

San Ramon Valley Democratic Club

(www.srvdc.net)

Newsletter: February 2010

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February Meeting: Thursday, February 25, 2010, 6:00 pm at **Crow Canyon Country Club**

Speaker: Dr. George Lakoff, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at the [University of California, Berkeley](http://www.berkeley.edu). He is the author of the influential book, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (2nd edition, 2002). Dr. Lakoff will be speaking on the California Democracy Act, an initiative he is sponsoring for the November 2010 ballot.

Dinner will be served at 6:45 and Speaker Program at 7:15. Program Committee meets from 6:00-6:30. Dinner is \$24 per person for members and their invited guests, \$30 for others. Please RSVP via email or by telephone.

RSVP: Mail checks made out to Jim Donnelly to him at 373 Century Circle, Danville, CA 94526

Presidents Corner

Jim Donnelly, President, SRVDC

Politics has changed, perhaps! This past month the U.S. Supreme court came down with a long awaited ruling that changes the political landscape for the U.S. Corporations are now deemed to have the same rights as individuals when it comes to free speech. In a five (5) to four (4) decision the court overturned over 100 years of precedent and displayed "judicial activism" to an unheard of extent. What this decision means to the future of this country should become apparent over the next ten months leading up to the elections this November. As with just about any political issue, opinions vary widely about the impact of this ruling. Will it just mean that corporations will no longer have to funnel campaign contributions through different PAC's and will be more transparent in their campaign spending? Will corporations be able to fundamentally change who gets elected and what our politicians will stand for? Will they leave no doubt as to who controls our country? Corporations only need to show that their money can make the difference in a few major races this year to put the fear in politicians and bring about lasting further

changes to our democracy. One race to watch this fall is the race for U.S. Senate from California. We are already seeing expensive television adds being aired that set the stage for a long bitter election season. The democratic candidate for governor will likely face a very well financed opponent. Sen. Barbara Boxer already faces a very wealthy potential opponent in Carly Fiorina who has show her willingness to blanket the air waves with negative attack adds. Added to these candidates' personal wealth, the power of corporate money can only make the battle for votes that much more challenging.

Our response must be to work all that harder for candidates we believe in. Volunteer time and efforts can go a long way to balance out the power of the purse. The SRVDC Candidates Committee has already recommended a number of candidates for our club's endorsement and the club has voted to endorse a number of these candidates. We all need to take the next step and volunteer to help our candidates of choice. As we move closer to the

elections, we will do our best to get honest and clear information from our local democratic candidates on the positions on the many issues facing us this election year.

Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan was the speaker at our January dinner meeting. Those of you who could not make the meeting missed a very

Last week the San Francisco Chronicle contained an article about the complete crash of salmon in the Sacramento/ San Joaquin river system. Only slightly over 38,000 salmon returned to spawn in the fall of 2009. This is only about one half the number from 2008 and less than 10 percent of historical numbers. It means an almost certain cancelling of



New Robes for our Supreme Court Justices

informative presentation about water issues facing our state. Joan and her staff have done a lot of research in learning about the issues surrounding protection of the delta and water use in the state. She made a very detailed presentation about how water is used in the state, the recent water legislation signed into law and her reasons for voting against these measures and for recommending a No Vote on the Water Bond issue that will appear on the November ballot. We are very fortunate to have someone like Joan represent us in the Assembly and we need to work to get her reelected. We are planning to have Joan speak to us a little later in the year on the continuing budget crisis in Sacramento.

the salmon season again this year. This is not good news for the fishing industry or for those of us who enjoy fresh salmon.

Many people argue about why the salmon population has crashed and the answer is complex. There is very strong evidence that diverting water south from the delta plays a major role in their disappearance. Changes in ocean temperatures and food supply also play a role. Yet too many of our politicians close their eyes to the evidence and yield to political pressure to continue sending massive amounts of water south to support unsustainable farming in the central valley. One of

the first things I learned in studying ecology was that every ecosystem can only withstand so much stress whether it be the smallest ecosystem to the entire planet. Today we are seeing evidence of degradation of ecosystems on a scale never before recorded in human history. The collapse of the delta

is one that strikes very close to home. One thing that is evident without a doubt is; you cannot save the delta by diverting water flow around or decreasing the flow through it. Yet that is what the proponents of the continued export of water to the central valley are proposing.

