



Bellaire Democrats Newsletter

November, 2007

**General Meeting on Tuesday, November 13, 2007
7:00 PM - Senior's Room at Bellaire Civic Center - 7008 So. Rice Avenue**

The Potboiler Artists for Change will present "Uncovered: The American Health Care Story"

Please arrive at the Bellaire Civic Center by 6:45 pm, for refreshments and seating prior to the performance. This is an informative and entertaining presentation, about a serious social and economic issue. You are encouraged to invite friends and family for this special event. Dr. Joe Bak will be available after the performance to answer questions.

More information on this group of concerned artists can be found on page 2.

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Friends and Fellow Democrats,

I invite all Bellaire Democrats, friends and neighbors to a special event at our General Meeting on Tuesday, November 13, 2007, 7:00 pm, at the Bellaire Civic Center (Senior's Room), 7008 S. Rice Ave, Bellaire, TX. We will be hosting a performance by the *Potboiler Artists for Change*, a local group of artists/activists. The title of the performance is "Uncovered: The American Health Care Story".

Using storytelling, poetry, music and movement, the Potboilers step onto the highly sudsy soapbox called the U.S. health care crisis, and challenge our current system's domination by the health insurance industry. The Potboilers are loaded with staggering ammunition for making the case for serious health care reform so everyone can be provided with comprehensive, cost-effective, affordable health care. The performance puts a face on the fallout in our system such as: job lock, bankruptcy due to medical bills, discontinuance of health care coverage for employees of small businesses, and the chronically ill who don't seek medical care because they cannot obtain coverage.

Following the performance Dr. Joseph Bak, clinical psychologist and frequent presenter on health care reform, will facilitate a question and answer session. Dr. Bak is a member of Health Care for All Texas, and Physicians for a National Health Program.

This presentation, sponsored by Bellaire Democrats, is open to everyone at no charge. Please encourage your friends, family and neighbors to join us for what will surely be a very interesting and informative evening.

Patrick Durio
President, Bellaire Democrats

GARAGE SALE TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2007 Location: 4709 Maple St., Bellaire

Still time to drop off items for the Sale. Items should be clean and in working condition: clothing, toys, household and decorative items, furniture, electrical and technical items, jewelry, tools, kitchen stuff, and holiday items.

Volunteers are needed to help with the setup and cleanup. Please contact Barbara Donovan at 713-664-9416, to volunteer. We always have great items, so come to shop as well. This is one of our main fundraisers, so please lend a hand

General Election on Tuesday, November 6, 2007

On the ballot:

- 16 proposed state constitutional amendments (see page 2),
- \$805 million in proposed bond funds for HISD (with a promise of no tax increase)
- \$880 million in proposed bonds for Harris County
- Election of several HISD and Houston Community College trustees
- Election of city officials in Houston and Bellaire.

Candidates for Mayor and City Council for Bellaire are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Mayor: | Robert Riquelmy and Cindy Siegel (I) |
| Councilman, Position No. 2: | Kathryn M. Hardin, Keith Bowers, and Jim Alvioli, Sr. |
| Councilman, Position No. 4: | Phil Nauert and Fred Stow |
| Councilman, Position No. 6: | John Jeffery (I) |

Additional information, sample ballots, and addresses for polling places are available at <http://www.harrisvotes.com/>

Sixteen Constitutional Amendments on the November 6th Ballot

The following information is courtesy of Rep. Scott Hochberg. More information can be found on his web site: <http://scotthochberg.com>.

Proposed amendments have been approved by two-thirds of the members of both the Texas House and the Texas Senate. The governor cannot veto a constitutional amendment. That right is left to the voters of the state.

The amendments on the upcoming ballot cover a wide range of issues, from important to relatively trivial. Propositions 2, 4, 12, 15 and 16 would authorize the state to borrow money for various programs and projects, with different amounts of risk and costs to state taxpayers. Rep. Hochberg authored Proposition 3, which fixes a loophole that caused some taxpayers to see 30% increases in their property taxes, even though they thought they were limited to the 10% cap I helped pass in 1997.

