



The SCPD Progressive Patriot

The Newsletter for Progressive Activists in NE Ohio

WHAT IS SCPD?

SCPD is a 501(c)4 grass roots organization of dedicated people committed to social justice on the local, State, national, and international levels. We support efforts that better the lives of all citizens by working to promote human rights, equal economic opportunity, responsive government, a safe, sustainable environment, and a society built on compassion. Our goal is to expand grass roots participation in the political process and to return the federal government to the will of the people.

If you are interested in SCPD, contact Ingrid Kunstel at ikunstel@neo.rr.com

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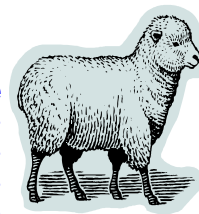
"GRASSROOTS ACTION NOW!"

MARCH 2007



BUILDING TOWARD 2008

As the blustery month of March comes rolling in, with snow and rain and wind, **Summit County Progressive Democrats** begin preparations to strengthen their members and their infrastructure. Another round of Leadership Training is about to begin, training for Precinct Committee people will continue, lobbying the legislators who we helped to elect is underway, the process of determining what issues we will work on this year has begun, fundraising events are being planned and an appreciation party is in the works to honor all of our hard workers.



So hold onto your hats because here comes SCPD!!

SCPD TO HOLD AWARDS PARTY

Friday, April 13th, will be a lucky day for the Summit County Progressive Democrats. It is the day that they will hold what they hope will become an annual recognition event to pay tribute to the members who have worked so hard in the preceding year.

A cocktail party will be held at St. Joseph's Family Center from 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. All members of SCPD, other Democratic organizations, county and city officials and state and local politicians are invited.

The evening will feature First Lady of Ohio, Frances Strickland, as the keynote speaker. She will talk about the role of progressives in turning Ohio around. She will appear at 7:00 p.m.



First Lady of the State of Ohio
Frances Strickland

Emceed by member, John Cross, the cocktail party will spotlight 4 people of distinction. The SCPD Progressive Patriot of the Year, The SCPD Member of the Year, The SCPD Unsung Hero/Heroine of the Year and The SCPD Committee Member of the Year will be announced that evening.

The difficult thing for the Board of Directors has been to narrow down the ballot to just a few names for each category. "There are so many people in this incredible group who could and probably should be singled out that it makes it very tough," says Board Member, Bobbie Carper. Whether receiving a reward or not, the members will undoubtedly be honoring one another and celebrating Friday the 13th!!

WHAT A PATRIOT LOOKS LIKE

By Tom Liston

On December 16, 1773, he climbed aboard cargo ship to throw bales of English tea into Boston Harbor. A year and a half later he was on the green at Lexington, facing down British soldiers who had grossly underestimated his thirst for liberty.

Half a century later he worked the Underground Railroad, risking his life to help people to free-

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dom. And on November 19, 1863, he stood in the crowd at Gettysburg to hear Lincoln speak.

He has fought for the rights of labor and the rights of women and was there to speak out against the excesses of the Gilded Age. He was in France in 1918, at Normandy in 1944. He marched in Selma for civil rights and in Chicago to force an end to an unjust war.

I met him the day I joined the Summit County Progressive Democrats, or more precisely, I met the person in whom his spirit now resides. If you've been active at all in SCPD in its advocacy of issues and its opposition to Bush's war, you've met him too.

He has no use for personal adulation and I'm sure these words will make him uncomfortable. A self-described simple man of simple means he has two driving passions: his family and his country. He calls himself a "soldier of the Constitution," and rises to defend it against men who consider it just another piece of paper, an inconvenient obstacle to power and greed.

His most admirable characteristic, however, the one you recognize as soon as you engage him in conversation, is that there is not a disingenuous bone in his body. He looks at you, usually with a broad smile, and tells it like it is. He is refreshingly, unabashedly, openly in love with truth and with the American ideal. It is his signature, his stamp, his persona.

