

Minutes of the 34th District Democrats

Meeting of 12 April 2006

36. Chair Ivan Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:04PM.
37. State Senator Erik Poulsen led the Flag salute.
38. Report from District Chair Ivan Weiss:
- 38.1 Ivan noted the “National Day of Action for Immigration Justice” march earlier this week, April 10th. Over 25,000 people marched through downtown Seattle, include a number of 34th Distirct members carrying our banner.
- 38.2 Ivan introduced member Georgie Kunkel. She and her husband - long-time PCO Norman Kunkel - have written a new book on their lives: *WWII Liberator's Life: AFS Ambulance Driver Chooses Peace*.
- 38.3 The Outreach Committee is planning an event on Saturday, May 13th – a volunteer chore services cleanup in White Center. These cleanups help low income people whose houses have gotten away from them. Sarah Earl and Steve Karbowski coordinate. Members should contact them via e-mail or phone to help.
- 38.4 On May 20th there will be three events – the first is the annual White Center cleanup. Then there are two neighborhood cleanups in West Seattle. Details are on the website; all members are urged to turn out to help.
- 38.5 The District caucus is one week from Saturday, April 22nd, at Chief Sealth School High School. Ann Martin is credentials chair. She needs two more people to help with sign-in.
39. Drinking Liberally. Ivan stated that we’ve had two sessions of Drinking Liberally. He introduced members Cherisse Luxa and Liz Giba, who spoke. Drinking liberally is a national organization – the Burien chapter holds its conversations at Mick's in Burien, a family friendly place. Cherisse passed around a signup sheet for the group’s e-mail list. Dwight Pelz is invited as the special guest this month – meetings are on the website, but are the fourth Wednesday of the month.
40. Poll Workers. Ivan recognized Ann Martin. She is leading an effort to call people who have previously worked as poll workers to work this year’s elections on Sept. 19th and Nov 2nd. Ann is recruiting volunteers to call poll workers in the next few days. PCO's can be poll workers – indeed, PCO's have top priority for such position, with second priority going to someone nominated by a PCO. Try to assign to own polling place. Since King County is going to “all mail in” elections, this may be your last chance to work as a poll worker. Linda Johnson commented that there will be DAVE machines in polling places to help the disabled vote in this election - volunteers are needed to help with them.
41. Treasurer’s Report. Ivan recognized Treasurer Greg Doss and Assistant Treasurer Ann Owchar. They’ve both gone through ORCA - Public Disclosure - training. This helps them comply with the various state laws on public disclosure. In particular, we need to collect names and addresses for most cash contributions. We can only receive \$300 a year anonymously - anything over that goes to the state party. Greg reported the cash-on-hand balance as of March 31st at \$13,062. We received \$835 from donations at the March 6th caucuses.
42. Program: Report from the Legislative Session – Senator Erik Poulsen, Representatives Eileen Cody and Joe McDermott. Ivan introduced the delegation, stating they had as large an influence on as many different issues as any other district delegation in the state
43. Senator Erik Poulsen presented first. He’s very happy the Cal Anderson Civil Rights bill is now law. Overall, this was an historic session for civil rights, transportation, environment and budget – and it finished ahead of schedule at 59 days. The legislature set aside a billion dollars to pay for healthcare and education in the next biennium.
- 43.1 Erik’s focus this session: He chaired the water, energy and environment committee. Last year Gov. Gregoire appointed him to the Columbia River task force to try and break a decade-old deadlock on water rights in Eastern Washington. An historic compromise was brokered: one third of water stays in the river for fish; the other two thirds can be used for irrigation. This is a landmark water bill – the biggest single investment ever in water storage. And for the first time, Republicans have acknowledged that taking water out of rivers hurts fish.
- 43.2 Other significant accomplishments:

