

Bellaire Democrats

Newsletter

May, 2004

General Meeting and Election of Officers – May 13, 2004

6:30 – 8:30 p.m. - Bellaire Civic Center – 7008 South Rice Avenue – Light Supper

Come and learn how you can help the Democrats take back our state and our country in November. Representatives from the John Kerry campaign and Sue Schechter, the former Chair of the Harris County Democrats, will provide information and opportunities to support Democratic candidates at all levels. Officers for the 2004-05 year (effective June 1) will be elected.

Deli sandwiches and drinks will be provided (\$10 donation appreciated). Contact Nancy Lomax at 713-668-7075 or nlomax@houston.rr.com to help us estimate how many sandwiches to order.

Fellow Democrats:

With every newsletter we write, the outlook for our country becomes more disturbing. We are told the economy is improving, but too many people still cannot find jobs. The budget deficit grows at terrifying rates, the national debt soars. I worry for my grandchildren.

The stark reality of what John Edwards called "The Two Americas" is evident everywhere. The rich are getting richer, while we continue to erode benefits to the poor, support for families, and funding for education. University tuition rates are growing to historic levels. How will our young people afford a college education? What is the cost to our country of an increasingly uneducated population?

Our nation's best and bravest die each day in Iraq and Afghanistan. And I see little evidence that our country or any country is safer.

With That Other Party in charge on a state level, I am concerned about the finances of our public education system, currently being debated in Austin. I wonder about the reliability of our state's and county's voting technology.

We face critical elections in a few months. The Democrats have a strong, smart, and dedicated presidential candidate in John Kerry (see profile), as well as good candidates for local races. Our quavering democracy can and will be stabilized if each of us gives what we can to our Democratic candidates and stays engaged in the democratic process.

As our nation's population grows, the percentage of eligible voters who actually votes declines—voters perhaps too disillusioned to even try to effect change. Encourage your relatives, friends, and neighbors to vote in November. Become a certified voter registrar; it's easy—call me and I can tell you how! Don't ever forget the words of Harry Truman: "It's not the hand that signs the laws that holds the destiny of America. It's the hand that casts the ballot."

Our local organization is holding its annual election of officers; we ask for your involvement. Because the pace of events has outraced our efforts this year, many of our current officers have agreed to serve another year, including myself. We need each of you—let me know what you want to do and we will put you to work.

*Officers for
2003 - 2004*

*President:
Nancy Lomax
Phone: 713-668-7075
nlomax@houston.rr.com*

*First Vice President:
Phil Donovan
Phone: 713-664-9416
m072965@aol.com*

*Second Vice President:
Guyleene Ebersole
Phone: 713-665-6470
guyleber@sbcglobal.net*

*Secretary:
Ellen Safier
713-665-0342
esafier@aol.com*

*Treasurer:
Jane McNeel
Phone: 713-664-3316
mcneelj@yahoo.com*

*Parliamentarian/Ex Officio:
J. Coy Tow
713-663-7200
jctow@hotmail.com*

Newsletter Editors

*Judy Viebig
Jane McNeel*

Nancy Lomax
President, Bellaire Democrats
713-668-7075
nlomax@houston.rr.com

Please Support Our Local Democratic Candidates

John Martinez for Congress – District 7 – In the Republican Redistricting, Bellaire lost our Democratic Congressman Chris Bell and was redistricted into District 7 which has been represented by Republican John Culberson. John Martinez ran unopposed in the Democratic primary. In November he faces Culberson, who has held public office representing West Houston since 1987. Martinez is a 31 year Harris County resident, an oil and gas production engineering consultant with experience in international projects, a business owner, and an adjunct professor in Petroleum Engineering at UH, as well as a youth and community leader. If you would be interested in holding a get-together for John Martinez, contact Kellen Wilson at bushoutnow@yahoo.com or Martinez @ www.martinez-district7.com

