



Healthcare

The June 13th meeting will focus on HEALTHCARE. Come and learn more about Sheila Kuehl's single-payer health insurance program that would cover every resident of California. We are pleased to have Emily Gold, field director for Senator Sheila Kuehl, who will fill us in on the details of SB840.

Penny Strowger, director of Ventura County's One Care Now organization, will announce the June 30 "action" event in Thousand Oaks. The 365 Cities campaign consists of teams who are conducting grassroots educational and public awareness events – one event per day, in a different city, for one year - to demand quality affordable healthcare for all Californians.

The meeting will start at 6:30 with a business meeting, followed by our speakers at 7:00. Location is the Newbury Park Library on Borchard Rd.

DCCV Big Winner with Wine Tasting

Wine for Winners was a winner according to the nearly 70 people who gathered at the beautiful home of Karen & Seth Stevens on Saturday evening. Many people had come from the Speakers' series with Ambassador Wilson, so there was plenty of lively conversation. Along with our old, faithful supporters, it was nice to see some new faces as well. The preliminary figures show that the event raised \$2600.00, not all expense receipts have been submitted, nor have the receipts from wine sales been received.

With the help of Wine Styles, attendees tasted 6 different California wines, accompanied by a delicious variety of cheeses, crackers & fruit.



Julia Blumenthal provided live musical entertainment along with her mom, Ingrid van Eckert.

The dessert table was as beautiful as it was delicious, with chocolate covered strawberries, nut bars, lemon tart, black forest torte, home-made chocolate truffles, chocolate baklava, biscotti, tiny cheesecakes and many more decadent choices. Flavored coffees were also served.

Thanks to Betty Spilker who sold raffle tickets. The raffle by itself raised \$355.00. Several attendees new to a DCCV event received free tickets. The winners – 1 – A Wine tasting at Wine Styles for up to 8 people – Bruce Gardner; 2 – Ticket for 2 to the DCCV Summer Garden Party – Julia Blumenthal; 3 – A gift basket donated by Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf – Dr. Paul Milberg.

Thanks to everyone who helped with food, cleanup, and hospitality. We are fortunate to have Jerry & Arlene Clein collecting the money. A big thank you to the events committee who worked so hard to put on this outstanding event: Penne Letson, Kara Altshuler, Deb Kelner, Ingrid van Eckert, Abbe Berns and Sandy Emberland, chair. A special thanks to our hosts, Karen & Seth Stevens, for opening their home.

EYE ON THE ISSUES

Our June show will be about affordable housing in Ventura County. Our guests will be Jessica Arciniega from the Ag Futures Alliance Farm Worker Housing Task Force, former KSBW newswoman Cynthia Martin and former Congressional candidate Jill Martinez. Jill is now working with Peoples Self-Help Housing to combat homelessness in Ventura County. The show airs every Tuesday night through June at 8:00 p.m. on Cable Channel 25.

Sue Gunther

An Iraq Oil Benchmark? A Bad Idea

By Linda L. Brown

When most Americans hear President Bush and other governmental officials stressing the importance of the Iraqi government passing an “oil agreement”, they probably think it means finding a way to divide the future oil revenues among the three main groups in Iraq (the Shiites, Sunnis, and the Kurds.) The proposed agreement would cover this, but that is not the part of the agreement our government is most interested in. What our government is truly interested in is the part of the agreement between Iraq and the major western oil companies. This one of the “benchmarks” they are seeking from the Iraqi government.

In fact we are so interested in that part of the agreement, that we helped the Iraq government by actually “producing” the document. We wrote it, the Iraqi government is supposed to get it passed. The following quote in an article by Pepe Escobar explains how it came into being and how the US taxpayer paid the cost:

“The law was in essence drafted, behind locked doors, by a US consulting firm hired by the Bush administration and then carefully retouched by Big Oil, the International Monetary Fund, former US deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz’ World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development. It’s virtually a US law (its original language is English, not Arabic.)”

That’s right we hired the company to write it!

