



31st Democrats Newsletter
 (Organized by R. Craig Sanders and Patricia Szot)
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ONGOING FOOD DRIVE

This month we are collecting donations for the Enumclaw Food Bank. Lets help them have a wonderful Holiday dinner!

(If you know of any organizations in the 31st that collect food donations please let Patti Szot know-patricia.szot@gmail.com)



Ready for luscious holiday food, a challenging gift exchange & stimulating holiday talks... possibly sprinkled with a little politics? If that's what you asked Santa for!... join the 31st Elves at



WHAT: The **31st Democrats Holiday Party** (it's a potluck or everyone's best & a white elephant gift exchange)

WHEN: **December 16th** (6pm)

WHERE: **The Marion Grange**
 27725 Sumner-Buckley Hwy., Buckley



Please help Santa's helpers make this a memorable affair...

Dig out that special or half forgotten item (*value not to exceed \$10 and no gag gifts*) that your family hopes will disappear, but you know someone will covet. Wrap it up in sparkling paper & a holiday bow. Your prized *white elephant gift* & others will be dispensed by chance. With esteemed ones like yours possibly passing through more than one hand.

Too we need your best holiday dish & hopefully to get all food groups covered here's the plan. **If your last name starts with...**

A-H a *main dish* is in order

I-R to keep us healthy a *salad* or for the more indulgent, a *side dish*... anyone for scalloped potatoes?

S-Z then to truly be decadent... bring on those holiday *dessert*



We are looking forward to sharing holiday cheer & merriment with you & your family



If you can help out or for more information call or email
 Mrs. Sandy Claus at 253-876-0094 loveland@comcast.net or
 Mrs. Kathy Claus at 253-297-0876 lorimkm@comcast.net.



PAY your 2010 Membership Dues NOW!!! This will help us with campaigns and functions in 2010. See Page 8 for our Membership form.

Up Coming Events:

Health Care Rally for the Holidays: Dec 12, 2009. Get out to let our Washington State leaders know that health care is an important issue for Washingtonians. There is one in Tacoma 1:30 to 3:00 pm at First United Methodist Church (621 Tacoma Ave S, Tacoma, WA 98402 and one in Seattle 2:00 to 3:00 pm at Occidental Park at Occidental Ave S and S Main St.

31st District Fundraiser: Feb 27, 2010. We have acquired a 5 piece Jazz band and are planning on having a wine & cheese party with jazz music. More details to follow but place this on your calendar.

Apologies to anyone that thought that the potluck dinner was on December 6th rather than December 16th. It seems that our postcard carried the incorrect date of the 6th. I even drove out to the Marion Grange to apologize and explain if anyone showed up on the 6th.

Thanks to Ingrid Curtis for pointing out our error. R. Craig

EDITORIAL-As I See It

By Diane Kerlin

For over fifteen years I have been asking, rhetorically, "Why does healthcare cost so much?" Early guesses were about the cost of medical school and how doctors need to pay off their loans. Then I heard about the enormous cost of medical equipment for more precise detection and diagnosis. Next I began to hear how the cost of research and development needed to be recouped. It always seemed to me that every person should have the best known healthcare available to them as a basic human right, not based on affordability like a consumer product. Then I began to see television advertisements for medical providers and especially for prescription drugs. These ads have become pervasive. I began to wonder how much of prescriptions costs are for the advertising, not for the research or the manufacture of the drug. I recently learned that in 2005 the top five drug companies made \$222 Billion in Drug Sales. Of this amount \$32 Billion was used for Research and Development, \$71 Billion was used for Marketing and Administration, and \$39 Billion was Profit. The marketing & administration equaled 32%. What is it now? I think there needs to be an amendment to the Congressional Healthcare bill, banning these television ads. Maybe the savings would actually go towards healthcare!

EDITORIAL-As I See It

By Ron Weigelt

Most of us have been following at least part of the "lively" debate on health reform. Now that Congress is moving into the final stretch that will lead to outcomes and solutions it is time for anyone who has been sitting on the sidelines to step up and act. The US Senate and the House of Representatives are working on bills that include important provisions that offer comprehensive health reform. As currently envisioned, the focus is on building a system where all people have access to affordable and quality health care that emphasizes prevention and wellness. Anyone who does not think our current system is badly flawed needs to look again. For example, our current system provides medical coverage to many inmates and welfare recipients but leaves out the single parent working fulltime to support their family. Certainly someone working fulltime should be able to take their sick child to the doctor without the fear of financial ruin. Additionally, our current system has allowed insurance companies to price gouge the American public, putting more and more money into their pockets and less and less into our hospitals and healthcare system where the dollars would do the most good.

