



Senate District 54 DFL Newsletter

September 2008
Vol. 17 No. 2

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

What's News in SD54

Ivor Matz, SD54 Associate Chair

Some of you are probably wondering, "Who's this new associate chair and where did he come from?" Frankly, I ask myself the same questions from time to time and have yet to find a helpful answer.

Like many another shareholder in this business of participatory democracy, I've become convinced that we badly need a change of management at the top. So I thought I'd better volunteer to do something useful to help preserve the institution we all love and rely on before the suits on the board tear out the fixtures and plumbing to sell for scrap, use our charter documents to wrap fish, and find ways to contract our children out for day labor to the Chinese. Those boys simply are out of control, I'm thinking.

So I went down to meet with the Nominations Committee, which graciously granted me an interview and asked what sort of party job I might be looking for. I told them I'm a humble man and only want what everyone else wants—a well-paying job with no work.

They told me that, regrettably, all the public offices had been claimed, but that wasn't the kind of job they had on offer in any case. What they had in mind was a job with a lot of hard work that pays nothing. So I asked them, "Then you're looking for a stooge to mind the store and I appear to you a likely candidate?" And they said, "There you have the gist of it."

A little while later, I received a call from Michelle Courneya, SD54 Chair, who asked me if I'd run for associate chair at the forthcoming SD54 Convention. My qualifications had something to do with being male. All I could divine from this unexpected offer was that either I had dazzled the Nominations Committee with my political insights and erudition, or they simply know a dummy when they see one and recommended me to Michelle on that basis, who agreed. Since, inarguably, there are plenty of male individuals around.

So I asked Michelle what the job of associate chair entailed. She told me 10-15 hours per week and while the party could offer nothing in the way of compensation, my fellow officers would provide abundant consolation. Besides that, I'd get a fancy title and several hundred bosses. So I'd at least have the comfort of knowing that I couldn't possibly take a misstep, because whatever step I might venture to take surely would be viewed as a misstep by someone who would be quick to point out my errors.

I told my wife Colleen that I'd been offered a position in top management with a lot of work and responsibility where I would answer to several hundred bosses, but that the job pays nothing. And she told me, "Now you can be sure that I married an affable and well-meaning man, since by all the evidence you're not very bright." I thought about that for a moment and asked her, "Colleen, am I really as dumb as all that?" She replied, "How many others have applied for the job?" I told her no one. "There's your answer," she said. "Then God has been generous with me," I told her, "It appears I have all the makings of a president."

Which brings us to one of the many duties no one told me about when I was hired: reporting on **What's Happening in the District**. Here is what we think we know so far.

Parades and Events - SD54 has appeared in a number of parades and events throughout the senate district over the last couple of months including the *Roseville Rosefest Parade* on June 23, where we had a float and a large turnout of volunteers including endorsed senate candidate Al Franken's wife, Frannie, and their daughter, Thomasin, who both seem to think Al's a pretty good guy.

After that, SD54 sponsored a booth at *Roseville Party in the Park* on the Fourth, where we passed out DFL literature, supported our candidates and talked with voters and residents. Volunteers carried the district banner in the *Slice of Shoreview* parade on July 26 and the Saint Anthony *Villagefest Parade* on August 1, followed by Little Canada's *Canadian Days Grand Parade* two days later. It fills the heart with pride to learn that somehow we

Our 98th issue—on our way to 100 in 2009!

managed to annex the entire sovereign nation of Canada while everyone was watching the Olympics. The district also was represented in Lauderdale's *Day in the Park Parade* and the *Vadnais Heights Heritage Grand Parade* two weeks later on August 16 and August 17. On average, a half-dozen or more SD54 volunteers showed for each parade and event. Thanks to all of you who gave your time and energy to show DFL strength for the coming elections.

