



SOUND & CLEAR

SENATE DISTRICT 41 DEMOCRATS WWW.SD41.DFL.ORG

UPCOMING EVENTS

SD 41 Democrats Monthly Meeting

7 to 8:30 p.m.
Mon., Mar. 12,
Helen Young Room,
Southdale Library,
York Ave., Edina

Mon., Apr. 9
Ethel Berry Room,
Southdale Library

SD 41 Democrats Links (Meetups)

7 p.m.
Tues., Feb. 27
Tues., Mar. 27
Tues., Apr. 24
All at Davanni's,
5124 Gus Young
Lane, Edina

Be sure to check
www.sd41.dfl.org for
changes and addition-
al events.

OTTO'S FISCAL SENSE APPEALS TO VOTERS

State Auditor Rebecca Otto thinks her "message of accountability and transparency in government resonated with voters in Senate District 41."

That translated into Otto getting just shy of 50 percent of votes in this district last November. Otto did better in Edina and West Bloomington than any other state-level DFL candidate and received 12 percent more votes than the 2002 DFL candidate.

"In part that may be because I'm from an area with similar demographics and understand

how to find common ground between Democrats and moderate Republicans," says Otto, who earlier represented a Stillwater district in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

Voters also noticed Otto's TV commercials about her bipartisan support and her finding accounting errors in government reports. "Everyone wants numbers to add up in government," she says.

Otto also did a very targeted mailing into Senate District 41 about her support from



STATE AUDITOR
REBECCA OTTO

the last three state auditors.

Her advice for keeping such Democratic momentum alive? "Continue to talk about issues that the majority of people embrace regardless of party—fiscal responsibility,

continued on page 2

NOTES FROM DISTRICT LEADERS

With the election over and the Minnesota winter upon us, it's a good time to reflect on what happened Nov. 7 and to think about what lies ahead.

We knew all along that last year was going to be a banner year for Democrats, and we said so repeatedly. As it turned out, though, even we underestimated the determination of Americans to push back against right-wing

Republicans. On the national level, Democratic gains exceeded even the most optimistic forecasts, and both the House of Representatives and the Senate returned to Democratic control. Congress has been in session only a few weeks, but already the tone has changed dramatically. Democrats are focusing on the issues that really matter to Americans.

It was much the same story

here in Minnesota, as Democrats executed a near-perfect sweep. In the battle for the open U.S. Senate seat, Amy Klobuchar overwhelmed Republican Mark Kennedy by a staggering 20 percentage points. Democrats took all of the constitutional offices, save the governorship. Analysts agree that Gov. Tim Pawlenty owed his razor-thin victory over Mike Hatch to the spoiler role played by

continued on page 2

DISTRICT LEADERS

Chair

Bill Melton

Associate Chair

Eileen McAuley

Secretary

Ardis Wexler

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

SOUND & CLEAR

Prepared and paid for by Senate District 41 Democrats

Comments?

Suggestions?

Contact Gwen Ruff, e-mail gweruff@yahoo.com

Printed by

Cooperative Print Solutions

STATE AUDITOR CONTINUED

prudence, bipartisanship, fairness and good government.”

Those are the underlying values Otto is transforming into tangible results in her new job. The state auditor oversees the spending of over \$20 billion annually by local governments across the state. The auditor’s office is basically a good-government office. Its job is to make sure no one is pocketing money, that they are complying with statutes and that they are implementing prudent fiscal management, according to Otto.

“My vision for the office is to be more proactive and preventive, instead of reactive and punitive,” she says. “We want to get out ahead of any

problems before they occur in local government spending.

This happens through better communication, education and redeveloping a trusting relationship. It’s a more efficient and cost-effective model. We all know there are a few bad apples, but most local officials want to give something back to their communities and don’t want to see their names in the paper because of some mistake.”

The auditor’s office also has a Government Information Division that collects and analyzes financial data on local governments, then issues annual reports on this data. Otto plans to make the analysis more meaningful because local officials and the Legislature use the infor-

mation in policy making and planning.

“We want to provide them with credible, nonpartisan information, so they can get back to long-term planning,” she says.