Here are four very specific points that I believe we should strive for in reforming our healthcare system:

- Prevent insurance companies from denying coverage based on a pre-existing condition.
- Allow Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies.
- Stop insurance companies from charging you higher premiums because of your age.
- Allow individuals to keep their current health insurance coverage if they are happy with it.

In general, we improve can our health care system by increasing access to it; striving to improve the quality of health care received; working to make the system financially sustainable; ensuring that the system is responsive to patients and communities; and focusing on health promotion and disease prevention.

If health care reform is to survive we have to help it survive the anti-reform propoganda of the special interests and their politicians (including, of course, Dan Roach and Dave Reichert). With that in mind, there is one more element I would like to see included in the health care reform package, treatment for compulsive lying for those who have construed this reform as "death panels" and "socialized medicine". Taxpayers and consumers should prepare to celebrate when we succeed at reforming health care over the objections of entrenched special interests with their fists full of our health care dollars and their morally bankrupt politicians.

Now is the time to email, write, and call your members of the US Senate and the House of Representatives to advocate that they follow through on health care reform!

Ron Weigelt
Bonney Lake--

www.ron4rep.com

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\$87 billion tax dollar savings

The US House of Representatives recently passed a bill which would eliminate the middle man in student loans, saving \$87 billion. To keep the bill from faltering in the US Senate we need to contact US Senators and insist that they not be influenced by lobbying from lending institutions.

The Student and Fiscal Responsibility Act passed the US House but needs our help to get it passed in the US Senate. This legislation reforms the system of federal student loans to save taxpayers \$87 billion – and then invest \$77 billion of those savings back into education, particularly by making college more affordable, and directs \$10 billion back to the Treasury to reduce entitlement spending. Among its many provisions, it increases the maximum Pell Grant from \$5,350 in 2009 to \$5,550 in 2010 and \$6,900 in 2019 and keeps interest rates low on subsidized federal student loans.

This legislation is good for students (and future students), their parents, and taxpayers. But, that will not stop lobbyists for lending institutions from spending big money to put a stop to it. Please contact as many members of the US Senate as you can to push through this legislation. Our interests, not special interests!

Ron Weigelt

Bonney Lake--

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Eight years ago, my 12 year old daughter asked me what would happen after we invaded Iraq. She wanted reassurance from me that the war would be brief and effective at suppressing terrorism as the president had promised. I looked her in the eyes and told her that I thought we would be fighting in the Middle East for many years to come. I told her that I believed that terrorism could not be defeated by force of arms, and that the cost of the war in lives and treasure would continue to grow until the desert sands were soaked in the blood of lives needlessly sacrificed to defend our supply of oil.

I hated having to tell her that terrible truth. But I could not lie to my daughter as the Bush Administration was lying to the rest of America. And so I watched in dismay as we condemned her and her friends to spend all their teenage years in a world where there was never a day of peace, never a month when American soldiers did not die in Iraq or Afghanistan, never a time when the American promise of liberty and justice did not ring false in the ears of a generation raised knowing that many of their friends and loved ones would have to die to defend not freedom but corporate profits.

Somewhere tonight a daughter is asking her father if the wars in the Middle East will ever end. Please take action now to make sure that when he answers "Yes, it will end soon," he will be telling her the truth.

Please sign the petition at <http://www.democrats.com/jobs-not-wars>

Brian Gunn

PCO, AUB 31-0062

There are 30 Senators who believe it is just fine for women to be raped while at work!! Their view came to light with a senate bill put forth by Minnesota Senator Al Franken to restrict military

contractors from bidding on contracts if they restrict their employees from taking workplace sexual assault, battery and discrimination cases to court. Senator Franken was responding to the fact that several women serving as contractors in Iraq were raped and, since the Iraq contractors have near immunity, the women were unable to seek criminal sanctions there and the Bush Justice Department declined to pursue the cases. The most prominent victim in the news and which precipitated this bill is Jamie Leigh Jones, a former KBR employer **who, at the age of 19**, was drugged and gang-raped by an undetermined number of colleagues and locked in a trailer for 24 hours right after to silence her. Seems like a “no-brainer” to support this bill. However, 30 **male** Republican senators voted against this bill (see the list below). Now, as I see it there are several reasons that these MEN voted “NO”

- 1) They never read the bill- and their natural instinct is to just vote “NO”
- 2) Since a Democrat put it forward- their natural instinct is to just vote “NO”
- 3) Since Al Franken put the bill forward- their natural instinct is to just vote “NO”
- 4) They care more for KBR and its profits then the women working over in Iraq and Afghanistan- so their natural instinct is to just vote “NO”.