In 2003 he traveled to New York to lend his voice to millions of others around the world gathering to protest Bush's illegal war. He wrote about that experience. Here is a portion of what he had to say:

"I am a soldier of the Constitution. I am Todd Schneider. I have no title, other than father, husband and taxpayer, so am of no interest to anyone in the media. We hail from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. My wife is a 29 year union cashier at a grocery store, I a machinist, welder, Cad draftsman. We are citizens of the United States, not as a reward for anything we have done, but rather by the grace of God. Therefore we feel duty-bound to return that blessing by standing by the Constitution of the United States with any talent bestowed on us by that same God."



Eric, Todd and Jill Schneider

The Summit County Progressive Democrats is a much better organization simply by the fact that one of its members is Todd Schneider.

We salute him in this edition of our newsletter as the Progressive Patriot of the month. Congratulations to Todd and his family and for the example they set for the rest of us.

ETHICS AND REFORM

By Sandra Kurt

Following his election to the state legislature, Rep. Vernon Sykes (D-44 District), whom the SCPD enthusiastically endorsed, made election reform one of his first priorities.

On Jan. 13 he sponsored a symposium in Columbus: "2008 and Beyond -- The Future of Election and Ethics Reform in the States." The event drew a host of political scientists from around the country – and a contingent of members of SCPD as interested, political activists. Featured speakers included Ohio's newly elected attorney general, Marc Dann, and secretary of state, Jennifer Brunner. Impetus



**State Representative
Dr. Vernon Sykes**

for the daylong event was the fact that our election system is in a state of crisis.

The morning session was devoted to the presentation of findings by several academics studying current problems in the election process. Some of their conclusions were:

- Allowing early voting (mailed ballots) *does not* increase overall turnout
- Voters' belief that the election process is fair is directly related to their perception of competence in the poll workers they encounter
- The more complicated the ballot, the less confidence voters have in the election outcome
- There is more voter confidence in the integrity of lo-

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cal elections than there is in statewide or national venues

- Where voters trust in the integrity of officials in charge of elections (eg: county clerks of court and secretaries of state), their confidence in the accuracy of the results tends to be higher.

Addressing some of the problems implicit in these findings, Jennifer Brunner, our new Secretary of State, said that her number one priority is to restore trust in the election process. To that end she plans to appoint a qualified individual to recertify and retest electronic voting machines, create a uniform system of auditing election results, and develop a uniform system of poll-worker training. She said the present system of recruiting and training poll workers is inadequate, that the 16-hour workday is too long. Her plan is to find qualified people to do the job, give them better training in advance of the election, and to split the election-day workload into two 8 hours shifts. She also intends to improve communications between her office and local election officials across the state. Her predecessor had a policy that prohibited written communications with local boards of election, which had a predictable result of creating confusion in elections administration and a lack of a uniform protocol across the state. She intends to eliminate that problem.

Another interesting topic of discussion at the symposium was the effect of term limits on the election process and subsequent performance of those elected. Professor Chris Mooney of the University of Illinois made a persuasive argument that term limits are not conducive to good governance.

They are *perceived* to be better leaders because “in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” Committees are less effective; each legislator is in a hurry to get his or her bill through, so they let others through without proper discrimination. Finally, term-limited legislators’ behavior tends to be much more partisan, their votes reflecting their personal beliefs and interests more than those of their constituents. Professor Mooney also noted that “institutional knowledge,” an important ingredient in representative democracy, is lost under a system with term limits.

Leaders, under term limits, have less experience and expertise; they are effectively lame ducks from the moment they pick up the gavel. Those of us from SCPD came away from this symposium with a realization that much work remains to be done in restoring integrity to our elections. We were also gratified to see that state officials like Jennifer Brunner and Marc Dann, whom we helped elect, are committed to election reform.