SD54 Annual Picnic – The district's annual picnic took place July 17 at Roseville Central Park. The picnic was well attended by more than 75 fun-loving DFLers, a lone DFLer who doesn't love any fun (and whom we suspect is a closet Republican), and many others who enjoyed the good weather, great food, friendly company and heady political discussions that prompted attendees to stay and continue visiting long after the kitchen was closed and the tables were cleared. Or so I'm told. We owe a special thanks to the masters of the grill who worked throughout the event, as well as to everyone who contributed their special dishes and treats to this potluck gathering. In particular we want to thank Georgiana Sobola, Andi Moffatt, John Treadwell, Jason Etten and Norm Hanson for their help in setting up, grilling and cleaning up. We also want to thank Paul Lareau, who again provided free books from Book Crossings, which I missed out on. Everyone had a great time, except those of us (like me) who couldn't make it and the one closet Republican.

Speakers included Senator John Marty and our district candidates, Representative Mindy Greiling and Representative Bev Scalze; Thomasin Franken, who spoke for endorsed Senate candidate Al Franken;

Melissa Jamrock, who spoke for CD4 Representative Betty McCollum; Connor Norton, who spoke on behalf of his mother, current Roseville City Council member Tammy Pust; Karen Schaffer, a candidate for Roseville City Council, and CD4 Chair J. P. Barone who came to talk about what's happening in CD4 and to encourage attendance at the forthcoming Bruce Vento Spaghetti Dinner on Sunday, October 5. The speeches were short but informative and no one went past the allotted time, which proves that the impossible can happen if you just close your eyes and believe hard enough.

DFL State Central Committee Meeting – The first meeting (after the DFL State Convention on June 6) of the new State Central Committee (SCC) took place on July 12 at Humboldt Senior High School in St. Paul. I was impressed by how well-attended it was by delegates from all across the state, given the beautiful weather. Various items of state business were conducted including a presentation by Matt Entenza, Minnesota 2020, about framing "issues-based" messages; establishing rules for the SCC's new session; a presentation from AFL-CIO Labor 2008 on the Employee Free Choice Act; chartering an Anoka County DFL party unit to provide for endorsing and supporting DFL candidates to the county commission; voting on a charter for a DFL Faith Caucus; endorsing the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment; and a proposed platform Action Agenda item relating to increased protection for victims of childhood sexual abuse. The meeting was followed by a barbecue at DFL headquarters where several hundred people gathered to picnic, make new friends, visit with old ones, and discuss issues, elections and politics with our endorsed candidates.

CD4 Central Committee Meeting – CD4 delegates met on July 21 and discussed at length the events and activities of CD4 and the Coordinated Campaign to get out the vote. Candidates for Ramsey County Conservation District spoke about their campaigns and local issues. Howard Orenstein, candidate for Ramsey County Judge, talked about the importance of knowing who the candidates are and what their qualification are. A website has been created for the Bruce Vento Dinner, which is the primary source of funding for CD4 activities including candidate support.

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

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The URL is ventodinner@gmail.com and lists volunteer opportunities for this important event. Abe Rosenthal addressed the group about his concerns regarding the newly established state DFL Faith Caucus.

CD5 Executive Committee Meeting – Some of you may not know that a part of SD54 (Saint Anthony precincts P-1 and P-2) are included within CD5, Representative Keith Ellison’s district. As a resident of Saint Anthony and an SD54 elected official, I am delegated to the CD5 Executive Committee and Central Committee, which I attend as often as practicable. The last CD5 Executive Committee meeting took place on July 2. The committee adopted a mission statement (as amended), discussed the director roles and a new approach in focusing those roles on specific goals and objectives in coordination with the various committees; discussed the Coordinated Campaign

and need to focus on candidate support and GOTV efforts to enlist DFL-leaning voters who don’t normally get out to vote; and discussed Representative Ellison’s GOTV call for 20,000 new voters in his district.

State Fair Donut Booth – SD54 is very fortunate to have a reliable source of funds provided each year by volunteers for the State Fair Donut Booth. Volunteer teams worked three shifts of around six hours each on August 21, August 24 and August 28. We actually had a surplus of volunteers going into the event! The weather was beautiful, the fair turnout was great and the mini-donuts proved far more popular than deep-fried breaded bacon and pickle juice popsicles. Thanks to all the volunteers who made this event happen and helped refill the SD54 war chest to support our candidates, district, and party in the forthcoming elections.