Any way you look at it these 30 **male** Republican senators are playing partisan politics with the lives of American women. But then again that is nothing new for many of these male Republican senators who seem to think it is fine for women to be dropped by Health Insurance companies because their spouse abused them or that they were raped (is there a pattern here, but I digress). These MEN are now whining about their decision to vote this way. They don't like it when a bill like this forces them to vote for the moneyed interest, it makes them “look bad”. Heavens forbid a senator looks bad! It isn't Senator Franken's fault if he saw injustice and would like to see the democratic process work. The 30 male senators only have themselves to blame, and they are all big boys who I presume can read. Look only at yourself in the mirror senators-that is who is to be blamed for the “NO” vote, no one else. But then again, this is the party that doesn't feel anyone with money should be held ACCOUNTABLE for their actions. So it is someone else's fault that they voted “NO”. Oh Well, they will never learn,

I am pleased to say the bill was passed despite these 30 MALE Republican senators NO vote.

The 30 male Republican senators are: Alexander (TN), Barrasso (WY). Bond (MO), Brownback (KS), Bunning (KY), Burr (NC), Chambliss (GA), Coburn (OK), Cochran (MS), Cornyn (TX), Crapo (ID), DeMint (SC), Ensign (NV), Enzi (WY), Graham (SC), Gregg (NH), Inhofe (OK), Isakson (GA), Johanns (NE), Kyl (AZ), McCain (AZ), McConnell (KY), Risch (ID), Roberts (KS), Sessions (AL), Shelby (AL), Thune (SD), Vitter (LA) and Wicker (MS).

Patti Szot
PCO, Aub 31-3335
Vice Chair King County for 31st LD
Chair of Outreach

HEALTH CARE AROUND THE WORLD-continued (Germany)

Perhaps the reason that people in the United States are reluctant to change our health care system is fear. Fear of the unknown is a very powerful emotion. It seems that all we are hearing is that there is no point to trying to change the system because change won't work or that the system is working fine. But the truth is the system has been getting worse for years now and will continue to get worse if we don't take some measures to fix it. Some 45 million and growing Americans don't have healthcare. When these people get sick, they have to go to the Emergency Room. It ends up being a lot more expensive and taxpayers end up paying for it anyway. If I have to pay for it anyway,

I'd just as soon have it be more economical. Presently, Americans spend about 17% of the GDP on healthcare.

Did you know that all other developed nations in the world have decided to make sure that their citizens have access to affordable healthcare and that they still pay about half or less of their GDP than the US pays? These countries made the conscientious decision that it would be immoral if they didn't insure that people were covered. In other words, they believe that health care is a right, not a privilege. How a nation cares for its citizens is a statement of how that nation values its citizens.

Information presented here is largely taken verbatim from "THE HEALING OF AMERICA" by T.R. Reid. I've tried to summarize the information into short snippets out of the book. This is a very good book discussing the various healthcare systems around the world (both advantages and disadvantages). T.R. Reid has suggested that all the US has to do is decide which one works best and then adopt it and perhaps, even improve upon it. It isn't as though the U.S. has to totally invent a new Health Care System.

GERMANY

National health care was introduced in Germany in 1883 by Otto von Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor". One of the guiding principles to health care in Germany is that the more-fortunate could take care of the less-fortunate. In fact, Bismarck, himself, thought that the public welfare should be viewed as "applied Christianity". Defending national health care, Bismarck, in 1884, stated "the greatest burden for the working class is the uncertainty of life. They can never be certain that they will have a job, or that they will have health and the ability to work. We cannot protect a man from all sickness and misfortune. But it is our obligation, as a society, to provide assistance when he encounters these difficulties....A rich society must care for the poor".

Health care in Germany is similar to health care in the U.S. (but with important differences). Germany's health care system could be viewed as private health insurance through employers with the government acting as umpire. In many areas of health care, the amount of government control is less in Germany than in the U.S. Germany's health care system includes coverage for doctors, dentists, chiropractors, physical therapists, all prescriptions, nursing homes, health clubs and even vacation trips to a spa (if a doctor recommends it). In Germany, there is an ample supply of doctors and hospitals. There is little waiting time (usually less than in the U.S.), you can go to any doctor and any hospital that you choose and insurance pays the bill. There are about two hundred private insurance plans in Germany and they fiercely compete (with frills) with each other even though the prices for health care are fixed. Health insurance is mandatory (except for the rich-about 7% of the population, who are considered rich enough buy their own for-profit insurance) and covers the person from cradle to grave. There is no such thing as pre-existing illness. Premiums are paid by both the employer and the worker. The worker's portion is about 15% of income and is deducted from pay (the more you make the more you pay). This amount (15%) is almost exactly what American workers already pay into Medicare and Social Security combined, but the U.S. worker pays premiums on top of this. Hospitals are usually either charity or municipal hospitals, although for-profit hospitals are growing in number.