Jim Dougherty for State Representative – District 134 – Jim Dougherty is a Houston attorney, CPA, federal prosecutor, and mediator and is active in numerous charitable organizations. He supports revising the State Franchise Tax that allows corporations to avoid paying state taxes, reversing cutbacks to CHIPS/Medicaid, and requiring that all legislators' votes be recorded. He is running against Martha Wong who defeated Democrat Debra Danburg in 2002 and who has consistently followed the Republican party line in Austin. Contact Jim Dougherty at: www.jimfortexas.com

Scott Hochberg for State Representative – District 137 – Scott Hochberg has represented an adjacent SW Houston district for 11 years, has been recognized among the best legislators by Texas Monthly magazine, and has been a good friend to Bellaire Democrats when our own representative has not. Contact Scott Hochberg at: www.scotthochberg.com

Richard Morrison for Congress – District 22 – Richard Morrison is an attorney who supports sunseting the USA Patriot Act, revisiting NAFTA and GATT, and responsible federal spending. He's running against Tom DeLay for Congress. Need we say more? Contact Richard Morrison at: www.RichardMorrisonforDistrict22.com

**Texas Democratic Convention – Volunteers Needed –
Participate in the Democratic Process!**

The Texas Democratic Convention will be held at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston June 18-19 (with opening night party June 17). Volunteers are needed for logistics, media, reception, registration, party planning. If you can help, contact Tricia Rosencranz at demvols@aol.com or 713-464-4346.

If anyone in the Bellaire area is interested in hosting a fundraising party for John Martinez's campaign, please contact Kellen Wilson at bushoutnow@yahoo.com

Update on Electronic Voting Machines...

This from Reuters, San Francisco, Elinor Mills Abreu , April 26, 2004:

Last week a state panel looking into glitches in electronic voting machines from a Diebold Inc. subsidiary recommended that California not use one of the firm's systems. By Friday, California Secretary of State Kevin Shelley could decide to scrap all electronic voting for now.

"If there is any question about who wins an election, there will be no way with most of these electronic systems to go back and determine the original voter intent," said Linda Franz of Citizens for Voting Integrity in Washington state.

This from WBAL-TV, Baltimore, MD, April 27, 2004

Washington-- A voter advocacy group plans to file a lawsuit Thursday seeking the decertification of all Maryland's 16,000 electronic voting machines, saying the state needs a paper backup system to ensure the November vote will be free of tampering or technical glitches.

"These machines are vulnerable to human error, computer error and fraud," said plaintiff Linda Schade, a member of the Campaign for Verifiable Voting in Maryland. "We are talking about the system by which we will elect the next president."

This from the New York Times, March 14, 2004

Florida's official line is that its machines are so carefully tested, nothing can go wrong. But things already have gone wrong. In a January election in Palm Beach and Broward Counties, the victory margin was 12 votes, but the machines recorded more than 130 blank ballots. It is simply not believable that 130 people showed up to cast a nonvote, in an election with only one race on the ballot. The runner-up wanted a recount, but since the machines do not produce a paper record, there was nothing to recount.

In 2002, in the primary race for governor between Janet Reno and Bill McBride, electronic voting problems were so widespread they cast doubt on the outcome. Many Miami-Dade County votes were not counted on election night because machines were shut down improperly. One precinct with over 1,000 eligible voters recorded no votes, despite a 33 percent turnout statewide

Representative Robert Wexler, a Florida Democrat, filed a federal lawsuit to require paper trails.

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To date, 9 states have required paper trails for their electronic voting terminals.

Write, call, or email your local, state, and national representatives and let them know you want verifiable elections in our democracy. Go to www.truemajority.com (Ben Cohen's site) or www.verifiedvoting.org for information and ideas.

(For more information see our article "Improvements" in Voting Technology Present New Threats of Voting Fraud" in the January, 2004, newsletter online at www.bellairedemocrats.org)

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"Peace is the most powerful weapon of mankind. It takes more courage to take a blow than give one. It takes more courage to try and talk things through than to start a war."
Mahatma Gandhi

**Trash to Treasure Sale
Save Your Junk!!!**

In the best spirit of recycling, Bellaire Democrats are planning a Garage Sale for this coming Fall. A date will be announced by our next Newsletter, but meanwhile, please start putting aside your castoffs, from the outdated clothes to the unused exercycles. Date, Time and Location TBA!!