—The Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment—

Julianne Johnston and Norm Hanson

The following is the proposed amendment to the state constitution which will be on the ballot in the general election on November 4:

“Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to protect our drinking water sources; to protect, enhance and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to support our parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater; by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009, by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?”

A somewhat similar amendment was introduced in the legislature for several years by the Republicans although it did not involve any new funding. Rather, it would have dedicated three-eighths of one percent of existing sales tax funds for conservation related activities. That meant that the dedicated funds would have to come from existing funds that supported education and other related activities. As such, the amendment as previously proposed by the Republicans was similar to the transportation funding amendment that was approved by the voters in 2006. That is, all of the transportation funding involved would have to be used entirely for transportation and not for other things, including education, as it had been in the past.

The proposed amendment on the 2008 ballot was generated by the Democrats, including Representative Bev Scalze, who was one of the house authors of the proposal to put the question on the November ballot. Representative Scalze acknowledges that very few people, if any, believe that the amendment is the proper way to fund habitat and clean water. On the other hand, she notes that “...in this age of ‘no new taxes,’ the state budget for the environment is at its lowest level in 30 years.” Representative Scalze notes that natural resource funding was cut in 2004 due to the four billion dollar deficit and without the proposed dedicated funding, will probably continue to be cut to protect funding for schools and health/human services budgets in the future.

It appears that securing the approval of the proposed constitutional amendment by the voters in November will be an uphill battle. Despite the support of many organizations and groups representing the interests of those who would be assisted by the passage of this amendment as well as the Minnesota State DFL Central Committee, a recent poll indicates that the proposal will fail by a wide margin. We think it would be a serious mistake if November results follow the recent poll, as our water, wildlife habitat, parks and trails, and the arts will suffer continued decreases in funding as a result. We urge your support of this important proposed amendment when you are at the polls on November 4.

Darkness in the Electronic Age

Ivor Matz

Twenty-five years ago, the notion that an individual could make a personal call from a mobile phone on a street corner in St. Paul and speak to another individual on a street corner in London, Riyadh, or Beijing, was still the stuff of science fiction. Today, the power of the electronics age rests in the hands of any individual who writes an email, texts a friend, or makes a cell phone call. Hundreds of communication satellites encircle the planet in stationary orbit transmitting millions of signals from telephone calls, internet connections, and television and radio stations around the globe into millions of homes and businesses, providing both broadcast mass communications to groups of people and targeted direct communications to individuals. Our culture is rich with new channels of communication of ever increasing power and sophistication that are cheaper and easier to access and use than ever before.

Unfortunately, with the increasing immediacy and vertical penetration of mass communications, together with a diversification of targeted direct communications, we see a proliferation of yellow journalists and political propagandists plying their trade: a trend reminiscent of an earlier time in our history when major cities might have a dozen or more partisan daily and weekly newspapers all competing for market share—a time when newspaper moguls fought for circulation and influence over their readerships and the electorate with bribes, libel, violence, and murder.

Today, partisan commentators use cable television and radio to broadcast daily diatribes against their political opposition, including elected officials, often employing unethical means to influence the electorates' understanding of issues and current events, including disseminating information they know to be untrue. Partisan bloggers do yeoman's work at their terminals laboring long hours into the night digging dirt and slinging mud against opposition candidates and party leaders. Partisan political groups maintain list servers that transmit daily email compilations of incendiary "factoids" instantaneously to thousands of recipients, which portray candidates, party organizations,

and elected officials as elitist, criminal, hypocritical, and corrupt. Anonymous individuals post commentary on news stories and articles at legitimate news organizations' websites that are rife with innuendo, rumor, and falsehood. And partisan individuals broadcast chain email letters to address lists of friends and associates that smear candidates and elected officials with rumor and hearsay, sometimes including falsified photographs and counterfeit documents as attachments, often accusing elected leaders and officials of misdemeanors, malfeasance, and crimes ranging from adultery to murder without the slightest basis in fact and with no opportunity for those accused to respond.

