



# EDINA - WEST BLOOMINGTON DEMOCRATS

SENATE DISTRICT 41 DEMOCRATS

WWW.SD41.DFL.ORG

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Green Town Forum

Environmental panel  
1 p.m.  
Sun., Oct. 14  
Fick Auditorium, Edina  
High School, 6754 Valley  
View Road, Edina  
(Details on back page)

### Edina-West Bloomington Democrats "Office Warming"

Thurs., Nov. 8  
7 to 8:30 p.m.  
Room 320, Edina  
Community Center  
5701 Normandale Road,  
Edina

### Edina-West Bloomington Democrats Monthly Meeting

Mon., Nov. 12  
7 p.m. business meeting;  
7:30 p.m. former House  
DFL leader Matt Entenza

Mon., Dec. 10  
7 p.m. business meeting  
Both meetings in Room  
350, Edina Community  
Center, 5701 Normandale  
Road, Edina

### Edina-West Bloomington Democrats Links

7 p.m.  
Fourth Tuesday of each  
month  
Davanni's, 5124 Gus  
Young Lane, Edina

## SCHOOLS ASK VOTERS TO INVEST IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Edina and Bloomington public schools are asking voters to approve levy referendums Nov. 6 to make up for inadequate state investment in public schools.

In Bloomington, an operating general fund levy would replace an existing levy to raise an additional \$512 per student, for a total of \$1,503. The 10-year operating levy would begin in 2009 with a yearly inflation adjustment. Bloomington school

district figures show that a house valued at \$250,000 would see a tax increase of \$123 a year due to the operating levy. Bloomington school officials say their referendum funding has fallen behind neighboring districts that compete with the city for new families, students and employees.

Bloomington voters also are being asked to OK a second levy to maintain and upgrade district technology. This



request would provide \$3 million annually beginning in 2008. Currently, Bloomington schools have no dedicated

*continued on page 2*

## HOUSE CANDIDATES ANNOUNCE

Three candidates have announced campaigns for Edina and West Bloomington House seats.

**Kevin Staunton**, Edina Planning Commission member and Excelsior City Attorney, is running for the District 41A seat. **Paul Rosenthal**, a 2006 candidate, is making another run for election to the District 41B House seat. Attorney **Mick Spence** also has announced his candidacy for the 41B House seat.

Staunton is a former Minnesota assistant attorney general and now runs his own law firm.

"I'm running for the Minnesota House of Representatives to continue my commitment to public service by advocating for stronger schools, more livable and sustainable communities and smarter health care," Staunton says. "Edina and Minnesota have been fortunate to have leaders who helped create the kind of

communities we're proud to be part of. But we're now living in a time of rapid change and the challenges presented to us in this first decade of the 21st century are much different than the ones we encountered a generation ago. I can provide the effective leadership needed to respond to those challenges and to build a community and state the next generation also will be proud of."

His campaign website is [www.stauntonforhouse.org](http://www.stauntonforhouse.org).

*continued on page 5*

**DISTRICT LEADERS**

Chair

**Bill Melton**

Associate Chair

**Eileen McAuley**

Secretary

**Genevieve Davila**

Treasurer

**Terri Stermer**

Affirmative Action

**Chuck Prentice**

Directors

**Donna Carlton**

**Jill Crafton**

**David Davison**

**Joan Kampmeyer**

**Bill Layton**

**Tim O'Brien**

**Gene Persha**

**Gwen Ruff**

**Del Smith**

**Peggy Smith**

**Russ Stanton**

Website

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

Prepared and paid for by Senate District 41 Democrats

**Comments?**

**Suggestions?**

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

Printed by

**Cooperative Print Solutions**

**SCHOOL REFERENDUMS CONTINUED**

funding for technology. District officials say new technology funding would provide greater access to computers for students; increase technology based communication between schools and parents; allow for a replacement plan to keep instructional and administrative technology up to date; and improve infrastructure such as networks, servers, internet connections and data storage.

With a successful technology levy, the tax increase on a \$250,000 Bloomington house would be about \$62 a year.

Bloomington school officials say if voters reject the general funding increases, class sizes would increase, programs would be eliminated and employee hiring, salary and benefits freezes could be instituted. Without dedicated technology funding, replacement and upgrading of technology would be limited, and Bloomington students would fall behind students in competing schools, school administrators say.