Membership Drive

A number of our members still have not renewed their membership for 2010. If you have not already done so it is time to join or renew your membership in the SRVDC. The primary goal of the SRVDC is to aid in informing voters and concerned citizens about issues of the day and how they may impact our lives. The SRVDC serves the communities of Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville and San Ramon. We provide a vehicle for persons interested in your communities to come together for interesting and informative meetings about issues facing all of us. We provide a voter registration and information table at the Danville Farmer's Market and other venues. We also send out a monthly newsletter presenting updates from our elected officials and provide a forum for our members to express their views.

We need your continued support for these efforts. Dues are \$25/ person and \$40 per family. Please complete the form below and mail it to address below:

Renewal or New Membership

Singly or Family Membership

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____

Home Phone _____ Cell phone _____

Please indicate the activities that interest you

____ Voter Registration

____ Fundraising

____ Local Government

____ Hospitality

____ Get-out-the-vote activities

____ Publicity

____ Newsletter

____ Programs & Functions

**Make checks payable to: San Ramon Valley Democratic Club
P.O. Box 1218**

Danville Farmer's Market- Voter Registration

We are planning to resume the voter registration table at the Saturday Danville Farmer's market beginning next weekend (weather permitting). This is your opportunity to tell members of our community about the SRVDC, recruit new members, register new voters, get petitions signed for issues important to us and explain our positions to others. To effectively do this we need volunteers to man the table. Here is your chance to help us carryout our mission statement, meet new people and engage in interesting discussions. Please take the time to sign up for a slot at our next dinner meeting or email us at james.r.donnelly@comcast.net with times you might be willing to participate in this effort.

Candidates Committee

The SRVDC Candidates Committee has had their first meeting and recommended to the board the following candidates for endorsement by the membership of the SRVDC:

Secretary of State
U.S. Congress (11th district)
15th Assembly District
U.S. Senate

Debra Bowen
Jerry McNerney
Joan Buchanan
Barbara Boxer

Their endorsements were accepted and passed by an unanimous vote of the members present at our January Meeting. The committee also made the following recommendations to the board for approval at our February meeting:

U.S. Congress (10th District)
U.S. Congress (7th District)
14th Assembly District

John Garamendi
George Miller
Nancy Skinner

The candidates committee meets the last Sunday of each month and all members are welcome to participate and share their views. Please contact John Hall (jdhall@mac.com) for more information.

Letters To The Editor

Have you been reading the letters sent in to The Contra Costa Times recently? It is quite shocking that there are so many with the same message against Jerry McNerney and the healthcare bill, right? We need to know that there is an organized campaign to change minds and attitudes with the multitude of letters written by disgruntled Republicans.

We should be as responsive in our views to counter the negative and one-sided attacks!

We all know that we Democrats are not terribly organized or "on message" as the other side is. Now is a good time to act and start working on our message--to present the other side and cause people to reconsider the comments that are presented.

A SPECIAL REQUEST TO ALL CLUB MEMBERS

Please take a few minutes to respond to these letters. Not every letter will be printed but by continuing to write new ones and sending them in by e-mail, fax or mail, they will be published. We can make a difference and open up some opportunities for change. Jerry and Healthcare need our support now. It will make a difference.

To send your letters : E-mail Letters to the Editor at ccnletters@bayareanewsgroup.com
FAX Letters to the Editor 925-943-8362
Mail The Times
P.O. Box 8099
Walnut Creek, Ca 94596

After you send your letter to the newspaper send it to the club president (email address at bottom) and we will publish it in our club newsletter.