Some might ask why it matters. After all, political operatives, mudslingers, and propagandists have been a part of the political landscape since the Declaration. While that's true, I would argue that the advent of cheap, powerful mass communications and directed communications embodies a new and sinister force in American politics: the ability to demonize political groups, activists, candidates, and elected leaders—and particularly those on the left of the political spectrum. Over the last twenty years, the very term Liberal itself has become a pejorative among many in the electorate, not only among Republicans and other Conservatives. Progressives are routinely accused of being unpatriotic, un-American, godless, hedonistic, corrupt, morally destitute, and the like. And some among our fellow citizens believe it.

While criticisms and slanders from those on the right are easily ignored, threats of violence and acts of violence should not be—not in this era of mass murders at churches and high schools by disgruntled individuals. And while it's hard to say that any incident of violence can be tied to a victim's political views and impossible to affirm that a broad pattern of violence against progressives is revealing itself, in my view, the last several decades of efforts by the right to demonize the left has emboldened a fringe element, who may ingest a steady diet of right-wing propaganda from multiple sources and who may have come to believe that violence against progressives is justified. In their view, it appears that progressives (or pejorative "Liberals") have created every problem and authored every evil that confronts us today. Some even believe that America is in moral decline, that we have become a decadent nation, and hold progressives responsible as agents of that decline. They are strengthened by the many new sources of propaganda that inform and nurture that belief and which create a self-supporting internal logic. Into this darkness, no light of fact or reason or rational argument seems to penetrate.

Help Get out the (Democratic) Vote!!

**Primary Election: September 9
General Election: November 4**

Asking the Tough Questions

Why don't we provide our children with quality early education?

Barb Yates

Few really argue against the positive outcomes, documented in multiple research studies, of quality preschool experiences, particularly with children from low-income families. Many believe that the children most disadvantaged who start school behind represent the achievement gap that K-12 educators try so valiantly to address, often with limited success.

So why do we have such a difficult time moving this issue in Minnesota? Probably many reasons, but here are some frequently mentioned.

- *Parents should stay home*

Parents are without a doubt, the first and most critical educator in their child's life. Most parents would love to stay home with their children. Unfortunately, many can not. Our public policies require parents of low-income children to work. Minnesota has the highest percentage of working mothers in the United States. We have hundreds of thousands of children under five in early care and education settings in Minnesota. Some of these settings represent excellent programs doing a great job of getting children ready for kindergarten. Unfortunately, the quality of many of these settings is mediocre, at best.

- *There isn't enough money*

Minnesota has not made a significant investment in funding for young children since Arne Carlson was governor. In fact, during the Pawlenty years, funding has been cut.

Economic times for the state have been difficult and now we find families and seniors struggling with high property taxes, high food costs, and high energy costs as well as the state facing yet another deficit. Our transportation system, K-12 education system, health care system, higher education system, and property tax system have all been seriously strained. In the absence of additional revenue, it is hard to see how we can ascend once again to the quality services that used to keep our economy strong. Adding a new issue, albeit a less costly issue, to the mix has understandably proved difficult for policymakers.

- *Child care is babysitting.*

- *Only schools should provide education*

In the past ten to fifteen years, child care has dramatically changed in some settings. It wasn't too long ago that families pulled their children out of child care or the "stay-at-home-mom" setting and enrolled their child in a part-

day preschool when they got to be four years old. These might have been Montessori schools or other preschool programs, and were often offered in a church building.

Now many child care centers (and some family child care homes) in the metro area offer a rigorous pre-school program that has curriculum and assessment tools to help prepare children for kindergarten. So do Head Start programs. Some schools with pre-K programs have joined forces with child care providers to target those most in need of assistance. With many children being in all-day care, it only makes sense to make use of that time to support the learning, development and growth of children.

Child care used to exist primarily as a place where children were cared for while their parents worked. We mostly cared that it was safe, clean, and that the provider was kind and loving towards our child.

Today, child care is where many children have a significant opportunity to learn skills that will help them be ready for kindergarten. However, if you are on public assistance and receive child care to help fulfill your work commitment, your child is pulled out of its preschool setting if you lose your job. Imagine if your elementary school student was told that she could not return to school until you found a job!