INFORMATION

The White House:
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
Fax: 202-456-2461
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/president@whitehouse.gov>
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

United States Senators
Kay Bailey Hutchison (R)
202-224-5922
Houston: 713-653-3456
Houston Fax: 713-209-3459
<http://www.hutchison.senate.gov>

John Cornyn (R)
202-224-2934
<http://www.cornyn.senate.gov>

U. S. Congressman for Bellaire
John Culberson, District 9
1728 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515-4307
(202)225-2571 Fax:(202)225-4381
Houston: 10000 Memorial Drive, Ste. 620
Houston, TX 77024-3490
713-682-8828 Fax: 713-680-8070

U. S. Senate: <http://www.senate.gov>
U. S. House: <http://www.house.gov>

U. S. Senate Democrats site
<http://democrats.senate.gov/>

Texas State Senator:
Kyle Janek - District 17 (R)
713-272-8929
<http://www.senate.state.tx.us>

Texas State House Representative:
Martha Wong – District 134 (R)
512-463-0389
<http://www.house.state.tx.us>

State House Representative (adj. dist.)
Scott Hochberg – District 137 (D)
(512)463-0389 / 832-252-7336
<http://scotthochberg.com>

The Texas Legislature
<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>

Harris County Democratic Party
713-739-7785
<http://hcdp.org>

Texas State Democratic Party:
<http://txdemocrats.org>
Independent economic and tax information:
<http://taxpolicycenter.org>
Moveon.org: www.moveon.org
TrueMajority.com: www.truemajority.com
(Ben Cohen's site)
Mother Jones: www.motherjones.com
Center for Public Integrity:
www.publicintegrity.org

Other Information Sources

KUHF - 88.7 FM: National Public Radio (NPR)

KPFT - 90.1 FM BBC News, Democracy Now with Amy Goodman on Pacifica

Channel 8: Public Broadcasting System (PBS) particularly NOW with Bill Moyers (Friday, 8 PM), Washington Week with Gwen Ifill (Friday, 7 PM), Frontline (Thursday, 9 PM)

New York Times online www.nytimes.com

The Guardian online www.guardian.co.uk

John Forbes Kerry – 2004

U. S. Senator John Forbes Kerry has been described by a colleague as "a very smart, well-read, balanced human being. A Republican staffer who worked closely with him on the POW/MIA investigation described him as "better than he seems. He's narcissistic, but that goes with being a Senator. He's an extraordinary diplomat. He's got good forensic skills; he's excellent at picking apart an argument." His opponents accuse him of being "a Massachusetts liberal;" the New York Times has called him a "fiscal conservative." Of his personality, his wife insists: "He's not aloof. He's just so goddamn, excuse me, busy." As a young man in Vietnam, he was already "mapping out a world geopolitical strategy." Nebraska Republican Chuck Hagel called Kerry "a seasoned, smart, tough, articulate campaigner who has a pretty strong record to offer the American people."

This 60-year-old man we hope will be our next president was one of four children born to Richard Kerry, an American diplomat who served in Europe, and Rosemary Forbes Kerry, descendent of settler John Winthrop. John Kerry grew up partly in Europe, attending boarding schools in Switzerland and the U.S.

Kerry graduated from Yale University in 1966 and entered the U. S. Navy immediately after graduation. He served as a lieutenant on a gunboat in Vietnam; earned a Bronze Star, a Silver Star, three Purple Hearts and numerous other commendations for his service – and returned transformed and embittered to co-found the Vietnam Veterans of America and become a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He testified eloquently against the war before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

After an unsuccessful 1972 run for the U. S. House of Representatives, he graduated from Boston College Law School and became a prosecutor in Middlesex County, MA. He was elected Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts 1982 and to the U. S. Senate in 1984.

