

San Ramon Valley Democratic Club

(www.srvdems.org)

Newsletter: March 2012

March Meeting: Thursday, March 22, 2012, 6:15 pm at Crow Canyon Country Club

Main Speaker: Michael Lighty “TAXING WALL STREET TO HEAL AMERICA”

Michael Lighty is currently the Director of Public Policy for the California Nurses Association/National Nurses United. He has spoken and organized throughout the country on healthcare reform, financing and delivery issues. He coordinated CNA's campaigns for HMO patients' bill of rights, clean money elections, and against Arnold Schwarzenegger's effort to roll back CNA's landmark safe staffing law. Most recently, he directed NNU's national political program, including the "Queen Meg" effort to defeat billionaire Meg Whitman. Now, he is working on the national "Heal America. Tax Wall Street," program to fund jobs, guaranteed healthcare, and a secure retirement for all.

Secondary Speaker: Eric Swalwell – Candidate for Congressional District 15.

Eric Swalwell is currently prosecutor for the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. He is a democrat running against Pete Stark for congress. We will tell us why he is running and his goals if elected.

6:15-6:45 PM Social Hour
6:45 PM Dinner Starts
7:15 PM Program begins

Dinner is \$25 per person for members and their invited guests, \$30 for others. Visitors who just would like to listen to the speakers are invited. A \$5 donation is requested.

**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, March 19, 2012.

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

In this Issue

- President's Corner
- SRVDC Website
- Member Editorial
- Reports from our Elected Officials

- Membership Drive
- Coming Events

Presidents Corner

A belated Happy Saint Patrick's day to all, as it is said everyone is Irish on St. Paddy's day. We celebrated with a traditional Corn Beef and Cabbage dinner, something I remember doing since childhood. Although while I was in the Marine Corps we used to refer to Corned beef as the Red death and usually shunned the mess hall on the days it was being served. I was brought up in a family that was very proud of their Irish heritage, even though the family immigrated to America before the revolutionary war and settled in the hills of eastern Tennessee. So you could say I'm an Irish Hillbilly. Sometime around 1915 my grandfather moved the family to Flowery, Montana to become dry land wheat farmers. That is where my father was born the last of 10 children. That lasted until the depression when the barn burned down and my grandfather collected the insurance and moved the family to San Pedro. A classic story of the American pioneer spirit.

If you have not renewed your membership (and about 30 % have not), now is the time to do it as we must submit our roster to the Central Committee soon to get re-chartered. The number of members impacts how many representatives from our club can be appointed to vote in the California Democratic Party endorsement process. Please check with you have renewed and if not do so today.

Any doubts you might have of what it will mean if we don't get out and work for our local Democratic elected officials and for President Obama should be put to rest by what you have been hearing from the republican candidates these past couple of months and by looking at the Paul Ryan(R) proposed budget. These people are all about helping the rich get richer off of the backs of the middle class and the poor. The Republican presidential candidates want to row back the clock to the 1950's where women were supposed to be home, barefoot and pregnant, doing what their husbands told them to do. Now not only is abortion evil but even the idea of contraception is considered a sin not to be allowed or paid for by your health insurance. Paul Ryan's proposed budget would essentially destroy Medicare while cutting the top tax rate to 25 % and doing away with most deductions, especially those that help the middle class and poor.

Look around and ask yourself these questions:

- Are you better or worse off today than you were ten years ago?
- Are your children going to have the same standard of living that you enjoy?
- Have your job benefits been cut over the past several years?
- Can the average middle class family afford college for their children without incurring a large burden of debt?
- Have the levels of city, county, state and federal services increased or decreased over the past ten years?
- Are our roads, bridges, parks and schools as well maintained as they were 30 years ago?
- Are we investing in our infrastructure and our schools for the future?

I could go on and on, but I think you get the point. The question is what are we as individuals and as a group of Democrats going to do about it?

