

Newsletter: February 2012

February Meeting: Thursday, February 23, 2012, 6:15 pm at Crow Canyon Country Club

Speaker: Congressman Pete Stark

Here is your chance to meet and talk with Congressman Pete Stark. His new congressional district includes San Ramon and the Crow Canyon Country Club section of Danville. Find out what his goals are for the next congressional session and let him know our areas specific concerns.

Secondary Speaker: Terry Mock from the American Heart Association will discuss the California Cancer Research Act on the ballot in November

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 Tuesday, February 21, 2012.

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

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Presidents Corner

Another dry month has gone by. This year is shaping up to be as dry as 1989, the year I moved to Danville. I remember watching my beautiful new lawn turn into a yellow patch of very stressed grass and my alder trees become infected with borers due to the dry conditions. It is

looking like we will have to make similar decisions this summer. Or perhaps, March, April and May will turn out to be very wet month, we can only hope so.

Over the weekend of February 11 & 12, I along with over 2,000 other delegates attended the Democratic State Convention in San Diego. We had a great line up of speakers including Governor Brown, Senator Diane Feinstein, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senator Al Franken, State Assembly Speaker John Perez and many more. The Democratic Party of Contra Costa county sponsored a reception Saturday evening that was very well attended by our elected officials and delegates from the bay area. It was a good opportunity to learn about the goals and priorities of our local officials..

The California Democratic Party also endorsed the same local state and congressional candidates as we did. They also endorsed the two propositions that will be on the June ballot. The first initiative deals with revising state terms limits to set a maximum of twelve years that a person may serve in both the Assembly and the Senate. The second initiatives places and additional tax on tobacco to fund cancer research in California. We will be hearing more about these initiatives before the June election.

Isn't it crazy what the republicans are doing to each other in their primary races, although it is probably good for President Obama's re-election. The worrisome part of it is that the PAC's are out spending the candidates, especially in the very negative ads bombarding the public in these primary states. Remember this is undisclosed money, that is we do not know who is funding these ads and they give the candidates plausible deniability for the very negative material being put out on the airwaves. Thank you Supreme court for the Citizens United decision. We can only expect it to get worse after the conventions have selected the candidates.

What is especially disturbing to me is how President Obama and his administration is being portrayed as godless socialists/communists. These candidates seem to know no bounds in the level of outright lies they are willing to tell the American people. We have much work to do to counter this trash and to help the President get re-elected. We not only need to call people in our local area, we also will need to help by calling voters in swing states to try to convince them to vote for President Obama.

In more ways than one it looks as though it will be a long hot summer and fall. Get out the ice tea and fans and the BS repellent.

Have a good month and I hope to see you at one or more of the upcoming events as listed at the end of this newsletter.

Jim Donnelly- President SRVDC

"I don't know of any way for working people to win basic economic justice and dignity except by being organized into a solid, democratic union" -Harry Bridges, Bill Moyer's interview 1974

SRVDC Website

Just a reminder that our website <http://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.

Candidate Endorsements

The results of our first email ballot for endorsement of local candidates are in. Over 60 percent of our membership responded to our email election and unanimously voted to endorse the following candidates for election this year:

- Congressman George Miller
- State Senator Mark DeSaulnier
- Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan

At our club Bar-B-Que last year we also endorsed Tomi Van de Brooke for County Supervisor, 2nd district.

Congratulations to these candidates and now we need to work to get them elected.

We will be having at least one more endorsement vote by email after other candidates have spoken our club..

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.

Chevron's Refining Our County

Let me go on record as a free market capitalist and believe in corporate responsibility to shareholders and the community. However, I can no longer stomach the corporate greed of Chevron's appeal for over \$75 million in property taxes from 2007 to 2009 and further appeals for 2010 to 2011- a seemingly annual event.

According to the California Board of Equalization, Gus Kramer's assessment of Chevron's property and assets were concurrent with their own findings - not only a clean bill of health, but gave our county the highest rating out of the six Bay Area counties in accurate assessments.

During a ravaging recessionary period where Chevron's record profit of \$19 Billion (2010) and the highest 5-Year Annual Earnings-per-Share Growth of 11% in their industry - will cost our county's education, crisis and welfare programs, not to mention Chevron's own employees who live in the county.

I appeal to Chevron's responsibility and generosity to the community and drop any further appeals for refunds. I challenge CEO John S. Watson who has enjoyed Contra Costa's

services and community and his board to reconsider .3% (around \$75 million) of their profit for programs, services and jobs that have faces, names and as Chevron advertises' "Human Energy."

