

# THE NEW DEMOCRAT

A Publication of the Peninsula Democratic Coalition (PDC)

May 2007

## California Democratic Convention Report

The California Democratic Party held its annual convention in San Diego, April 27th - 29th. It seemed like "everyone" came. More than 2000 delegates were joined by press, hangers on, and those who came to influence the delegates. There were even dozens of "LaRouche" followers who came to propagandize and to disrupt the proceedings with singing. It was great fun to be there.

We heard from seven Presidential candidates. We listened most carefully to Hillary, Obama, Edwards and Richardson. Dennis Kucinich has his strong supporters and they were delighted with his calls to get out of Iraq immediately and to impeach President Bush and Vice-President Cheney.

Hillary spoke first and did a masterful job. She had a hoarse voice but that didn't slow her down at all. She was direct, cogent and forceful. She spoke of the mismanagement of the war and the need for universal health care. I think she impressed everyone there. Obama followed about an hour later. I wondered how he could match up to Hillary's excellent talk but he was great — so well spoken and as someone described him, "compelling." He stressed his opposition to the war (which dates from 2002 13 months before the invasion), his call to withdraw the troops by next March, and his promise for universal health care by the end of his first term. He talked over and over again about "turning the page" on old politics and his ability to seek a new consensus.

John Edwards spoke on Sunday and again we wondered how he could possibly measure up. But he was wonderful. If anyone gained points, he was the one. He was masterful in the detail of his program suggestions. He apologized for his vote in 2002 and is now strongly opposed to the war. He had his widely praised plan for national health insurance. And he talked frankly about latent racism in the US and about the terrible toll that

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## Andrew Byrnes Wins JFK, Jr. Public Service Award

PDC member Andrew Byrnes received the John F. Kennedy, Jr. Award for Outstanding Public Service from the California Democratic Party at its convention in San Diego on April 28, 2007. The Award is given each year to a young man and woman between the ages of 18 and 35 who are Democrats and have provided strong leadership in the service of others and achieved success in doing so. Chairman Art Torres presented Andrew with the Award at the convention's well-attended legislative lunch.

Emily and Jim Thurber nominated Andrew for the Award. Andrew also received warm support from many other Democratic office-holders and activists. Andrew began his Democratic service early, walking precincts as a child. Since then, he has been a leader in Stanford Democrats, Harvard Law School Democrats, and the PDC. While a member of the PDC Board, he founded the Peninsula Young Democrats, a caucus of the PDC.

In addition to providing strong leadership in Democratic organizations and activities, Andrew has also made time to mentor high school students, help at a local children's hospital, represent poor clients in need of *pro bono* legal services, and provide substantial help to cystic fibrosis and organ transplant causes.

Andrew continues his service to the Democratic Party as Chair of the San Mateo County Democratic Central Committee; he intends to run for a spot on the Democratic National Committee.

Congratulations, Andrew!

*Danielle James*



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

**Jon Kessler**

In late March, Governor Schwarzenegger appointed David Long to fill the role of Secretary of Education. The job had been vacant since Dec. 15, when Alan Bersin left after barely more than 16 months. Three able people were approached about replacing him; none was interested because, as one education official put it, "it's a crappy job." Although California spends nearly half its budget on education, the governor seems barely interested in how it's spent or in education policy generally.

Hopefully, Mr. Long's appointment will stabilize the leadership gap in the administration's education policy. But nobody in that office, or at the State Board of Education, has ever had much access to the governor or his inner circle, the people in the so-called horseshoe who jealously guard their boss but have little collective knowledge of education policy.

That has led to a series of blunders in recent years, the most obvious being last year's act by the Legislature to punish the State Board of Education — the governor's board — by cutting all funding for its staff.

When the blunders get serious enough, as they did when the whole state accountability system was under attack and two former governors issued a public warning to Schwarzenegger, he responds in a reassuring manner. Something similar happened in 2004 when the staff director of the State Board of Education resigned and two members of the board threatened to quit.

