

Northwest Democrats News



October, 2007
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Northwest Democrats, P.O. Box 681911, San Antonio, TX 78268; TXDemocrat@satx.rr.com

October 20th Program: True Blue Action & Constitutional Amendments

Don't forget to attend our October 20th meeting when Glenn Maxey will be our guest speaker and will demonstrate how we can use TrueBlueAction.com to help elect Democrats.

State Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer will speak about the 16 Constitutional Amendments that will be on the November ballot this year. Early voting begins on the 22nd of October.

Please join us for this important meeting at 8:30 a.m. at Luby's, 6200 Bandera Rd.

2006-2008

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WEAR YOUR T-SHIRTS AND BRING YOUR MUGS

Don't want to have to think about what to wear to the Northwest Democrats meeting: WEAR YOUR NORTHWEST DEMOCRATS' T-SHIRT? If you are a member of Northwest Democrats and you have Northwest Democrats' t-shirt (blue or red) wear your t-shirt to the meeting.

If you have a Northwest Democrats' mug, bring it to Luby's and use it rather than the styrofoam cups. We know styrofoam is bad for the environment, so do your part to help it.

Special Projects: Eckert Road Clean-Up

Yes, it is time for our last clean-up of 2007! Let's make Eckert Rd shine! The weather should be a tad cooler and very pleasant. New volunteers are welcome and we look forward to seeing the regulars! We will gather under the Luby's sign after the meeting.

If you have any questions, please call Gene Marck 614-7400 (office)...273-9201 (cell).

Authorized & Paid for by the Northwest Democrats

To submit an article or other info, email Jacob Middleton at:

TXDemocrat@satx.rr.com

A Few 'Joyce' Words

by Joyce Dorrycott

Sunday morning as I began reading the paper I was horrified – is that too strong a word? – to read the headline that very few child abusers have been sent to prison since 1991. As many of you know, I chaired the District Attorney's Task Force on Domestic Violence and co-chaired the Child Abuse Task Force during the administration of former District Attorney Sam Millsap (1982 – 1986).

Not only did I chair the task forces, I took a leave of absence from Southwest Texas to lobby the legislature on 21 different proposals to change the way cases concerning victims of these forms of abuse were treated by the criminal justice system. Thirteen of these proposals became law. In addition, the Family Violence Unit was established by D.A. Millsap to assist these victims in staying in the system to see these cases through to effective prosecution.

One of the most immediate concerns we heard was the difficulty of prosecuting cases when women wouldn't testify or where there were no witnesses to the child abuse occurring. That didn't stop the prosecutions, however. We read the same prosecutorial concern in the article on Sunday.

Yes, these cases are difficult and complex. By its very nature, child abuse most often occurs when the child and the perpetrator are alone. Every case won't be won. But, every case should go to a jury. The other remedies discussed, anger management, etc., should occur after conviction – not in place of a trial.

Where physical abuse occurs, there are injuries observable to attending relatives, friends and attending physicians. Especially when a report comes to police from a physician there is strong evidence for prosecution. It is usually fairly easy to identify who has had access to the child.

These cases should never be subject to deferred adjudication which circumvents the criminal justice process and allows a perpetrator to get away with no record if they serve the period of probation set by the district attorney's office. And, the probationary periods are far too short. Even more tragically, it allows the perpetrator to continue to having access to children who may also become victims.

When animals are abused we hear a tremendous public outcry. However, while I like animals, I am much more concerned about our children. Why the greater outcry for animals? Because there is a highly organized group speaking out about animals, but there is no longer a highly organized coalition speaking out about our children. We had such a coalition in the 1980's. People knew we were there advocating for those who cannot protect themselves.

Michael Vick will go to prison for abusing animals. Those who are abusing children will go back to their everyday lives with a slap on the wrist. They may be get probation for three months, a year, five years for seriously injuring a child. Where are our priorities? Who will speak out for the many children being abused and/or killed by primary caretakers today?

Don and I are very grateful to all of you who have given blood on his behalf at the blood bank. Should others wish to give, the following may help you.

