



# SOUND & CLEAR

SENATE DISTRICT 41 DEMOCRATS WWW.SD41.DFL.ORG

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Golf outings

5 p.m., May 20 and  
June 7, Fred Richards  
Golf Course, Edina  
Contact: Patty O'Brien,  
952-944-0206

### SD 41 Democrats Monthly Meeting

7 to 8:30 p.m., May 23  
Southdale Public  
Library, Ethel Berry  
Room, Edina

### SD 41 Democrats Meet-up

7 to 9 p.m., June 14  
Davanni's, 5124 Gus  
Young Lane, Edina

### An Evening with Al Franken

7 to 9 p.m., June 11  
Ted Mann Concert Hall,  
University of Minnesota  
Show general admis-  
sion: \$50, students \$25  
Contact: www.  
housedflcaucus.com  
or 651-251-6346

### Edina 4th of July Parade-SD 41 Democrats unit

Contact: Laura Davis,  
jdlaura@aol.com

### Loaves and Fishes din- ner serving disadvan- taged and homeless people

July 8, Contact: Patty  
O'Brien, 952-944-0206

### SD 41 Democrats Annual Picnic

Noon to 4 p.m., July 23  
Cornelia Park, Edina  
Contact: Patty O'Brien,  
952-944-0206

## WHY FUNDING EDUCATION MATTERS

The famed "Minnesota Miracle," which boosted state incomes and employment markedly relative to the rest of the country, was based on a bipartisan commitment that substantially increased our investment in education. It worked. Minnesota ranked 22nd in per capita income in 1970 and had risen to seventh nationwide by 2002, notes Sen. Steve Kelley, DFL-Hopkins, who chairs the Senate Education Committee. That happened because the state invested in education, he says.

Thanks to that commitment,

Minnesota students have consistently outperformed most students nationally. However, as right-wing Republicans insist that tax cuts must take absolute priority, they have forced through an unprecedented constriction in education funding during the past three years, and more lies ahead.

The state agreed to take on primary responsibility for funding local school districts in fiscal year 2003, and Republicans touted the reductions in local property taxes that would result. Since then, state aid to schools per pupil has fallen in real dollars,

according to the Minnesota Department of Finance. Even local levies haven't offset losses in state aid, and total school district revenues per pupil have declined in real terms. For example, in November 2003 Edina voters approved a major referendum for building and remodeling facilities, which can't be used for general operating expenses. Another referendum authorized \$300,000 in operating expenses, but this money only offset a portion of the reduction in state operating support.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget  
***continued on page 2***

## NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT CHAIR

Last November, Democrats in Senate District 41 stood up and yelled, "We are here, and we are going to make a difference!" More than 24,000 of us voted for John Kerry. In many districts this may not have been a big deal. Here, in what most people consider solid Republican territory, it was a very big deal.

Some will dismiss this as a one-time fluke. We know bet-

ter. People still don't understand why we're at war in Iraq. Locally, it's not surprising that people are tired of selling magazines and wrapping paper to fund our schools. It doesn't take much research to tell us that traffic problems are getting worse. People in this senate district understand that shifting taxes from the state to cities and using accounting gim-

***continued on page 2***



DISTRICT  
CHAIR TOM  
LA FORCE

**DISTRICT LEADERS**

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Associate Chair

**Jill Crafton**

Secretary

**Ann Nusbaum**

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**Emily Falk**

**Tom Gleason**

**Joan Kampmeyer**

**Patty O'Brien**

**Chuck Prentice**

**Boyd Schuler**

**Del Smith**

**Peggy Smith**

**Gwen Welckle**

Website

[www.sd41.dfl.org](http://www.sd41.dfl.org)

**SOUND & CLEAR**

Prepared and paid for by Senate District 41 Democrats

**Comments?**

Contact Gwen Ruff, e-mail [gweruff@yahoo.com](mailto:gweruff@yahoo.com)

**Cooperative Printing Association**

**EDUCATION FUNDING CONTINUED**

proposed a 2 percent funding increase for each of the next two fiscal years, but as anyone who has been to a gas station lately knows, this meager increase doesn't even keep up with inflation. The most recent data available indicates the Consumer Price Index rose 3.1 percent. Unfortunately schools must purchase things, such as health insurance and fuel, that have experienced even faster inflation rates than consumer prices nationwide in the past several years. It's likely the gap will be even larger this year. So, a 2 percent funding increase probably would result in about a 3 percent decline in real dollars for Minnesota schools in each year of the biennium. That is why the Bloomington and Edina schools have cut key programs, and if Republicans have their way, will have to continue doing so.

