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The Jackson County DEMOCRAT

Newsletter of the Jackson Co. Democratic Central Committee

40 So. Central, Medford May 2006



WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE!

*MAY DAY ** MAY DAY ** MAY DAY* MAIL-IN BALLOTS ARRIVE THIS WEEK

We have already received our voters' pamphlets, and ballots will be arriving this week for the **May 16th Primary Election**. Thursday May 11th is the last safe day to mail them to the county elections office. After that it's up to you to get yours to the drop-boxes at 1101 West Main St. in Medford, or to one of the county libraries.

So, how many of us have actually read through the voters' pamphlet yet? Take a look at pages 7 and 15 where - for the first time in living memory - each political party articulates the duties and responsibilities of Precinct Committee-persons.

After an admittedly biased look at each page, a couple of differences in style and content stand out.

Right up front, Democratic Party Chair Jim Edmundson lays out the problems created in the nation during this period of Republican control. Here are a few he mentions:

- + A tragic and costly war in Iraq premised on lies and deception
- + Abandonment of tens of thousands of victims of Hurricane Katrina
- + Environmental laws written by lobbyists for industry polluters
- + Tax policy to make billionaires richer and produce the largest budget deficit in history

He then refers to arguments afloat about creating new parties, open primaries, and the efforts to impose an artificial 'non-partisanship' into state politics. If we really want to change Congress, he writes, and break the logjam in Sal

em, the door is open to any Democrat to help marshal the awesome strength of our voters who carried the state of Oregon in 2004 and now must wrest control of the Oregon House of Representatives from the Republicans. He describes what PCPs do in active terms, tells folks how easy it is to be part of this grassroots party effort, and urges voters who are reading the voters' pamphlet to become empowered!

State Republicans present their pitch in the passive voice, "you may be asked...are often called upon...should be able to convey" the "principles of the party", and are bluntly told that, "...it is expected that PCPs, as representatives of the party during the general election, will support all Republican candidates receiving the party's nomination." The leadership tells the grassroots what to do and say, including:

"each person's dignity, freedom, ability and responsibility must be honored"

"equal rights, equal justice and equal opportunity for all regardless of race, creed, sex, age or disability"

"government must practice fiscal responsibility"

"the proper role of government is to provide for the people only those critical functions that cannot be performed by individuals"

This is called discipline.

Oddly, those quotes sound almost like they might have been written by a Democrat. In tone, they are nothing like the current Republican platform. It is an effort to persuade voters that this bunch of politicians represents the party of Abe Lincoln and Tom McCall. You can't help but wonder why anyone would believe them.

ALERT!

Carl Worden, who was once national salesman for *Circus Vargas*, seems to think politics is just another circus. He's declared himself a Democrat at candidate forums for County Commissioner. He is also on the Democratic Primary Ballot. But he's admitted online and in print that he's a lifelong conservative Republican who changed his registration last August to first run against Congressman Greg Walden, and now against Commissioner Jack Walker. Worden might be clowning around, but don't be fooled.

There really is only one Democratic candidate for County Commission Seat #1

Ashlander Tom Winmill.

[At its April meeting, the JCDCC suspended its rules to be able to endorse the only genuine Democrat running in this Commissioner race.]

40 South Central Ave. ACTION HEADQUARTERS

All technological hurdles are overcome and our headquarters is geared up for the election season. Thanks to John Littleton and his crew, and to Christine Haynie and her volunteers, we are ready to support our candidates. Our building signage is wending its way through the Medford certification process.

Every month our Central Committee meetings are slipping another building block in place as we construct our party into an instrument for change. The major focus this Spring is on the Voter ID Project, and around 500 volunteers have been called upon to share the workload.

For the future, precincts are being combined into six regions within the county because each of these discrete areas represent a separate and distinct campaign situation. **Sharon Marler (488-0038)** wants to hear from active Democrats in each region as she builds teams to organize party activities for the general election.

AND WE CAN WIN

Now the pieces that we have been putting together over the past year are melding into a strong political organization ready to conquer the Primaries and move clear through to the General Election. Many of you have been integral to the strength of the Democratic Party. Bravo!

We can be proud of our Democratic legislators up for re-election who have been fighting for our ideals in Salem and at home over the past two years, and proud of the Democratic candidates who truly represent the principles and ethics of the Party and are ready to take on the good fight to win seats in the state legislature, the county, and the courts.

