safety net programs for needy and vulnerable individuals and families in the following areas:

- Human Services;
- Developmental Disabilities Services;
- Long Term Care;
- Implementation of 1115 Medicaid Waiver and federal Affordable Care Act; and
- Community Mental Health

DeSaulnier asked for a written response by February 24, 2012. Those responses will be incorporated into the budget subcommittee hearings that begin in March.

In 2010, as Chair of Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee #4, DeSaulnier asked numerous state agencies and departments under his purview to provide information to assist in evaluating their performance. DeSaulnier was also a joint author of SB 14 to provide a statutory framework for the implementation of performance-based budgeting. SB 14 was ultimately vetoed, but on December 8th, Governor Brown issued Executive Order #B-13-11 to require the

Director of Finance to “create a plan for modifying the budget process to increase efficiency and focus on accomplishing program goals.” DeSaulnier’s request coincides with the goals of the Governor.

Assembly Woman Joan Buchanan

Buchanan Bond Initiatives Reform Bill Signed into Law by Governor

(Sacramento, CA)— Assemblymember Joan Buchanan (D-Alamo) is pleased to announce that Governor Brown has signed Assembly Bill 732 into law. The bill passed through both houses of the Legislature with unanimous support.

AB 732 requires an explanatory table, which will appear in the ballot pamphlet, summarizing the Legislative Analyst’s estimate of the net state and local government fiscal impact of statewide bond measures. The bill, which stems from a recommendation by the Little Hoover Commission, would provide additional clarity to voters on statewide bond measures.

“The 2009 Little Hoover Report suggests improving the information given to voters in order to help them have a clearer picture of the implications of approving or rejecting a state bond measure. One specific recommendation is to “include in the voter guide an easy-to-read chart or report card developed by the Legislative Analyst’s Office that assists voters in more completely understanding the fiscal context of and potential tradeoffs that result from their decisions on the ballot,” stated Buchanan.

“I believe that during such difficult fiscal times, voters need as much information as possible when voting on measures that will lead to decades of fiscal obligations,” Buchanan continued.

The Governor announced that he had signed AB 732 along with a group of reform bills all designed to “protect the state budget and strengthen fiscal stability in California.”

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