Why do I ask these questions now? Well the Democratic Party of Contra Costa County has been advertising a fund raiser., a one act play about the labor movement in San Francisco, for the past two months. I have sent out a number of notices to my email list. Today we had to cancel the Fund Raiser because we only had sold about 18 tickets and looked to lose over \$1,000 if we went ahead with the program. I am very disappointed to say the least and am wondering if it was us just doing a poor job of getting the word out or more seriously, if this is just a sign of the times. I worry that we will not see the hard work and dedication it took to get President Obama elected. Without we may just end up with a Republican President, and Senate to go along with the Republican House..

Think about what that would mean to all of us and to our future. It is not a very bright picture.

Jim Donnelly- President SRVDC

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education." **Franklin D. Roosevelt**

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.

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.

Reports from our Elected Officials

Congressman Jerry McNerney

McNerney Champions Gas Rebate Act To Shut Tax Loopholes For Oil And Gas Companies And Help American Families

H.R. 4231 Will Put \$38.6 Billion Back Into the American Economy
March 21, 2012

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) joined several of his colleagues in introducing the Gas Rebate Act today in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Gas Rebate Act will slam shut tax loopholes for oil and gas companies and give the money back to American families to help them cope with rising gas prices.

"Every year, we see gas prices rise as summer approaches. This bill will provide relief for real

people who are struggling in today's economy and end bad practices that have benefitted big oil and gas companies at the expense of the American people," said Rep. McNerney.

The Gas Rebate Act ends tax loopholes for oil and gas companies that are paid for by American taxpayers and returns the money to them through targeted gas rebates. This bill will return \$38.6 billion to the American economy and will result in rebates of approximately \$160 per vehicle. The Internal Revenue Service and the Secretary of the Treasury will work with states to oversee and distribute rebates to individuals and businesses for each vehicle they own or lease for longer than one year.

Last year, the five biggest oil companies combined to earn a record \$137 billion in profits despite producing 4 percent less oil than in 2010. During the same time period, these companies raked in approximately \$4 billion due to tax loopholes funded by American taxpayers, even as they laid off more than 10,000 workers.

"The Gas Rebate Act will undo an unfair tax practice and provide relief to people who are paying escalating gas prices. Folks are already stretched to the limit in today's economy and they just can't afford to pay even more at the pump. This is especially true in our region, where we have some of the longest commutes in the country," said Rep. McNerney.

Congressman George Miller

GOP works to end Medicare Guarantee; ACA strengthens Medicare

March 19, 2012 12:52 PM

As we mark the second anniversary of the Affordable Care Act, Republicans in Congress are again working to end the Medicare guarantee. They have voted three times for a budget that ends the Medicare guarantee and raises health care costs for seniors, and they have voted 14 times to repeal patient protections and health care benefits.

If Republicans had it their way:

- Seniors' out-of-pocket health care costs would increase by more than \$6,000 per year.
- 54-year-olds would have to save an additional \$182,000 just to cover health care costs.
- The prescription drug donut hole would reopen, increasing seniors' drug costs by up to \$44 billion through 2020, including \$2.2 billion in 2012 alone.
- Preventive care and wellness visits would cost more, increasing beneficiaries' out-of-pocket costs by over \$110 million in 2012 alone.

At the two-year anniversary of this landmark law, new data demonstrates the benefits that the law has already provided to seniors, young adults, small businesses, and many others. Reforms in the law have also decreased or slowed Medicare costs:

- The 2012 Part A deductible increased by just \$24 since 2011 – well below previous year increases and inflation.
- The 2012 Part B deductible decreased by \$22 since 2011.

- The 2012 Part B premiums were 6% lower than projected – meaning some seniors will see premiums slightly increase by \$3.50, others will see premiums decrease by more than \$15 since 2011.
- 2012 Medicare Advantage premiums decreased by 7% – and they are 16% lower than before the Affordable Care Act was signed into law.
- Part D premiums held steady, with no increase to the average premium since 2011.
- Total Medicare spending has slowed, increasing by just 3.8% in FY11 (vs. an average of 9% per year from 2000-2009).
- Solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund has been increased by eight years.
- Medicare's new anti-fraud tools are working, saving taxpayers \$4.1 billion in fraudulent payments in 2011.