NOW IT'S UP TO ALL OF US TO VOTE! Return your ballots early. Bring our people home! Talk to you neighbors, be sure that *they* are filling out and mailing in their ballots. We are so incredibly lucky in Oregon to have probably the safest *and* easiest way to make our opinions count...possibly even so lucky that the ballots and our combined voices are taken for granted, so now is *not* the time to be indifferent or apathetic.

For the short bit of time it takes you to fill out your ballot, forget Washington DC. Focus on *your* home-front, *your* candidates, *your* issues right here and now. Look to the home-ground.

If we build well here, we will build well in Salem.

And if we build well in Salem, we can build well in Washington.

So let's get started Grassroots Democrats...and may we all win!

Gail Beason, County Chair

MAY JCDCC MEETING

Thursday, May 25, 2006

6:30 – 8:30 pm

**OEA Offices - 2495 S. Pacific Hwy
PRIORITIZING OUR GOALS**

Tonya Graham and Cindy Deacon Williams developed a workshop in early March. A group of 20 active party members attended this all day planning session and created a framework for directing our efforts over the next five years.

We analyzed the assets that the Jackson County Democrats can bring to bear on the political arena as well as the threats that create obstacles to success. We determined on five major goals and strategies we will use to implement those goals.

At the May Meeting we will share the results of that session and we'll be asking everyone in the room to help us prioritize the activities identified in the new plan and to recruit committed volunteers to see these efforts through to completion.

Mark your Calendars! See you there!

Fundraising Events

TALENT Needed!

We're looking for a hot team to organize the events and fundraisers that keep the Democrats alive and well.

Annual Kennedy-Roosevelt

Dinner

Summer is the perfect time to devise those lively parties for Democrats which build relationships and network with fellow liberals & progressives. Interested?

Call Keith Quick at 227-3006: dkquick@gmail.com

JOLLY JEFF CHEEK'S 'PAY AS YOU GO' CHALLENGE TO JACKSON CO. DEMS

Running headquarters costs \$60 a day or \$1,800 a month. ***I'll pay \$60 to keep the office open for one day*** and challenge other Dems to pick up the tab for the other 259 days. [Hint: \$60 = \$5 a month on our Automatic Transfer pledge plan]

**Let's make sure the Donkey hangs around
40 So. Central Avenue five days a week
through the 2006 election season and beyond!**

JCDCC SENDS POPULAR VOTE RESOLUTION TO THE DPO

At our April meeting the Central Committee passed a resolution urging our state party and legislators to support the national effort to guarantee there will never be someone elected to President of the United States who has not won the popular vote. The background on this project was ably described by Wolf Hoppe in the April DEMOCRAT. We have posted the resolution on our website.

We are urging Oregon to be part of this elegant finesse to get around the Electoral College embedded in the Federal Constitution. That honored document leaves the manner of choosing its electors entirely up to each state. In short, all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be invited to pass identical measures, compact legislation under which they agree to cast 100 percent of their electoral votes for the presidential candidate who receives the largest total number of popular votes in all states. The compact would go into effect when - but only when - states with votes constituting a majority of the Electoral College (270 of the total of 538) signed up.

The difficult political choice this method acknowledges is that on occasion a state may

send electors to the Electoral College to vote for someone who has NOT won the state's majority vote. The discussion and controversy is over whether local politicians will be willing to satisfy the popular will rather than their local constituents. The first opportunity for the Oregon legislature to consider this idea is during the 2007 session.

Former congressional leaders who'd been frustrated system reformers are among the proposal's promoters; including former Sen. Birch Bayh, D-Ind., leader of Electoral College reform efforts in the 1960s and '70s, and former Rep. John B. Anderson, R-Ill., an independent candidate for president in 1980.

