

Palos Verdes Democrats

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Paul Conrad

March 2015 Newsletter

P.O. Box 2234, Rolling Hills Est. CA 90274
Visit Us on the Web at www.pvpedemocrats.org
"One of the oldest Democratic Clubs in California"

COMING EVENTS

MARCH MEETING

DATE: Sunday, March 15th

TIME: 2:30 - 4:30pm

LOCATION: Peninsula Center Library 701 Silver Spur Road, RHE

TOPIC: The California DISCLOSE Act

SPEAKER: D'Marie Mulattieri, California Clean Money Campaign

APRIL MEETING

DATE: Sunday, April 19th

TIME: 2:30 - 4:30pm

LOCATION: Peninsula Center Library 701 Silver Spur Road, RHE

TOPIC: Protected Areas in California

SPEAKER: Mike Schaadt, Director, Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

March Meeting

The California Clean Money Campaign

Please join us March 15 at 2:30 at the Peninsula Center Library when we hear from D'Marie Mulattieri, field organizer for the California Clean Money Campaign. Their current focus is to pass the California DISCLOSE Act. The recent history pertaining to the DISCLOSE Act is summed up here:

- 8 out of 9 justices in the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision noted problems when groups run ads "while hiding behind dubious and misleading names" and recommended transparent disclosure for voters "to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages", yet many propositions have passed or failed due to hidden special interests funding deceptive ads.

- 84% of California voters favored legislation to "increase the public disclosure requirements of initiative sponsors to more clearly identify major funders", including 86% of Democrats, 88% of Independents, and 78% of Republicans.

- Over \$475 million was spent on California ballot measures in 2012 alone. Out-of-state non-profit organizations funneled \$11 million into California races in the final days of the 2012 election without revealing their donors, resulting in defeat of propositions initially favorable to most polled voters. The outcry resulted in the May, 2014 passage of SB 27, which requires non-profits that spend \$50,000 or more in California elections to reveal their secret donors

- The 2014 California DISCLOSE Act, SB 52 (Leno-Hill), passed the State Senate and both Assembly committees, but was defeated before reaching the Governor's desk.

- Happily, in Oct of 2014, Gov Brown was able to sign SB 844, which requires the Secretary of State to create an online page with the total amount raised and the top ten funders for and against

each proposition. In addition, the official ballot pamphlet will include a link to that page, allowing voters easy access to funding sources as they make their voting decisions.

- Even so, over 100,000 Californians have signed petitions urging the legislature to pass the wider-reaching California DISCLOSE Act. This would let voters know who really is paying for political ads by including this information in the ads themselves. Political ads would clearly and prominently list their three largest funders on all kinds of political ads, including television, radio, print advertising, and websites.

February Meeting Report by Connie Sullivan

President Carol Moeller called the meeting to order.

Then I announced the monthly breakfasts the 66th Assembly District Democratic Council plans to hold every fourth Sunday of the month. The first will be held at 10:00 am on February 22 at the Normandie Casino in conjunction with the Gardena Valley Democratic Club.

Carol provided information about the endorsed candidates for the LA Community College District.

Stacey Michaels announced a couple of upcoming events for other clubs.

GMO Labeling

According to Wikipedia "genetic modification is the direct manipulation of an organism's genome using biotechnology. New DNA may be inserted in the host genome by first isolating and copying the genetic material of interest using molecular cloning methods to generate a DNA sequence, or by synthesizing the DNA, and then inserting

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Do you have something you'd like to donate to our monthly fundraiser drawing; like a plant or memorabilia? If so, please e-mail Carol at rpvdem@gmail.com.

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this construct into the host organism. Genes may be removed, or “knocked out”, using a nuclease.”

Jim Montgomery of LabelGmos.org was our first speaker. Jim’s very passionate about a healthy, sustainable and just world; and healthy food is an important part of that. He thinks GMO foods are one of the greatest dangers we’ve ever faced and labeling is important so we can know what we are eating.



*Jim Montgomery
LabelGmos.org*

Jim started off his talk by presenting his credentials. He’s an engineer from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory who finds the evidence against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in our food irrefutable. Unfortunately, we have to trust him on that, since he really didn’t produce the evidence, but said he would provide links to those interested in reading the science.

The presentation was somewhat disjointed and nonlinear. I will provide some of the many points he made along the way.

Jim likens the GMO political environment to that of cigarettes some years ago. “Same old story.”

He thinks genetics and gene therapy are wonderful, but this is different. GMOs change the gene structure of our food.

