



# Bellaire Democrats

# Newsletter

May, 2007

**General Meeting and Election of Officers - Tuesday, May 8, 2007 - 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
To be held at the Gazebo in Bellaire Park, behind Bellaire City Hall**

The "Bi-Annual Election of Officers" of Bellaire Democrats will be held Tuesday, May 8, 2007, at 6:00 pm, at the General Meeting of Members. The meeting will be a picnic open to current and prospective members, family and guests. The picnic will be held at the Gazebo behind Bellaire City Hall (7008 South Rice, Bellaire, TX). Outgoing officers of Bellaire Democrats will provide hot dogs, "rice dressing pockets", salad and other food and drinks. Attendees are welcome to bring a pot-luck dish, dessert or drinks if they like, but it is not a requirement. Attendees may also want to bring lawn chairs.

### Officers for 2005-2006

**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**  
Patrick Durio  
713-667-5508  
patrick.durio@durio.pro

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

**Treasurer:**  
Guyleene Ebersole  
Phone: 713-665-6470  
guyleber@sbcglobal.net

**Parliamentarian**  
Jamie Allen  
713-664-1041  
allenfam@pdq.net

### Newsletter Editors

Jane McNeel  
mcneelj@yahoo.com

Judy Viebig  
jviebig@sbcglobal.net

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve with you in the Bellaire Democrats. We have made new friends, and elected a strong, intelligent Democrat to represent us in the state Legislature. We have cheered our legislators who went to Oklahoma and New Mexico trying to hold back the Delay Redistricting Robbery. We have sent "care packages" to our soldiers and the children in Afghanistan. We have held hugely successful Garage Sales to support our favorite candidates, and we have been inspired by enthusiastic Democrats like David VanOs and Hank Gilbert., Barbara Radnofsky and Chris Bell.

I hope to see you and your family at the end of the year picnic at the Gazebo in Bellaire Park (behind City Hall) on Tuesday, May 8. Together we will elect new officers and begin a new chapter for the Bellaire Democrats. I believe that hard work in Harris County in the coming months will mean great victories for all Democrats in 2008. Come share a picnic supper with us as we kick back and relax a bit before gearing up for the next round.

The best is yet to come!

Nancy Lomax

*Editors' Note:* We're certain that all Club members and friends join us in expressing our thanks to the outgoing officers who have given so much of their time and effort to make the Bellaire Democrats a success. Thanks also to Lynn McBee, for her efforts as chair of the Nominating Committee, in presenting us with such fine candidates for the upcoming election.

### Nominating Committee Report to Membership

By Lynn McBee, April 2, 2007

It is my pleasure to recommend a partial slate of nominees to be voted on for officers of the Bellaire Democrats, a two-year term beginning July 1, 2007. The election will take place on Tuesday, May 8, 2007, at 6:30 pm at the Bellaire Park Gazebo (see details elsewhere). The Nominees for officers who have agreed to serve, if voted to do so by the members, are:

President:	Patrick Durio, CPA – currently 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Democratic Chair Pct. 182
1 <sup>st</sup> V.P. (programs)	Carolyn Mata – currently assisting the 1 <sup>st</sup> V.P.
2 <sup>nd</sup> V.P. (spec. projects)	
Treasurer	Linda Steen Norris, CPA
Secretary	Elaine Schroller, technical writer
Parliamentarian (ex officio)	

These are outstanding candidates who have served the current Board of Directors and/or have been active in the Club's activities. The current Board has served for the past three years with distinction, completing their first one-year term and, following a bylaws amendment, an additional two-year term. Our deepest appreciation goes to each of them for commitment and excellence.

As yet, there are no candidates for 2<sup>nd</sup> V.P. or Parliamentarian but I am still working on that. Should anyone care to volunteer to run for any office, they may contact me (713-665-0557, [lynmb@hal-pc.org](mailto:lynmb@hal-pc.org)) or may be nominated from the floor at the election meeting.