Reports from our Elected Officials

Dear Friends,

In 1979, a woman named Lilly Ledbetter, the wife of an Army veteran and the mother of two daughters began work at a tire manufacturing plant in Alabama. She worked on the night shift from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. as a supervisor and was one of just a few female managers. **When she retired twenty years later, Lilly was making \$599 a month less than the lowest paid male manager and \$1509 a month less than highest paid male manager.** Determined to right this wrong, she made her case in court, only to ultimately have a decision in her favor overturned by the Supreme Court.

One of the first votes I cast in 2009 was for the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to help close the income gap between women and men. One year ago, this bill was signed into law with Lilly present at the ceremony. It was a historic and moving day.

Fair treatment for everyone in the workplace is critically important to me.

Unfortunately, across our country there are still too many women like Lilly Ledbetter - hardworking women - mothers, sisters, and daughters, who provide for their families and want nothing more for their hours than to receive equal pay for equal work. Thanks to Lilly's courage and the Fair Pay Act we are one step closer to making that a reality.

We still have work to do. Women are making only 81 percent as much as men. At the end of 2009, women made an average of \$670 per week while men made an average of \$825 per week. We need to leave a better legacy for our daughters and future generations.

When my daughter, Windy, was growing up she loved solving puzzles, but hated math because she felt overshadowed by her math and science oriented brothers. My wife, Mary, and I, continually encouraged her to develop her math skills. Today, she has the equivalent of a master's degree in statistics and is working toward a PhD in neuroscience where she uses complex calculations daily. I want to make sure that she, and all children in our country, have every opportunity to succeed.

The changes we're making today will strengthen future generations. Thank you for standing with me and for a better America.

Sincerely,

Jerry

Congressman Jerry McNerney

Member's Forum

Have anything you want to share with others; thoughts, ideas, gripes about what is happening around you. Perhaps you might just want to give your reflections on life. Here is your opportunity. We are setting aside space in each news letter for your input, so give it a go and let us hear from you.

Thinking people I respect,

The past several days, no - weeks, no - months - - - ok, obsessively, over the last several years / decades; I've been thinking about what is the best way for a left of liberal, but a very practical-minded / results-oriented person who is tired of losing most of the time since the mid-sixties - both in terms of candidates and issues dear to both my mind and heart.

I am and have been torn all of this time (nearing a half century, and likely decades more) - - - which is the most fruitful approach to take with the least damage to knocking my head on the brick walls of ignorance, deceit, evil as well as hope, wishful thinking and actions and taking chances ?

I still have no good answers. Most of the time, I go towards the positive side despite my too frequent pessimism about our American electorate and the alleged presence of common sense among them.

But, I will probably go to my end with efforts to get as much as I can practically get and promote while giving up the least of my principles and goals. Of course, that is what suffices to satisfy us most of the time, that which we won - - - but, after having had to suffer and tolerate much less than for that which we had hoped and worked. We then reset our limits as to what and when we give up or give in. In my experience, this is what it all boils down to - - - not how smart or correct is your analysis, not how bad "they" are, not how good your goals are for "the people" - - - . Yes, it is what can you do that will be good and worthwhile after you are gone. Time to rethink once again - - -. After we get over our latest disappointment (s) / triumph(s).

Tony Suh
Member, SRVDC

Majority Rule Initiative

The following letter is from Dr. George Lakoff to California voters explaining the Majority Rule Initiative. Dr. Lakoff will be speaking to our club at our February dinner meeting. We will have more information and petitions supporting this initiative at our next few dinner meetings and at the voter registration table at the Danville Farmer's Market.

Dear Friends and Fellow Californians:

Are you tired of gridlock in Sacramento? Are you fed up with the senseless cuts to critical services and social programs year after year? Are you outraged that a few bullies in the Legislature can hold the rest of the state hostage to their out-of-sync views and outrageous demands?

If you are, then please join me in stopping this craziness by putting the California Democracy Act on the November 2010 ballot. If we are successful critically needed services will be protected and common sense restored to our state government. This battle is for all of us and I am fully committed.

But I can only do this with your help!