Her current challenge is putting together a budget. “Right now, the largest challenge is in getting a budget that can retain employees and implement the work the office is statutorily charged with,” Otto says. “I will be going to the Legislature to make my case. I’m presenting them with a modest budget request that will allow us to continue to do our very important oversight work.”

DISTRICT LEADERS CONTINUED

Peter Hutchinson, the Independence Party candidate. Meanwhile, Democrats boosted their majority in the State Senate and retook the House of Representatives.

Election results in Senate District 41 were just as spectacular in their own way. Edina and West Bloomington have been a Republican fortress for many years. Now, however, that fortress is starting to crumble. We knew this when John Kerry carried the district in the 2004 presidential election. But Klubuchar provided the proof, as

she took a stunning 57 percent of the vote in Senate District 41, just a tad short of her 58 percent share statewide. Other Democratic women romped in Senate District 41 as well. Attorney General Lori Swanson and State Auditor Rebecca Otto almost tied their incumbent Republican opponents—not bad in a Republican fortress!

These were astounding local results, yet much remains to be done. Senate District 41 still has only Republican legislators; that needs to change.

We’re already laying the foundations to win in Senate District 41 in 2008. We’ll need volunteers with experience in graphic design, marketing, communications, fund raising and volunteer coordination. We’re also looking for a webmaster. There’s something for everyone—whatever your interest or expertise. We’ll be counting on your help!

*Bill Melton, Chair
Eileen McAuley, Associate Chair*

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

A firm dedication to “public education for all,” drives Kim Montgomery’s work with the Edina Education Fund. Started in 1999, the fund awards grants of between \$500 and \$5,000 to Edina Public Schools teachers and staff who want to try something new. The money comes from donations by Edina families, alumni, community members and businesses.

While Edina may have a fairly affluent population, the city’s public schools receive the same per-pupil allocation as other Minnesota school districts. “We, as a district, have been fortunate to have voters pass referenda to support our schools, but even those fall under state caps,” Montgomery says. “Our most recent referendum was for capital expenditures, not for operations. As in most districts, operating funds are tight each year with little, if anything, left over for innovation. That is where the Edina Education Fund comes in. We provide the dollars for innovation.”

More than 140 Innovation Grants have been awarded. Projects include reading materials for students learning the English language that will be rotated among schools; establishing robotics teams; using calculators programmed to collect and analyze data in hands-on lab-

oratory investigations; and development of an interactive video game for students with developmentally-adaptive physical needs to improve aerobic conditioning, muscle strength and attention.

“We strive to bring equity in the grant giving process across all schools within the district,” Montgomery says. “We also strive to reach students at all learning levels. Sally Euson, our executive director, has worked hard to ensure fairness in the process.”

The fund’s continued success also means board members can support major school district initiatives. “With steadily growing funding, we have been able to put more dollars toward projects the district does not have adequate funds to cover,” says Montgomery, who has two children in Edina public schools.

This year the education fund is looking at providing money for district initiatives in science and technology, additional counseling resources and an Academic Resource Center for students who need additional help.

This is Montgomery’s fifth year on the Edina Education Fund’s board of directors. She just ended a stint as co-



K I M M O N T G O M E R Y ,
R I G H T , A N D M A R Y
W E R B A L O W S K Y

chair with Mary Werbalowsky in 2004 through 2006. Montgomery also is active with Senate District 41 Democrats. She and Werbalowsky, along with Laura Nisi, have hosted four events in the past three years.

“I’m proud of the fact that pretty much everyone knows what the Edina Education Fund is,” says Werbalowsky, whose three children attend Edina public schools. “It’s always hard to turn any teacher down for a grant. They all work so hard, and we would love to help them all. That’s when I feel empowered to tell parents, business owners and others what we’re trying to do here and why they should support the fund.”

To get more information or to make a donation, contact the Edina Education Fund at 952-848-4222 or go to www.edinaedfund.com.