More information about the Bloomington referendums can be found on the school district website, [www.bloomington.k12.mn.us](http://www.bloomington.k12.mn.us), or at [www.yesyesforbloomingtonschools.com](http://www.yesyesforbloomingtonschools.com).

**Edina schools referendum**

In Edina, voters are being

asked to approve a 10-year operating levy to replace one that expired June 30. Approval of the Nov. 6 general funding levy would prevent a \$2.1 million budget shortfall in the 2008-09 school year, district officials say. The new funding levy would raise an additional \$278 per student, for a total of about \$1,383.

If the levy is approved, the district's portion of taxes on an average home in Edina, valued at \$450,000, would increase about \$108 a year.

A "no" vote on the referendum means the district will lose about 15 percent of its budget, resulting in three to four more students in each school classroom, according to school officials.

Additional information about the Edina referendum is available at the school district's website, [www.edina.k12.mn.us](http://www.edina.k12.mn.us), and at [www.voteyesedina.com](http://www.voteyesedina.com).

Edina-West Bloomington Democrats voted to support the three referendums at their September meeting. While speakers urged neighbors to vote to support local schools, several agreed that not all school districts have the same ability to raise additional local money for schools. Democrats need to continue to press for adequate, ongoing funding for all

Minnesota schools.

Most of the school funding problem originated in 2003 when Gov. Tim Pawlenty and House Republicans solved a \$4.5 billion budget deficit through massive cuts to state support for education. The 2007 legislature provided a 2 percent basic funding increase for 2007-08 and only 1 percent for 2008-09. Meanwhile, inflation is running about 2.5 percent.

"This isn't going to be just an Edina problem," said Edina Superintendent Ric Dressen. "This is going to be something every school district in the metro area, and probably statewide, will deal with because of that small increase in funding in the second year of the budget."

Indeed, the Minnesota School Boards Association says this fall will see the second-highest number of districts ever going for operating levy referendums. An additional 32 districts are trying for bond referendums or capital project levies this fall. "Many districts know a 1 percent state increase for schools won't go far with inflation, so they are asking local citizens for help to avoid budget cuts," according to an association press release.

*Gwen Ruff*

## REPUBLICANS USE REFUND PROGRAM MORE THAN DEMOCRATS

Minnesota has a unique program to encourage eligible voters to contribute to candidates or political parties of their choice.

It's called the Political Contribution Refund program. The program provides public money to fund political campaigns and parties but contributors get to decide who gets the money.

The program has existed for years, but people still find it hard to believe they'll get their money back. Every eligible voter can get a refund of up to \$50 each year—\$100 for a married couple—for qualifying political contributions. The State of Minnesota pays refunds to voters from its general fund—meaning from your taxes—while the money stays with the candidate or party unit that received the donation.

Overall, Republicans have consistently used this program more than Democrats.

In 2005-06, Democrats received slightly more refunds for contributions to individual candidates, but Republicans received more than twice the amount Democrats did for contributions to party units. In total for those years, Republican voters received more than \$6.5 million in refunds for their contributions to candidates and party units while Democratic voters received only \$4.3 million.

Locally, contributors to the Edina-West Bloomington Republican organization and to Republican candidates Geoff Michel, Ron Erhardt and Neil Peterson received just over \$99,000 in refunds in 2005 and 2006. Contributors to Edina-West Bloomington Democrats and local Democratic candidates for the Legislature only received about \$36,000 in refunds those same two years.

Until we correct this imbalance, Democrats' taxes are

subsidizing the Republican Party and its candidates.

Obtaining a refund isn't hard. Edina-West Bloomington Democrats can make donations to our party unit by filling out the form on page 7. Mail it along with your check to the address on the form. You'll receive a receipt and a one-page form to mail to the appropriate state office for your refund. The entire process takes about five minutes and two stamps. Your refund check comes directly from the state within six to eight weeks.

Minnesota has long been a leader in campaign finance reform. In 1974, the state enacted ethics in government laws, including campaign finance reforms. Lawmakers hoped to bolster campaign spending limit rules by restricting the program to candidates who agree to abide by those regulations. The program's goals are to lessen candidates' dependence on large dollar contributions and to increase participation in the political process by removing any financial obligation on the voter's part.

For voters, candidates and political parties, it's a win-win situation.