According to Jim, we have a small window for action. The Obama administration just approved the non-browning apple, so both

parties are in the tank for the large food producers.

We can, however, change the situation by choosing what to eat and not to eat. Hit them in the pocketbook.

We have labels for everything. But our food isn’t labeled for GMO content.

The rest of the world is way ahead of us. The U.S. and Canada are the only first world countries that don’t label GMO foods. Even Russia and Saudi Arabia do so!

Corn, soy, canola and cotton are the main foods that are genetically modified. These are used in many processed foods.

These plants are genetically modified to produce their own pesticides and herbicides.

Organically labeled food can have up to 0.9% GMO in them. And the companies are trying to raise the threshold.

There has been no independent testing for GMO food safety – the FDA just relies on the food company’s test results. Not a single long-term human study has been done.

“It falls to us to protect ourselves.”

On the topic of health risks Jim said that one particular GMO toxin is not broken down by body, as promised by the food producers – BT toxin. He knows this because it’s found in fetal cord blood. A bacterium produces BT toxin, which kills cabbage looper by causing their guts to explode. “Imagine what it could do to humans.” Jim thinks it’s plausible that it could be responsible for the increase in irritable bowel syndrome.

Russia is conducting a long-term human study and will have results in a couple of years.

We often hear that labeling will increase food costs but in Europe it amounted to pennies. 65 countries label or ban GMOs outright, including Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Whole Foods is removing GMOs by 2018. Kosher foods are all non-GMO.

Sen. Barbara Boxer and U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio are food champions. Call and thank them.

On the other hand, Rep. Mike Pompeo of Kansas is a Koch Brothers representative who authored HR 4432, The Safe and Uniform Food Labeling Act, which is designed to stop food labeling at the state level. It would reserve that power for the FDA only.

In our California legislature, no one wants to sponsor a labeling law, but many want to co-sponsor. Jim doesn’t understand this, since labeling of GMO foods is very popular.

Some questions and Jim’s answers follow:

Q: Will GMO labeling be specific? Will we know how the food is genetically modified – e.g. what has been inserted in the genome of the plant? A: No.

Q: Will restaurants be exempt from labeling? A: Yes

Q: Drought resistant plants are being genetically developed; we don’t want to affect progress in that endeavor. A: Jim agrees

Changes to Prop 13 for Large Commercial Properties

Our second speaker was Kelly Osajima, Campus Organizer of Evolve-ca.org a group founded in the Bay area in 2011 “on the belief that there’s a better way. Most of the significant problems we face have effective solutions that are not being implemented because of political infighting or the power of special interests....



Kelly Osajima, Campus Organizer of Evolve-ca.org

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We need to hold politicians accountable to real results... through effective, smart organizing and grassroots issue advocacy."

Evolve is currently working to increase public education funding. California now ranks 49th in public school funding among all the states. Before Prop 13 we ranked at or near the top. Class sizes are twice that of most other states. After school programs and arts programs are being slashed.

And our universities are also struggling. Tuition at UC tripled in recent years.

Evolve worked to help pass Prop 30 in 2012. With that successful campaign which passed by a 10% margin and raised income taxes on high earners and sales tax increase on everyone. Unfortunately, the revenue increase is temporary and set to expire in 2016 – 2019. Also income tax revenue is volatile and sales tax revenue is regressive. Unfortunately, Gov. Brown opposes extension of these taxes, because he promised they would be temporary.

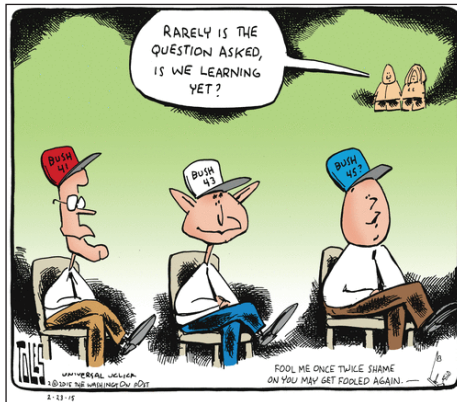
What is the solution? How do we raise desperately needed revenue without raising taxes? A simple change to a loophole in Prop 13 is the solution.

Voters passed Prop 13 to protect homeowners, not corporations. In fact, most people don't know that it applies to commercial property, as well. Unlike residential property, commercial property rarely or never changes hands, and thus is rarely if ever re-assessed.

This situation has led to a skewing of the source of property tax revenues with 72% now coming from residential and only 28% from commercial properties. This ratio was about 50/50 when Prop 13 passed.

