



Senate District 54 DFL Newsletter

September 2007
Vol. 16, No. 2

Gem Lake . Lauderdale . Little Canada . Roseville . Shoreview . St. Anthony . Vadnais Heights

What's News in SD54

Charlie Quick, Associate Chair

July Picnic

About 100 people attended the event, the largest attendance yet. Charlie Quick and John Treadwell manned the grill while delicacies of all kinds overloaded the picnic tables. We heard from candidates for senator, Al Franken, Mike Ciresi, and Jim Cohen as well as Todd Anderson for school board and Susan Gaertner for governor. Staff for presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama also attended.

Donut Booth 2007

The State Fair is in full swing with the donut booth selling tons of donuts. I worked the noon until 6:00 p.m. shift on Saturday and we were going for a record day. The weather was perfect and we had a great crew of volunteers which included Bev and Bob Scalze. It was nice seeing Bob feeling well enough to volunteer at the booth. This is our fundraiser for the year so a big thank you goes out to all the donut booth volunteers, especially the Donut Booth Committee headed by Jack Barlow.

Vento Dinner

Make sure you sign up for the Vento Dinner which is scheduled for October 7th at the Prom Center. We have signed up for five tables for SD54 folks but you need to let Michele Courneya know that you are interested in a reservation as soon as possible because they will go fast. The evening should be very entertaining with Garrison Keillor as our guest speaker. *See* page 5 in this issue for more information.

Election year begins now

We are beginning to work on the 2008 caucuses. The State Central Committee recently confirmed that the date has been changed to February 5, 2008. The intent for the earlier date is to give DFLers an opportunity to help determine the Democratic endorsed presidential candidate. We will need all the help we can get to plan for space and staff the caucuses. The school districts are not required to offer space on that date, since it has not been reserved by state statute.

In Recognition

With the collapse of the I-35W bridge, our hearts go out to all those having friends and family affected by this disaster. We have already seen an increase in discussion concerning bridge inspections, road replacement, etc. Our legislators will need your support as they work on future transportation funding bills.

Executive Committee Meeting – August 16, 2007

The committee discussed the successes and problems with the picnic and decided that our SD54 legislators should highlight the event from now on and candidates for other offices who wish to speak will be restricted in the time they are allowed before the group. The January 2008 Forum will be a candidate forum that will give all members of the district a chance to hear and compare the various candidates in order to make informed voting decisions. The Pre-Holiday Party, scheduled for November 15, will feature SD54 officers and volunteers exclusively.

The committee decided to purchase a tent for our use at community events similar to that we borrowed for the Roseville Fourth of July celebration in Bennett Park. SD54 had a good turnout for the float for the Roseville Parade the week before, and joined the parades with our legislative candidates at other community events this summer.

Election of Officers

SD54 officers for the 2008 and 2009 cycle will be elected at the SD 54 Convention. All positions will be open. The slate will include the chair, associate chair, secretary, treasurer and directors (numbers to be determined).

Thanks for all you folks do in order to support the DFL. We look back with pride at our past experiences and are looking forward to the coming elections.

Restoring the Vision: Ending Poverty

Senator John Marty, SD54

Political expectations have slipped in recent decades; people accept things that were once considered unacceptable. Even after a tragic bridge collapse, there appears to be only a marginal shift in the public outrage over bridges so structurally deficient that they could not withstand the stress of bolting on reinforcements.

One area where we have lowered expectations relates to our acceptance of poverty among working families. It was always part of the American Dream that life would be better for the next generation than for the previous one. “Better off” might be measured in ways other than financial, but few parents in the last couple generations would have expected that their children would not make enough to pay for food, housing, medical care, and other necessities if they were employed.

Yet today, we have many families with full-time workers who are paid too little to make ends meet. At the end of 2006, about half of all job openings in Minnesota were for jobs that paid less than \$10 per hour.

Remember when one worker could support an entire family on the wages earned as a janitor or a retail clerk or a milk truck driver?

Economic analysis by the Jobs Now Coalition estimates that for the average family of four, with *both* parents working, each worker must earn at least \$12.24 per hour in order to meet basic needs, which it defines as “a ‘no frills’ standard of living: no money for debt payments, entertainment, restaurant meals, vacation, and nothing is set aside for emergencies, retirement or children’s college education.”