**May 12, 2007 – Texas Constitutional Amendment Election  
Early voting – April 30 through May 8, 2007**

Please remember to vote in this upcoming election. Ballot language is as follows:

*“The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for a reduction of the limitation on the total amount of ad valorem taxes that may be imposed for public school purposes on the residence homesteads of the elderly or disabled to reflect any reduction in the rate of those taxes for the 2006 and 2007 tax years.”*

This amendment is related to a reduction of property taxes by public schools for the elderly or disabled (over-65 and disabled property tax reduction for 2006 and 2007). The Harris County Clerk's Office has combined Bellaire precincts for the May 12th election to two locations on Election Day: Precinct 215 and 182 will vote at Horn School; Precincts 128, 214, and 268 will vote at Condit School

For those who now have frozen school taxes as of the year turned age 65 or disabled, if passed, this will allow for any further reductions of school taxes for years 2006 and 2007.

**Meet the New Chair for Precinct 215**

Nancy Masterson (a longstanding member of the Bellaire Democrats) has accepted the position of Democratic Chair of Pct. 215, effective this month. She replaces Guyleene Ebersole who has moved out of the area. Nancy looks forward to being involved in this important job and will participate in the November 6th, 2007 General Election in her precinct on Election Day.

**Texas Freedom Network Town Hall – Stem Cell Research  
Thursday, May 3, 2007 – 7:00 p.m.**

Bay Area Unitarian Church – 17503 El Camino Real, Houston 77058

Learn about current stem cell legislation pending in Austin and find out how you can make a difference. Join the TFN *Stand Up for Science* campaign and help defend science from attacks by the religious right. For more information, go to: [www.StandUpForScienceTexas.org](http://www.StandUpForScienceTexas.org).

**The Progressive Forum – Spring 2007 Schedule of Speakers  
7:30 p.m. at the Wortham Center.**

Tickets start at \$19 and may be obtained by calling 832-251-0706 or online through the link at [www.progressiveforumhouston.org](http://www.progressiveforumhouston.org). (Tickets at the door are \$5 more.)

Monday, May 21 - Anna Deavere Smith – African American author, playwright, performing artist, and teacher.

**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](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/vice-president@whitehouse.gov)

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

John Cornyn (R)  
Houston: 713-572-3337 Fax: 713-275-3777  
<http://www.cornyn.senate.gov>

U. S. Congressman for Bellaire Area  
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>

Texas State Senator:  
Kyle Janek - District 17 (R)  
7777 SW Freeway, Ste. 102  
Houston, Texas 77074  
(713) 272-8929 Fax: (713) 272-8956  
Austin Phone:  
(800) 445-2635

Texas State House Representative:  
Ellen Cohen – District 134 (D)  
Rm. EXT E2.302  
PO Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768  
(512)463-0389  
<http://www.house.state.tx.us>  
3355 W. Alabama, Ste. 1250  
Houston, TX 77098  
(713)660-0899

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/>

**Updates on the Texas Legislature**

- Texans would be able to see how individual lawmakers vote on final passage of legislation under a plan approved on April 17th by the state House. The Senate would still have to approve the measure, then it would have to go before Texas voters before becoming part of the constitution.
- The House Public Education Committee revised a bill that would have required Texas public schools to offer classes teaching the Bible as a textbook. The committee passed a bill on April 19th saying Bible classes should be optional. The bill does not yet have a sponsor in the Senate.
- Meanwhile, on April 10th Gov. Rick Perry endorsed legislation that he says will clarify for Texas schools what may be allowed as religious freedom on campus. Perry joined fellow Capitol Republicans and social conservatives to push the bill in Austin. The proposal by Representative Charlie Howard of Sugar Land will be considered in a legislative committee this week.
- Advocates for the Children's Health Insurance Program are urging the Senate to approve legislation that would let parents re-enroll their children every year instead of every six months. The House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved the proposal last week. In 2003 the Legislature made several changes to the program, including reducing the eligibility period from one year to six months for the CHIP program when the state faced a \$10 billion budget shortfall. Approximately 325,000 children are now enrolled in CHIP, about 182,000 fewer than before the changes were made. However, conservatives, including Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, say making parents re-enroll twice a year ensures that only truly needy families receive state benefits. It is doubtful that this proposed change will pass in the Senate.
- Ranked 49th in the nation in per-capita spending on state parks, the Legislature has let our state parks go without even the minimal support needed to maintain them. Last year, a blue ribbon commission recommended increasing funds for state parks by \$85 million per year, yet on March 30th the House approved an increase of only \$23 million per year. Years of budget cuts have forced the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to lay off dozens of park rangers, close campgrounds, cut back hours of operation and cancel plans to acquire environmentally sensitive lands. proposed budget cuts would mean the agency may have to close 18 state parks.