**O F F T H E
B O O K S H E L F**

***The Republican Noise Machine: Right-Wing Media and How it Corrupts Democracy*
By David Brock**

Ex-conservative David Brock runs a Washington, D.C. nonprofit media watchdog group, Media Matters for America. “A healthy democracy and sound public policy depend on public access to factual information and a wide range of informed opinion,” Brock writes. He describes a network of foundations and thinktanks backed by corporate dollars and conservative family money. This network sells conservatism to the public through media outlets that disregard journalistic ethics and accepted standards of fairness and accuracy. Brock, who worked at several of these organizations, writes that “unchecked right-wing media power means that in the United States today, no issue can be honestly debated and no election can be fairly decided. If California voters recall their governor in the belief that the state budget deficit is four times higher than it actually is, if Americans think Saddam Hussein was behind Sept. 11 before hearing any evidence, . . . thank the right-wing media and those who abet it.”

INSIGHT ON ISSUES: TRANSPORTATION NEEDS FUNDING

The lion's share of gas tax revenue is dedicated to funding transportation infrastructure, such as highways and bridges. However the tax has been unchanged since 1988—by far the longest period of no change in its history.

The Minnesota Legislature is engaged in a bipartisan effort to pass a transportation bill similar to the one passed last year, which was vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Almost everyone agrees Minnesota needs to invest more in transportation infrastructure. The controversy centers on how to pay for projects. The transportation bill would boost the tax on gasoline from 20 cents per gallon to 30 cents. Predictably right-wing Republicans have railed against the increase. Pawlenty reportedly referred to such a provision as “veto bait.”

The Minnesota excise tax on motor fuels includes alternative fuels as well as gasoline, but the tax on gasoline produces well over 90 percent of the revenue. The lion's share of the revenue is dedicated to funding transportation infrastructure, such as highways and bridges. The gas tax was first enacted in 1925, at 2 cents per gallon, and has been increased from time to time during the ensuing 82 years. Most of

these increases have been triggered by the need to offset the impact of inflation on the cost of transportation projects.

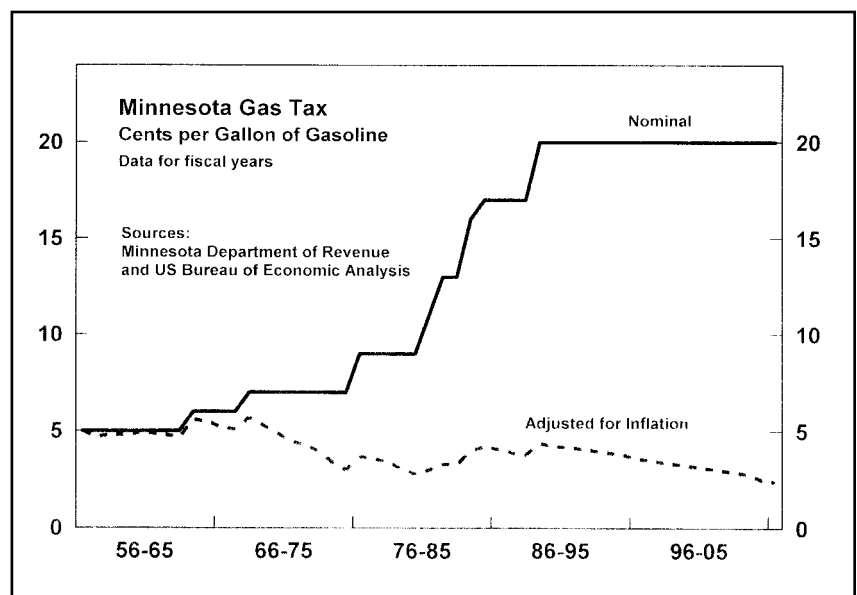
The chart displays the most recent half-century of the Minnesota gas tax. For most of the 1950s, the tax was 5 cents per gallon, but increases occurred fairly regularly, with particularly sharp increases after the OPEC oil shocks in 1973 and 1979. However the tax has been unchanged since 1988—by far the longest period of no change in its history.

The chart also shows the buying power of the gas tax after adjustment for inflation in the cost of structures built by state and local governments. The “real” gas tax has declined fairly uniformly since the mid-1960s, as increases

in the nominal rate have trailed inflation. Since 1988 the real purchasing power of the gas tax has declined every year. Now it is less than half its level in the 1950s and down a whopping 38 percent since 1988. The increase currently being considered in the nominal rate—to 30 cents per gallon from 20 cents—would still leave the real purchasing power about 7 percent lower than it was in 1988.