That means more than half of all job openings are for jobs that pay too little to make ends meet, even if both parents are working full time!

The situation is getting worse. According to the state demographer, “The number of Minnesotans in extreme poverty, below 50% of the poverty line, grew from about 154,000 in 2000 to about 194,000 in 2005.” One in 25 Minnesotans lives in *extreme* poverty.

Yet despite political promises, some politicians are making the situation worse. Remember Governor Pawlenty’s promise last November to provide health care for all children? He backed away from that promise just two months later.

And the Pawlenty administration certainly is not doing anything to encourage a private sector solution to poverty, pressuring employers to pay better wages and provide health benefits. If anything, they encourage the opposite.

Recently, the Pawlenty administration selected a new contractor to provide the food service in the state capitol complex. The new contractor fired long-term employees—one woman had worked there for 39 years—and replaced them with part-time workers with no health care benefits. Management companies operating the capitol food service have come and gone over the years, but until now, no administration has selected a company that dumped the employees and took away their benefits.

Denying our neighbors the basic necessities of life and enabling employers to treat those neighbors even worse should not be acceptable politics in Minnesota. This would be a good time to restore the vision, demand dignity for all people, and change public and private sector policies

The Senate District 54 *Newsletter* is published six times a year to inform and educate interested parties of the happenings within SD54 DFL. The *Newsletter* provides opportunities for readers to submit articles for publication on various subjects of interest to this audience. The Newsletter Committee reserves the right to edit articles as appropriate to meet these goals and space restrictions.

Newsletter Committee

Norm Hanson, chair	(651)484-8926
Julianne Johnston, vice-chair	(651)486-7120
Joan Cooper	Grace Dyrud
Keith Dyrud	Karen Hanson
Sandy Hanson	Beth Lareau
Tim Krinke	Mary Jo Rourke
Charlie Quick	Karen Schaffer
Georgiana Sobola	John Treadwell

Copy editor: Anne Frenchick
Layout editor: Antona Richardson

State Senator John Marty
328 State Capitol, St Paul, MN 55155
jmarty@senate.mn
(651)296-5645
www.senate.mn/senatormarty

Asking the Tough Questions

Where have all the leaders gone?

He is an 82 year old successful industrialist who, in the mid-60s, brought us the Ford Mustang, an affordable sports car within the financial reach of many, many Americans. Later, he successfully led one of the periodic revitalizations of the Chrysler Corporation in the early 70s with the small but successful K-cars. Now, still very active in public affairs, Lee Iacocca asks the tough question, “Where have all the leaders gone?” He wonders why everyone isn’t asking the same question as he is and for the same or similar reasons.

Writing in his 2007 book, *Where Have All the Leaders Gone?* Lee Iacocca poses some tough questions that many of us have thought about but either haven’t asked or haven’t asked hard enough. For example, Iacocca asks who gave the president of the United States a free pass to ignore the Constitution, tap our phones, lead us into a war based upon a bed of lies, grant huge tax cuts to the wealthy (Iacocca says thank you but he doesn’t need those cuts), and to bring disrespect upon the Department of Justice and other important public agencies as well. And, he asks, why aren’t the citizens outraged by the behavior of the current administration and the Congress? All of them are hired by us to work for the common good for all citizens, not just those who are wealthy or who have special connections or some other unique credential. America has always been about doing the best for all of its citizens regardless of political affiliation or creed. “We are all in this together,” he reminds us in his book.

Other local and state commentators have asked similar tough questions using the same premise as Iacocca, that is, we are all in this together and we should expect that premise to guide the actions of our leaders rather than their relying on pure partisanship as so often is the case. The recent collapse of the I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis caused us all to reflect on the current state of affairs regarding the maintenance of the infrastructure that we all take for granted, including freeway bridges. Did that collapse provide us all, Democrats and Republicans alike, with the sense that the matter of trying to get something for nothing has come to a head? Did the governor’s no new taxes pledge lull the citizens to sleep thinking that all was well in the Gopher State and all necessary maintenance and repairs were being taken care of? If so, why was the “pledge” apparently so effective, at least in the short run? What did people think that it meant? Did the pledge cause anyone

to remember the old marketing cliché about paying now or paying later on and with much higher costs?