But there seems to be no strong capacity in the governor's shop to track or develop expertise in long-term education policy issues.

"Getting Down to Facts," was released in Mid-March. It is a voluminous set of foundation-funded studies on school finance commissioned by senior California officials. The studies were requested by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, and the governor's Advisory Committee on Education Excellence. Thus, at least indirectly (and reluctantly), Schwarzenegger

himself requested the work. The governor has bought some additional time for his Committee on Education Excellence by declaring 2008 as the Year for Education Reform.

The studies are supposed to focus equally on adequacy — how much money is needed for different kinds of students — and on how effectively the state uses the money it spends now. Due to timidity and excesses of academic abstraction, the project may generate less in policy guidance than had been hoped for. But it should provide enough material to start a serious discussion about school spending — how much, where and how — that the state has not had recently.

For the past 30 years we have had a series of ad-hoc decisions: When money is available, school budgets increase, sometimes in the form of huge, semi-permanent categorical programs, such as class-size reduction, based more on political agendas than research. When money is tight, we cut without reference to priorities or effectiveness.

The reluctance of the governor in commissioning the study — and the near-total absence of interest from legislative Republicans — isn't surprising, because it's likely to include some large dollar signs that will be useful in any future school funding suit or school lobby ballot initiative.

But, as has become evident in the many other states where adequacy studies have driven up school spending, if the California reports come even close to meeting their goals, bottom-line numbers may be no more important than the recommendations on efficiency. At the same time, almost everyone who's looked at the future of California's economy and labor force — and at the nation's — understands that both depend on major investments in the literacy and skills of today's students.

The majority of those students, like California's population, are African-Americans and Latino and Asian immigrants and their children, and they'll have to replace and support the boomers who'll be retiring in the years ahead.

The labor market forecasts, from studies by the Public Policy Institute of California, the Educational Testing Service and others, are not rosy. A generation from now, American workers will have to support nearly twice as many retirees as they do now.

More important, unless educational achievement increases, the next generation will not have the literacy

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# More Than You Want to Know about Social Security

I have been writing about whether the Trust Fund, or Lock Box, is full or empty. Here are two versions from scholars.

Distinguished economist Dr. James K. Galbraith:

“In fact, Social Security is in better shape than ever, holding vast stocks of Treasury bonds on which interest can and will be paid. No economic or budget imperative requires that SS be cut, now or later. In private discussion Hamilton leaders let on that they understand this. But they are prepared, nevertheless, to include SS cuts – pension cuts for America’s elderly, many of whom would otherwise be poor – in some sort of grand deficit bargain. **Progressives must be absolutely categorical in rejecting any such deal.**”

*The Nation, 3/5/2007 issue, p18*

I will paraphrase how Dr. John Shoven (Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institute, former head of the Economics Dept. at Stanford where he holds the Charles Schwab Professorship, and Director of the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research) illustrated the case that the box is empty.

Imagine a married couple living on the husband’s salary. The wife takes a job, making say \$25K a year, and decides that they should save all of her money for when they retire. She gives all of her money to her husband for this project. He logs the money in. He develops a gambling habit and loses all the money. The next year he receives her \$27K, gives her a another receipt, even gives her a receipt for interest earned. Again he proceeds to lose all the money. This goes on for 35 years. The wife retires and says to her husband, “Let’s buy our dream home that we’ve been saving for. We have well over a million dollars.” No dream home.

My thoughts: the complication arises because the SS surplus dollars each year are used to reduce the National Debt so that the deficit will be smaller. Let us say that this trust fund peaks at \$4 trillion. (The excess money that SS collected plus the interest that these dollars earned now totals \$4T.)

Eventually SS will want to tap into this fund. For a simple example let’s say SS wants all \$4T. Then

the overall budget will have to be reduced by \$4T or the National Debt increased by \$4T. (Actually it will take 25-30 years to empty the fund, so the annual amount will be around \$200 billion.)