Under the proposed agreement, the major western oil companies would assume all the costs for exploration, drilling, construction of pipelines, etc. This portion of the main agreement is called a Production Sharing Agreement (known as a PSA.) The money earned from the sale of the oil would be shared with the Iraqis. That sounds fair; after all it will cost a great deal of money to explore, drill, and extract oil. However the proposed PSAs are a long way from fair. The terms make them closer to making a friendly agreement with your local loan shark!

The proposed PSAs had truly unbelievable terms. The original duration of the contracts was to be up to 40 years. It seems now that some of the contracts have been shortened to 15-25 years. While the term “PSA” itself is not currently mentioned in the proposed Iraqi Oil Law, it is not excluded. To experts that seems to indicate that indeed it is likely.

PSAs are ordinarily used only now in places in the world in which oil is very difficult to extract or if the oil produced is much more difficult to process into gasoline. In Iraq none of that is true. In fact the production cost per barrel of oil in Iraq is spectacularly low. The reserves are relatively close to the surface.

None of the other countries in the Gulf region have such agreements. Those agreements are, for the most part, a leftover of a colonial period. All the other Gulf nations pay the international oil companies to explore and develop their oil fields. Obviously, those companies wouldn’t do so if they didn’t find it profitable. There is no reason an ordinary contract wouldn’t work in Iraq as well.

On February 26, 2007, the Iraqi cabinet approved the draft of the new law. A few copies of the draft had been seen by a small number of the members of the Iraqi Parliament, but most members had seen nothing by that date. However, since the end of February, we have been pushing the parliament to agree to pass the law we wrote. Many members are in no great hurry to give away the natural resources of their country. Maybe they’re not truly grateful; many members of our Congress have seemed more than eager to give away our natural resources.

President Bush had promised in 2000 to be a uniter, not a divider. Well in one amazing place, he finally achieved his goal. Amazingly he has managed to unite Muqtada al-Sadr (leader of the Shiite Mahdi Army) and the Sunnis. Both groups are opposed to the new proposed law. In fact he’s united more than that. The majority of the country does not agree with the plan.

Some particularly odious terms of the proposed law:

- The Iraqi government would not have control over oil company operations inside its own country. Any disputes would be referred to pro-industry international arbitration panels.
- No contracts would be public documents.
- Contracting companies would not have to hire Iraqi workers. For example, they could continue to employ South Asian laborers.

Iraq must come to some agreement with the oil companies. After all Iraq at this time simply does not have the money for the capital expenditures of exploration, drilling, pipelines, etc. They won’t have the funds necessary to handle governmental expenses to rebuild the country without selling the oil. However it ought to be an agreement that fosters good will on both (Continued on next page.)

sides. Pepe Escobar says of the proposed laws, "The law represents no less than institutionalized raping and pillaging of Iraq's oil wealth."

Unfortunately Iraq is in a very difficult position. It has enormous debts run up under Saddam's rule. The nation has the largest per capita debt in the world. It needs the debts (or at least a portion of them) to be "forgiven." The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is in a position to do so, but apparently only if Iraq gives in to this unfair oil law being forced on it by the United States.

Greg Muttitt is a researcher for Platform, which is a human rights and environmental group in the UK that monitors oil industry practices. Speaking of Iraq he says, "They will lose out massively because they don't have the capacity at the moment to strike a good deal." He goes on to say, "Along with the US and UK governments, the IMF and World Bank are forcing a policy on Iraq which favours the interests of oil multinationals at the expense of the Iraqi people."

Vince Cable, who is the Treasury spokesman for the Liberal Democrat party in Britain and also a former chief economist for Shell, said it was crucial that any deal would ensure that there is money to rebuild Iraq. "It is absolutely vital that the revenue from the oil industry goes into Iraqi development and is seen to do so. Although it does make sense to collaborate with foreign investors, it is very important the terms are seen to be fair."

The chance for this unreasonable law being good for Iraq is nil. The chance for the law being good for the US is also nil. In fact it appears our president is ensuring that a steady supply of people who feel anger toward America will be created. Oh well, why should he change now?