Ross Erin Butler
Danville - Investment Advisor
Ross ran for 2010 County Assessor

Reports from our Elected Officials

Congressman Jerry McNerney

McNerney Calls New Water Legislation "Unconscionable"

Feb. 15, 2012

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney issued the following statement today in response to the pending committee markup of H.R. 1837:

"This bill is yet another example of a water scheme created behind closed doors and without the input of the Delta communities. Any legislation that will forever affect the Delta must include the input of the people who reside there and rely on a healthy Delta for their livelihoods.

"This bill is deeply-flawed, and it will rob the Delta of clean water and reduce the quality of the water that remains. To steal water from one community to benefit another is unconscionable and would have disastrous consequences for the Delta communities.

"This is yet another example of how greedy water exporters and their allies will stop at nothing to achieve their goals with total disregard for the disastrous consequences for the Delta.

"I will continue to call for fair solutions that include the input of all stakeholders, and to stand with the families, farmers, and small business owners who rely on the Delta for their economic security."

California Reps: Water Bill Kills Local Jobs, Neglects 50 Years Of Established Science

Bay-Delta Representatives Lead Call Against So-Called San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act

Feb. 16, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Ten Northern California representatives are today calling on the House Committee on Natural Resources to oppose H.R. 1837, the so-called San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act. As written, the legislation would divert additional water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta to South-of-Delta water users, running counter to established economic and environmental policies.

In a letter to the Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson (CA-1), George Miller (CA-7), Doris Matsui (CA-5), Jerry McNerney (CA-11), John Garamendi (CA-10), Jackie Speier (CA-12), Mike Honda (CA-15), Lynn Woolsey (CA-6), Zoe Lofgren (CA-16) and Anna Eshoo (CA-14) wrote that the bill grossly dismisses the best available science, would

cause job losses, repeals environmental protections, damages local tourism, hurts fishers and farmers, and should be rejected.

The lawmakers who sent the letter responded today as the legislation is being considered by the House Committee on Natural Resources:

"This legislation is nothing more than an attempt by well-funded south-of-Delta water contractors to steal water from the North with no regard for the fishers, farmers, families and businesses who depend on the Delta for their livelihoods" said Thompson. "This bill puts politics ahead of a half-century of established science, guts environmental protections and kills local jobs. It should be rejected, and solutions to California's water challenges should be based on sound science so that our Delta communities, wildlife and environment are not harmed."

"Last summer, we said that this bill would do serious damage to California's water future. Republicans took their extreme bill behind closed doors for the rest of the year, tinkered with it, and emerged with an equally radical and damaging bill. Their bill undermines water policy throughout the west, including state policy, federal policy, and court approved settlements. Their bill takes years of collaboration and compromise and just blows it all up. Their bill is nothing more than a deliberate special interest attack by a small group of well funded water agencies, their lobbyists, and Republican members of Congress to undermine a sound, workable and equitable solution to our state's serious water problems. Californians should recognize this bill for what it is and Congress should reject it," said Miller.

"This bill is a brazen move by the water contractors and their allies who want to steal water from the Delta. The farmers, families, and business owners in our region rely upon a healthy Delta for their livelihoods. The bill before the committee today has been crafted without the input of stakeholders from the Delta and should not move forward. It would have a disastrous effect on the Delta communities and cause countless jobs to be lost. To steal from one community to benefit another is completely unacceptable," said McNerney.

"H.R. 1837 is a shameless attempt to draw water from the farmers and urban areas of Northern California for the use of junior water right holders in the Central Valley," said Matsui. "Further, the bill would preempt the state from passing any stricter laws needed to protect endangered and native species, and restrict California's ability to pass tougher legislation to restore the San Joaquin River. This would dramatically undermine our state's authority to monitor, allot, and safeguard its own natural resources, as well as set a dangerous precedent for government interference in the ability of states to protect local agricultural and environmental interests. At a time when we should be working together to solve California's water problems through a balanced approach, H.R. 1837 is anything but balanced and will only create further discord."

"H.R. 1837 would alter the entirety of California's water laws," said Garamendi, former Deputy Secretary of the Interior. "We have had only one day to understand its implications. This could be disastrous for California's water interests. I strongly urge we step on the brakes before running roughshod over state law, threatening jobs, the environment, and our public health."

Congressman George Miller

Medicare is under attack

February 13, 2012 12:49 PM

Medicare is under attack – again. This time, it has to do with the Medicare Physician Payment System – or, how Medicare doctors are paid to care for seniors.