Don's blood type is O positive. Those donors who are O positive should call 731-5555, ext 1278, and speak to Rosie to make an appointment. She is in charge of "Specific Donations". You should tell Rosie you wish to donate blood to Donald F. Green, and that it is to be sent to Methodist Hospital at the Medical Center. It takes approximately 5 business days for the blood to be processed and sent to the hospital.

*It will expedite things if you will call me and tell me when you want to go, as I have to authorize them to accept blood on Don's behalf. For those who don't know the **South Texas Blood and Tissue Center, is located on IH 10 between Vance Jackson and 410 on the north side of the expressway.***

Don will only be treated with blood transfusions from now on as none of the treatments worked. When the transfusions become too close together, Dr. Kalter will try chemotherapy.

We really do appreciate all your thoughts and prayers. Most of you know that Don is the strong, creative man behind all the things we do for Northwest Democrats.

Lying in Politics Gets an Official Thumbs Up

by Jacob Middleton

Most of us may not have seen or heard about a recent ruling from the Washington state Supreme Court. The case stemmed from a lawsuit filed in 2002 by a Democratic State Senator, Tim Sheldon. Sheldon's Green Party opponent in the general election sent out a mailer that lied about Sheldon's voting record in the legislature. The opponent was fined \$1000.

The case went to the state Supreme Court which ruled in favor of the Green Party candidate. The court's justification was that the law in question was too broad, but what the court effectiely did is rule that lying in political campaigns is okay. Some groups hailed the ruling saying, "In our democracy, candidates are free to make very strong statements criticizing their opponents or the government. The court recognized that government itself should not be in the business of vetting the truth and falsity of their political speech." I agree that strong criticism of one's opponent and or government is protected free speech, but lying, especially about an opponent during a political campaign, should never be tolerated.

The ruling still held that defamatory statements are not protected speech. So what this ruling says is that it's okay to lie about an official's voting record, but not okay to defame them, "the court has not held that false statements about public figures made with actual malice, but which are not defamatory, are devoid of all constitutional protection."

What this ruling ignores is that lying about someone's voting record can easily turn into defamation. Defame is defined as, "to attack the good name or reputation of, as by uttering or publishing maliciously or falsely anything injurious."

Let's say an elected official, Representative Smith, was a known leader in the environmental community. During a campaign his or her opponent publishes a direct mail piece that says this person voted to allow companies to pollute the water and air supply by building more power plants. In actuality, Representative Smith never voted for or supported this position. Even though this person's reputation was harmed by this mail piece, under the court's ruling this type of speech is okay. Even though the opponent blatantly lied, that's just fine.

Although this ruling only applies to Washington state, it opens the door to a perilous and slippery slope. Imagine if this ruling was applicable to Texas. Now just think about what this ruling would mean to people like James Leininger and Bob Perry. Can you imagine the flyers and TV ads?

The dissent opinion rightly stated that the majority decision is, "...an invitation to lie with impunity." The dissent goes on to state that, "The majority opinion advances the efforts of those who would turn political campaigns into contests of the best stratagems of lies and deceit, to the end that honest discourse and honest candidates are lost in the maelstrom."

Hopefully the legislature will go back and fix this law because inevitably this type of thinking and campaigning will spread to other states. Even though campaigns are marked by truth-stretching, one thing that we could always count on was a person's voting record which is usually black and white, yes or no. With this ruling, voting records wouldn't seem to matter anymore. What's next, a judge's legal ruling?

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Saturday, October 20th

8:30 am - Northwest Democrats, Luby's, 6200 Bandera Rd.

Friday, October 27th

9 - 11 am - DLC, Enchilada Warehouse, 2106 N. St. Mary's

Saturday, November 3rd

8:30 am - Northeast Democrats, Luby's, 8511 Tesoro Drive.

1 pm - SAAPAC, Grady's, 6510 San Pedro

Thursday, November 6th

6:00 pm - Bexar County Democratic Women, 3010 N. St. Mary's

Monday, November 17th

8:30 pm - Northwest Democrats, Luby's, 6200 Bandera Rd.

Sunday, November 19th

6:30 pm - Stonewall Democrats General Meeting, Grady's Restaurant, 6510 San Pedro