Kerry married Julia Thorne in 1970, from whom he was later divorced; they have two daughters. In 1995, he married Teresa Heinz, the widow of Senator H. John Heinz III, a woman with a sizeable personal fortune who has made a name for herself in philanthropic efforts related to the arts, social activism and the environment, and who speaks five languages fluently.

How liberal—or conservative—is John Kerry? Many of his positions defy easy categorization. His first acts in Congress were to sponsor the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction bill and to make a name for himself for his relentless investigation of the Iran contra scandal; he was among the first in the Senate to combat the growing threat of transnational forces. He has supported welfare reform and faith-based charitable efforts. He is currently the ranking Democrat on the Small Business Committee.

Senator Kerry has supported payroll tax relief and an increase in minimum wage for lower- and middle-class workers. He endorsed the Kennedy-Kassebaum Health Insurance Reform Act and authored a Children's Health Initiative. He has supported programs to assist the elderly. He co-introduced a bill to increase federal funding to public schools and has called for increasing Pell Grants for college students. He has been consistently engaged in environmental issues; according to the Sierra Club: "there is no stronger advocate in the Senate for environmental protection."

Kerry shines in foreign policy and support for the military and veterans. His perspective was shaped by his experience as son of a foreign service officer who wrote that, "America should not see the world in 'black and white,' exaggerating our goodness and our enemies' evil, or trying to recast the world in our image, propagating democracy and imposing our values and institutions on the third world."

He has a bold plan to develop alternate energy sources and reduce American dependency on foreign oil. And—he voted for the U.S.A. Patriot Act and to give President Bush authority to use force against Iraq.

Kerry's support of gay and lesbian rights (though not of gay marriage) and of women's reproductive rights has put him in an awkward position with the Catholic church, where some bishops have ordered the denial of the sacraments to politicians who stray from the church's positions. Although a hunter, Kerry has long supported gun control.

Kerry's long and complex voting record will be exploited—and distorted—by the Bush administration. When portrayed as inconsistent, Kerry's defenders argue that his changes in position are signs of a curious and subtle mind and the ability to see shades of gray. Kerry's complex and "subtle" mind gets him in trouble on the campaign trail where too often he tends to wander off into complexities on issues when a cogent sound bite would be more effective.

John Kerry may lack some candidates' ability to charm a crowd or empathize personally with the working class. But he is undeniably an intelligent, capable, and experienced candidate with positions that resonate with most Democrats. He deserves our complete support.

You can contribute to or volunteer in John Kerry's campaign: www.johnkerry.com or (Houston campaign headquarters telephone number: 713-526-2004 - <http://www.johnkerry.com/states/tx/>)

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"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." Ralph Waldo Emerson