But reform ranks have swelled with a new generation of direct vote advocates, including Common Cause and FairVote and a coterie of computer experts, lawyers and political scientists. Among them: John R. Koza, a Stanford University computer scientist, is lead author of a new book — *Every Vote Equal: A State-Based Plan for Electing the President*, featured on the group's newly launched Web site, www.NationalPopularVote.com

RESOLUTION: *to provide for a national popular vote for President of the United States of America*

Because there is overwhelming national sentiment that Presidents should be chosen by popular vote, *and*

Because the Federal Constitution specifies that the President shall be elected by an Electoral College, but leaves entirely to the several states the manner by which they choose and instruct their designated electors, *and*

Because amending the Constitution to eliminate the Electoral College has failed over 500 times because the smaller states have a disproportionately larger number of electoral votes which they are unwilling to give up, *and*

Because today by state law in all the states the electors are elected by popular vote, and in all but two follow "winner take all" rules, to wit: the winner of the popular vote in the state gets all of that state's electoral votes, *therefore*

The Jackson County Democratic Party Urges the Oregon Democratic Party and our Oregon state legislators to support the effort being made in several states to accomplish the objective of a popular vote for President, and to pass legislation to instruct our electors to vote for the winner of the national popular vote, and furthermore,

To join with other states to build an ongoing coalition that commands 270 electoral votes to assure that the winner of the national popular vote will always be the elected President of the United States of America.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

I. RECONSTRUCTING THE PRIMARY CALENDAR: If there is one thing people agree on, it's that they want their votes to count for something. Democratic activists should consider the merits of the various efforts to overhaul a primary system which has become progressively dysfunctional. At the moment the disincentives to register for primaries are mounting. Yet Oregon's mail-in ballot reform has prompted our state to lead the nation in general election turnout. So now is a good time for party activists to consider which, if any, of these proposed reforms will strengthen the Democratic Party.

A Little History: The rush of states to hold early presidential primaries so as to have a voice in the selection of party nominees – called frontloading – worsened between 1994 and 2000, when Democratic primary turnout was the second lowest in history. Only Clinton's 1996 re-election garnered a lower turnout. Meanwhile, Republicans experienced higher turnouts in the primaries, but the GPO party regulars were concerned that open primaries allowed Democrats to have a say in choosing their nominee. Most importantly, the fact that both nominations were effectively decided by March 7th could not help but depress turnout in the many states that held primaries late in the primary season.

1999 – 2004: Trying to address the many problems of frontloading, in 1999 the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) advocated *a rotating regional primary system*. The various regions would rotate placement in the monthly schedule every Presidential cycle. The original hope was that the system would be in place by 2004. Unfortunately, the proposal would have had to be approved by the individual state legislatures in order to take effect – so it did not happen.

In the meantime both major parties conducted studies of the primary process. The 1999 DNC Rules & Bylaws Committee reviewed the process and timidly recommended against a major overhaul, negotiating instead with the RNC to ensure that the two parties schedules would coincide – or as one member commented, “It was déjà vu all over again.”

The Republicans came up with a pyramid scheme wherein the small states would go first, followed by the next tier and so forth, finishing with the largest states. That plan was defeated in the RNC Rules committee by a 66 to 33 vote.

Three attempts before the 2000 election to address the situation with national legislation failed, and that election was decided by the Supreme Court, with Al Gore winning the popular vote, and George Bush winning the court battle. The by-passed electoral college did its pro-forma job of after-the-fact ratification.

After the closely fought 2004 campaign, with its attendant accusations of fraud and misconduct, American University organized what's now called the Carter/Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform. In September of 2005 its report included among its 87 recommendations an endorsement of the NASS rotational regional primary plan.

In early 2005, the DNC created a Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling. The Commission considered the NASS plan, as well as a more complicated alternative version called the *American* or *California Plan*, but recommended yet another interim scheme described as ‘moderate’, ‘incremental’, and ‘neither radical nor trivial’. There may, however, be a couple more early contests before Feb 5th; very likely a western state with a significant Hispanic population and a southern state with a large African American population. At the latest DNC meeting in New Orleans eleven states made proposals for early slots. The recommendations – now before the DNC Rules Committee – also call for awarding large numbers of bonus delegates to the National Convention to states willing to slot their primaries later in the campaign season. The DNC party chairman was urged to begin a series of discussions with the RNC (which will begin to draft its 2012 rules for adoption at the 2008 Republican convention), so the two parties may well be dickering again.

Who knows how this will play out, since both modest changes and major overhauls can lead to unintended consequences. Some are predicting the country might find that nominees will be chosen by February 5th, once again depressing participation. Recall that in 2004 Terry McAuliffe worked the primary schedule to prevent a long, drawn out contest for the party's nomination, but the resulting seven-eight month general election campaign did not benefit the Democrats much. It looks like 2008 will be only incrementally different than 2004.