Proposition 1: Correcting the Constitution to list Angelo State University as part of the Texas Tech system to match a change made by the Legislature.

Proposition 2: Authorizing \$500 million in additional state bonds for college student loans.

Proposition 3: Clarifying that the appraised value of a homestead for property taxes cannot increase by more than 10% in any year, even if more than a year has passed since the home was last appraised. (This Amendment was authored by Rep. Scott Hochberg)

Proposition 4: Authorizing \$1 billion in additional state bonds for prisons, DPS, mental health facilities and other state projects.

Proposition 5: Allowing small towns to grant tax breaks for downtown development if approved by local voters.

Proposition 6: Exempting motor vehicles used in business from property tax if they are also used for personal purposes.

Proposition 7: Allowing property that was sold to the government through eminent domain to be bought back by the seller at the original sales price if the government does not use the property.

Proposition 8: Changing the consumer protections for home equity loans.

Proposition 9: Exempting totally disabled veterans from property taxes.

Proposition 10: Abolishing the office of inspector of hides and animals.

Proposition 11: Requiring how each legislator voted on the final vote on most legislative bills to be recorded and posted on the Internet.

Proposition 12: Authorizing \$5 billion in additional state bonds for highways.

Proposition 13: Allowing judges to deny bail to defendants in family violence cases who violate certain conditions of their initial release on bail.

Proposition 14: Allowing judges to serve their entire term of office even if they reach the mandatory retirement age while serving.

Proposition 15: Authorizing \$3 billion in bonds for a new program to fund cancer research.

Proposition 16: Authorizing \$250 million in additional state bonds for water and sewers in existing subdivisions that were developed with inadequate facilities.

Open Field for Rick Noriega as Mikal Watts Withdraws from Senate Race

Mikal Watts, a San Antonio attorney and Democratic fund raiser, has announced that he no longer plans to explore a race for the Democratic primary for the race for the Senate seat currently held by John Cornyn. Rick Noriega, an Army lieutenant colonel and state representative from Houston's East End, remains the principal candidate for the Democratic primary. Meanwhile, Melissa Noriega is running for re-election to the Houston City council seat she won in July.

Of Interest: Apparently Sen. Cornyn cares as little about his legacy as does Pres. Bush. He voted against the expansion of health insurance for uninsured children, even as Kay Bailey Hutchison supported the package. The bill passed the House and the Senate, only to be vetoed by Bush. Unfortunately, the Democrats in the House failed to garner enough votes to override Bush's veto of the bill. Saddest of all - of the 9.4 million uninsured children in this country, 1.3 million live in Texas.

More About the Potboiler Artists for Change

Potboiler Artists for Change will present their latest version of "Uncovered: The American Health Care Story." This group, affiliated with "Health Care for All Texas," formed in the summer of 2005 and performed in October of that year to a sold out, standing room only crowd at Barnevelder Movement Arts Complex in downtown Houston. A 17 member cast of dancers, actors, musicians and writers, on the eve of Halloween, illustrated through music, storytelling, and choreography the real human horror stories brought about by our current health care system.

Linda Phenix, founder and director of Potboiler Artists for Change, coordinated the dance program at Rice University for over twenty years, served as Executive Artistic Director of Chrysalis Dance Company from 1998 to 2005, and has directed plays and musicals at Theatre LaB Houston. Linda invited concerned artists to gather around her dining table and brainstorm how we might go about telling the human side of our broken and unjust health care system. What stories did we each bring to the table? Where might we collect other stories that are out there, often hidden in shame and self-blame? What part can we play to inspire serious discussion about the US health care morass?

The Potboilers often present in tandem with Joe Bak, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in private practice in Houston and member of Physicians for a National Health Program and Health Care for all Texas. Dr. Bak is a frequent presenter and author of various articles on the topic of crisis in U.S. health care – how our system works, how we got here, and how will we fix it. The Potboilers "stir things up" and then Dr. Bak is available to relate the real data behind the quagmire and to field question, and help us focus on the effective positive actions we can take for change.