Asking You for Money

We spend a lot of time asking you for money, so I want to start by thanking you for your generosity in 2006. While Jerry Clein, our treasurer, has a detailed report available at every meeting, let me give a quick run down of what happened last year. Last year we took in \$14,709 -- the Garden Party netted \$6500 and we raised \$3900 from member dues and donations. Other activities throughout 2006 raised the balance. We spent \$13,911. Of that, \$4,448 was spent on election expenses. So where does the rest go? That's a question every new Executive Board asks.

Most of it, \$4,535, goes to getting this newsletter printed and mailed. We paid \$1,234 for our monthly program expenses -- we usually give speakers \$100 to cover their gas and dinner expenses and sometimes we rent space -- \$575 for liability insurance, and \$3,119 paid

for everything from our booth at Conejo Valley Days and the Street Fair, to buying bumper stickers and pins. But we'd like to see more money go directly into our Get Out The Vote efforts.

So, we're asking for your help. Our goal at every election is to contact every one of the 25,000 Democrats in the Conejo Valley. So far we've managed something over half of that in any one election. If you can help us underwrite expenses, we can make the 2008 election the one where we can mount a full Get Out The Vote campaign that reaches every Democrat. For example, there are about 18,000 Democratic households in the Conejo Valley area. One mailing to all of them is about \$9,000. Or that same \$9,000 could be used to hire and train Young Democrats to walk neighborhoods. Even at \$15 an hour (they have tuition to pay you know) they could get to 6,000 doors that our volunteers couldn't get to.

We have some new opportunities for you. First, we're going to have some new sustaining memberships, starting at \$50 a year. We'll also have membership levels at \$100, \$250, \$500 and \$1,000. All sustaining members will receive special recognition in our newsletter and on our website. While we have some ideas, we'd like to hear from you how you think the club should recognize our more generous donors.

We're also looking for underwriters for our newsletter. For \$400 we'll put an "underwritten by" note on every page along with a credit in the editor's box. If that's more than you can afford, you can underwrite a page for \$100 and receive recognition for the page.

One hundred dollars will underwrite a monthly meeting, \$50 will pay for a weekend of tabling. Website costs \$360.00 per year. A \$30.00 donation would underwrite the website for one month.

Conejo Valley Days is tremendous exposure for the Club. You can underwrite the Conejo Valley Days booth for \$115 for one day or five days is \$575.

And for this year's Garden Party you can sponsor a table for \$750, receive 10 tickets for the event, and the table will be labeled with your name.

We have a great opportunity to put a Democrat in the White House next year, and a great opportunity to keep chipping away at the Republican majority in the Conejo Valley with your financial and volunteer support.

Tom Mullens, President DCCV



Bush Values Loyalty Over Competence

By Richard Kolber

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales is the pin-up boy for the Bush administration's de facto motto: "Competence is not important. Loyalty is our top consideration." To paraphrase a letter in the Los Angeles Times regarding the district attorney firings and Gonzales's testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, "What's the problem? Gonzales hasn't done anything wrong. As he says, he didn't know who did the firing or what criteria was used in these dismissals, so how could he be held responsible?"

In his Senate committee testimony, Gonzales said, "I do not recall" seventy one times. Then Bush actually had the temerity to respond to a reporter's question by saying he was impressed by Gonzales's strong performance under questioning. Give me a break. When I was in college, if my professors were as generous with their grading as Bush, I would have received straight A's without ever attending class or doing any assignments.

But the DA firings are far from the worst of Gonzales's actions. Now we have the sworn testimony of former Deputy Attorney General James Comey that Gonzales tried to force then Attorney General John Ashcroft to sign an order allowing wire tapping without a court order while the latter was lying in pain in a hospital bed following major surgery. Even Ashcroft thought the order unconstitutional. Did you ever think having Ashcroft back as attorney general would be a step up?

When Ashcroft protested that he had delegated his powers to Comey, Gonzales angrily demanded he sign the order. Comey, called a man of principle by his peers, refused and resigned shortly afterwards. Somehow, I do not expect the President to be praising him for his strong performance under oath.

As this is being written, no less than four Republican senators have called on Gonzales to resign, but these senators are asking the wrong man. When President Bush was asked whether he had ordered Gonzales to visit Ashcroft in the hospital and get him to sign the wiretapping order bypassing the courts, he refused to answer. Would Bush really be so staunchly defending his attorney general if he had gone off on his own in acting so wantonly? I hardly think so.