(Aside: When SS makes its estimates based on constant 2006 dollars, the surplus peaks at about \$3.8T in 2022. When adjusting to use current year dollars each year it peaks at about **\$6T** in 2025. In either case the *annual* money collected will be less than the money paid out around 2017-18. The fund will continue to grow for a while anyway because the shortfall is less than the interest that the fund is earning.)

Trillions, billions, zillions. The numbers numb. For a little perspective as to how significant is \$4T (or alternatively \$200 billion per year): the Federal deficit for 2006 was \$248 billion. The budget was \$2.407 trillion, expenses were \$2.655 trillion.

CBO (Congressional Budget Office) estimates the annual deficits for years 2007-2017 to be, in billions, \$214, 226, 215, 169, 149, 31, 74, 64, 53, 70, \$10. Thus CBO sees the projected budget to be almost balanced by 2017. The National debt will be \$6.2T. That is about when the SS expenses will start.

One final note: the salient feature of the plan I presented in the March issue is that it is flexible. It will work whether we have an empty or full lock box..

*Fran Cochran*

## President’s Report

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and skills of those retiring now.

There will be two challenges. One is to persuade California’s disproportionately older, whiter, more affluent voters that educational investment is both necessary and in their own interests. The other is to generate the accountability systems and political will to make certain the investment is not spent according to old formulas or according to the power of competing interest groups. That brings us back to the question of leadership. California badly needs a governor who can oversee increased spending on schools while protecting California’s high academic standards.

*Jon Kessler*

## EDITORIAL

The killing at Virginia Tech was terrible. But put it in perspective. Perspective not to mitigate the horror of those shootings, but to account for other violence in the world – violence that is not in the United States but which has been caused by the United States.

While this was the largest shooting death toll on a United States college campus, the toll would be an unremarkable day in Iraq or Afghanistan. An incident in which United States troops killed 35 Iraqi civilians would merit notice in the paper, but not a great deal of attention – and certainly not on the front pages for several days.

This country has been fortunate for the past hundred years. Most of the violence of the world has been outside our borders. We can consider thirty deaths in one place and time to be an anomaly while we read of death and destruction elsewhere on the planet.

The United States should work to export the good fortune of our relative non-violence to the rest of the world. Instead we seem to do exactly the opposite; when we are not involved in starting the fight we avoid taking firm action to stop it.

In spite of that good fortune, or maybe because of it, someone in this country can easily obtain guns along with the idea of using them on a number of people.

Gun control is not the only issue. It is hard to imagine that more laws would have prevented the shooter from getting a gun – unless those laws came with some major changes in attitude.

The shooter in Virginia clearly needed help from mental health professionals. But services are not generally available. In Santa Clara County budget cuts are threatening to wipe out the majority of outpatient mental health services provided by the government. The “rule” in the United States for both physical and mental health is to provide services only after a crisis has been reached.

Hospitals provide care in the emergency room. People without insurance and with insufficient funds are forced to use the emergency room as their health care provider. Mental health services are, in general, provided in the same way. That is a good working definition of “penny wise, pound foolish” – or maybe just plain stupid policy.

While the Republican legislators take pledges to not vote for any new taxes, the Democrats avoid taking a stand in favor of additional taxes to pay for

needed services. There seems to be a great and unreasonable fear of being called a “tax and spend liberal” or of being in favor of larger government. That in spite of the fact that the current administration is spending more on war and violence in Iraq and Afghanistan than anyone dreams of spending on domestic programs.

As long as our national priorities seem to favor the rule of violence and of the gun in international affairs we must expect the unstable people in our midst to bring that model home to roost.

*Martin Gorfinkel*

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## PDC Board Endorses Membership Goal Increase for 2007-2008

The PDC Board unanimously endorsed a Membership Plan for 2007-2008 at the April Board Meeting. The Board voted to work toward increasing membership significantly while retaining present members. The plan also works to increase financial resources to build the Democratic community and to elect more Democrats to office. The Board’s dedication to this membership goal was seen in their unanimous decision to encourage each of the 19 Board members to recruit 5 friends, co-workers, neighbors, or precinct members to join the PDC.