NOTE: We will be happy to publish notices from Democratic candidates. Please send information to mcneelj@yahoo.com.

For Democrats to Win in 2008

One year from now, we have the opportunity to take back our county, our state and our nation, and with your help we'll do just that!

The Harris County Democratic Party (HCDP) has been working hard to ensure that you have a Democrat to vote for in every spot on your ballot in 2008. Every time we read about innocent men wrongly convicted of crimes spending years and years in prison, we know that we need new people representing justice and fairness in Harris County. Your county Party has worked diligently to recruit viable candidates for District Attorney and for every judgeship -- criminal, civil, and appellate.

Harris County plans to duplicate the success of Dallas County in 2006 by helping all of our candidates to work together insuring victory for all. That's why we are helping all of our judicial candidates gather signatures on filing petitions. (At least 2 of the judicial candidates are your neighbors right here in Bellaire.) That's why we will all be working hard to turn out the vote in every neighborhood or our town. That's why we supported the Johnson-Rayburn-Richards dinner so that HCDP will have enough funds to make this plan a reality. We need your help making grassroots contacts, and we need your financial support to run successful campaigns for all. I hope that you will renew your "Sustaining Membership" in the Harris County Party.

Boyd Richie is working on the state level to ensure Democrats have success all across our state. Our Houston neighbor Rick Noriega is a candidate for US Senate, and the Texas ballot will also be full of great choices.

Howard Dean, at the national party level, has been working for years to make sure that Democrats offer real hope and real candidates all across the country. Here are some of the things he has accomplished.

"Ground-breaking technology: We're testing a brand new voter contact system that will give state parties, campaigns and individual activists the critical tools they need to get out the vote on Election Day. We're in a position to innovate because of the years of advance work we've done.

Organizers in the field: We're making great progress on the voter protection project. Our 50-State Strategy organizers are meeting every elections official in the country to know about any "voting irregularities" now -- not next November. More than that, these organizers have been building the relationships with volunteers, activists and other allies that will pay off in races up and down the ballot in 2008.

Holding the Republicans accountable: Last week, Democrats like you sent almost 200,000 letters to Congress in support of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Bit by bit, we are changing the culture in Washington that says it's OK to spend \$100 billion each year in Iraq, but balks at spending \$7 billion to give American kids health care. Even with strong, bipartisan support in Congress, the White House shot down funding for children's health care. And every Republican candidate for President would do the same thing.

This White House continues to avoid an honest assessment of Iraq and a plan to bring our troops home. The top Republican candidates wouldn't be any different -- just look at their records.

When the dust settles on the 2008 election, we should all ask ourselves a simple question: "Did I do everything possible to support Democrats and change the direction of our country?"

Working together, Democrats will take back the White House in 2008" -- and the US Senate, the US House, the state Legislature, and the courthouse.

Nancy Lomax

Bill Moyers Journal

If you haven't had an opportunity to watch *Bill Moyers Journal* (Friday nights at 9 pm on PBS), please give it a try. His programs explore current issues, his guests come from any and every profession, often with opposing points of view, but always with intelligent and revealing insight into current affairs. A recent show addressed the concentration of power by Cheney and Bush, under the guise of national security, leading to illegal and unconstitutional acts in the name of the President, including torture and warrantless surveillance.

Could lack of response by Congress lead to a coup in this county? Moyers spoke at length about Jim Hightower's latest newsletter, which asks this very question. Read the Hightower newsletter, and find out more about *Bill Moyers Journal*, at www.pbs.org/moyers

Who Gets Your Money?

According to Parade.com, in the 2006 fiscal year, more than \$415 billion in government contracts was awarded to 176,712 companies and entities. One-quarter of that, **\$100 billion**, went to only 6 companies: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and KBR (formerly part of Halliburton). These 6 companies do the majority of their government work with the Department of Defense, and **less than 40%** of their government contracts were awarded in full and open competition.