What happened to the longstanding Minnesota tradition of wanting to be first in the nation in terms of education, highways, the environment, health care coverage, and other important quality of life issues for our citizens? When and why did we apparently begin to accept lower standards and expectations in all of these important public policy areas? When did we begin the rush to surpass Mississippi or Alabama as the state providing the least amount of public services for its citizenry?

Why aren’t we all outraged at the behavior of the current leadership in Washington and St. Paul?

When did the current administration receive permission from the citizenry to withhold important scientific information that could affect their health? When did the citizens tell the current administration to check first with the affected industries before releasing public health safety information to the public, be it employment risks regarding certain cancers or the public water supply? Who said that such behavior was good government anyway? Is it that the old ‘government should be run like a business’ cliché rearing its head or is it really an effort to “prove” that government, that is, you and me and all of us, just can’t work and things should be turned over to the private sector? Why do we accept it as such in so many areas? Why aren’t we all outraged at the behavior of the current leadership in Washington and St. Paul, which is increasingly abusive of a basic tenet of this nation—that we are all in this together working for the common good, regardless of political party affiliation?

Norm Hanson

Senate District 54

www.sd54dfll.org

Chair: Michele Courneya

651-484-3717 courneya05@comcast.net

Associate Chair: CharlieQuick

651-483-3623 charlierquick@comcast.net

4th Congressional District DFL

Chair: J.P. Barone, 651-426-1836, var630@aol.com

Minnesota State DFL Party

www.dfl.org

Our representatives report

Choices for the future: “On the cheap” or adequate funding?

Representative Mindy Greiling, SD54A

It’s a sad way to forge a new sound byte, but we now have “on the cheap” in exchange for “no new taxes.” Quality infrastructure, be it bridges or education, can’t be had on the cheap, any more than toys that should be safe enough for our most precious little mouths.

Initially the governor panicked and realized this until the usual suspects whipped him back into his cage. Now he is talking “temporary” gas taxes and, worse yet, dedication of existing taxes. The latter would only serve to shift funds away from health care and education, a tactic at which the governor has already excelled. With even the current level of funding, I was forced to propose an income tax increase on high earners last year, because I anticipated the result we got: inadequate education and health care funding.

This fall, I will work on a state task force to examine education finance. It is a worthy exercise to ensure that our finance system is efficient, transparent, and equitable. The main task, however, is to address inadequate funding.

I will spend the fall preparing the case for next year’s session that quality government cannot be run “on the cheap.”

Representative Bev Scalze, SD54B

When the legislature convenes on February 12, 2008, one of the first bills that we will probably debate is the 2007 proposed Dedicated Funding amendment to the state constitution for natural resource protection. While it is difficult for most of us to consider inserting natural resource funding in the constitution, Minnesotans have requested that the measure be put on the general election ballot for their vote.

Budget cuts are the reason for this activity.

In the past, Minnesota provided dedicated funding for natural resources. There was an almost 40-year dedication of two cents per pack of cigarettes (initially one cent) to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources for “natural resources acceleration.” This provided \$360 million during that period. Then the dedication was removed and the monies placed in the general fund during the major budget deficit of 2002.

From 2002-2006, \$45 million was cut from the Department of Natural Resources general fund budget, or almost 25 percent of its total general fund budget since 2002. Since 1990, only 40 percent of the net lottery proceeds have been placed in the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to supplement traditional sources. Currently, the state constitution allows up to 5.5 percent of the main part of the fund (now \$415 million) to be recommended for expenditure annually.

This is not a new issue. Some bills were introduced in the 1990s, but it wasn’t until 2000 that such bills started to be heard and passed in committee. Since then, dedicated funding bills have been introduced every year except 2004.

Most wildlife and sporting groups argue that state funding, primarily through the game and fish fund, has not been keeping up with identified habitat and project needs. An estimated \$3 billion is spent annually by users in the state on hunting, fishing, camping, and wildlife-watching activities.