The PDC has 565 members from 429 households. The PDC has the largest membership of any club in Santa Clara County. Traditionally the PDC has grown by approximately 5% per year; however, in the last few years our membership numbers have been static. The Board wishes to change that.

This strategic membership plan was developed by the Membership Committee. It emphasizes the need to retain present members by continuing our legislative luncheons, our traditional holiday party and August auction/picnic and offering more exciting and compelling issue meetings of importance to Democrats and other interested community members. An outgrowth of the Membership Committee’s Plan was establishment of a Finance Committee to be

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# Convention

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poverty takes on our nation. He had a big demonstration and enthusiastic applause when he finished.

Bill Richardson was a bit of a sleeper as most people had never heard him. They appeared to like what they heard. He stressed over and over again that he was the best prepared candidate and his resume (congressman, ambassador, cabinet secretary and governor) is impressive. He also used self-deprecating humor to great advantage. He said he called his elderly mother and told her he was running for president. He said there was a rather long pause and then she queried "President of what?" The crowd liked him very much.

The call to impeach both Bush and Cheney had a lot of emotional support. Impeachment advocates were well organized with banners and black stickers saying starkly "Impeachment." A number of impeachment resolutions were submitted for party consideration. The party hierarchy was leery about a direct call for impeachment so compromise language was drafted calling for vigorous investigation into the actions of Bush and Cheney with appropriate punishments, which could include impeachment.

The only sour note at the convention occurred Sunday, just after noon, when the officially selected resolutions were being considered. Many of the delegates had left; about one quarter were left in the hall. The convention was considering an Iraq resolution proposed by Chairman Art Torres and Senate leader Don Perata that included a statement calling for US troops to leave Iraq to be on the February Primary ballot. Some delegates wanted additions to the resolution to call for an immediate cessation of war funding and to rescind the October 2002 Congressional Resolution authorizing the President to use force. Just as these powerful amendments were to be considered as independent statements of policy, someone asked for a quorum call, since only 27% of the delegates remained, the convention was adjourned. Those who wanted stronger position statements on Iraq were outraged and there has been much e-mail traffic since the convention that is very critical of the resolutions committee officials and of the whole process. I anticipate that the way the party handles resolutions, which are statements of party

values and opinions, will become more accessible to the grass roots and far more transparent in the future, as a result of this imbroglio.

Even with this glitch, the 2007 California Democratic Convention was lively; delegates were clearly energized and hopeful of winning all possible races next year. The 2008 convention will be in San Jose in March (exact dates to be determined); anyone who is interested in attending or being a volunteer should contact Emy Thurber, at 650-948-8259. With the Presidential election just around the corner, it should prove to be an equally exciting event.

*Emy Thurber*

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## Membership

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chaired by Mark Solomon. Their aim will be to increase the donations to the Outreach and Education Fund of the PDC.

The details of the PDC Membership Plan are: 1) We support the California Democratic Council's ambitious goal of increasing our membership dramatically; 2) To that end we expect to have at least 50 new members bringing in at least \$750 - \$1,250 this year; 3) Each Board Members is encouraged to solicit or at least ask 5 people to become PDC members; and 4) We will phone and mail people whose membership has lapsed and encourage them to rejoin.

The Membership Committee is composed of Lynne Isaacs, Jim and Emy Thurber, Rich Watters, Bob Hosek, Joe Rolfe and Chair Diane Rolfe. The Membership Committee hopes that many non-Board members will also be inspired to reach out and solicit at least one new member in this coming year as well. If you would like to join the Membership Committee and build up the Democratic Party, promote its values, and elect more Democrats, please contact Diane Rolfe at (650) 326 - 6328 or [onedianerolfe@comcast.net](mailto:onedianerolfe@comcast.net)

*Diane Rolfe*

*Membership Committee Chair*

## Assemblymember Jim Beall's Healthcare Town Hall – May 17th



Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr. is hosting a Town Hall on Healthcare. The Governor and leadership from both houses of the State Legislature have made fixing California's healthcare system a top priority this year. This Town Hall will help educate and raise awareness about the various healthcare reform proposals that are currently being considered in Sacramento. The event will also provide an opportunity to meet with elected officials, learn how the Governor's May Revise impacts the proposals, and express your thoughts on which proposals you think would work best in California.