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand why Minnesota's transportation needs have been short-changed. For years the right-wing, no-tax ideology has been in the driver's seat. Hopefully the new Legislature will change that.

Bill Melton



CONTRIBUTIONS HELP SD41 DEMOCRATS PREPARE FOR EXCITING 2008 ELECTIONS

The 2008 election cycle began Nov. 8. It will end Nov. 4, 2008. Senate District 41 Democrats need your help to ensure our candidates win. In an already exciting presidential primary field, who will the nominees be? Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama, Chris Dodd, John Edwards? Maybe Al Gore? Who will run for U.S. Senate? Al Franken? Mike Cerisi? We must beat Norm Coleman and keep control of the U.S. Senate.

In Senate District 41 it's too early to tell who our candidates might be. Amy Klobuchar's showing in this district demonstrates that a good candidate whose campaign is well organized with financial and volunteer support can win. Democrats can be competitive and can even win in Edina and West Bloomington. Your votes, volunteer help and financial support make it happen.

We're already preparing for the 2008 races. Early preparation is critical to our success on Election Day. We want to win in 2008, and to do that we need your help now. Please contribute to Senate District 41 Democrats, and help build on last year's momentum. Here are some of the ways that making your 2007 contribution now will help elect Democratic candidates in 2008.

Your contribution will help:

- to recruit and mentor potential candidates
- to provide organizational help to endorsed local candidates
- to identify and train campaign volunteers
- to update and maintain databases of Senate District 41 Democrats
- to improve communications with you.

How can you help? By, in essence, lending us some of your money for six to eight weeks. Lending up to \$50, or \$100 per couple, will cost you only a little effort and two 39 cent stamps. This is possible thanks to the Minnesota Political Contribution Refund program. You give your contribution to Senate District 41 Democrats with the enclosed envelope. That's the first stamp. Terri Stermer, our treasurer, will send you a political contribution receipt and a refund application. You fill it out and mail it to the Minnesota Revenue Department. That's the second stamp.

In six to eight weeks a check will be in the mail to you. Voila! Your loan is repaid and your money is back. Isn't that neat? This program is great news for those of us on fixed incomes. We get the satisfaction of contributing to our party, and it costs us

only 78 cents in postage and a little time.

Of course, we hope that those of you with a bit more disposable income might give a donation above the amount that will be refunded. We're hoping to get donations in the \$250 to \$1,000 range. How about it?

If you didn't receive a remittance envelope in your newsletter or if you have more questions, please contact me at BillLayton@comcast.net or 952-922-2597.

Thank you in advance for your generous support. Working together, we will win in 2008.

*Bill Layton, Chair,
Fund-raising Committee*

**For more information
about the Political Contribution Refund Program,
go to SD41.DFL.org and click on Donate.
You can read about the program and, just incidentally,
get a little more encouragement to contribute.**

Senate District 41 Democrats
P. O. Box 24073
Edina, MN 55424-0073

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
MINNEAPOLIS MN
PERMIT NO. 894

PLEASE
VOLUNTEER

Our job is to elect Democrats. There's plenty to do between now and the 2008 elections. We've got all kinds of jobs—big and small. If you'd like to help, please call Chuck Prentice at 952-929-8284 to offer your services.

Just for fun! Totally unscientific!
Senate District 41 Democrats Presidential Straw Poll *



Sen. Barack Obama: 10
Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton: 10
Former Sen. John Edwards: 7
New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson: 5
Rep. Dennis Kucinich: 2
Retired Gen. Wesley Clark: 1
Sen. Chuck Hagel, Republican: 1
Anybody but John Kerry: 1
Undecided: 2



With such small numbers any interpretation is over-interpretation and risky. But because our results mirror national opinions, here we go with risky over-interpretations! Clinton represents moderate to conservative Democrats *ala* the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). Former DLC chair Terry McAuliffe is her campaign manager. Edwards and Obama represent youth and may be seen as leaders but not part of the establishment leadership. Richardson was a surprise. His leadership skills may be appealing to people. Hagel and Clark reflect



outspoken leadership, especially in regard to Iraq. Clark showed outstanding leadership in Bosnia, a situation similar to Iraq. Given his one "anti-vote," Kerry's decision not to go for it appears to have been wise!



**Results compiled by Bill Layton*