We face yet another looming but unnecessary crisis manufactured in Congress by obstruction and misdirection that could hurt services to seniors who rely on Medicare. As your Member of Congress, I have a responsibility to protect and preserve Medicare, ensuring that every American senior has access to quality and affordable health care. To protect our promise to America's seniors, we need to fix the broken physician payment system. For over a decade, this doctors' payment system has created great uncertainty and instability for patients, health care providers, and the federal budget. Weakness in this policy discourages physicians from participating in Medicare, and that can limit your access to the care you need.

I support a full repeal of the current Medicare payment system and replacing it with a more sustainable system that will help stabilize rates, ensure beneficiary access, and promote responsible budgeting. It is expensive to replace the system, though, make no mistake about it. According to the Congressional Budget Office, if we did it today, it would cost over \$300 billion. And every month we avoid taking action, the cost grows.

There is a path forward – using part of the savings from the reduction of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan offers a limited opportunity to resolve this fiscal problem. It will take bipartisanship to fulfill our responsibility to America's seniors by seizing this opportunity to replace the payment system.

Here's the problem -- the Republican-led House is risking another Medicare crisis by refusing to take immediate action to ensure that seniors can continue to see the doctor of their choice under Medicare. And they continue to try to gut the program and end the guarantee of Medicare coverage for all seniors.

I remain committed to preserving and strengthening Medicare coverage. Fixing the physicians payment system in the weeks ahead would be one big step toward this critical goal. Failure to agree on reforming the Medicare doctor payment system before the end of this month risks provoking another unnecessary crisis that could jeopardize seniors' ability to see the doctor of their choice under Medicare.

Congressman John Garamendi

Garamendi Calls for End to War in Afghanistan on House Floor and on NPR

February 8, 2012 1:03 PM

WASHINGTON, DC – Today on the House Floor, Congressman John Garamendi (D-Fairfield, CA), a Member of House Armed Services Committee, called for an end to America's war in Afghanistan. A video of that speech is included above and a transcript of his remarks is included below.

Garamendi was joined on the Floor by Congressmen Walter Jones (R-NC) and Jim McGovern (D-MA). The three Members of Congress met earlier with [Lt. Col. Davis, a respected officer who has also urged a redeployment of our troops.](#)

Remarks on the House Floor:

I commend President Obama's administration for the steps it is taking to bring the longest war in our nation's history to a close. Last week, Defense Secretary Panetta expressed the hope that "by mid- to the latter part of 2013 we'll be able to make a transition from a combat role to a training, advice and assist role." I urge the administration to fulfill this aspiration and bring our troops home to their families. They have sacrificed enough.

Afghanistan began as a war of necessity. After the horrific September 11th attacks, we sent troops to eliminate Al Qaeda, killing their leaders and destroying their training camps to prevent a future terrorist attack. Our troops carried out this mission with extraordinary courage and dedication. Osama Bin Laden was driven out of Afghanistan and he is now dead. Furthermore, our intelligence community affirms that Al Qaeda is virtually extinguished from Afghanistan, yet the war continues. End this war now and focus like a laser on terrorists where ever they may be.

Our troops in Afghanistan are no longer fighting terrorists who pose a threat to the United States. They are now fighting domestic Afghan factions and defending a corrupt and inept Afghan government. Our service members are dying in another country's civil war. This has become a war of choice.

I recently met with Lt. Col. Danny Davis who described to me what that civil war looks like on the ground. He has served two combat deployments in Afghanistan, and has traveled throughout the country talking with US troops stationed all over. A recent evaluation of Col. Davis reads: "His maturity, tenacity and judgment can be counted on in even the hardest of situations, and his devotion to mission accomplishment is unmatched by his peers." This is how Col. Davis describes what he has observed:

"What I saw bore no resemblance to rosy official statements by U.S. military leaders about conditions on the ground. Entering this deployment, I was sincerely hoping to learn that the claims were true: that conditions in Afghanistan were improving...

Instead, I witnessed the absence of success on virtually every level.

I saw the incredible difficulties any military force would have to pacify even a single area of any of those provinces; I heard many stories of how insurgents controlled virtually every piece of land beyond eyeshot of a U.S. or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) base. I saw little to no evidence the local governments were able to provide for the basic needs of the people. Some of the Afghan civilians I talked with said the people didn't want to be connected to a predatory or incapable local government. From time to time, I observed Afghan Security forces collude with the insurgency""

Col. Davis's candid testimony reinforced my conviction that there is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, only the prospect of continued shedding of American blood in a war that is not ours to fight. Only through a negotiated political settlement amongst the Afghan factions, not through an open ended US military presence, could Afghanistan become a stable, developing country.