**Thursday, May 17, 2007 6:00pm - 8:00pm**  
**Camden Community Center Multi-Purpose Room**  
**3369 Union Avenue San Jose, CA**  
 (Free parking available on site)  
 RSVP appreciated (408) 282-8920

Do you have pictures from PDC, PYD or Central Committee meetings and/or functions for inclusion in our newsletter? Send them, along with a description of the pictures, to Kristen Lohnes Johnson, 245 Wilton Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306 or email them to [graffikdezine@comcast.net](mailto:graffikdezine@comcast.net)

## Vision New America 8th Annual Internship Kickoff

Sunday, May 20th, 2007, 1:30pm-4:00pm

San Jose State University

Engineering Auditorium, Room 189

John Chiang, California State Controller, will be the keynote speaker

RSVP to: Linda Pham- (408) 260-0116 or

[linda@visionnewamerica.org](mailto:linda@visionnewamerica.org)

[www.visionnewamerica.org](http://www.visionnewamerica.org)

### THE NEW DEMOCRAT

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The Peninsula Democratic Coalition (PDC) is chartered by the Santa Clara County Democratic Central Committee, and affiliated with the California Democratic Council (CDC)  
<http://www.cdc-ca.org>

The Peninsula Young Democrats (PYD) is a group within the PDC for members under age 36; the PYD is affiliated with the California Young Democrats.

# We want to know...

The PDC is interested in input and participation from all of its members. We are eager to hear what you have to say. What interests you? What are your concerns? There has never been a better time than right now to strengthen the PDC and make our voices heard. Democrats throughout the area coming together can make giant waves of progress when we all work together for the common good.

## PLEASE FILL OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND MAIL TO:

**PDC Questionnaire, P.O. Box 97, Los Altos, CA 94023-0097**

### WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS:

- Blogging and news media: how is it affecting the political process
- Civil Rights
- Civil rights issues of persons detained by US related to "war on terror"
- Consumer Rights
- Death Penalty
- Education
- Election Integrity
- Ethics and Financial Reform
- Foreign Affairs
- Global Warming
- Health Care
- National Security
- Social Security
- Taxes - Fairness and Budget
- Traditional media: are we getting the information we need as citizens and, if not, why not and what can we do about it
- Views from organizers in red states -- what we can do to help
- Immigration
- Proposition 13
- National Debt
- Impeach Bush/Cheney
- Civility in Politics
- Family Planning



- Yes, I am a member of PDC
- No, I am not a member of PDC but would like to receive a membership application
- I am interested participating in a discussion group
- I am interested participating in an action group
- I am interested in volunteering in local service groups (i.e. Second Harvest Food Bank or Ecumenical Hunger Program)
- I would like to help work the 2008 North County Headquarters

**Yes, please sign me up for online Democratic events announcements and news updates.**

✉ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #2 \_\_\_\_\_

The Peninsula Democratic Coalition  
P.O. Box 97  
Los Altos, CA 94023-0097



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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### MONTHLY MEETINGS

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**Santa Clara County Democratic Central Committee** meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at 70 West Hedding, San Jose. Call 408/445-9500 for information. Anyone is welcome to attend.

**The PDC Board of Directors** meets at 7:15 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at the Palo Alto Unitarian Church, 505 East Charleston Road, Palo Alto, Room 10; all are welcome.

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### MAY EVENTS

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May 17 - Jim Beall's Healthcare Town Hall (*See article on page 6.*)

May 20 - Vision New America 8th Annual Internship Kickoff (*For more information, see page 6.*)