Germany's doctor's offices are generally modern and spotless, much like America's doctors offices. The general practitioner (GP) serves as a gatekeeper, also similar to the U.S. The GP generally decides whether patients need to see a specialist or not. Health care providers consult online directories to tell them which procedures and treatments are covered. Coverage is determined by a group consisting of representatives of the insurance industry and the doctors union (apparently, the doctors are unionized in Germany). Until recently, the patient had no copay. Now, the patient pays a co-pay to the doctor and a co-pay to the hospital (about \$13 to each-still pretty cheap). The patients get high quality, low-cost, easy access (usually within a week, even for elective surgery) health care.

The downside to all of this great health care is that it costs money. Germany spends 11% of their GDP on health care, while in the U.S. we spend 17% of GDP and have less choice and less coverage (France 10%). Germany tries to hold down some of its costs by controlling how much is paid to doctors. Understandably, the doctors are not very happy with this situation and periodically hold demonstrations to point out their dissatisfaction. On the other hand, the education to become a doctor in Germany is free of charge. Like France, Germany also has low administrative costs, probably secondary to their digital health card, *die elektronischen Gesundheitskarte*, which contains all of a person's health data.

Health care in Germany is better than the U.S. in at least 3 important ways. First, health insurance is non-profit in Germany (the U.S. is the only country to have for-profit insurance of any of the developed countries of the world). Secondly, you don't lose your health insurance if you lose your job. Thirdly, the worker has hundreds of plans to choose from, while the U.S. usually has only a few at the most.

Germany has a decent health care system that is fairly similar to the U.S. system. Where France is in the lead for overall health care, Germany isn't even in the top 10. Like France, Germany has non-profit insurance plans where the U.S. has for-profit. To control unrelenting cost increases, Germany is squeezing the health care providers (doctors and hospitals). A co-pay has also recently been added.

Our Representatives-how to get hold of them

Senators: Patty Murray (D) and Maria Cantwell

Patty Murray- DC office phone: (202) 224-2621

Seattle Office

2988 Jackson Federal Bldg.

915 2nd Avenue

Seattle, Washington 98174

Phone: (206) 553-5545

Fax: (206) 553-0891

Maria Cantwell- DC office phone (202) 224-3441

Seattle Office

915 Second Avenue

Suite #3206

Seattle, WA 98174

206-220-6400

206-220-6404 – FAX

Tacoma Office

950 Pacific Avenue, Suite #615

Tacoma, WA 98402

253-572-2281

253-572-5879 FAX

8th CD Representative-Dave Reichert (R)

Dave Reichert- DC Office phone (202) 225-7761

District Office

2737 78th Avenue, S.E. Suite #202

Mercer Island, WA 98040

(206) 275-3438

(206) 275-3437 Fax

9th CD Representative-Adam Smith (D)

Adam Smith-DC office phone (202) 225-8901

District Office

2209 Pacific Ave, Suite B

Tacoma, WA 98402

(253) 593-6600

(253) 593-6776

State Senator-31st LD

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State Representatives-31st LD

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Email: Roach.Dan@leg.wa.gov

Occupation Statistics (<http://www.antiwar.com/casualties>)

- 4,367 US Military Deaths (Iraq)
- 932 US Military Deaths (Afghanistan)
- 31,572 US Military Wounded (Iraq)
- 151,000-1,366,350 Iraq Civilian Deaths



DO YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR LOCAL POLITICAL SYSTEM?

YES!! Join us

Fill out the form below (questions are required by the state Public Disclosure Commission) and hand it in to one of our volunteers at our monthly meeting or mail it in (31st District Democrats, 20825 SR 410 E #130, Bonney Lake, WA 98391). You can pay 2010 dues now or later by check (made out to 31st District Democrats) or on-line by credit card. Dues are \$31 per year (January-December), but members can pay what they can afford with a minimum of \$5.

NAME _____

Street Address _____

Mailing Address (if different from above) _____

Telephone # _____

Email _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____