



Senate District 54 DFL Newsletter

November 2008
Vol. 17 No. 3

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

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The Torch; be yours to hold it high!
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

LT. COL. JOHN McCRAE
MAY 3, 1915, WWI

Veterans Day 2008

Norm Hanson and Julianne Johnston

The pending honoring of veterans on November 11, 2008 has caused us to stop and reflect on what the day means to us as well as what it has meant to us over the years. We both grew up in the '40s and '50s in the 8th District of Minnesota across a couple of county lines from each other and enjoyed many similar experiences with respect to the celebration in our respective small towns (Norm in Cromwell and Julianne in Nashwauk). For example, we both recall remembering the veterans at the annual celebration on Memorial Day in May where the high school band followed a color guard of several uniformed veterans on the march to the local cemetery to recognize veterans who died in service or since then, as town heroes. Most days it was raining, which added to the solemnity in which the towns held these events. The ceremonies were attended by veterans, families, and friends who remembered and often wept through the services. A speech to honor the sacrifices by service men and women was presented by a local official. Then the presentation of the Gettysburg Address and the poem *In Flanders Fields* was followed by the firing of a gun salute to the departed veterans. The solitary sound of a bugle playing taps and its echo heard in respectful silence ended the brief ceremony. These were the people who paid the price for the nation's call. The towns met to relive and grieve once again for what was given and lost when the United States sent its men and women to war.

We find it interesting that today many citizens champion the services of those who are currently serving or have served in the professional military, including the men and women members of the heavily used and repeatedly called back National Guard and Reserve forces. Many of these folks stand ready to pat veterans on their backs, thank them for their service, wish them well, and send them cookies in a tin container. They seem to derive pleasure from the fact that these servicemen and women have been called to protect the United States as a result of ill-advised challenges to regimes or causes in many parts of the world. They fail to recognize that we are sending them ill-prepared and ill-equipped for the task set before them and offer them little or no rewards when they return and attempt to re-enter our society. We continue without them, suffering little or no consequences while they are sent off to fight someone else's war.

Servicemen and woman may join the service to serve their country (not their president), but in the midst of battle, they quickly learn that they must rely on one another's support in order to survive. Many soldiers re-enlist in order to continue to support those still on the battle field because that bond is so strong. It becomes paramount to the servicemen and women in such situations to not let their comrades down. Meanwhile, many citizens fail to understand what the soldiers, marines, seamen, and airmen who are placed in harms way on behalf of America are actually fighting for. The fact is that they are now fighting and dying for each other.

Our 99th issue—watch for our 100th in 2009!

It seems to us that many citizens and politicians thoughtlessly dismiss the commitment, effort, time, and personal sacrifice provided by the servicemen and women who serve in our country's military services. They fail to realize that lives and families are being torn apart for what would appear, in this Iraq war, to be for less than honorable reasons and results. Citizens, unaffected by the task given to our servicemen and women, seem to think that by wrapping themselves in the American flag or by covering their political posters and literature with the American flag, they are honoring the veterans.

Such behavior diminishes the contributions of the dedicated men and women who have volunteered to serve

or have served in the military services at the request of our nation.

Our observation is that many of the flag wavers and flag wrappers are somehow more than willing to assure that the American military be used to quell any disturbance or fight any ill-defined war as long as they and their children are not leading the charge, that is, to make sure that someone other than themselves is placed in harm's way while they hold, wave, and wear the American flag and cry "no more taxes" to pay off the debt we owe to those who serve.

What's News in SD54

Michele Courneya, chair

As I sit down to write this article, I am ruminating on how the state that elected Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, and Paul Wellstone also managed to send Republican Michele Bachman to Congress to represent Minnesota's 6th District. Representative Bachman is all over the news this morning for remarks she made on MSNBC saying she is very concerned that Barack Obama "may have anti-American views," naming Joe Biden, Harry Reid, and Nancy Pelosi as other "liberals" who we should also be concerned about. When asked what other members of Congress have anti-American views, she stated "I wish the American media would take a great look

at the views of the people in Congress and find out, are they pro-America or anti-America?" Apparently, her definition of anti-American is the same as Joe McCarthy's was—anybody that doesn't agree with me and my views.