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John Kerry House Party

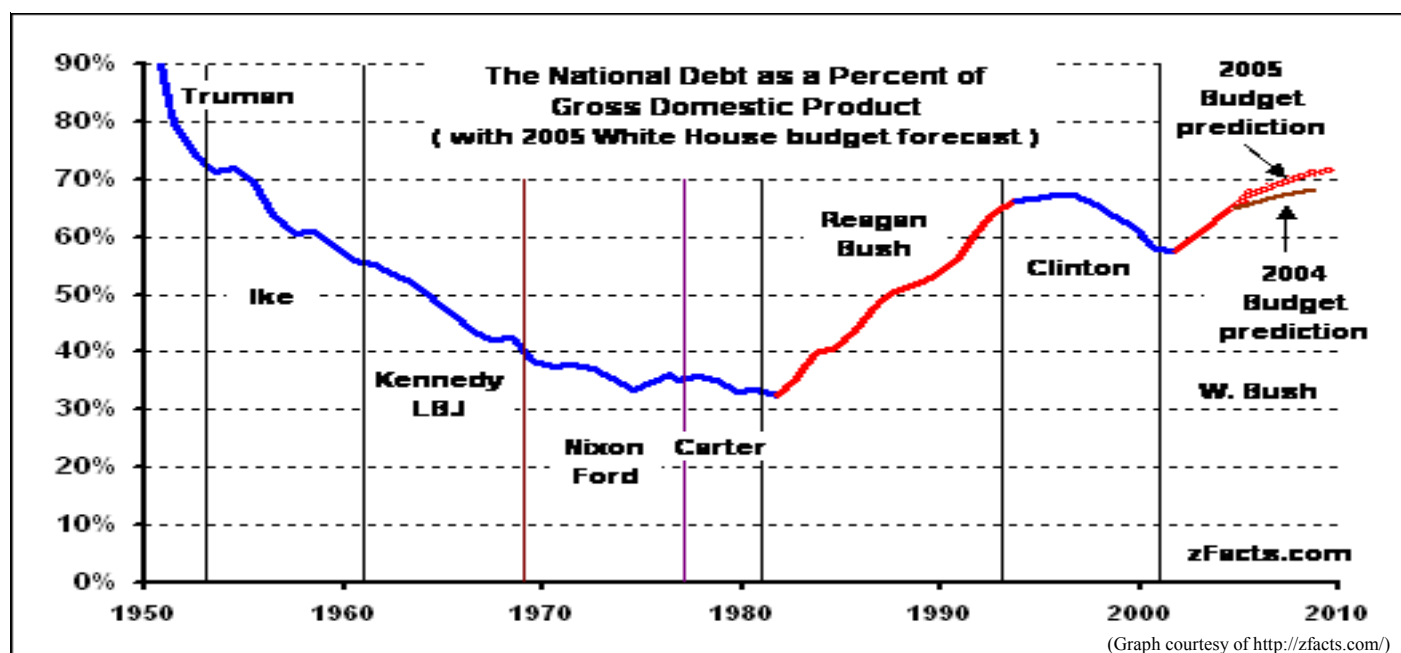
Sunday, May 23rd, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Bellaire Democrats are invited to join other Kerry supporters at the home of Mary Meyerson and Ballard Burgher and help the effort to take back the White House and our country.

Consider donating \$50 – but any amount is welcome.
3134 Castlewood Street – 713-522-7032 X3 e-mail: mem459@hotmail.com

What WE CAN DO in 2004

- Make monetary contributions to the campaigns of John Kerry and other Democratic candidates. This campaign has demonstrated that democratic candidates CAN compete through the multiple small contributions (often over the Internet) from a large base of supporters. See contact information elsewhere in this newsletter.
- Have a fundraising coffee at your home, answer the phones in campaign offices, distribute campaign literature, become an activist.
- Stay informed; know the facts about the situation in our country. Talk to friends, colleagues, relatives—especially those living in key swing states. Encourage activism in others with the facts of America's current situation; many voters are overwhelmed, uninformed, or blindly following a inherited political tradition.
- Write letters to the newspapers, to your government representatives at all levels, making clear statements regarding key issues.
- Contribute time and/or money to the Democratic activist groups not affiliated with the Kerry campaign (the '527' groups). There are many effective ones, such as: Move On at www.moveon.org; The True Majority at www.truemajority.org; America Coming Together at www.act4victory.org; Emily's List at www.emilyslist.org
- Advertise your values – with yard signs, bumper stickers, campaign pins
- Join and support the Harris County Democrats – www.hcdp.org – and/or the Texas Democrats – www.txdemocrats.org – in their efforts to recruit qualified Democratic candidates and unite local Democrats.
- Do NOT despair! "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world!" Together, we can take back our country!



Gross Federal Debt as % of GDP: The data plotted here were taken from the Historical Tables of the 2005 budget posted on www.whitehouse.gov (Tables S-1 & S-17), which show the Gross Federal Debt of \$7.4 trillion as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product, the measure of the USA's output of goods and services, of \$11,466 trillion

The Upward Trends indicate an increase in Debt as a percentage of GDP - rising sharply during the recent Republican administrations. Loss of revenue from tax cuts and job losses, coupled with increased spending, are driving up the Deficit and the National Debt.