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL OHIOANS

By Bobbie Carper

On February 27th, the Portage Democratic Coalition, Summit County Progressive Democrats, Northeast Portage Democrats, and Ohio Progressive Action Coalition co-sponsored a joint meeting on the health-care crisis in America at the VFW post in Kent. Dr. Johnathon Ross, a physician from Toledo, gave an inspiring presentation of the history of health care in this country and how we have gotten to where we are (or aren’t) today. The proposition of national health care has been discussed since at least 1912 when Teddy Roosevelt was president, and we are no closer to obtaining insurance coverage for all Americans now than we were then. Consider these facts:



Dr. Johnathon Ross speaking to

- 1.3 million Ohioans and 47 million Americans have no health insurance and millions more have inadequate coverage.
- People who do have insurance are only one illness or job change away from losing it.
- 18,000 Americans died last year because they couldn’t afford health care (that’s equivalent to two World Trade Center disasters every two months!).
- 46% of all personal bankruptcies are related to medical expenses and 75% of those filing had insurance but were underinsured.
- \$11.6 billion is wasted annually **in Ohio alone** by a complex and inefficient health insurance system with 20-30% administrative overhead.

Few people would argue that our health care system in America is seriously broken and it is time to fix it. A statewide coalition of organizations and individuals in Ohio, known as SPAN (Single-Payer Action Network) is working to do just that. SPAN advocates the establishment of a public fund that would pay health care

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bills for **all Ohioans** without co-payments or deductibles, similar to the way Medicare works. Imagine, if you would, that every resident of Ohio had access to guaranteed comprehensive health care including hospitalization, doctors' visits, prescription drugs, vision, dental and home care --- all with no premiums, no co-pays and no deductibles. Sound too good to be true? Well, it is entirely possible to fund such a plan from taxes collected on a sliding scale, where the wealthier residents pay more than the middle and lower class. Presently, the wealthy only pay taxes into Medicare on the first \$90,000 of their income. SPAN's proposal, however, would establish an additional tax based on annual income so that anyone making *less* than \$94,000 annually would pay *no additional taxes at all* for health care and those who make more would pay proportionally. Administrative costs would be limited to 5% or less, which means the additional money currently spent on insurance administrators would be added to the public fund to cover health care costs. Similar plans are already in place and running successfully in Canada and Europe.

Many of the reforms we have accomplished in the past have started at the state level, and once they are proven successful (and the sky hasn't fallen), they are much more easily adopted as a national reform. Consequently, SPAN and numerous progressive groups around the state will be working this year collecting signatures to get the Health Care For All Ohioans Act on the ballot. SCPD will be joining this effort, so brush off your clipboards and get ready to hit local venues to help put this very important issue before the voters in November. It is time to take our health care system back because some day we will all be patients. For more information, go to www.spanohio.org

WE WON. NOW WHAT?

By Tom Liston

If there was a paragon of progressive values and ideals among the various candidates last year, it was a candidate we endorsed and then enthusiastically supported in the May primary, Subodh Chandra. He was 'our' candidate for attorney general. For those of you who know him, or have heard him speak, this is "preaching to the choir."

The good news is that Subodh has not withdrawn from the public arena. In fact, he was a guest speaker at the SCPD January meeting. His return to SCPD was quintessential Subodh.

He had come back to thank SCPD for its support of his campaign, describing us as one of the two or three most effective progressive organizations in the state, a model for others. But he also wanted to share some thoughts about the future, and the responsibility of progressives to remain active.

One of his points was that our electoral victories in 2006 were just the beginning of a long journey. He stressed the importance of not only continuing to support the officials we helped to elect, but of monitoring their performance and holding them accountable. His point was that politicians need to be reminded occasionally of the expectations of those who worked so hard to put them into office. When they deviate from those expectations they need to be reminded of it.

He was also quite insistent that one of the most effective things we can do is to find members who are willing to run for office themselves, from school board to Congress and everything in between. Though he lost his run for attorney general, he noted that his candidacy had had a measurable

effect on the political dialogue, forcing a public consideration of more progressive points of view. And this is the real value of seeking office, to force a more open discussion of issues

Paraphrasing his comments in necessarily inadequate,

but in speaking of issues for which progressives should be in the vanguard he said nothing is more important than electoral reform. He told a very compelling story of a black woman from the south who had fought the difficult battles for civil and voting rights. He traced her history of civic involvement over the years, and how she had eventually come to Cleveland. And then he described how, thanks to needlessly restrictive rules in HB 3 (the Republican voting bill passed last year in Ohio), she was denied her right to vote in the 2006 election! It took a legal, temporary ruling to allow this woman and folks like her to vote in 2006 but the problem is still there waiting for her in 2007.