Education funding still was being debated in the Legislature when this edition of *SOUND & CLEAR* went to press, but nobody was predicting an increase that would make up for previous real-dollar shortfalls.

Minnesota's national standing in education funding has been eroding. Minnesota spent \$10 less than the national average per student in 2001-02, according to the Census of Governments. Minnesotans spent 3.9 percent of their personal income on elementary and secondary school students, placing the state 39th in the nation.

The Alliance for Student Achievement, chaired by Edina Public Schools Superintendent Kenneth Dragseth, believes quality education has attracted families and businesses to

Minnesota. Shrinking state funding is jeopardizing the ability to maintain excellence and even putting basic programs at risk, according to the alliance, which sponsored a February rally for education at the Capitol.

"We are here for the children of Minnesota no matter where they live, no matter their ethnicity, no matter their home situation, no matter their family income," Dragseth told a huge, cheering rally crowd. "They come to us as students who have dreams of a great education and a better life. We are here to tell the Legislature and the governor to keep the promise to children and families, and that promise means to adequately fund our public schools now."

*Bill Melton and Gwen Ruff*

**NOTES FROM THE CHAIR CONTINUED**

micks to balance the budget are not shining examples of fiscal responsibility.

As Democrats, we will use our voices for positive change. We believe in:

- Equal opportunity for all citizens.
- Living wages.
- A fair tax system.
- Family values that are more than political slogans.
- Quality education.

- Freedom from government interference in our private lives and personal decisions.
- Strength in diversity.
- Secure and safe homes and streets.
- Separation of church and state.
- Common-sense reforms that give us cleaner, safer air and water.

We will stand up for building the best system of public

education in the world. We will invest in our transportation infrastructure, so people can get where they need to go. We will figure out how to make quality health care available to everyone. We will preserve the environment for future generations. And we will have honest conversations about what it costs and how to pay for it.

*Tom LaForce, Chair*

## O U R C O M M U N I T Y

After 25 years in local government administration, including with the City of Edina, Ralph Campbell now sees the streets in a different way. He volunteers between 10 and 20 hours a week with organizations like the Salvation Army, Mission Detox and The Retreat that help people with drug and alcohol problems. He's also attending the University of Minnesota full time working on a degree in drug and alcohol counseling.

"My family has had many people die from alcoholism," Campbell says. "That's not unusual. My experience is if you walk up to anybody and ask if you have issues of drug or alcohol abuse in your family, 95 percent will say 'Yes.' "

The pay for these human services jobs "is barely above the poverty rate," says Campbell, who lives in Edina with his wife and son. "Now is the time of my life that I can afford to do it. Many Democrats who live where we live have the luxury to do these kind of jobs."

Such work is critical because "the safety nets are gone," Campbell says. "We can't expect any help from the institutions that used to nurture us. There are no supports to speak of that are



R A L P H  
C A M P B E L L

coming from the government."

Wouldn't Republicans say that's great? "As individual Democrats we can provide a safety net," Campbell says. "We can tend to our own gardens, as Voltaire said. We can put our fingers in the dike, but a finger in the dike doesn't keep out a tsunami. That's where we need government-scaled responses to these things."

Ideology drives Republicans, he says, while "the Democratic party for me is very much about what we do. It's not abstracted. Democrats don't say let's go out there and see if we can instill the market-driven ideology in the rest of the world. Life is not at all theoretical to the people out there getting shot on both sides.

"Any family scientist will tell

you there's no such thing as a traditional family. It doesn't exist, and it never existed. So if there's no such thing as a traditional American family, how can there be such a thing as traditional family values? To be using that for an ideologically based set of policies, I don't know how that works.

"Democrats stand more for what some people would consider the boring issues of children and families. We are the party that takes care of poor people. We are the party that believes in strong public education for everybody. We are the party that takes care of old people. We are the party that creates jobs. We are the party that says if there are hungry people, let's feed them."