- 43.2.1 Biofuels. Washington is now just the second state in nation to pass minimum requirement for bio-fuels in fuel supply. This minimum is two percent to start and ramping up in the future. This is important because Eastern Washington farmers need a guaranteed market for both ethanol and biodiesel.
 - 43.2.2 Electronic waste - computers and televisions. The legislature passed one of the first e-waste bills – manufacturers need to take responsibility to clean up used computers and TV's.
 - 43.2.3 There were two big breakthroughs on RTED - regional transportation district: In the past this money could only used for roads. Now can it can be used for transit and passenger-only ferries. Next, we've finally have figured out the passenger only ferry future: King County will provide report to state about how the County can take over the passenger ferry service. But jobs must stay unionized. No private operators, no service interruptions, and there will be subsidies from the State.
 - 43.3 There were a number of other budget victories - Greenbridge in White Center got some state help. Greenbridge is new housing project which provides social service programs and other services. A similar project is occurring in Delridge.
 - 43.4 There were also disappointments. FairShare health care didn't pass. This legislation would require biggest employers to pay 9% of their employee costs in health insurance. Some large employers do not cover many of their workers, who are also paid so poorly that they are on Medicaid or similar programs paid largely by the State.
44. Joe McDermott spoke next.
- 44.1 Education. His number one task and accomplishment - WASL remediation. There are 84,000 10th grade students taking WASL this month and must pass in order to graduate in 2008. This year's legislature created the "PAS" program - promoting academic success. PAS includes \$28 million in statewide funding so school districts can design own programs for tutoring, summer school, or whatever works to help kids pass. It does not mandate specific measures like summer school but gives districts flexibility. And eligible students include both the classes of 2007 and 2008, even though the class of 2007 doesn't need to pass the WASL.
 - 44.2 Other education accomplishments:
 - 44.2.1 State school board reform. Formerly the State school board was elected only by local school board members.
 - 44.2.2 Funded free and reduced price breakfast for children – with extra funding any child who qualifies for a reduced price breakfast will now receive it free.
 - 44.2.3 Combined a number of state agencies to form a department of early learning – this new department will work with foundations like Bill and Melinda Gates on early learning and childhood development.
 - 44.3 Election reform - moved the date of the primary election, starting in 2007 to be the third Tuesday in August. The present September date did not work because, among other reasons, there was not enough time to do a recount if ever required in a primary.
45. Eileen Cody then spoke.
- 45.1 Healthcare. The legislature did not accomplish as much as she would have hoped. FairShare didn't pass. There were enough votes in the House, but not the Senate. The Governor supports it. And the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed it.
 - 45.2 There is a new healthcare commission, with the Governor chairing, and two legislators from each caucus. The commission will write a five year plan on healthcare reform. And this will start to get healthcare issues back on front burner.
 - 45.3 A medical malpractice bill passed – the electorate did the right thing voting down both of last year's initiatives.
 - 45.4 A bill passed to prohibit distribution of free tobacco samples.
 - 45.5 Passed a measure allowing for healthcare declarations in living wills. The State will keep living wills on file so any healthcare provider can access them. This will help prevent Terry-Shiavo-like cases in this state.
 - 45.6 Pandemic flu. The State allocated \$2 million in state budget with a potential match of \$6 million from the feds to prepare for a potential epidemic. King County is buying drugs but Eileen is not convinced the available drugs will actually combat a pandemic.
 - 45.7 Small group employer insurance bill. A measure passed allowing State subsidies to employees who are eligible for state help, but who work for an employer without a health insurance plan. This plan is a voucher program to purchase insurance.

- 45.8 Bill to mandate safe lifting in hospitals and healthcare facilities. This helps nurses and patients. People are getting heavier.
- 45.9 Increased funding of the State basic health plan by 6,500 people as of July 1st and added 14,000 more kids to healthcare. Grants for community health care clinics and \$450,000 investment in family planning in every CSO across the state – this also has a potential federal match of \$9 million.
- 45.10 Unemployment insurance. The Legislature did make changes this year - labor and business actually agreed on this! Some changes two years ago hurt seasonal workers - those were eliminated this session.
46. Ivan further commented: All the legislators to whom he's talked give Governor Gregoire credit for one of the best sessions ever. She was very active, meeting with legislators to make sure people come to the table and took action.
47. A question-and-answer session followed:
- 47.1 Q. For WASL assistance – will it help about Dyslexia or other such disabilities?
- 47.1.1 A. Joe: There is funding for those with learning disabilities and test anxieties. This includes alternative assessments, for example GPA-equivalence and a portfolio of work to demonstrate mastery of skills for high school graduation.
- 47.2 Q. Electronic voting machines - are they trustworthy and secure?
- 47.2.1 A. Joe: The counties have a major role in this too. But every ballot cast is counted by machines. We need to focus on a verifiable paper trail, e.g. if you touch a screen to vote, there is a paper receipt showing the correct vote.
- 47.3 Q. Is anything planned to prevent advertising prescription drugs to the public? It is odd that cigarette advertising is prohibited, but advertising of drugs is allowed.
- 47.3.1 A. Eileen: She doubts anything will happen on this issue. The Feds changed the federal law in 1993 to allow advertising of prescription drugs. Congress and federal law control this, not the State. As a humorous aside, Cialis commercials do put the romance back in advertising!
- 47.4 Q. How can we stop the construction of a tunnel as a replacement for the Alaskan Way viaduct?
- 47.4.1 A. Eileen: She is not a tunnel supporter - we need to build what we can afford, and sufficient funds do not exist at the present time to construct a tunnel. The legislature passed a bill to give City Council a say in this decision. The Council can either vote on a recommendation to the State itself or put an advisory measure on the November ballot. Mayor Nickels has stated he'll abide by the election result. The Legislature did a gas tax increase last year to provide \$2 billion for the route, but won't provide more. If the City wants the tunnel option, it will need to find the additional funding.
- 47.5 Q. The State employee pension fund not fully funded - how do we meet this obligation?
- 47.5.1 A. Eileen: The Legislature put \$350 million in a pension stabilization account for next year. It was only last year – 2005 – that this obligation was under funded.
- 47.6 Q. The Sonics want a rebuild of Key Arena - will that go to the voters?
- 47.6.1 A. Erik: No. The Legislature ran out of time on this issue. A proposal from the City received hearings in the House and Senate. The bigger issue, in his mind, is the question of when the government should provide support for for-profit private businesses. We do \$40 billion in tax breaks every two years - classrooms for Boeing and freeways to Microsoft. Every industry gets breaks. Q. How can schools provide free breakfast for 15 cents?
- 47.7 A. Joe: Some local school district money is also involved. It can be as simple as a banana and carton of milk or container of cereal.
- 47.7.1 Q. The Executive Director of the White Center food bank thanked the delegation for Legislative Action providing full funding for a new walk-in center for the White Center food bank.
- 47.8 Q. What is the Massachusetts plan for FairShare healthcare? And why force only large employers to provide health insurance coverage rather than having a complete state-sponsored single-care plan.
- 47.8.1 A. Eileen: Businesses not ready to go to a universal plan yet. More businesses than ever want to talk about it, but they are not ready to support such a sweeping measure.
- 47.9 Q. The increases in State healthcare coverage are good but are pretty modest.
- 47.9.1 A. Joe: Universal healthcare - single payer - is a long way away. Incremental progress such as better funding of the basic health plan and the small business plan are what we can expect over the next few years. Erik: There used to be only two countries which didn't fund healthcare for all their children - S. Africa and the United States. South Africa has funded it, so the United States is now