- *If we only had all-day kindergarten for everyone*

Some believe that the solution is to offer all-day kindergarten. This is one of those issues where the answer is not "either/or" but "and." Parents love all-day kindergarten for many reasons, not the least of which is that all-day kindergarten, combined with an after-school program is a lot less expensive than paying for child care. All-day kindergarten is great for children, but it won't address the issue of those children most at risk not being ready for school. Many believe it will exacerbate the achievement gap. Research seems to indicate that half-day for four-year-olds and half-day for kindergarteners has longer term positive impact on school success for children from low socio-economic circumstances.

- *It takes a governor to raise a child*

Many states have made much more progress on addressing the school readiness of its young children than Minnesota. In all instances, the difference seems to be gubernatorial leadership. Unless Minnesota has a governor that considers

this one of his/her top priorities, we may not see much progress on getting our children ready for school.

Where do we go from here?

The child care system is a market-driven system primarily funded by parents. Many children receive what early childhood education they receive in this setting. Publicly funded programs like Head Start, school readiness, and the publicly funded part of child care are all underfunded, serving at best, half of those eligible. Underfunded programs make for significant turf battles between state departments, legislative committees, and early childhood programs. What if we accepted that quality early education can and does occur in many settings? What if we coordinated our efforts to maximize results?

Some argue for universal pre-K. Others say we can't even afford to provide for those most at risk. Space, transportation, parental choice, and limited funding complicate the issue. One-size solutions don't work well in Minnesota. What if we didn't let funding streams guide our policy making, but directed our funding streams to achieve results for children?

Parents and advocates are frustrated by the lack of progress. Policy makers are frustrated. Maybe it's time for us to treat at least one issue as if it transcends all the typical boundaries. What if all children entered kindergarten ready for school? Just imagine.

GOTV—Get Out the Vote

SD54 will be participating in the Minnesota DFL GOTV effort through the Coordinated Campaign. (See forum announcement on the back page.) This campaign is a joint effort of our DFL-endorsed candidates, partners, and the DFL Party to pool resources to run a voter contact and GOTV program to the mutual benefit all our campaigns. As we get close to Election Day, after collecting data and identifying our candidates' supporters, it will be time to make sure that voters who will vote Democratic get to the polls—that is, Get-Out-The-Vote. It's great if voters support our candidates, but at this crucial phase of the election, we must get them to the polls! There will be many ways to participate in GOTV including phoning, doorknocking, implementing an absentee ballot program, offering rides to the polls, helping folks with same-day registration among others.

Disposing of Hazardous Household Wastes

Peter Berglund

Many types of hazardous wastes should not be put in with regular household trash, such as nickel-cadmium rechargeable batteries, weed and insect killers (pesticides), fluorescent lamps, and mercury thermometers. It is even illegal to put some, such as lead-acid car batteries, in with household collections. There are a year-round collection site and many seasonal sites located in Ramsey County which will take hazardous wastes. Since certain wastes are managed differently, and not all are acceptable at county collection sites, you should contact the county for more information. Visit: www.co.ramsey.mn.us and click on "Health & Environment." Select "Home & Yard" for household hazardous waste information. Or phone (651) 266-1144 for a recorded message. To speak with someone during business hours on this and other topics (e.g., recycling), call (651) 633-EASY (3279).

Please be safe, legal, and do your part to manage hazardous wastes appropriately.

—Bruce Vento Spaghetti Dinner— October 5, 2008

Prom Center, 484 Inwood Avenue, Oakdale

4:00 p.m. Silent Auction/Registration
5:00 p.m. Dinner
6:30 p.m. Live Auction
7:00 p.m. Program featuring Wy Spano

Adults \$35 or 2/\$60
Students and Seniors \$25 or 2/\$44

Wyman (Wy) L. Spano is the director of the University of Minnesota Duluth Master of Advocacy and Political Leadership (MAPL) program in the College of Liberal Arts. Spano is one of the most frequent guests on Minnesota's public affairs TV program "Almanac," where he serves as a regular member of its political panel. He also frequently provides commentary and analysis for TV and print journalists, locally and nationally, speaking about Minnesota's political life.