Campbell sees himself as typical among Democrats he knows. "I couldn't be less special," he says. "I'm doing what all Democrats do. As Democrats on the street, we need to set the example for what we want from our government. People see us acting out our values, not just talking about them. My son can say his dad comes home sometimes with puke on his shoes. That's not leaving it to somebody else."

Gwen Ruff

O F F T H E  
B O O K S H E L F**The Great Divide:  
Retro vs. Metro  
America**

by John Sperling

This book is jammed with information about what makes red (Retro) and blue (Metro) states different. Consider economics: "In the last decade of the 20th century, with about 65 percent of the population, Metro America produced almost 70 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product annually and paid 71 percent of the federal taxes. In that same decade, Retro America received \$800 billion more in federal payments than it paid in taxes. All told, Retro America enjoyed a tax-versus-payment advantage of \$2.2 trillion over Metro America."

**Nickel and Dimed:  
On (Not) Getting By  
in America**

by Barbara Ehrenreich

"I grew up hearing over and over that 'hard work' was the secret of success. No one ever said that you could work hard—harder even than you thought possible—and still find yourself sinking ever deeper into poverty and debt. . . . Now that the overwhelming majority of the poor are out there toiling in Wal-Mart or Wendy's—well, what are we to think of them?"

## INSIGHT ON ISSUES: BUSH RECORD DISMAL ON JOBS

**The Bush administration's record on jobs is not merely bad, it sets a modern standard for neglect of this critical dimension of economic performance.**

Jobs are at the heart of economic policy, and properly so. It is hard to think of any important dimension of social well-being that is not affected in some way by the availability of meaningful, well-paying jobs. That is why the pursuit of full employment has been recognized as a special responsibility of government for decades.

However, the Bush administration's record on jobs is not merely bad. It sets a modern standard for neglect of this critical dimension of economic performance. It's easy to lose sight of this fact. Newspapers, radio and TV mostly report monthly statistics. They seldom put the numbers in perspective. For its part, the Bush administration has done everything imaginable to conceal the

extent of its neglect of jobs. Perhaps the cruelest irony is that the series of corporate and individual tax cuts pushed through by the administration were labeled as jobs bills, even though most economists (at least those with no ideological axe to grind) agreed they would do little to stimulate employment—as indeed has been the case.

The chart below illustrates the scale of this workplace tragedy. The last recession ended in November 2001. Had the U.S. economy merely kept pace with the average record for job creation during past business expansions, employment should have expanded over 8 percent by now. Instead the modest growth that occurred in recent months has barely replaced the large job losses

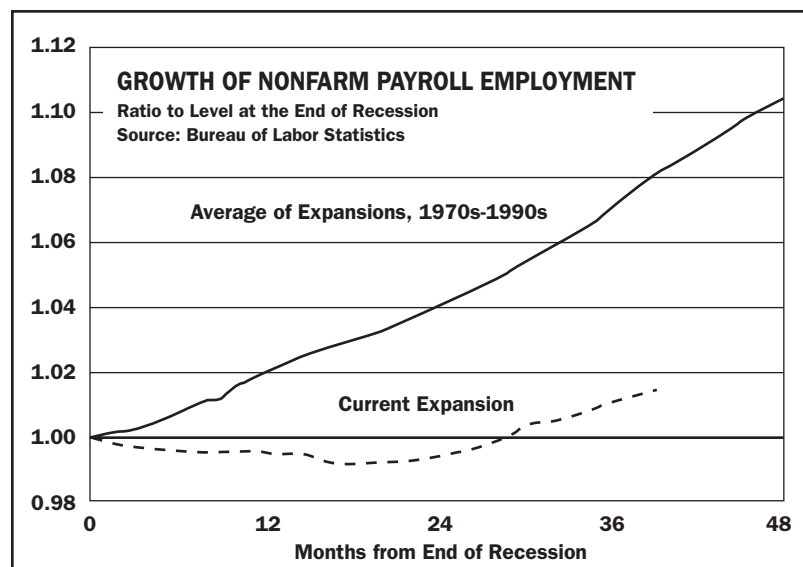
that occurred earlier during the Bush administration. The shortfall is equivalent to a staggering 9 million jobs. Such prolonged stagnation is without parallel since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The standard administration response is merely to intone that things are getting better, tax cuts are working, etc. The absence of concern—beyond spin control—is striking.