As an example, homeowners pay 8 times (\$.40 vs \$.05 per square foot) what Disneyland pays in property taxes. Disneyland is no longer paying its fair share.

Another point Kelly made is that even for commercial properties there are inequities that might keep businesses from moving to California. Her example was two neighboring, competing parking lots by Staples Center, one was new and one was longstanding. Their property tax burdens were vastly different.



Evolve proposes a change to Prop 13 whereby large commercial properties are regularly re-assessed. Most other states do this. Small businesses would be exempt, as would apartment buildings.

This would raise between \$6 -10 billion annually for the state.

Evolve has been building a grassroots organization around this concept. Through their efforts many school boards and cities have passed resolutions calling for this change to Prop 13. They got a plank placed in the California Democratic Party's platform in 2013. They asked candidates for office to answer a questionnaire – this led to identifying 700 elected officials who are on board with this proposed reform.

Their next step is to introduce legislation to put a proposition before the voters to make the change to our constitution so that large commercial properties are re-assessed regularly. If they can't get the 2/3 majority in each chamber to put this change before the voters, they will work to get the signatures through the initiative process.

Senator Ben Allen Held Hearing on Voter Turnout
by Connie Sullivan

On Friday, February 20, our state Senator, Ben Allen chaired a hearing about how to increase voter turnout.

As you probably know, voter turnout in the 2014 election in California was lower than ever before,



Ben Allen
CA State Senator

including the last gubernatorial election year of 2010. Four years ago, turnout in Los Angeles County was 42%; in 2014 it was 31%.

The low voter turnout is believed to be responsible for the loss of our assembly seat to a Tea Party Republican (sorry, I can't bring myself to even write his name).

The committee heard from California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters, Dean Logan, County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, and a variety of experts from Common Cause, Cal. State Los Angeles, and others.

Some of the ideas put forth were the coordination of local elections (where turnout is even lower; Los Angeles' city council races garnered only 13% turnout) with gubernatorial elections; automatic voter registration at the DMV, easier to use voting equipment (LA County is developing a new, computer screen system for marking a readable ballot), more days for voting, flexibility of where one can vote, methods for reaching out to younger voters, among others.

It's great to see our senator tackling this important issue. After conducting another hearing in Northern California, we can expect to see him bringing forth legislation to improve voter turnout in our state.

By-laws Amendments
by Connie Sullivan

The PV Democrats Board met on February 16 and voted to recommend the following changes to our by-laws. We will conduct a vote to accept these changes at our next general membership meeting on March 15.

- 1.4 ENDORSEMENTS - The club may participate in the making of endorsements through delegates to appropriate Democratic Party councils or conventions. In primary and general elections the club shall support the candidates endorsed by the Democratic Party, including allowing the name of the club to appear in endorsed candidates' campaign materials.
- 4.9 APPROPRIATIONS AND INDEBTEDNESS-EXPENDITURES for items in excess of \$200 \$300 shall require a majority vote of the entire Board.
- 5.2 The committee shall prepare a SLATE OF CANDIDATES for offices which shall be submitted to the membership in the March April newsletter.
- 5.3 ADDITIONAL NOMINATIONS may be submitted to the Nominating Committee by petition of five members. Such nominations shall be published in the April May Newsletter.
- 7.5 All meetings shall be conducted according to Roberts' RULES OF ORDER, Revised.
- 7.5.1 The motion for the Previous Question ("Call the Question") shall be out of order and replaced by the motion to LIMIT DEBATE which shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present. After such a motion is passed, members may speak to the question for a maximum of two minutes; no member may yield the floor for the purpose of circumventing this rule, and debate shall be limited to ten minutes.

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Palos Verdes
 Democrats
 Founded 1952

P.O. Box 2234,
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Palos Verdes Democrats

Founded in 1952 - One of the oldest and largest Democratic Clubs in California

www.pvpdemocrats.org

As a member of
 the Palos Verdes
 Democrats,
 you can:

- Meet other Democrats
- Meet and get to know your elected officials, raise funds and work for candidates
- Attend special events and monthly meetings
- Hear speakers and discuss issues of local, state and national import

**Please send your membership form to P.O. Box 2234, Rolling Hills Est. Ca 90274
 Please fill in all items to ensure that we have your full and correct current information.**

Name _____ I am a registered Democrat
 Name* _____ I am a registered Democrat

* Fill in if Applying as a Family - two memberships

Residence Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ Zip _____ Cell _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

E-mail Address _____

*Select One: Individual: \$ 25.00/Year Family Membership \$40.00/Year
 Young Adult \$10.00/Year

Amount enclosed _____ Renewal New Member

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