E-Voting on eSlate is Not Secure in Texas

Rice University computer scientist Dan Wallach reports that the eSlate system used in several Texas counties, including Harris County, contains the same security flaws as those uncovered in California. However, California machines have voter-verified printers attached for audit purposes. Texas machines do not. Wallach's team found that a poll worker, or even a voter, could manipulate eSlate equipment to create ballot-stuffing and vote-forgery. With no paper trail, no audit of the eSlate votes in Harris County is possible.

"We discovered serious and significant security flaws in every system we examined", stated Wallach, "and officials will either be making adjustments to how they conduct their elections or will move to different technologies such as optically scanned paper ballots that are much less vulnerable to fraud."

What can we do? Demand a paper trail. Contact the office of Beverly Kaufman, Harris County Clerk, to demand a paper trail to record all votes in Harris County. Send an e-mail to hdeleon@cco.hctx.net (the Director of Communications and Voter Outreach), call (713) 755-6965 fax (713) 755-4983, or mail: Beverly Kaufman, Harris County, Clerk, Attn: Elections Division, P.O. Box 1148, Houston, TX 77251-1148

Please join or renew your membership in Bellaire Democrats for the fiscal year June 1, 2007 through May 31, 2008. If you prefer to receive communications, but not be a member, you can do that as well. Our membership and communications lists are not sold or distributed to anyone. Generally, we suggest individual memberships at \$5 to \$15 per year, depending on your ability to pay. If members wish to share a single mailing to a household, we suggest \$5 to \$25 per household (again, depending on your ability to pay). We also need and request donations from both members and others of whatever amount you can afford...\$50, \$100, \$1,000.

_____ Individual Membership \$ _____
 _____ Household Membership \$ _____
 _____ Donation \$ _____

Name _____ Precinct _____

Address/Zip Code _____

Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____ E-mail: _____

Communications Preference: _____ E-Mail _____ U.S. Mail _____ Both

(We encourage "E-mail", since it helps reduce both financial and environmental costs.)


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

Interests and volunteer opportunities (optional):

- Telephone committee
- Newsletter committee
- Special events
- Program committee
- Technical support: Website/Listserve
- Democratic candidate campaigns
- I cannot come to meetings, but can assist from home.
- Other interests, skills: _____

Please send your check to:

Bellaire Democrats, c/o Linda Norris, 5117 Grand Lake St, Bellaire, TX 77401-4923

 **DO YOU WANT TO BE A STAR?** Look at your mailing label. Is there a star? You have paid your dues. No star on your label? Complete and mail the membership form on the back of this newsletter. We are a membership driven organization, and membership dues are a major source of our revenue. Dues are used to prepare our newsletter, for special mailings during campaigns, to purchase yard signs, and to support Democratic candidates. We couldn't do these things without your support. Dues guidelines are on the form. If you wish to make an additional contribution beyond the amount suggested for dues, it will be gratefully accepted. **BE A STAR!!**

Democratic Precinct Chairs for Bellaire			
Precinct 128	Lynn McBee	713-665-0557	lynnmb@hal-pc.org
Precinct 182	Patrick Durio	832-423-4038	patrick.durio@durio.pro
Precinct 214	Catherine O'Harra	713-758-4588	cohara@velaw.com
Precinct 215	Nancy Masterson	713-667-2469	nmasterson1@comcast.net
Precinct 268	Fred Cook	713-660-9116	hfcook@wglaw.net

As of October 27, 2007, **3839** Americans have died in Iraq, **28,276** Americans have been wounded. **451** Americans have died in Afghanistan. According at a recent analysis from the Congressional Budget office, the United States has spent about **\$604 billion** on the wars, including \$39 billion in diplomatic operations and foreign aid.

The National Debt has risen to **\$9.1 trillion**, from \$5.7 trillion in 2000, with over \$2 trillion debt held by foreign interests. The cause for this huge increase in debt: continues to be the tax cuts and military spending.