But this is not the first time Bush has expressed strong, even fervent support for less than sterling performances from people whose common bond was loyalty to the President. In a ceremony about two-and-a-

half years ago, Bush bestowed the presidential Medal of Freedom upon former Iraq administrator Paul Bremer, former CIA chief George Tenet, and retired General Tommy Franks, who oversaw the invasion of Iraq. Let's look at their records.

Bremer is the man who ordered that no Baathists were to be part of the new Iraqi government. Unfortunately, that order excluded a lot more than just Saddam loyalists. Doctors, teachers and engineers had been forced to join the Baathist party when Saddam was in charge. They were not loyal supporters of the former dictator and could have played a valuable role in the reconstruction of Iraq. Instead, they were shut out and became a fertile recruiting base for the insurgents. And yet the man who made this monumental blunder is given the presidential Medal of Freedom? Ah, but let's not forget that Bremer was a loyal Bushie, and isn't that what's really important?

George Tenet, of course, was the former head of the CIA who stood right behind then Secretary of State Colin Powell as he assured the world that Saddam did indeed have weapons of mass destruction and represented a grave threat to the world. But he was a loyal Bushie, and once again that consideration trumps all others when the administration decides who is to be honored. Given his new book, perhaps this is one award Bush now regrets bestowing. Then again, maybe not. I understand Tenet's book goes easy on Bush himself.

The third man honored that day back in December, 2004 was retired General Tommy Franks. Now there is no question that the initial invasion was a stunning success in terms of removing Saddam from power. But not once have I read that Franks ever warned the administration that getting rid of Saddam was the easy part and that the long range stability of the country and region would be at risk. But Franks has been an outspoken supporter of this president, and that is what counts.

I could go on. Rumsfeld was forced out only when the outcry from even Republicans could no longer be ignored. Vice-President Dick "We'll be welcomed with open arms" and "The insurgency is in its last stages" Cheney still has the full confidence of this president. Condi Rice, another Bush loyalist who staunchly backed the invasion of Iraq, is still in power. This truly is the gang that couldn't shoot straight, and no one more epitomizes that than the man who gave us this mess, George W. Bush.



Opt Out of Mailed Newsletter

It costs about \$6.00 a year to put this snail-mailed newsletter into your hands. During last year's campaign, \$6.00 paid for roughly 20 literature packets for precinct walking. It was almost enough to buy the least expensive time slots for our 30-second cable TV ads. In the past when we've hired students to help us go door to door, \$6.00 paid for 45 minutes of their time.

Every month we e-mail the same newsletter to everyone on our mailing list with e-mail addresses. If you have e-mail access and would like to have \$6.00 of your dues go into precinct walking instead of copying and postage, send an e-mail to president@conejodemocrats.com and we'll deliver the newsletter to your inbox instead of your mailbox.

Tom Mullens, President DCCV



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, July 21 at 9:00 a.m. there will be a Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser to kick off precinct walking. Vote Blue founders Sue Broidy and Helen Conley will present their program for registering people to vote. The program will include an educational video and role-playing. Afterwards all participants will be given Thousand Oaks new homeowners' addresses. We will go door-to-door to register 650 new residents of TO.

The breakfast will be 15.00 per person. Children under 12 will be \$5.00. You're welcome to enjoy the breakfast even if you're not going to walk a precinct! To make reservations contact Sandy at semlerland@verizon.net, Penne at penn2draw@earthlink.net or at the DCCV web site, www.conejodemocrats.com.



"365" Healthcare Event set for Thousand Oaks

Save Saturday, June 30 on your calendar to learn more about the campaign for Single-payer healthcare. The One Care Now campaign is sponsoring an event in Thousand Oaks that day, from 10-12 noon at the Thousand Oaks Library.

Featured speakers include Andrew McGuire, Executive Director for Health Care for All – California and representatives from the health industry. A short video on the crisis in healthcare will be shown. Penny Strowger, director for Ventura County, is organizing the event.