## Why Do We Need to Know About the Trans-Texas Corridor? It Can Impact All of Us!

Here's what we know: the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) project was first proposed by Governor Rick Perry in 2002 as a 4,000-mile transportation network, at a cost of \$180 billion over 50 years, financed mostly if not entirely with private money. The builders then would charge motorists tolls. Environmentalists are worried about what it will do to the countryside. Ranchers and farmers who stand to lose their land through eminent domain (over half a million acres) are mobilizing against it. Both small towns and big cities alike fear a loss of business when traffic is diverted around them.

- The TTC was authorized by the Legislature in 2003 in a complex bill (HB3588) amending the Texas Transportation Code, a bill poorly understood by the Legislators responsible for its passage.
- The project has received opposition from Democrats and Republicans in the state legislature, and has been considered a probable boondoggle for Texas residents but a boon for the private interests who would be involved in its construction and operation. Opponents also contend that the TTC is part of President Bush's proposal for a North American Union, a union of Mexico, the United States, and Canada, as a continuation of the NAFTA agreement.
- Contracts for initial phases have been let to Zachry Construction Corporation of San Antonio in a limited partnership with Cintra, a capital consortium based in Spain, who would receive a 70-year concession for a portion of the Corridor. Under terms of the contracts, Cintra would receive revenues from the highway tolls, as well as from concessions along the Corridors – gas stations, garages, restaurants, hotels, stores, etc. – displacing these concessions currently furnished by towns and cities adjacent to highways.
- The TTC contractors have made large contributions to the campaigns of Texas politicians, including Rick Perry, and especially those responsible for the passage of HB3588.
- The TTC appears to be a portion of a nation-wide plan to facilitate the movement of goods from Mexico as foreseen under NAFTA and CAFTA and to connect to a national hub, or "smart port" in Kansas. (According to Hank Gilbert, this port is to be built with tax dollars and ultimately deeded to Mexico.)
- A bill has been introduced to the Legislature to invalidate the TTC, but Mike Krusee, author of HB3588 authorizing the TTC and Chair of the Transportation Committee, will not let it come to a vote.
- Bills declaring a 2-year moratorium on TTC action have been approved by wide margins in both the House and the Senate. Although they have enough support to override Governor Perry's veto, it is considered likely that Perry will wait until it is too late for reconsideration to render his veto.

So – you see how complex, far-reaching, and serious this Corridor proposal is – on both the state and federal levels. This is just a brief overview. Perry believes he can proceed, in spite of the costs and problems to Texas taxpayers. We urge each of you to learn all you can about these TTC plans and to speak out to government leaders to stop its progress.

### ***The Trans Texas Corridor is not a toll road, toll roads are just one part of the Trans Texas Corridor.***

The Trans Texas Corridor (TTC) is not one but several all-Texas 1/4-mile-wide corridors that are planned to include toll roads for passenger vehicles and trucks, passenger bullet trains, commuters trains, high-speed freight trains, pipelines of all types, and electrical transmission towers. Plans also include gas stations, garages, restaurants, hotels, stores, billboards, warehouses, freight interchange, intermodal transfer areas, passenger train stations, bus stations, parking facilities, dispatch control centers, maintenance facilities, pipeline pumping stations, and of course, toll facilities.

The Trans Texas Corridor is the largest engineering project ever proposed for Texas. The corridor will far exceed any public works project in the state's history. This statewide network of priority corridors will stretch 4,000 miles and measure up to 1,200 feet wide.