Over the long term the most notable national reform proposal is still the National Association of Secretaries of State's rotating regional primary plan, if only because the proposal made a serious stab at considering the timetable and scheduling difficulties faced by those charged with running elections. Isn't it time for the grassroots to make their voices heard?

NASS PRIMARY SCHEDULE

This proposal allows Iowa and New Hampshire to retain their early primary slots and creates four regional primaries to be held in March, April, May and June.*

These regions would be:

Eastern: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont*, West Virginia and the District of Columbia

Southern: Alabama*, Arkansas*, Florida, Georgia*, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi*, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina*, Tennessee*, Texas*, Virginia*, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

Midwestern: Illinois*, Indiana*, Kansas, Michigan*, Minnesota*, Missouri*, Nebraska, North Dakota*, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin*

Western: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii*, Idaho*, Montana*, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington*, Wyoming and Guam.

**21 States that hold open primaries.*

II. AN OPEN PRIMARY FOR OREGON?

Is the whole Presidential Primary Process as we know it slouching toward a structural change? Newsletter Editor Nan Trout has been scoping out the two efforts targeted on pages 4 and 5.

Two former Secretaries of State, Democrat Phil Keisling, and Republican Norma Paulus are spearheading the petition drive to put an open primary initiative on the November ballot. They claim that the legislation proposed in their petition would create a more open primary than exists anywhere else in the country. Oregonians are coming down on both sides of the issue.

Under this proposal, all candidacies would be classified “voter choice office”, meaning any registered voter would be able to cast a vote for any candidate regardless of party affiliation or the lack of same. Candidates, in turn, could declare a party or not. ***Only during the quadrennial Presidential years would our ballots contain a page that limits voter choice to the party they are registered in, and then only for the choice of president/vice-president or the election of precinct committee persons within each party.***

Currently, 21 states have open primaries: 16 of them in the South and Midwest, that is, 2/3rds of those 24 states. Only 4 states in the West hold them, and three of those are among the least populated states in the nation. The Northeast has only Vermont, a state with a total population equivalent to a medium sized American city. Combined, these amount to 1/5 of the states in the blue coastal regions of the country. A hundred years ago or so, Oregon was the first western state to provide for a primary at all, and it’s always been understood that this was specifically a partisan election that would allow both parties to field contenders to run against each other in a subsequent general election.

The Oregon Democratic Party opposes this petition drive, as do the Republican and Pacific Green Parties. They are agreed that open primaries weaken their party building efforts. Senator Alan Bates is a firm supporter of the petition drive because he believes that it will result in more moderate candidates winning the primary and going on to the general election. Rep. Peter Buckley is not so sure. He thinks that Democratic primary elections haven’t actually resulted in the election of candidates who throw monkey wrenches into the legislative process. Only the GOP primary elections seem to greatly favor extremists. Furthermore, given the short primary season, candidates with the greatest financial resources would have an even greater advantage than they do now, and parties are still free to punish candidates they dislike after the primary has been won.

This proposal privileges unaffiliated voters who, for whatever reasons, refuse to join one of the two national parties and who get most of their information about all things political from the media. It also gives a boost to minor parties who have never been able to reach the required threshold for inclusion in the current primary system. Disenfranchised Republicans also have a stake in this change. For example, Ben Westlund has left the Republican Party and is having difficulty establishing himself as an Independent because of the rules governing primary elections.

Oregon politics has gone through this kind of realignment before. Wayne Morse led a shift in party affiliation from Republican to Independent to Democrat in the 60s and 70s in the metropolitan areas of Oregon; and the switch in party by Lenn Hannon and other southern Oregon conservative Democrats during the Reagan election is another instance that comes to mind.

Democrats, as individuals, are free to sign this petition, of course, but we should give it a lot of thought. We have been spending a lot of our energy re-invigorating our party at the grass roots level, and should be wary of whether this particular kind of initiative is the kind of election reform that it purports to be. Is there any substantiating evidence that free-for-all primaries at the state and national level create the same kind of retail campaigns that make the non-partisan races at the local level work reasonably well? Can our political system function well without two strong political parties? And if so, that begs the question whether non-presidential year primaries are worth having at all. What would be the point of having a primary that simply duplicates the November general election? Perhaps the state should allocate funds for post general election run-offs. Parties large and small could select their candidates by convention or caucuses (and pay for them out of their party funds, as Washington State did in 2004). Obviously, there are many ways to skin this cat!