The total National Debt as of April 30, 2004, is over \$7 trillion - or about \$24,500 for every American* - man, woman and child. The Debt increases at an average of \$1.87 billion per day. Interest payments alone on the current Debt are estimated to reach \$400 billion for fiscal year 2004, or over \$1 billion per day - obviously a large part of the ever growing debt.

Deficits for Federal and State governments are at record highs. This year's Federal deficit is estimated to run \$477 billion dollars, which does not include the full amount of the escalating costs of Iraq. Military expenses for Iraq and Afghanistan are now running \$4.7 billion a month, and lawmakers and analysts estimate that Iraq alone will cost \$75 billion by FY2005.

From the *New York Times*, Jan. 7, 2004: "With its rising budget deficit and ballooning trade imbalance, the United States is running up a foreign debt of such record-breaking proportions that it threatens the financial stability of the global economy, according to a report made public today by the International Monetary Fund."

This president has broken all records for Federal Debt and Federal Deficits, and now the inevitable rise in interest rates will cost Americans even more - higher costs to borrow for homes, autos, student loans, credit purchases, as well as the higher costs of loans to businesses. And we face the imminent threat of inflation. The meager savings in tax cuts, if any, for middle America will be wiped out by the rising costs of borrowing and by inflation. Write your Congressman and Senators - tell them you want fiscal responsibility from your elected representatives!

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(For an in-depth review of deficits and the national debt, refer to our article in the May, 2003, newsletter "A Primer on National Debt", online at www.bellairedemocrats.org)

*based on estimated U.S. population per CIA, July, 2003: 290,345,000 ~

Texas School Finance – Another Special Session

Texas Legislators are back in Austin again, this time to deal with school finance reform. And Governor Perry's proposals to end the Robin Hood school financing system and cut property taxes are as worrisome as last year's redistricting proposals.

As part of his "Educational Excellence" initiative, the Governor proposed limiting property appraisal increases to three percent per year, capping the amount of revenue local entities can raise from property taxes, requiring mandatory disclosure of sales prices of real property, and replacing current appraisal boards with five elected officials.

The obvious problem with Perry's proposal, as the Republican State Comptroller has pointed out, is that it is too expensive—creating as much as a \$10 billion revenue shortfall over the next five years. In addition, the proposed cap would reduce the ability of governments to respond to public needs, create dangerous imbalances in the property tax system, take discretion out of local governments and give it to the Legislature, and shift a portion of the tax burden to businesses.

When this same group of legislators got together last year, they cut support to public education and security, health care for children and the poor, programs for substance abusers, higher education, benefits to state employees and retirees, school text books, social services, etc. etc. Those cuts often shifted greater costs to our cities and school districts.

This week the subject of school vouchers has been included in the bills being considered, and will be buried in the final school finance bill.

Keep eyes and ears open to what is going on in Austin. Oppose additional cuts and vouchers—protect the education of our state's children.

For details on Texas School Finance, see *Financing Public Schools in Texas* at www.bellairedemocrats.org and the Center for Public Policy Priorities website at www.cppp.org.

Election of Officers To Be Held on May 13th, 2004

All offices are up for election—please attend the General Meeting on May 13th and consider running for office. All nominations from the floor will be accepted if seconded. All current members who have been members in good standing for three months are eligible (please make certain your dues are paid and current). Serving on the Executive Committee takes very little time, and it's a great way to participate!

The **President** shall preside at all meetings and be the official spokesperson for the Executive Committee and for the organization. The President shall create committees as needed and shall appoint their members and chairpersons, with the consent of the Executive Committee. The President shall have the power to call special meetings. The President shall be the official spokesperson at all meetings or gatherings with other Democratic organizations, Democratic officeholders, and/or candidates seeking office.

The **First Vice President** shall preside in the absence of the President. The First Vice President shall additionally be responsible for arrangements of membership meeting locations and programs.

The **Second Vice President** presides in the absence of both the President and First Vice President. The Second Vice President shall additionally be responsible for planning and implementing special and social events.