What does the California Democracy Act do? The Act is just 14 words: "All legislative actions on revenue and budget must be determined by a majority vote." It simply changes two words in the California Constitution – "two thirds" becomes "a majority" – that simple change will restore sanity and common sense to our budget process and priorities. What could be simpler than that?

This simple change will immediately stop the small band of ultra-conservatives in Sacramento who are holding the rest of us hostage! These ideologues want to starve our government and keep it from serving public needs. The California Democracy Act will restore the basic tenet of democracy – that the majority shall rule on matters of public good.

California's budget crisis – and so many of our state's systemic problems – are the result of the absurd two-thirds requirement that allows a small minority, now just 37%, to block sensible economic legislation. Their tactics create gridlock, impoverish our government, lead to massive cuts in education, healthcare, critical infrastructure and virtually every other important public need.

California is the only state in America where one-third plus one, only 34%, runs the legislature by blocking the sensible, responsible majority at every turn. That is why our state is in constant crisis.

We can change all this by enacting the California Democracy Act! Only a majority is needed. No change is more crucial. With your help and generous support we can restore common sense to California government. The task ahead will not be easy – remember, we need to collect more than one million signatures by April – but together **WE CAN DO IT!**

Here's how you can help:

1. Make an immediate contribution of \$1,000, \$500, \$250, \$100, \$50, even \$25 would help. Make your check payable to "California Majority Rule PAC" and send it to California Majority Rule, 12021 Wilshire Blvd., # 542, Los Angeles, CA 90025.

2. Go to our website, register and tell us what else you can do to help. You can get there by going to www.californiansfordemocracy.com.
3. Help recruit volunteers for three areas: a) signature gathering, b) fundraising events and other activities, and c) the speakers' bureau. Go to the website, click on JOIN THE CAMPAIGN and sign up.
4. We need people with access to large email lists to make them available. Write to susieshannon@yahoo.com. And if you belong to a large organization, get it to endorse this initiative. Go to the website and click on "ENDORSE."

If we are to take back control from the ultra-conservative ideologues who have endangered the future of our great state, then we must collect more than one million signatures by April 2010. **We cannot do this without your immediate contribution and participation.** Send a check, sign a petition, help gather signatures, organize a house party, join our speakers' bureau or volunteer.

Please forward this letter to your friends, neighbors, relatives and colleagues. Help us reach as many of our fellow Californians as possible.

So if you are tired of the repeated, senseless cuts to critical programs and angry that services you need have been rolled back or eliminated, I ask that you join me in this fight. Send a check, sign a petition, help gather signatures, organize house parties, join our speakers' bureau, or volunteer... **WE CAN DO IT!**

I look forward to working with you on this crucial effort to make California the Golden State once again.

Thank you,

George Lakoff,
Goldman Distinguished Professor
of Cognitive Science and Linguistics,
UC Berkeley

Upcoming Events

Two of our local elected officials; Congressman John Garamendi and State Senator Mark DeSaulnier, are having events in our area this month. This is an opportunity to hear about their positions on issues affecting us and to let them know your thoughts. Please take this opportunity to meet with them and learn more about issues facing all of us.

John Garamendi February Town Hall Schedule

CONCORD TOWN HALL

WHEN: Tuesday Feb. 16th 2010 | 6:00-7:30PM

WHERE: Plumbers & Steamfitters Hall |935 Detroit Ave. , Concord CA. 94518

LAMORINDA TOWN HALL

WHEN: Wednesday Feb 17th 2010 | 6:00-7:30PM

WHERE: St. Mary's College's Soda Activity Center | 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga CA. 94556

For additional information please contact Brian Hooker at: brian.hooker11@gmail.com

Office hours in San Ramon with State Senator Mark DeSaulnier

Do you have an idea, or need help with a problem involving a state agency?

Do you want to give your opinion on legislation that affects your community?

Here's an opportunity to speak about it.

Date: February 20, 2010

Time: 11 am to 2 pm

Location: San Ramon - Dougherty Station Library

17017 Bollinger Canyon Road

San Ramon, CA

For more information, please call

(925) 942-6082.

Lupe Schoenberger

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