It is a true act of courage and patriotism to run for public office, campaign on good ideas, and tell the truth in the political climate created by these kinds of statements and those that make them. Many thanks to our wonderful SD54 State Representatives Mindy Greiling and Bev Scalze for the commitment, thoughtful discussion of complex issues, tireless efforts, and courage they have shown in running positive re-election campaigns.

Many thanks also to all the volunteers who knocked doors, dropped literature, phone banked, delivered signs, wrote letters to the editor, attended debates, got out the vote, and donated money and time to these campaigns and those of other Democratic candidates. Finally, many thanks to all who attended and donated to the Bruce Vento Dinner. Proceeds from that event went to pay for sample ballots listing all DFL-endorsed candidates running for office in CD4. The ballots went out to approximately 90 percent of the DFL-leaning voters in SD54. None of this is possible without your willingness to work hard for candidates that support your values and work hard for you.

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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Fortunately, based on the polls as we go to press, it appears 2008 is the year American voters reject fear mongering, baseless character attacks, and the questioning of a candidate's patriotism because they do not share your views of reasonable campaign tactics. Millions of voters all over the country now stirred by hope and change, instead of fear and hate, plan to cast their votes accordingly—for Democrats. By the time you read this, the election will likely be over. It is my fervent hope and belief that Americans everywhere sent a loud and clear

message that “Enough is enough!” and elected a full slate of Democrats to offices at all levels of government.

SD54’s Post Election/Pre-Holiday celebration will be on Thursday, November 20, from 6:00-9:00 p.m. at Cedarholm Golf Course in Roseville. We will provide beverages, plates, napkins, utensils, and door prizes. You bring the food, friends and fun. Also, please bring your checkbook. We pulled out all the stops and donated the full legal amounts to our candidates for their 2008 campaigns. As part of our ongoing efforts to continue electing DFL candidates, we need to replenish our funds. This event will provide you one of many future opportunities to donate directly to SD54 and help keep building the DFL base.

Donations to SD54 are eligible for the Minnesota State Political Contribution Refund (PCR). This means that you can donate \$50 per person, or \$100 per couple, per year and the state will refund your money. If you have not already made a political donation eligible for the PCR this year, please consider making a donation to SD54. If you have donated in 2008, keep SD54 in mind for 2009.

If you receive this newsletter before November 4—please remember, Vote Democrat!

Two Senators Highlight Vento Dinner

Georgiana Sobola
Anticipation ran high when Fourth Congressional District (4CD) Chair J. P. Barone, complete in tux and red cummerbund, announced that there would be a big surprise at the Bruce Vento Spaghetti Dinner on October 5, 2008. Senator Amy Klobuchar was not the surprise. She has been a regular speaker at the dinner. But when she introduced Senator Russ Feingold, from neighboring Wisconsin, the DFLers rose to their feet to give him a rousing welcome.

Senator Feingold paid his respects to the memory of Bruce Vento for his meaningful environmental work. He described Klobuchar as one of the most active members of the senate. He thanked Betty McCollum, who could not attend because of pressing obligations in Washington D.C., for her work—especially for the AIDS programs.

Feingold stressed we now have a fantastic opportunity to add Democrats to Congress. Al Franken has helped Democratic efforts in Wisconsin. Now it is time to help him. We need to elect Barack Obama so that we can put responsible leadership in the U.S. Department of Justice and on the Intelligence Committee. We need a president who will have a different approach and who believes in the rule of law. The senator reminded us that we can’t let up. We need to stay focused and not be over-confident. This message was impressed upon the audience by all the speakers at the dinner.

Amy Klobuchar said she came to honor Bruce Vento and thank him for his legacy of environmental work: work that is being continued by Betty McCollum. “How things have changed in just eight years!” she exclaimed. We are now

the victims of an economic policy whose danger signs the current administration ignored while forgetting Main Street. We need new people in office so that this never happens again. “We are fired up and ready to go! Why is this election important? We need more Democratic seats in the senate if we want to pass the legislation we care about.”

Keynote speaker Wy Spano described his program at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, as teaching a new understanding of advocacy. He introduced current and former students who are now in positions to practice this advocacy. Spano indicted the Bush administration for its lack of caring about the environment; disregarding the care for other people; making it difficult for poor people to get ahead; and leaving us broke and universally disliked. The cost of education is an obscene example of not taking care. Taking out his crystal ball, Spano predicted that after the election we will have a Democratic president, two new senators and a total of 62 new Democrats in Congress.