Each segment of the corridor will contain:

- Six 12-foot Passenger Vehicle Lanes (80mph); 112-feet in aggregate width with shoulders.
- Four 13-foot Truck Lanes; 84-feet in aggregate width with shoulders.
- Two Tracks for 200mph High-Speed Passenger Rail. (All depots are contained within the corridor.)
- Two Tracks for 80mph Commuter Passenger Rail.
- Two Tracks for 80mph Freight Rail.
- A 200-foot Utility Zone for large underground water lines, natural gas and petroleum pipelines, telecommunication cables and overhead high-voltage electric transmission lines.
- Operational Maintenance Zone.
- Safety Zones sufficient to accommodate future roadway expansion.

*From CorridorWatch.com, March, 2007*



“Backers of the idea, labeled the “Nafta Superhighway”, after the North American trade pact, say it would revolutionise patterns of commerce across the continent and enhance the economic prospects of millions. But its critics say it could spell the end of US sovereignty. In arguments akin to those deployed by critics of the European Union, opponents say that opening borders will hit businesses, create a terrorist threat and allow illegal immigrants and drugs to flood in.

Opposition is strongest in Texas, where the state's plans for a vast road project, known as the Trans-Texas Corridor, are well advanced. Once complete, the corridor could become the first leg of a Nafta Superhighway, crossing the Mexican border at the Rio Grande, near Laredo, and then pushing north to Kansas. It would include a toll road with 10 lorry and car lanes, a high-speed railway, and oil, gas and water pipelines.”

*Telegraph.co.uk, April, 3, 2007*

**Become a Member of the Bellaire Democrats or Renew Your Current Membership**

The Bellaire Democrats organization maintains a membership list and a mailing list. We love to have memberships; it helps defray the cost of our communications. But we can also carry you on our non-member mailing list. Annual dues are \$5.00 to \$25 per person or family - just send what you can!

I wish to join/renew my membership in the Bellaire Democrats. My payment is attached.

I don't want to join now, but I would like to be on your mailing/e-mailing list.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Precinct \_\_\_\_\_

Address/zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ Personal email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ (required for contributions of \$50 or more)

Interests and volunteer opportunities (optional):

- Telephone committee
- Publicity
- Special events
- Program committee
- Other interests, skills, comments \_\_\_\_\_
- Intern for future leadership position in Bellaire Democrats
- Democratic candidate campaigns
- Technical support: website/listserv
- I cannot come to meetings, but would like to assist from home.

Please return your dues check made payable to the Bellaire Democrats to:  
**Bellaire Democrats, c/o Jane McNeel, 5112 Locust St., Bellaire, TX 77401**

For club use: Amount paid \_\_\_\_\_ Date received \_\_\_\_\_

**Democratic Precinct Chairs for Bellaire**

Precinct 128	Lynn McBee	713-665-0557	lynmcb@hal-pc.org
Precinct 182	Patrick Durio	713-667-5508	patrick.durio@durio.cpa.pro
Precinct 214	Catherine O'Hara	713-758-4588	cohara@velaw.com
Precinct 215	Nancy Masterson	713-667-2469	underhmasterton@houston.tx.com
Precinct 268	Fred Cook	713-660-9116	hfcook@wglaw.net

As of April 20, 2007, 3316 Americans have died in Iraq, 24,314 Americans have been wounded, and the war has cost the U.S. over \$418 billion. Of note: in addition to the 145,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, the Bush administration is funding approximately 120,000 private contractors servicing U.S. military supply lines, running U.S. military bases, and protecting U.S. diplomats and generals. *(PBS Frontline)*

Meanwhile, our National Debt has risen to \$8.82 trillion, from \$5.7 trillion in 2000; the projected budget deficit for FY2007 is \$400 billion\*. The last time the U.S. had a budget surplus was in 2000, when President Clinton announced a \$216 billion payment, which represented the largest debt paydown in American history.

*\*The OMB recently reduced the projected deficit FY2007 to \$200 billion, assuming employment and tax receipts remain strong*

★  
 A STAR on your address label shows current membership.  
 No STAR? How about joining or renewing soon? Thanks!

www.bellairedemocrats.org

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 Bellaire Democrats