

Aloha, precinct members (officers in the To: box, other members in bcc field),

These grim times for political engagement often leave us feeling helpless or less empowered, since many thought they had voted for change and essentially fairer playing fields, peace in our time, and a safer, healthier, positive jobs environment all around.

Those who responded to my last call to meet are listed below, as well as what we thought and did. As your precinct president, I think we can do the following, and I call for anyone willing to pitch in with their particular skillsets and dedication:

1. register a significantly increased number of voters, getting their assurance that they will vote or call for help if they need to get to the polls or need help at home while they vote. (If voter turn-out had been the same in 2010 as it was in 2008, we wouldn't be facing very bad choices now. We could have stopped GOP and Tea Party obstruction of every fair step forward and stopped the current coddling of the very wealthy, and the tax avoidance schemes of the richest corporations in history. Let's everyone vote in the next round to get back to the kind of country we believe in and want. Volunteer skillsets: being part of the community and a neighborhood, ability to ask others to vote in person or by any means of communicating, willingness to improve the voter registration list, some clerical skills

2. counter the propaganda and right wing "no new taxes" drivel to ensure the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest expire, and that budget cutting comes after, not before, job creation and tax code revision. Skillsets: good thinking, drafting, social networking, plus a small team of media monitors to flag egregious examples of distortion. This includes someone who knows which sites to monitor, both to avoid duplicating effort and to brainstorm on best tacks to take.

3. change the media narrative. Skills: research, thinking, effective writing, media outreach.

4. keep tabs on our and other legislators, putting important questions clearly before them and helping form or reform their answers, e.g., on taxes, budgets, jobs, voting integrity, immigration. Skills: website monitoring, position delineation, drafting.

5. prepare resolutions for the county party debate and approval to move on to the State Democratic Party and, if successful,, to the Democratic National Committee. Skills: Thinking and drafting abilities, communication within precinct, county and state Democratic groups.

If you want to volunteer but don't know when or how much you can do, just let me and Secretary Pat Gegen know. Your officers will go to work. Please share as widely as you can.

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with aloha,

Michael

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8/27/11 11:47 AM

***Democratic Precinct 16-2 Meeting Minutes*** 2<sup>nd</sup> draft August 20, 2011

**Venue and Time:** Kalaheo Neighborhood Center Aug12, 2011 4-6:30 p.m.

**Participants:** Bruce Parsil, Christy Taylor-Parsil, Alison Dunn (Vice-President), Kathi Lee, John Zwiebel, Patrick S. Gegen (Secretary), Olivia Gegen, Michael A. Ceurvorst (President), JoAnne Nakashima (District 16 Chairperson).

#### **AGENDA:**

**1. Talk Story.** Participants shared what they were currently doing, how they got involved politically, what their motivations and current state of satisfaction are. Stories included ongoing success in the continuance of the Mokihana Program to aid elementary students with adjustment issues, but also common and deeply felt disappointment in what is happening in Washington, including how Obama is handling things and at how Republicans have tied the Democrats' hands. Concern was expressed for the future, given grinding gridlocks. Politics is becoming way too partisan.

**2. DNC Winter Meeting 2011 Report.** As promised, Michael reported on his analysis of the temperature and preparedness of the Democratic Party after the November 2010 "shellacking".

Michael saw the party as suffering from a structural problem and incomplete post-election integration of Obama campaign personnel, the workaday Democratic party officials throughout the country, and the "hopeful independents" whose support was critical to Obama's 2008 victory.

The Clinton-era personnel have been mostly integrated. Pres. Obama was since election, perhaps properly, more intent on reaching out to achieve a healing of the partisan divide than on presenting

Democratic Party values in policy fights with the GOP and tea parties. This dual office weakened the Democratic Party's punch.