SD54 will arrange for three tables of eight for preferred seating. Contact Michele Courneya as soon as possible to arrange seating at one of these tables. Whether you purchase tickets or donate to the silent auction, notify Michele so as to meet campaign financing requirements. Ticket deadline is September 15. Make your check payable to SD54 if you register with Michele. Donations of baskets, services, and interesting items of art or crafts for the auction will also be accepted until September 15. All proceeds benefit the 4CD DFL. For more information, check the website at VentoDinner@gmail.com or contact Leslie Lelii at (651) 698-0048 or Michele Courneya at (651) 484-3717 or courneya05@comcast.net. Looking forward to seeing you there!!

—SD54 Calendar September 2008—

Note: Mark your calendars now!!! Due to circumstances beyond our control, the U.S. Post Office may not always deliver the *Newsletter* in advance of the events scheduled. For speedy email delivery, please contact us at (651) 484-8926 or (651) 486-7120 and request to be put on our email list.

September 9	Tuesday	PRIMARY ELECTION DAY
September 15	Monday	4CD Central Committee Meeting, St. Paul Library, 1011 Rice St., 7:00 p.m.
September 18	Thursday	SD54 Central Committee Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Roseville Maintenance Building, 2660 Civic Center Drive, Roseville
October 2	Thursday	Newsletter Planning Meeting, Georgiana Sobola's home, 1961 Hamline Ave. N., Roseville, 7:00 p.m.
October 5	Sunday	The 2008 Bruce Vento Dinner. Silent Auction, 4:00 p.m.; Dinner, 5:00 p.m. Prom Center, 484 Inwood Ave., Oakdale (Special instructions for SD54 residents on p. 6.)
October 16	Thursday	SD54 Executive Committee Meeting, Roseville Maintenance Building, 2660 Civic Center Drive, Roseville
October 21	Tuesday	4CD Central Committee Meeting, St. Paul Library, 1011 Rice St., 7:00 p.m.
November 4	Tuesday	GENERAL ELECTION DAY
November 20	Thursday	Post Election/Pre-Holiday Party for SD54 friends and families – place TBA

—Volunteers Needed—

Campaign Activities for Mindy Greiling... 54A

We would like more sign locations and are putting up signs on Saturday, September 20. Volunteers can call Karen Gill-Gerbig at (651) 644-4782 or email her at kglggrbg@comcast.net. I still need people to doorknock with me on the other side of the street. Please contact: Mary Ann Palmer at (651) 633-8140 or Stephanie DeBenedet at jdebenedet@msn.com.

All are welcome to the victory party at my home, 2495 Marion St., Roseville, on November 4.

Campaign Activities for Bev Scalze... 54B

I will be hosting a literature drop on two Saturdays—October 4 and 11—at my home, 969 Beam Avenue, Little Canada at 9:00 a.m. Also, we always need help taking down signs, this year on November 5. As always you can reach me at bscalze@aol.com and (651) 483-1055. Please put us on your calendars and come out to join us. It's a lot of fun, and the food is good!

All are welcome to the victory party at my home on November 4.

SD54 Legislators

Senator John Marty

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

54A Representative Mindy Greiling

381 State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155
(651)296-5387
rep.mindy.greiling@house.mn
www.mindygreiling.org

54B Representative Bev Scalze

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

Help Get out the (Democratic) Vote!!

**Primary Election: September 9
General Election: November 4**

**DEMOCRATIC
FARMER LABOR
PARTY**

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

SD54 Central Committee Meeting Announcement
September 18, 2008 - 7:00 p.m.

GOTV

What's at stake?

How you can participate in determining the results.

Now is the time for GOTV (Get Out the Vote) Campaign planning
for the general election in November. Come with your ideas.
Sign up for the special events and activities. Stay involved and informed.

City of Roseville Maintenance Building
2660 Civic Center Drive

All City of Roseville buildings are handicapped accessible.