alone among industrialized nations. Eileen: Nothing can happen on this until we get business to the table. Wisconsin is working on a bill with labor and business at the table.

47.10 Q. Will the State fully fund health insurance for its own employees? Full-time State employees now pay \$280 a month for Regency care for an individual and child.

47.10.1 A. Eileen: This probably will not change. State employees pay 17% of the premium, state pays 82%. Very very few employers have full funding. State employees are still paying less - percentage wise – than they did 20 years ago.

47.11 Q. Will there be statewide mail-in balloting next year?

47.11.1 A. Joe: Yes, probably, in the next year. King County is already going to all-mail-in balloting

47.12 Humorous comment from Nels Ekroth: With mail-in ballots you better be damned sure there aren't any Republican postmen.

47.13 Q. Felon rights restoration - what are the chances of something happening next session?

47.13.1 A. Eileen: The Democratic party leadership thinks this makes us look soft on crime. It is unknown if it can pass next session.

47.14 Q. Why are private schools part of the voting structure at the state school board?

47.14.1 A. Joe: There are functions of the state board of education which do dictate to and control private schools around the state. So they get to elect one member.

48. Precinct Committee Officers. There were no new PCO applications.

49. Old business: None.

50. New business:

50.1 Motion of Appreciation.

50.1.1 Robin Hess moved we of the 34th district express our appreciation to our three legislators for giving us the best representation in the legislature. Seconded.

50.1.2 Voting on this motion at this meeting requires suspension of the rules. The vote to suspend was unanimous.

50.1.3 Georgie Kunkel suggested a friendly amendment: Substitute the term "highest quality" for "best". Robin Hess accepted this amendment. The original motion passed unanimously.

51. Good of the order.

51.1 Dina Johnson: Sat Apr 29th is national party's neighbor-to-neighbor day. No one in West Seattle is signed up to participate at this time. Dina will help coordinate. Information about this event is on the website.

51.2 Dina Johnson: Dina is very upset with the situation regarding Representative Jim McDermott. The federal appeals court ruled this week against him – that he did violate Federal law in making public taped cell phone conversations. His legal expenses are over \$700,000. We take him for granted. For example, he appeared in Fahrenheit 911 and in Baghdad before the Iraq war attempting to stop it. Dina is planning a benefit for McDermott in August at Columbia City Theater – a performing arts event by the Seattle performing arts community. Call Dina if you can help plan the event. Ivan noted that we've had at least four fund raisers for McDermott's legal fund in the district.

51.3 Linda Johnson: Tonight we have at the meeting the first woman to serve on the State Court of Appeals. She's also climbed every volcano in the state and kayaked Puget Sound. Linda asked for a hand of applause for member Ethel Williams.

51.4 Beth Greiser: Beth co-chairs the West Seattle Democratic Women. This month's meeting theme is "Women's Right to Choose". A speaker from Planned Parenthood will speak. The Meeting is Thursday April 17, 11:30AM, Daystar on Barton.

52. Alan Munro moved adjournment at 8:48PM, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Schrier, Secretary