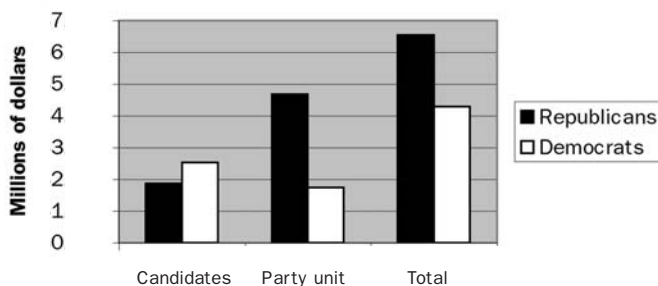
*Chuck Prentice*

### OFF THE BOOKSHELF

***Whose Freedom? The Battle Over America's Most Important Idea***  
By George Lakoff

Lakoff, a cognitive linguistics professor, can be somewhat estoric, but this book has concrete suggestions for talking about issues from a progressive perspective. First, Lakoff explains why progressives need to break right-wing conservatives' stranglehold on public discourse. "This book is about more than freedom in the political and patriotic sense. It is just as much about free will, about how we have begun to lose it and how to regain it. Parallel to the right-wing political machine is a right-wing mind machine. If taxes are only afflictions to be removed, if education is only teaching to the test, if poverty is deserved for lack of discipline, if stem-cell research is child mutilation, if homosexuality is only a lifestyle, if religious freedom is government-supported proselytizing, if scientific theories are merely beliefs—if this is the only way you think about these matters, then your free will is severely limited because you cannot even imagine how most Americans understand these issues, much less act on that understanding."

**Political Contribution Refunds 2005-06**



## INSIGHT ON ISSUES: ERHARDT, PETERSON AREN'T MODERATES

**The record is clear. Ron Erhardt and Neil Peterson are not moderates. They talk the moderate talk but almost always walk the far-right Republican line.**

Many Edina and Bloomington residents are unaware just how far right the voting records of Ron Erhardt, House District 41A, and Neil Peterson, House District 41B, actually are. Erhardt and Peterson talk a good line, but they almost always vote for the far-right Republican position. Here are a few examples of what they were up to during the spring legislative session.

### **Education**

For several years the Republican strategy has been to cut funding for public education when possible and otherwise to hold funding increases below the inflation rate. This reduces the real value of state support for education. Erhardt and Peterson have supported this strategy routinely.

In the aftermath of tragedies at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech, the people have been sensitized to the threat of violence against students. Republicans beg to differ. In the spring legislative session, Erhardt and Peterson voted against a modest increase in local levy authority to help keep schools safe (*House Journal*, April 18, p. 3993).

### **Health care**

Access to health care is another issue the public feels strongly about—with good

reason. Large numbers of Minnesotans have no health insurance, and health crises are the number one cause of personal bankruptcies. Republicans apparently don't regard this as a problem, or maybe they think it's somebody else's problem.

The House tried to improve the situation by providing coverage for 55,000 Minnesota children who currently lack health insurance. Erhardt and Peterson voted against this "Cover All Kids" program (*House Journal*, April 20, p. 4121).

They also voted against legislation to increase funding for nursing homes and long-term care for seniors (*House Journal*, April 20, p. 4315).

### **Transportation**

It's no mystery why Minnesota's transportation problems have been so severe—even before the tragic collapse of the I-35W bridge. Funding has fallen far short of needs. The gas tax has remained unchanged since 1988, and inflation has reduced its real value by about 40 percent since then. Republican ideologues have opposed raising the gas tax and have instead favored borrowing to make improvements. Of course, the interest and principal would have to be repaid in the future. In the

absence of future tax increases, the burden of such payments would fall principally on state spending for education and health care.

Erhardt and Peterson voted to keep alive a borrowing plan that provided inadequate funding for roads and bridges and almost nothing for transit (*House Journal*, March 23, p. 1880). Fortunately that proposal didn't pass. A bipartisan transportation bill that included a meager gas tax increase and \$8.4 billion of new money did pass—only to be vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty. When the House tried to override the veto, Erhardt and Peterson voted against the bill with their Republican allies, and the override failed to gain the necessary two-thirds majority (*House Journal*, May 21, p. 7571).

Space doesn't permit calling the roll on all Erhardt-Peterson votes in the spring legislative session and in earlier years, but the record is clear. These fellows aren't moderates; they're conservative Republican loyalists. Their voting records are inconsistent with the values of our communities. Edina and West Bloomington citizens deserve a better deal.