Spano stood Republican tax policy on its head, describing it as teaching that raising taxes stifles economic growth. Actually, he contended, the opposite is true. The higher the tax rate, the stronger the people are. He admitted, however, that this is a hard sell. He ended with a plea to Democrats to

- Participate fully in the Obama administration.
- Admit we need more resources. We need to make sure that all economic levels are equal.
- Do whatever we can to help the GOP find a vision and stop the viciousness. They used to be people who tried to solve problems.

“We’re going to win big, but this is just the beginning!!!”

By the time dinner was served, the lobby of the Prom Center in Oakdale was filled wall to wall with enthusiastic and confident DFLers from 4CD and beyond. SD54 had five reserved tables. Time preceding dinner was spent meeting and greeting friends and bidding on the silent auction items—the funding source for 4CD. Andi Moffett provided the auction basket from SD54, and additional baskets were contributed by April Alfuth, Sue Rengstorf, Anita Mayfield, and Hallie Finucane.

The spirited live auction, held as part of the dinner program, auctioned off ten items. The high bid was \$1,000 for an apple pie to be baked and delivered by Franni (Mrs. Al) Franken. A copy of a Hubert Humphrey Day program autographed by Barack Obama brought the second highest

bid of \$500. Total proceeds from both auctions were announced as \$5,962, but after late comers paid for their auction items, the total was well over \$6,000. This money will pay for DFL sample ballots for 90,000 households in 4CD.

Robin Madsen was the winner of the Bruce Vento Public Service Award. She organized the Bruce Vento Dinner for the first five years and served as a consultant for this year's event. Gene F. Mammenga received the 4CD Party Service Award. He served as a state senator 1967-1972, and since then has been an active volunteer in many 4CD campaigns. He arrived on stage to accept his award in his white jogging shoes—appearing ready to do more door-knocking right after the dinner.

A Rocky Mountain High

The Democratic National Convention

Impressions from the 2008 DNC

Pat Coleman

What an honor and a privilege to be chosen by SD54 to be a delegate to a national convention. As a historian, I was pretty sure this would be an especially important and memorable convention, and I wasn't disappointed. And what a joy to be gathered together in a town with so many people who are all as fixated on politics as I am. You couldn't walk down a street or through a restaurant without overhearing dozens of political conversations and, for once in my life, they almost all agreed with me!

I took my charge very seriously (one night I even gave up my tickets to a concert to attend a meeting where all we did was go around a table and introduce ourselves) and I found out that there is, in actuality, very little "charge." Aside from the nomination vote, our duty as delegates was to be enthusiastic background props for the home viewing audience.

I was not prepared for how emotional the convention would be. I know I'm a weeper but boy! Every night at the convention I was moved to tears at least once. For example, one night I wasn't paying attention when Tammy Duckworth began speaking. She was an Iraq war veteran who had run for a U.S. House seat in Illinois. She did mention that she had been shot down in Iraq but I cried when she walked off the dais and her prosthetic legs showed beneath her dress.

Highlights? The meeting Hillary had with her delegates right before the vote telling us why she voted for Obama (very classy); Biden introducing us to his mother (a Finnegan like me own dear mother); the Obama children on stage (no Hollywood script writer could have made them cuter); Barack's acceptance speech (proving to me that he would do what it took to get elected); and karaoke (nuff said).

My biggest surprise was how attached I became to my fellow delegates. We spent so much time together it was almost like going away to camp. When we parted there were misty eyes (again) and promises to stay in touch and be friends forever, but since that is always harder to do than it sounds, we may have to be content with our memories.

If I had any disappointment at all it was with the media. They seemed more interested in finding the story they had already written than reporting the real story. Several reporters, looking for a controversy, dismissed me quickly when it became clear that I was not an "angry Clinton delegate" and was in fact happy with the outcome of the process. A newspaper reporter from Texas was looking for a delegate who thought Michelle Obama was a demon and a television reporter from Florida was looking for another delegate who believed Obama was in grave danger from assassins. Both those journalists left, still looking for someone who would tell them what they wanted to hear.