SB840 establishes a single-payer health insurance program that covers every California resident. SB840 provides high-quality care, comprehensive benefits and a choice of primary care provider. SB840 would mean insurance is affordable for individuals, families and businesses.

With health care costs soaring, it is time to learn about this important issue.

Teams in more than 365 California cities are conducting grassroots educational and public awareness "action" events – one event per day, in a different city, for one year – to demand quality, affordable healthcare for all Californians.

For more information, contact Penny Strowger, pen1@verizon.net or 805-495-3297.



Volunteers Needed!

We are scheduled for tabling at Oak Mall 6/16 and 7/14 from 12 to 4 p.m. . . . Tabling on 5/26 is canceled due to mall conflicts.

Tabling at the Oaks promises to be one of our most successful outreach activities. March and April tabling produced dozens of signups for our mailing list, added new members and registered new voters. Tabling at Conejo Valley Days produced about 30 signups.

Contact: Jay at j_kapitz@yahoo.com.

Calendar of Events

June 2	Spring Fling www.venturacountydemocrats.com	6/16 and 7/14, Noon to 4:00 p.m	Tabling at the Oaks Contact: j_kapitz@yahoo.com
June 13 6:30 p.m.	General DCCV Meeting Newbury Park Library, 2311 Borchard Rd. www.conejodemocrats.com	July 11 6:30 p.m.	DCCV General Meeting, T.O. Main Library 1401 E. Janss Rd
Tuesdays 8:00 p.m	Eye On The Issues Cable 25	July 21 9 - Noon	Pancake Breakfast contact Sandy at seemberland@verizon.net , Penne at penn2draw@earthlink.net or at the DCCV web site, www.conejodemocrats.com
June 30 10 - Noon	"365" Healthcare Event Thousand Oaks Main Library Penny Strowger, pen1@verizon.net or 805-495-3297		



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Ventura County
Democrats

Annual Spring Fling 2007



Spring Into Summer

Assemblyman Pedro Nava, Emcee
Congresswoman Lois Capps
with Keynote Speaker
Lt. Governor John Garamendi

“... California is the Golden State. It should be a place where a person can climb the economic and social ladder, achieve success and in so doing, participate in the creation of a robust and just economy...” Lt. Gov. John Garamendi

Join us Saturday, June 2nd 12:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Rosenmund Ranch 2705 E Pleasant Valley Road Oxnard

101 to Rice Avenue; West on Rice (Left from South, Right from North); Corner of Pleasant Valley and Rice just past 5th

Tasty food, Auction, Raffle, 50/50, Strawberries, UV Lemonade & More!

Donation: \$35/one; \$60/two before May 25; \$40 ea at the door

Call Heather for senior, student or children's rate ... 805.651.0677

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ for ___ reservations. Make check payable to VCDCC .
Return this stub in remit envelope or mail to PO Box 1587, Camarillo. CA 93011.

(Note: Please fill in information on envelope. Occupation and employer name are required by law.)

Sponsor Categories

\$650* Take back the
White House in 2008

\$500* Turn Ventura
County BLUE – Now!

\$250* Every vote counts

\$100* Forever DEM

\$35 Business card ad

* Includes business card ad in program

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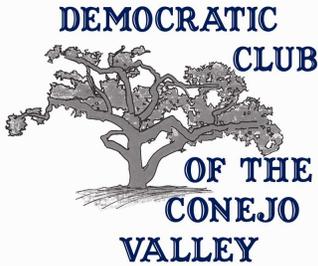
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Yes, I'd like to support the Democratic Club of the Conejo Valley!

Please fill out this form and mail with your check to the address below. If you'd like to pay via credit card, please go to our website at www.conejodemocrats.com

**DCCV
P.O. Box 4421
Thousand Oaks, CA 91359**

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I'm a registered Democrat I'm a new member Please renew my membership

Membership Type: (please note that memberships are for the calendar year)

Individual Membership \$20 Family Membership: \$30
 Senior (65+): \$10 Student \$10

I wish to make an additional donation of:

\$10 \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other _____

**Contributions are not tax deductible*

The following information is required by federal law. If you are a student, unemployed or retired, you can enter "none" for both fields.

Occupation _____ Employer _____

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