In a quick overview Michael noted changes in the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Party from Bill Clinton's time (1992-2000), when Terry McAuliffe as DNC chair followed [an 18-state strategy](#), targeting resources and personnel in the 18 states Clinton/McAuliffe analysed as being essential to a Clinton/Democratic victory in 1992 and 1996. In 2004 Howard Dean lost his bid for top candidacy but was elected DNC chair with a verbal contract with the Association of State Democratic Chairs (ASDC) to implement a [new fifty-state strategy](#), which meant devoting resources (money and training) in all fifty states (not just 18 targetted from the top) with the goal of rebuilding the national party grassroots up over a ten year period so that every elected office would have a good Democratic candidate backed by a trained and enthusiastic team.

In this strategy, endorsed by all fifty state parties, Rahm Emmanuel, then head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) did not concur. A Clinton guy, as head of DCCC, he wanted the DNC to put most of the funds the DNC raised at his disposal to ensure election of particular candidates as far as possible.

When Pres. Obama picked Rahm Emmanuel to be his Chief of Staff, within short order, DNC Chair Dean, who had told Michael he was going to stay on to implement the fifty-state strategy, was gone, replaced at Pres. Obama's behest by Va. Governor Tim Kaine.

Meanwhile, Obama for America (OFA), Barack Obama's strong campaign organization, morphed into [Organizing for America \(OFA\)](#). Dean's 50 state strategy seemed to fade, as OFA personnel replaced Dean hired personnel within the DNC. The money-and-resources flow to individual state committees now went through OFA personnel who were mostly collocated within headquarters of state elected party officials and whose OFA branches overlapped but were not coterminous with the Democratic Party organization. Some states worked hand-in-glove; some did not.

In February 2011 at a joint DNC and ASDC session involving internal elections and budgets Gov Kaine answered sometimes very pointed questions by saying he was integrating the 50-state strategy and the ASDC /DNC. Michael's sounding among party chairs, vice-chairs, and executive directors from around the country suggested that the

integration was only working well in a few cases but faltering in many others.

One senior official (from California) noted that after Mr. Obama's second term OFA would disappear but the Democratic Party would still be carrying the burden, so a lot more of the resources needed to be shared to rebuild and sustain the state parties. Leadership committees were formed, met overnight, and came up with a resolution that was finally accepted, but with little obvious enthusiasm. State party leaders from Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Florida each were cheered as they described their struggles against both tea party-ers and right-wing GOP governors bent on taking down workers' rights and undercutting Democratic voting strength. Gov. Kaine also answered a question about his chairmanship that he would announce shortly whether he would run for the Virginia Senate seat that was vacant, but reiterated his faith in both the DNC/ASDC cooperation and OFA. [Subsequently Kaine resigned and was replaced by Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman-Schultz.]

**3. Who votes, wins.** In 2008 voter turn-out was roughly 62.2% whereas in 2010 the turnout dropped to 41%, a typical drop between general and off-cycle elections. Nonetheless, it is manifestly clear that if Democrats had turned out in the same numbers in 2010 as in 2008, the course of the country would be very different. The House had under Speaker Pelosi passed many progressive bills which died in the GOP-filibustered Senate.

Analysts agree: getting the vote out helps Democrats significantly. Repressing the vote helps those determined to make Obama a one-term president.

**Leadership.** President Obama has this year delivered two powerful speeches filled with ideas and targets that have not resonated because there has not been positive follow-up and because there has been an anti-Obama attack machine hard at work, from Murdoch-owned publications, radio stations, tv, and rightwing cable channels with much larger audiences than MSNBC or PBS/NPR.

Obama's State of the Union (SOTU) and major budget/economic speech at George Washington University, [The Country We Believe In](#), had good and contrastive content, much more like his campaign speeches than his conciliatory oval office addresses and weekly chats.

Bold actions seem to be missing although the rhetoric may be returning.

Participants were in general consensus that President Obama is not pushing hard enough, is giving in too much, and unfortunately not accomplishing what is expected. Michael agreed that disappointment was rife, but said that widely broadcast Democratic disillusionment played right into the GOP game plan to stop Obama and overturn his accomplishments in health care, enabling them to call to privatize social security, and generally roll back Democratic gains in environment, health care, workers' rights, and voting.