What happens to people who can't find good jobs? Some are counted in the official unemployment statistics—but only if they continue to register with an employment office and seek work actively. Unfortunately, in recent years a large number of people appear to have simply given up. Once they do so, they are no longer counted in the

labor force and are not included in the official tally of the unemployed.

What an irony that the most important impact of the Bush tax cuts, so far at least, has been to induce large numbers of Americans to give up on their aspirations for gainful employment.

*Bill Melton*



FUND RAISING HELPS DISTRICT DFL COMPETE

The Senate District 41 Democrats fund-raising campaign got off to a roaring start earlier this year, thanks to the Herculean efforts of many volunteers and the extraordinary generosity of Democrats committed to making Minnesota better.

From time to time someone asks, "Why do we need to do this now, when the next

state and federal elections aren't until next year?" The answer is that we have to start fund raising early if we are to be fully competitive in the 2006 elections. Money raised through fund raising pays for activities like this newsletter that help us keep in touch with you and reach out to other potential Democratic voters.

John Kerry's victory in SD41 demonstrated that the district is now marginally Democratic, but our Republican opposition is deeply entrenched, highly organized and very well funded. We can beat them in 2006, just as Kerry did in 2004, but we have to be totally committed, highly organized and very well funded, too.

To those of you who have responded so generously to our appeal, thank you! We will do our very best to make sure that your contributions are a sound investment in Minnesota's future. To those who have not yet contributed, please give us a hand. We're counting on you!

Joan Kampmeyer, Finance Team Chair

MINNESOTA POLITICAL CAMPAIGN REFUND

The Minnesota Political Campaign Refund Program is a wonderful way to encourage democratic participation in the political process. Here are the details.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue allows an annual political contribution refund of up to \$50 per individual, or \$100 per married couple if

you file a joint return. This is totally separate from the political campaign check-off on your Minnesota tax return. When we receive your contribution, we'll send you a contribution receipt and the Minnesota Department of Revenue's official contribution refund form. Just complete the form, mail it to the

Department of Revenue and you'll receive your refund check in the mail in eight weeks or less. It takes about five minutes and only costs you a 37-cent stamp!

Mail your contribution today and receive your direct, dollar-for-dollar refund from the State of Minnesota.

Of course, contributions over the refund program limit are always welcome. However, donations over the limit do not qualify for a refund, and they are not tax deductible.

So, please consider it a win-win situation and help your Senate District 41 Democrats.

2005 Senate District 41 Democrats Contribution Form

Electing Democrats is important. I'm enclosing my (our) check, payable to Senate District 41 Democrats.

\$150 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Please mail my (our) receipt to the address below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Joni Kelly Bennett, Senate District 41 Democrats Treasurer, 4003 Lynn Ave., Edina, MN 55416

Senate District 41 Democrats  
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JOIN US

**We're always looking for volunteers. There's plenty to do. Big jobs and little jobs. Thinking jobs and hands-on jobs. Individual jobs and team-based jobs. If things are going to change, a lot of people will have to step up and do something. Will you be one of them? Contact Chair Tom LaForce at [chair@sd41.dfl.org](mailto:chair@sd41.dfl.org) or 952-920-3313.**

## W E L C O M E T O Y O U R N E W S L E T T E R

In our continuing efforts to increase the impact of Democratic voices, we have launched this newsletter. Our goal is to help Senate District 41 Democrats stay connected to each other and encourage everyone to take actions that improve our communities, nation and world.

We plan to send the newsletter out about six times a year. During the first year, you'll probably see adjustments as we incorporate your ideas and suggestions. We hope you'll provide plenty of both. Let us know if you have suggestions for story ideas or

know people in our community who volunteer to make other people's lives better.

Help increase the impact of this newsletter by passing it along to friends and neighbors. We don't want to talk only with Democrats but with anyone who shares our core values.

If you know of someone who would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list, let us know. Or if you'd like to help us save money and prefer to read the newsletter online, let us know we can take you off our mailing list. To add or

remove a name, please contact Gwen Ruff at [gweruff@yahoo.com](mailto:gweruff@yahoo.com).

It's just 18 months to the next election. More than 24,000 district residents voted for John Kerry in the last presidential election. That many people speaking with one voice will have a huge impact in Edina and West Bloomington. Together, we will help win elections for the U.S. Senate, governor, Minnesota House and Senate and other races. We simply need to stick together, stand up and make a positive difference.