Clearly because of budget deficits, the state has chosen to cut funding for natural resources, considering it to be “low-hanging fruit.” Consequently, legislators have resorted to the constitutional amendment proposal because it is a veto-proof option that lets the voters decide whether or not they want to use sales tax dollars for natural resources.

2008 may be the year that the legislature finally votes to put the measure on the ballot for the people.

SD54 Representatives

State Representative Mindy Greiling
381 State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155
(651)296-5387
rep.mindy.greiling@house.mn

State Representative Bev Scalze
357 State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155
(651)296-7153 or 483-1055 (home)
rep.bev.scalze@house.mn

Please contact your representatives with questions and opinions on this and other issues.

SD54 Calendar of Events 2007–2008
Mark your calendars now!!

Note: Due to circumstance beyond our control, the US Post Office may not deliver the newsletter in advance of the events scheduled. For more timely delivery, contact us at (651) 484-8926 or (651) 486-7120 to receive your copy by email rather than postal delivery.

2007

- September 17 Monday 4th CD Central Committee meeting, 1011 N. Rice Street, 7:00 p.m.
- September 20 Thursday SD54 Central Committee meeting, Fairview Community Center, 7:00 p.m.
- September 29 Saturday DFL State Central Committee meeting, location and time TBA
2007 Founders Day Dinner, location and time TBA
- October 4 Thursday SD54 Newsletter Development Committee, Georgiana Sobola's,
1961 Hamline Ave N., Roseville, 7:00 p.m.
- October 7 Sunday Bruce Vento Spaghetti Dinner, 484 Inwood Avenue, Oakdale, beginning at 4:00 p.m.
Ride share at 3:00 p.m. *See* dinner ad below
- October 18 Thursday SD54 Executive Committee meeting, Fairview Community Center, 7:00 p.m.
- November 3 Saturday SD54 Central Committee meeting, Fairview Community Center, 7:00 p.m.
- November 15 Thursday SD54 Pre-Holiday Potluck Party, Cedarholm Golf Course Club House, 6:00 p.m.
- December 20 Thursday SD54 Executive Committee meeting, Fairview Community Center, 7:00 p.m.

2008

February 5, Tuesday Precinct Caucuses – *NOTE* date change

For additional information and events yet to be announced, check the SD54 DFL website at www.sd54df.org

Bruce Vento Spaghetti Dinner — October 7
Prom Center — 484 Inwood Avenue, Oakdale
(North of I-94, Radio Drive/Inwood Ave exit)

Garrison Keillor, guest speaker
Bruce F. Vento Public Service Award
Distinguished Party Service Award

- Silent Auction 4:00 p.m • Italian Dinner 5:00 p.m • Program 6:00 p.m.

Five tables are reserved for SD54 members, with space available first come first serve while tickets last at \$25 per person. If interested, call Michele Courneya (651-484-3717). Checks made out to SD54 are due no later than the SD54 Central Committee meeting on September 20. Include the name of your employer, if applicable, because of campaign finance requirements. If you wish to carpool to the event, meet at the northeast corner of the strip mall at the corner of Transit and Rice Sts. at 3:00 p.m.

**DEMOCRATIC
FARMER LABOR
PARTY**

SENATE DISTRICT 54
1947 EUSTIS
LAUDERDALE, MN 55113



Presorted
Standard
US Postage
PAID
Minneapolis, MN
Permit No 30757



Dated Material—Please Rush

**Prepared and Distributed by the Minnesota DFL
State Central Committee**

Brainstorming Meeting
SD54 Central Committee meeting
September 20, 2007, 7:00 p.m., at the Fairview Community Center

Join us as we begin planning
for the precinct caucuses and the campaign season ahead

We need to make the all-important decisions about caucus locations, caucus convenors, and training for them, the SD54 Convention location, and much, much more.

If you are willing to participate in any capacity for these events, contact Michele Courneya, 651-484-3717, SD54 chair, Charlie Quick, 651-483-3623, SD54 associate chair, or Andi Mof-fatt, 651-917-3579, volunteer coordinator.

For further information, check the website at www.sd54df.org