Strong voter turn-out, especially spurred by dynamo NY Congressman Steve Israel, new DCCC head, could return Nancy Pelosi to the Speakership and change the American narrative again, if Democrats hold on to the Senate.

**Field Changes**: Michael described larger changes affecting politics.

a. A U.S. national economy no longer exists in this **globalizing age**. Corporate loyalties are to profit first, and not national wellbeing.

b. **Major wealth distribution** is occurring, shifting the largest percentage of wealth into fewer hands. While this is much better for the very wealthy, given their ability to avoid taxes via subsidies and loopholes and off-shoring, corporations are now being accorded too many political rights.

c. The **Supreme Court of the U.S.** (SCOTUS) Citizens United decision effectively **gutted campaign financing reforms**, maximizing the role of private wealth, whether individual or corporate, in public power. This helps explain the GOP and Tea Party resurgence after 2008 elections.

d. Besides greater wealth shifting into fewer hands **a longer Ideological fight** is playing out, symbolized by differences between Paul Volker, of Keynesian and general welfare bent, and Alan Greenspan, an Ayn Rand devotee of laissez-faire capitalism who wants almost no restrictions on free enterprise and privatization.

Paul Ryan's budget, adopted by all GOP members of the House as the Republican approach to budget and deficits, manifests Ayn Rand

and the Heritage Foundation's approach, funded in part by the Koch Brothers.

Seldom have the ideological sides been so manifest in the quest for determining America's path and utilization of resources. Democrats should capitalize on this apparent disregard for the general welfare in favor of the disproven "trickle-down economics" predicated on job creation by the private sector based on the profit motive. This approach has failed repeatedly but still is trumpeted by media outlets for big business interests.

e. Michael also briefed briefly about the **American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)**, an organization operating from D. C. mostly at the state level. State legislators pay a very small fee to join ALEC, in exchange for which they and their families are invited to exclusive week-end seminars in nice settings, where they meet with corporate lobbyists and foundation representatives to discuss issues in six different baskets.

ALEC's support seminars include draft model legislation molded to reflect major sponsors' interests in tort reform, budget capping, defunding regulatory efforts, especially in the environmental area, crime and prison reform, etc. Major sponsors include Exxon Mobil, Chevron, RJ Reynolds, the Koch Brothers and the Scaiffe family foundations, Amway, and others. About 800 ALEC drafted bills have been introduced around the country, of which about 20 percent have been adopted, e.g., the Arizona Immigration Law, and state laws turning prisons over to private contractors.

ALEC proposals were similarly behind the public-union busting efforts in Wisconsin, Ohio, New Jersey, Indiana, and Florida.

**f. Wisconsin recall elections:** Serious national as well as local issues came to a head in the Wisconsin recall elections, with some small success chalked up in the removal of 2 GOP-ers in Republican districts who had prominently supported Gov. Scott Walker's excision of public union collective bargaining rights. Huge amounts of money flowed into the state in this election, including from the Koch Brothers, and again the Waukesha County clerk's vote counts, which went to the GOP, were publicly questioned. Libertarians and right-wingers have focused at state level.

**4. Doing Something Besides Venting.** Participants agreed that it is time for Democrats to make bold moves, notwithstanding strong divisions within the Democratic Party. In fact, fracturing in values and leadership in both parties has yielded more power directly to financial interests and religious zealots, making politics more divisive and less bent to common purpose.

There are, however, ways forward.

- o 64% of Americans believe taxes need to be raised and that defense spending should be cut.

- o Taxes can be raised and loopholes closed, directly challenging the GOP and tea party'ers.

- o Two unpopular and inadequately strategized or understood wars can be ended. Mobilize public unease at continuing the longest war in American history by re-emphasizing the human, materiel, and financial costs of war.

- o Transparency can be brought to no-bid contracting and to publicizing the amounts of contracts involved, along with calls for public audits. Who benefits from these wars?