Report from the 2008 DNC

Miguel Lindgren

First, as a member of DFL Senate District 54, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank SD54 members who attended the DFL State Convention and helped elect me as a national delegate to the 2008 DNC in Denver, Colorado. The experience was incredible and one that I will cherish the rest of my life, especially since it was so historic. As a delegate pledged to Senator Obama, I had the great honor of representing thousands of Minnesotans who entrusted me to cast their votes to make Senator Obama the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency of the United States.

As this was my first convention, I had some vague ideas about what the experience would be like. These were mostly drawn from seeing previous conventions on television and reading about them in the newspapers. I even read much pre-convention coverage on the internet and stayed informed through the news media. However, my vague notions about a Democratic National Convention would pale in comparison to being a full participant at one.

First of all, the schedule was quite demanding. The DNC took place Monday, August 25 to Thursday, August 28. A typical day began with a 7:00 a.m. delegation breakfast where a bit of business such as announcements, distribution of credentials for the day, and other housekeeping items took place. In addition, breakfast sponsors, fellow delegates, and keynote speakers from all walks of life were invited to address the delegation. Among these were delegation leaders such as Vice-President Mondale, U.S. Senator Klobuchar, State Senator Patricia Torres Ray, State Auditor Rebecca Otto, and special invited guests Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Representative Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), President of the Teamsters International James P. Hoffa, Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans, and others.

After the breakfast meeting, most of us headed to the Denver Convention Center for various caucus meetings. These generally ran from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. I attended the meetings of the Hispanic caucus and found the experience enlightening. As you can imagine, the Hispanic caucus focused on issues impacting many communities such as healthcare and education, as well as community-specific issues such as voter turnout, the untapped potential of Latino political power, impediments to greater participation, strategies for getting out the vote, etc. Highlights from the Hispanic caucus meetings included keynote addresses by U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama.

Generally from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., delegates attended various luncheons to which we were invited. Some of our delegation attended a luncheon sponsored by Congressman James Oberstar while others, as I did, attended a luncheon sponsored by the Latino Leaders Network to honor Federico Peña, former mayor of the city of Denver, who had held posts in the Clinton administration.

After lunch it was time to head to the Pepsi Center where the actual business of the DNC took place, generally from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. This was by far the highlight of the DNC. Here is where the leaders of the Democratic Party such as Teddy Kennedy, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Michelle Obama, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and many others addressed the convention. Here is where the international press gathered to cover it. A few of us were interviewed by the media. Seated right behind the CNN broadcasting station, a few of us even made it on national TV. Here also was a chance to shake hands with party leaders such as Joe Biden, Bill Richardson, and others.

After the evening's program, high on energy and the enthusiasm of being around thousands of like-minded people, it was time to celebrate by attending one of the many parties hosted by a myriad of organizations. Returning to the hotel by 2:00 a.m. was not uncommon. As I said, the schedule was quite demanding!

The schedule was fairly consistent Monday through Thursday morning. On Thursday afternoon however, instead of heading to the Pepsi Center, we headed to Invesco Field, also known as Mile High Stadium or the home of the Denver Broncos, where the traditional doors of a convention site were blown wide open to allow 80,000+ citizens to witness history as Senator Barack Obama accepted our party's nomination for the presidency of the United States with a tremendous acceptance speech. The build-up toward the culmination of the night included a line up of great speeches and entertainers like Stevie Wonder and Cheryl Crow. Video played on "jumbotrons" throughout the stadium juxtaposing the lives of Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Obama made for a very moving experience. After Senator Obama's speech, the stadium was showered with red, white, and blue confetti and fireworks that brought the entire audience to its feet with thunderous applause, a few tears, and exuberant chants including our rallying cry, 'Yes, we can!'

After a very successful convention, it is now time to focus on victory in November. I urge members of SD54 to unite behind our nominee and continue to work to make Barack Obama the next president of the United States.

Seventeen—Too Young to Vote

Joey Johnson

As a senior in high school, it's hard to avoid involvement in this year's presidential race. While many of my friends have just turned eighteen or will be celebrating their birthday before November 4, I will be left out of the voting process this year, as my birthday falls in May, about six months too late. As everyone else was preparing to vote, registering, researching the candidates, and watching the debates, I found myself feeling irrelevant in ensuring the future of our government. I raised the question "What can I do, as a citizen who is not eligible to vote, to influence the election?"