Two years after health care reform was signed into law, beneficiaries have expanded benefits and choices:

Beneficiaries are paying less for prescription drugs, as the “donut hole” closes completely by 2020:

- More than 5.1 million seniors and people with disabilities on Medicare saved over \$3.2 billion on prescription drugs, an average of \$635 per person, thanks to \$250 donut hole rebate checks in 2010 and a 50% discount on brand-name drugs in 2011.

Beneficiaries are paying less and getting more preventive care and wellness services:

- 32.5 million beneficiaries have received free preventive services, such as mammograms and colonoscopies.
- 2.3 million beneficiaries have already taken advantage of a free annual wellness visit.
- Beneficiaries continue to have more Medicare Advantage choices:
- MA enrollment increased by 10% this year, and by 17% since the Affordable Care Act was enacted.
- Today, 99.7% of beneficiaries have access to a Medicare Advantage plan.

Congressman John Garamendi

Congressman Garamendi Alarmed by Republican Budget that Harms Medicare, Kills Jobs

March 20, 2012 2:08 PM

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Garamendi, California's Insurance Commissioner for eight years, criticized the House Republican budget plan released today. He issued the following statement:

"A year ago, Republicans in Congress voted repeatedly to end Medicare and replace it with an underfunded coupon system. This year House Republicans are once again proposing to end the Medicare guarantee and to shift more costs to seniors struggling to make ends meet. The Congressional Republicans' proposal will undermine Medicare and cost seniors more, and it maintains Big Oil subsidies and increases tax giveaways for millionaires and billionaires. This is just wrong, and the deficit will actually grow.

"Seniors aren't the only people harmed by this terrible plan. Investments in education are slashed. Roads, bridges, and public transportation are decimated. Thousands of jobs will be destroyed. Middle class and working class families will pay more and see less.

"America deserves a budget that creates jobs, invests in vital national priorities, strengthens small businesses, preserves retirement security, improves education access and affordability, and responsibly reduces the deficit. The Republican budget does the opposite."

State Senator Mark DeSaulnier

SB 1505, The California Keep Our Promises Act, Creates \$600 million Special Fund Annually for Veterans Services

Today Senator Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord) announced that he has introduced Senate Bill 1505 to create the "*California Keep Our Promises Act*" to provide \$600 million in funding for vital Veterans services by removing a tax incentive for out of state businesses.

"The payment from a "grateful nation" to our Veterans is long past due," said DeSaulnier. "After putting themselves in harms way, they came home to face homelessness, unemployment, inadequate health care, and much more. This legislation will provide \$600 million to help Veterans and their families deal with struggles here in California."

The name for the "*California Keep Our Promises Act*" comes from President Lincoln's second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, in which he closed by speaking of the need, "*To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.*" As a nation and as a people, Lincoln's promise must be kept.

Funding for these vital services will come from closing California's infamous corporate tax loophole that benefits out of state companies.

Veterans Services

The moneys provided by the Act will exclusively benefit Veterans by doing the following:

- Funds (and hire) to capacity ALL state administered Veteran homes, including Redding and Fresno.
- Dramatically reduces the fees paid by disabled Veterans to live in Veteran homes.

- Creates a \$200 million annual grant program to be administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs to fund eligible organizations that serve Veterans (including Counties, Non-profits, Veteran Service Organizations, builders of housing for homeless Veterans and other Veteran organizations such as the American Legion).
- Allocates \$100 million to the California Capital Access Program (CalCAP) – in the Office of the Treasurer – to fund small business loans for Veterans.
- Moves the entire budget of the Department of Veteran Affairs into a new special fund (\$347 million in FY 2011-12).

California is home to more Veterans than any state. More than 2 million Veterans live in California, with 37,000 more coming home every year. In Los Angeles County alone, more than 7,400 Veterans are homeless on any given night.