The **Secretary** shall keep the minutes of all meetings and be prepared to report those minutes at the next scheduled meeting if requested by the President. The Secretary shall make such records available to all officers as requested. The Secretary shall additionally be responsible for coordinating publicity for the organization through newsletters and/or in the media.

The **Treasurer** shall receive and deposit all monies of the organization and shall record all financial transactions and report them to the Executive Committee and the general membership. Membership dues received by the Treasurer shall determine active membership status and the Treasurer shall supervise the accuracy of membership records. The Treasurer shall additionally be appointed by the President to be the Treasurer of the Bellaire Democrats Political Action Committee and be responsible for filing all reports required by law with the Texas Ethics Commission.

The **Parliamentarian/Sergeant at Arms** shall help keep order at the meetings, as may be needed, and use Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised, to make sure proper parliamentary procedures are maintained during all meetings when requested by the President.

The following current officers have agreed to be serve as candidates for the 2004-2005 year. All current members are encouraged to volunteer as candidates for any position. Please contact Nancy Lomax if you can volunteer. Nominations from the floor are welcome.

- President: Nancy Lomax
- Vice President: Phil Donovan
- Vice President: Open
- Secretary: Ellen Safier
- Treasurer: Guyleene Ebersole
- Volunteers need for: Telephone Committee Campaign Volunteer Coordinator
- Membership Committee 4th of July Committee
- Fundraising/Social Committee Voter Registration Committee
- Hospitality Committee

The following changes in the Club By-laws have been proposed and will be voted on at the May meeting:

It is recommended that Article IV.C be changed as follows: "The term of each office shall be one year **two years** beginning June 1 through May 31, or until a successor is elected."

It is recommended that Article IV.D be changed as follows: "Elections shall be held at the regular June **Spring** meeting of the organization."

The full version of the Club By-laws and Constitution can be found at www.bellairedemocrats.org

The recommendation is to change this to read: "Elections shall be held at the regular spring meeting of the organization."

Sources for articles in this newsletter include various mainstream media including The New York Times, TIME Magazine, PBS, NPR, and various U. S. Government data sources; many sources are available online. Search via Google is suggested. Your feedback regarding the Newsletter is always welcome. Please email Judy Viebig at jviebig@att.net with your comments and

Become a Member of Bellaire Democrats, or Renew Your Current Membership

I wish to join or renew my membership in the Bellaire Democrats.

Annual Dues: \$ 15.00 Per Year

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____ Personal email: _____

Date: _____ Occupation: _____ (Optional for contributions of less than \$50)

I will: (check each box that applies)

- Attend Meetings - add me to you notice list
- Give permission to receive email notices at home (not at employer address)
- Volunteer for Club committee work
- Volunteer for Democratic candidate campaigns
- Volunteer for Harris Country Democratic Party projects
- Serve as an Election Day precinct clerk in my precinct
- Other Interests or Skills _____

Annual Membership runs from June 1st through May 31st - **Dues are Payable now for 2004-2005**

If you wish to renew or to join, please return your dues check made payable to Bellaire Democrats in the enclosed envelope.

Without the envelope, the mailing address is: **Bellaire Democrats, c/o Jane McNeel, 5112 Locust St., Bellaire, TX 77401**

For more information, please contact Jane McNeel, Treasurer: 713-664-3316 or email: mcneelj@yahoo.com

Democratic Precinct Chairs for Bellaire

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Precinct 128 | Lynn McBee | 713-665-0557 | lynnmb@hal-pc.org |
| Precinct 182 | J. Coy Tow | 713-663-7200 | jctow@hotmail.com |
| Precinct 214 | Helen Fisher | 713-664-3887 | helenfisher@hal-pc.org |
| Precinct 215 | Guyleene Ebersole | 713-665-6470 | guyleber@sbcglobal.net |
| Precinct 268 | Fred Cook | 713-660-9116 | |

**General Meeting and Election of Officers
May 13, 2004 - Bellaire Civic Center**

Bellaire Democrats
4801 Maple St.
Bellaire, TX 77401
www.bellairedemocrats.org