America faces new threats now. The more than a trillion dollars spent on two wars over the course of a decade undermines our financial stability and takes away from much needed funds for American jobs and investments at home. The Obama administration has shown courageous leadership in eliminating Osama Bin Laden and other top Al Qaeda leaders. They have also shown leadership in bringing the war in Iraq to an end and in planning to ensure that the US military commitment in Afghanistan is not an open-ended one. As President Obama clearly stated in his speech on the drawdown plan last year, we need to focus on nation-building at home. I agree, and I strongly support ending US combat operations in Afghanistan and bringing our troops home by mid-2013, if not sooner. It's us, the 435 Members of this body, the United States Congress, that can choose when this war ends.

State Senator Mark DeSaulnier

CalHFA Borrowers Granted Reprieve after Steinberg, DeSaulnier Challenge Agency's Policy

February 06, 2012

In response to questions raised by Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg and Senator Mark DeSaulnier over the California Housing Finance Agency's policies that increase the hardships on mortgage borrowers acting in good faith to stay current on their loans, CalHFA has now revised its policies to ease those pressures on its borrowers.

As requested by Steinberg and DeSaulnier, CalHFA has now agreed to allow borrowers to rent out their properties if they have remained current on their mortgage payments, lived in the residence for at least one year after obtaining the CalHFA mortgage, had a reasonable expectation at the time they took out the loan that the home would be their principal residence, and cannot realistically sell or refinance the loan because they are "upside down" in relation to the current market value and the current loan balance. The revised policy goes into effect today, February 6, 2012.

"The earlier policy unfairly punished Californians who were trying to do the right thing despite changing personal circumstances. CalHFA's change of heart will now eliminate an unnecessary burden on more than 200 borrowers," said Steinberg (D-Sacramento). "I'm gratified that CalHFA Executive Director Claudia Cappio and the board of directors moved quickly to resolve this issue. The new policy brings CalHFA back to its mission of providing affordable housing opportunities and reducing foreclosures in California."

Last month, Senator DeSaulnier amended SB 447 to prohibit CalHFA from foreclosing on single-family borrowers who were forced to rent out their properties.

"This policy change recognizes that these homeowners are doing the right thing," said DeSaulnier (D-Concord). "While they are upside down in their mortgage, they continue to make payments and are not walking away from their obligation. With this policy change, there seems no further need to pursue a change in law and I will be dropping SB 447. I thank CalHFA for changing its policy."

The issue first came to light through an investigation by the Senate Office of Oversight and Outcomes, "Good Deeds Punished: State Run Mortgage Lender Forecloses on Californians Current on Their Loans." The report issued last fall found CalHFA was following excessively

strict policies, “with borrowers who are trying to avoid severe losses by renting out their residences, in some cases foreclosing even though the borrowers are willing and able to continue paying.” The report, which can be viewed [here](#), also found that those foreclosures were actually increasing costs to CalHFA.

Assembly Woman Joan Buchanan

Legislative Priorities for 2012

Every year I try to limit the number of bills I author because I believe that the Legislature spends too much time writing new laws rather than solving problems and ensuring adequate oversight of existing programs and services.

The Budget

- The most important bill we pass is the budget bill. It is a statement of our values. Producing a balanced, on-time budget is our highest priority. As a member of the Budget Committee and chair of the Budget Sub Committee on Government Administration and Information Technology, I support and understand the need for proper oversight and review. I also expect the Legislature to spend considerable time evaluating the Governor's pension reform package and its impact on our finances.

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Education

- Education will continue to be a high priority for me. As a former school board member, I understand the impact of recent cuts in funding and believe it is critically important to maintain and increase current funding levels. A strong education system is our greatest economic engine.

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Delta Protection

- Every year, invasive non-native plant species grow like weeds throughout the Delta water ways, threatening the ecosystem, obstructing navigation, interfering with recreation and harming fisheries. Currently, only water hyacinth and egeria densa are authorized for treatment by the Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW). South African Spongeplant is a highly invasive weed that is growing and spreading quickly. I will introduce a bill to designate DBW as the lead agency in controlling South African Spongeplant in the Delta because early stage treatment is the most cost effective.

Streamlining Government Procurement

- Another area of interest is the use of technology to streamline government processes. This includes updating existing legacy systems that are decades old. As chair of the Select Committee on Government Efficiency, Technology, and Innovation, I had several meetings and held a hearing during the recess on how the state buys, builds, and implements new technology systems. I am working with the Department of General Services, California Technology Agency, and industry organizations to improve the procurement process.

Detailed information about the bills I have authored can always be found on [my website](#). My new bills for the 2012 legislative session will be posted once they are finalized in the next few weeks. The last day to introduce new bills this year is February 24.

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