- o Getting out the vote will have a very transformative impact because the American public at large in a great majority agrees with Democratic values and understanding of the American Dream (see Van Jones initiative.) GOTV deserves strongest support and effort.

- o Locally, resolutions from Kauai could make their way through the State Democratic Party, using Obama's own words to drive policy and to safeguard against the GOP agenda of undoing every societal program achieved over the last 100 years.

- o Popular support for Medicare suggests that a simple Democratic plank and candidate pledge to open Medicare to everyone who wanted in would be both a winning political and economic goal, a simply understood path to universal single-payer health care reform. (Most analyses suggest escalating health care costs in both public and private sectors will drive deficits and projected budget losses, so Medicaid reform via broadening the base would also address the individual mandate issue, making "medicare for all" a winning

formula. Nancy Pelosi has championed this approach in internal party discussions and at the White House.

**5. How to proceed/succeed?** How do we get a voice out there to offer that different point of view? Ideas were raised.

o Should we back a spokesperson, such as Rachel Maddow, Alan Grayson, van Jones, who is insightfully different from the Fox stable of rabid righties and GOP candidates on their payroll? See [americansselect.org](http://americansselect.org)

o Letters to the editor. Should we pool ideas and talents to ensure quick responses to right-wing drivel in local publications and talk radio?

o As an organizational and Party bulletin board, the Democratic Party of Kauai website should be kept current. It has not been maintained since events listed for August are a year old and inaccurate. John moved and Kathi seconded that 16-2 **Pres Michael request the Kauai Democratic Party to update its site and put district activities on line to facilitate participation and discussion.**

o District Chairwoman Joanne relayed that the caucus for the 2012 election is March 7th, the first Wednesday of March, at 7:00 pm throughout the state. Joanne relayed that a decision seems to have been taken not to hold more functions before then, though she was not present when the decision was taken.

o VP Alison agreed to check what it takes to call a meeting before the next caucus in order to ensure that Democrats have voice in deliberations.

o Alison also called attention to the potential of social networking for both getting out the vote and for issues development.

o Several noted that a leader who articulates views clearly and passionately is a necessary rallying focus to effect change.

An immediate goal is to enumerate niche issues that will make the Democratic difference that people can get behind:

-- **Medicare** - don't mess with it. Combine with healthcare issue and make it an opt-in program going forward for a universal single-payer healthcare.

-- **“No new taxes” GOP rallying cry** shows the power of the wealthy. Grover Norquist’s “Americans for Tax Reform” has way too much power in deciding elections and office retention. AFTR’s **Taxpayer Pledge** signed by 247 members of the House and 41 Senators represents pre-emptive abdication of responsible legislation, forming a brick wall against raising taxes on the wealthy. This absurdity, a misuse of office, should be targeted by Democrats, not just by GOP retired Senator Alan Simpson of the Simpson/Bowles reform commission. Democrats everywhere should press Members of Congress to repudiate the pledge and explain any support given for it.

-- **End the wars** and give us **transparency regarding the contractors** being hired. How many no bid contracts?

-- Torture issues need to be addressed and accountability pursued, regardless of party or where official inquiries lead. Both the practice and policy of torture are antithetical to what America is, so going after accountability is necessary for U.S. integrity as well as leadership.

-- Elections need to be cleaned up to make sure votes are all counted and no tallies "adjusted" as happened in Ohio for sure and quite possibly in Wisconsin. Ideas welcome in dealing with the ALEC-pressed legislation at state level to demand gov't issued ID's for voting.

-- Mixing religion and politics, church and state, also needs to be challenged and clarified under the 1st amendment. Separation of church and state is essential to American governance, and divisiveness using religion and fear is unacceptable as a form of political discourse.

6. **Adjournment:** Michael paraphrased George Soros re the Obama’s Administration’s stance on budget and deficit negotiations with tea party and Republican leaders: "I don't mind losing. I do mind not fighting."

At 6:30 p.m. the chair called for a motion to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

Most participants adjourned to nearby KSR for drinks and more discussion.