Such questions were quickly met with answers as I became informed of volunteer opportunities for the Democratic Party. One of these was volunteering to work at the SD54 DFL mini-donut booth during the 2008 Minnesota State Fair. The booth generates revenues that are spent on campaigning for DFL nominees.

After my first experiences working at the donut booth, I can definitively say it's nothing like any campaign volunteering I've done in the past. While I have distributed yard signs and done other things of that nature, I had never bagged, sugared, and sold mini donuts for a good cause before this past August. I would recommend this opportunity (as soon as the fair rolls around next year) to anyone tired of door knocking and phone calling, or just looking for an opportunity to meet some interesting people while working for a worthy cause.

Thanks again!

—SD54 Legislators—

Senator John Marty

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The Very Air We Breathe

Peter Berglund

Now that our homes and apartments are being closed up for winter, it is a good time to think about the indoor air we breathe. This column for the Senate District 54 newsletter will usually be devoted to topics dealing with how you can help the environment. This article on radon gas should help you test and protect your immediate environment—your home! Homes and apartments (below the third level) should be tested for radon.

The following information is from a brochure published by the St. Paul-Ramsey County Department of Public Health (DPH).

Radon is a cancer-causing gas that can be in our homes. For non-smokers in this country, radon is the number one cause of lung cancer. Here's a website for Ramsey County, with more information on radon gas and how you can test for it in your own home:

http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/hsndo/Ior_Air_Radon.htm

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) estimates that about one in three Minnesota homes has enough radon to pose a large risk to the occupants' health over many years of exposure.

Contacts:

St. Paul-Ramsey County DPH: 651-266-1199 (for recorded information 651-266-1133)

Minnesota Department of Health: 651-201-4601.

The MDH website is:

www.health.state.mn. (type radon in the search box)

You can order a test kit from the St. Paul-Ramsey County DPH. (The test results will become public information. You may be able to obtain a kit from a different source if you do not want the information made publically available. Check with St. Paul-Ramsey County.)

Please test the air you breathe in your own home so you can stay safe.

Senate District 54

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Minnesota State DFL Party

www.dfl.org

SD54 Calendar November 2008—February 2009

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.

November 20	Thursday	Post Election/Pre-Holiday Party for SD54 friends and families, Cedarholm Golf Course, Roseville, 6:00-9:00 p.m.
December 4	Thursday	Newsletter Planning Committee Meeting, Georgiana Sobola's home, 1961 Hamline Ave. N., Roseville, 7:00 p.m.
December 18	Thursday	SD54 Executive Committee Meeting, Basswood Room in Fire Station #1, 2701 N. Lexington Ave. in the Roseville City Hall complex

2009

January 15	Thursday	SD54 Central Committee Meeting, Basswood Room in Fire Station #1, 2701 N. Lexington Ave. in the Roseville City Hall complex, 7:00 p.m.
February 19	Thursday	SD54 Executive Committee Meeting, Basswood Room in Fire Station #1, 2701 N. Lexington Ave. in the Roseville City Hall complex, 7:00 p.m.

—*Attention Readers*—

This newsletter is an important asset to SD54, but there are costs as well! You can help maintain this service and cut production costs by switching from paper copy to email copy. Please do so starting today. Contact Norm Hanson (651) 484-8926 or Julianne Johnston (651) 486-7120 to make this change.

Also, the Newsletter Committee needs new members who are willing to learn how the newsletter is produced and become essential members of the newsletter production committee. We are looking for people in all positions. Contact Norm or Julianne to find out how you can become more involved and help keep this valuable resource going as we look forward to our 100th issue in January 2009.

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Dated Material—Please Rush

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

Party Time!!!

Post-Election/Pre-Holiday Potluck Party Event

Date: Thursday, November 20, 2008

Time: 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Place: Cedarholm Golf Course Clubhouse

(The Roseville Cedarholm Golf Course is located just north of Highway 36 on Hamline Avenue)

This annual event brings friends and neighbors together
to celebrate our many victories and thank all the DFL supporters in SD54.

There will be prizes and lots of fun political talk you won't want to miss.

Beverages, plates, utensils, and napkins will be provided.
You bring the gourmet culinary repast (also known as "food") to share.

Everyone is welcome, so bring your family and friends of the DFL.