Almost every California community has non-profits and other organizations that struggle to get Veterans sheltered and into supportive housing if they have significant mental health or substance abuse issues. The *“California Keep Our Promises Act”* gets these heroic non-profits and community based organizations the resources they need to serve the Veteran population, while also building out to capacity the currently funded state infrastructure (Veteran homes) that has stalled due to strained general fund resources.

There is no doubt that existing services for Veterans is well below the demand. In 2011, the 9th Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Veteran groups that sued the federal government for failing to provide adequate mental health care and timely compensation for service-connected death and disability.

Judge Stephen Reinhardt wrote in the court's opinion: *“We willingly acknowledge that, in theory, the political branches of government are better positioned than are courts to design the procedures necessary to save Veterans’ lives and to fulfill our country’s obligation to care for those who have protected us. But that is only so if those governmental institutions are willing to do their job.”*

That case is now being considered by the entire 9th Circuit Court of Appeals “en banc.” Nonetheless, the *“California Keep Our Promises Act”* demonstrates the State of California’s willingness to do our job.

Single Sales Factor

The cost of the *“California Keep Our Promises Act”* will be paid by eliminating a tax break that allows multi-state corporations to elect whether to use a “single sales factor” in calculating taxable income. This tax break creates a perverse incentive for companies to invest and create jobs out of California.

Before 2011, a company's corporate taxes were calculated on a formula that considered three factors: California sales, California employees, and California property.

Some companies believed that this formula penalized growth in California because creating California jobs and building facilities in California would lead to higher taxes. So in 2009 as part of a state budget deal, some Republicans demanded that California adopt a “single sales factor.” This allowed corporate taxes, beginning in 2011, to be based strictly on their California sales.

Companies are offered the option of using either the new or the old tax formula. Since this change in tax law, we have found that this policy encourages California companies to expand out of state and encourages out of state companies to reduce their workforce and facilities in California. At a time when we are trying to encourage California companies to hire California employees and expand, this tax policy just makes no sense.

SB 1505, will end a corporation's ability to choose between paying their state taxes through a single sales factor or through a formula that includes property, payroll, and sales factors. All companies would be required to use the same single sales factor formula. This change in tax policy will generate about \$1 billion in new revenues. As roughly \$400 million will go directly to schools under Proposition 98, this means that roughly \$600 million will go to Veterans services.

Assembly Woman Joan Buchanan

Buchanan Bill on Juvenile Sex Offenders Signed into Law by Governor

Sacramento - Assemblymember Joan Buchanan (D-Alamo) is pleased to announce that Governor Brown has signed Assembly Bill 324 into law. AB 324 clarifies the status of the law with regard to the commitment and housing of juvenile sex offenders in response to a recent court case that would prohibit the commitment of some of these offenders to the Department of Juvenile Facilities (DJF).

"With realignment, the state is in a historic process of shifting responsibility for most juvenile offenders back to the counties," Buchanan stated. "However, the intention has always been to allow commitment at DJF to be an ongoing alternative for juveniles who have committed registrable sex offenses. We want to give the counties needed flexibility in determining the best way to house and treat juvenile sex offenders."

The realignment provisions of 2007 were intended to reserve state-level commitment exclusively for those juveniles who had committed serious or violent felonies, or a sex offense listed in Penal Code section 290.008(c). In a recent decision, the California Supreme Court ruled that youth currently being held at DJF on the basis of sex offenses were not eligible for state-level commitment. AB 324 clarifies that juvenile offenders who commit sex offenses will be eligible for commitment to DJF going forward; in addition counties may contract with DJF for the continued housing of those juvenile offenders who were committed to DJF at the time of the court's decision.

"This bill allows local judges to determine the most appropriate level of commitment for juvenile sex offenders based upon the individual facts of the case and keeps commitment to DJF as an option for those offenders who require a higher level of detention and treatment than what is available at the county level," indicated Buchanan.

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