*Bill Melton*

CANDIDATES CONTINUED



PAUL ROSENTHAL, HOUSE DISTRICT 41B CANDIDATE

Rosenthal was the Senate District 41 Democrats-endorsed candidate in the 2006 House 41B race. He has a degree in metropolitan studies and urban planning from New York University. He has owned a small business, was vice president of sales and leasing for Cimmaron properties, a commercial brokerage in New York City, and



MICK SPENCE, HOUSE DISTRICT 41B CANDIDATE

was an intern working on environmental issues with the National Audubon Society. Rosenthal is a partner in a development group, based in St. Paul, formed to save endangered historic buildings.

Education is Rosenthal's top priority. "Gov. Pawlenty and Republican legislators have



KEVIN STAUNTON, HOUSE DISTRICT 41A CANDIDATE

guttled aid to local government," he says. "We must restore funds and foster development of leading early childhood education programs."

Rosenthal says the Legislature needs to focus more on "the real issues of our time—education, health care and transportation."

Spence also is running for the 41B House seat. For the past eight years, he has been with the Spence Law Firm, which handles entertainment law, intellectual property, business and personal legal issues. Before that he started a consulting business advising companies and individuals in non-legal and entertainment industry, internet, media and business matters. He was a trial attorney and investigator with Meshbesh & Spence from 1993 through 1999.

Spence says he would find common ground and work to give people in the community fair, equal and universal representation. "We all want improvements," he says. "We're in this together. My goal is to work for solutions benefiting everyone."

CAUCUSES MOVED UP TO FEBRUARY

The Minnesota DFL recently moved statewide precinct caucuses to Feb. 5. "Super Tuesday" is expected to have tremendous impact on national presidential nominations. Dozens of states will hold primaries or caucuses on or before Feb. 5.

DFL officials hope the earlier caucuses increase grassroots participation, draw new participants into the political process and make Minnesota's caucuses more rele-

vant in a hyperspeed presidential election year.

DFL caucuses will conduct presidential preference polls that will be binding to determine the proportionate number of delegates each Democratic presidential candidate receives. Caucus turnout traditionally is high when there are numerous presidential candidates and no clear front-runner exists at the time.

A precinct is the smallest unit in Minnesota's electoral system and the DFL's basic organizing unit. Party officials view caucuses as places to recruit new members and get participants excited about the upcoming campaigns. It's also the first step in picking state and national convention delegates.

Edina-West Bloomington Democrats typically hold precinct caucuses at a local



public school. Check our website, [www.sd41.dfl.org](http://www.sd41.dfl.org), for detailed caucus information. Precinct caucus details also will be available at [www.dfl.org](http://www.dfl.org), the state party website.

PAPER OR  
PLASTIC?  
NEITHER!



**Need an environmentally friendly bag for trips to the grocery store or library that lets you display your political colors? These blue reusable bags measure 14 by 13-1/2 by 3 inches and cost just \$8.**

**One side proudly displays "Edina & West Bloomington Democrats," and the graphic on the other side urges a cut in global warming.**

**To order a bag or two, send an e-mail message to [sd41-democrats@comcast.net](mailto:sd41-democrats@comcast.net) with your name, address, phone number and how many you'd like to buy. You also can call Chuck Prentice at 952-929-8284 to order bags. Money earned from the bags benefits Edina-West Bloomington Democrats.**

NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT CHAIRS

The last issue of this newsletter, which hit your mail box in late June, noted that "numerous roads and bridges are literally falling apart, while other transportation needs remain unmet." This was common knowledge, but we sincerely wish we had been wrong given the tragic collapse of the I-35W bridge.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty responded to the urgent need for action and announced that, after having vetoed transportation bills in 2005 and again in May, he had changed his position and was willing to agree to an increase in the gas tax. However, within hours of Pawlenty's statement, he was under pressure from Republican right-wing elements and back-pedaled fast. His revised position was that the gas-tax increase would have to be temporary

and offset by other tax cuts. All things being equal, this meant improvements in transportation would have to be financed by cuts in state outlays for education and health care.

From such rigid, ideological posturing came nothing. Pawlenty called a special session of the Legislature in September, but it was limited to providing flood relief and little more. There was nothing—nothing—for transportation, despite the public's heightened awareness of the consequences of years of neglect. The photo ops were over, and Pawlenty and his Republican allies were back to business as usual. Some of us feel like we've been had.

However, something good could emerge from this tragedy if the public remains

determined to hold hypocritical politicians accountable.

To that end, Democrats in Edina and West Bloomington are charged up as never before. We aim to send Republicans a message next year via the ballot box, and we've got a lot going on.

Here are a couple of things to put on your calendar:

- The Green Town Forum promises to deliver real insights on what individuals can do to create environmental progress even while Republican obstruction prevails in Washington and St. Paul. It's Sun., Oct. 14, 1 to 4 p.m., at Edina High School. See the back page of the newsletter for details.

- For the first time ever, we're opening a permanent office in Room 320 of the Edina Community Center, 5701 Normandale Road. We're planning an "office warming" party Thurs., Nov. 8, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. We'll be showing off the office and seeking ideas for how it can be put to the best use. Our Legislative candidates will be there, as will Minn-esota DFL Party Chair Brian Melendez and many of your Democratic neighbors. Please join us!

*Bill Melton, Chair  
Eileen McAuley, Associate Chair*



RON MARIEN, BILL MELTON AND EILEEN MCAULEY IN THE NEW DISTRICT OFFICE

# EDINA - WEST BLOOMINGTON DEMOCRATS KEEP GROWING WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

U.S. Senate candidate Al Franken was quoted in the Sept. 17 *Newsweek* replying to a questioner who asked why a comedian also wants to be a senator. "A satirist sees the hypocrisies and absurdities in the world and cuts through the baloney to get to the truth," Franken says. "I think that's good training for the U.S. Senate, don't you?"

I'm not a satirist, but it's no baloney when I say Edina-West Bloomington Democrats need your contributions.

Why? Because we've got so much going on. Read about our new office space on page 6. Check out the details on our upcoming Green Town environmental forum on the

back page. Learn about our great Democratic Legislative candidates on page 1.

And be sure to take a look at the story on page 3 about how Republicans take better advantage overall of the statewide Political Contribution Refund program. Republicans in Edina and West Bloomington who donated money to their political party or candidates received more than twice the amount of refunds through this program than local Democrats did.

The state pays these refunds through its general fund, our tax dollars. Why are we letting our tax dollars fund Republicans? Why aren't we tapping this precious resource to the maximum ben-

efit of Democrats in Edina and West Bloomington?

We can do better. By making this your first political contribution of 2007, you'll receive a refund—up to \$50 per individual or \$100 per couple—paid directly to you from the State of Minnesota through the refund program.

It's so easy to do. Simply fill out the form below and mail it along with your check.

You'll receive a receipt and a one-page form to mail in for your refund. It only takes a few minutes. Refunds usually arrive in six to eight weeks.

While that contribution is very much appreciated, I bet you'll feel even better if you dig a little deeper and give

more. It won't be covered by the refund program, but you can rest assured we'll put it to good use. Our mailing list just gets bigger with each newsletter. We're got to organize and pay for upcoming precinct caucuses. And most importantly, we'll provide financial support to candidates in the upcoming campaigns. Edina-West Bloomington Democrats are energized and excited as our organization grows continuously. And that's no baloney!

So please write a check and send it today with the form below. Any questions? Call me at 952-922-2597 or e-mail [BillLayton@comcast.net](mailto:BillLayton@comcast.net)

*Bill Layton, Chair  
Fund-raising Committee*

---

## 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: Terri Stermer, Treasurer, Senate District 41 Democrats, P.O. Box 24073, Edina, MN 55424-0073**



**Edina-West Bloomington  
Democrats**

P. O. Box 24073

Edina, MN 55424-0073

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
MINNEAPOLIS MN  
PERMIT NO. 894

## Green Town Forum

*Information and practical ideas to help you live  
a more environmentally friendly lifestyle and make changes  
at the local, state and national levels*

**1 p.m., Sun., Oct. 14**

**Fick Auditorium, Edina High School**

**6754 Valley View Road, Edina**

**\$1 admission; doors open at 12:30 p.m.**

Panelists:

- J. Drake Hamilton, science policy director, Fresh Energy
- Rebecca Otto, Minnesota State Auditor
- James Turnure, environmental policy manager, Xcel Energy
- Ami Voeltz, executive director, Twin Cities Green Guide

Moderated by Tom LaForce, founder, LaForce Teamwork Services

A social hour will follow the program from 3 to 4 p.m.

Sponsored by Edina-West Bloomington Democrats

Artwork by David Cahn