This kind of injustice, he said, is the kind which all progressives and all fair-minded people should energetically work to prevent. The best way to do that, he suggested, was for us to work as hard as we can to make elections fair.



Subodh Chandra

WHAT IS A PROGRESSIVE?

By Frank Kunstel

Does it matter to us that we be able to define “progressive”? I suggest yes, it does. As issues arise for SCPD to confront, understanding progressive beliefs and values will help us interpret and choose good options for solutions. For example, what is a progressive solution to charter schools and vouchers? Yes, we are against them in their present form, but is there a progressive solution to the problems they try to address?

What makes a candidate “progressive”? It is relatively easy to answer that at the national level, but what about candidates for mayor or council or state legislature? How can we tell if they are progressive?

This is a two-part article on progressivism. In Part 1 I try to capture the historical basis of progressivism—the roots of progressive belief. In part 2 I will discuss current progressivism, with a particular eye toward differentiating between “liberal” and “progressive” beliefs.

At the beginning of the 20th century, America was about to become a major world power. There had been tremendous technical and industrial advances in the last decades of the 19th century and a large portion of the population had migrated to urban areas. But the mind-set of the country as a whole was still rooted in rural ideas. Wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a relatively few people as businesses consolidated into huge “trusts”. By 1909, 44% of all manufactured goods were produced by just 1% of all business firms.

With all these advances, there was still a huge portion of the population that was poor. Between 30% and 50% of the working class lived in poverty and only 10% of their children graduated from high school.

Farmers pressed for political reforms in the hope that more direct forms of democracy would lead to public policies that would help them—better roads, cheaper credit, lower land taxes.

As these conditions grew, protestors became active. Authors exposed the horrible conditions of the meat-packing plants, the cut-throat practices of big businesses such as Standard Oil, and the living conditions of the poor.

From 1901 to 1920 and again from 1932 to 1941, progressivism was a major force in American politics, embodied in the Presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The movement began as an effort to respond to the conditions described above. Progressivism as a political force actually crystallized under the Republican Party as lead by Teddy Roosevelt. William Howard Taft undermined that movement in the party and the progressive mantle shifted to the Democrats with the election of Wilson in 1912.

Several interest groups—farmers, labor unions, intellectual reformers, and middle-class businessmen in the big cities,

drove progressivism. They had a core set of beliefs:

- the common good should prevail; a humanitarian temperament means it is the responsibility of all of us to lend a hand to each other and to promote the basic Human dignity of all people
- concentration of power in large organizations is dangerous, especially power in the hands of the wealthy and the big business owners
- distribution of power through a democratic form of government is beneficial to all
- government has a duty to regulate big businesses for the common good and to provide a level playing field; government has an obligation to promote justice and fairness
- labor should be protected and helped to flourish; collective bargaining should be fostered
- reform is valued as a means to create systems that provide for the common good

Major pieces of legislation passed in all three presidential administrations illustrate these principles. Teddy Roosevelt created a Department of Commerce and Labor to regulate industry. He convinced Congress to grant the Interstate Commerce Commission the power to regulate railroad rates. He added 17 million acres of land to the national reserves.

Wilson reduced tariff rates in order to foster more international trade. He achieved passage of the Federal Reserve Act to gain more public control over banking, and he created the Federal Trade Commission to deal with unfair trade practices. Of course, FDR, in his New Deal, established landmark social welfare programs such as Social Security. The Agricultural Adjustment Act provided relief and reform for farmers and the National Industrial Recovery Act allowed trade groups to collaborate fairly while also guaranteeing unions the right to organize and bargain.

There were, of course different interpretations of some of these principles. For example, Teddy Roosevelt thought that consolidation of business was inevitable and therefore government can best serve by regulating it. Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, believed consolidation was not inevitable and that government should break up big business and foster competition.

These core principles were fairly consistent throughout the progressive era and serve as a framework for modern progressivism. This will be discussed in the next newsletter.



SCPD Sponsors 100 Black Man Mentorship Program

The 100 Black Men of Summit County have started a program that has an adult African-American male make a commitment to a 5th grade boy to mentor him all the way through high school. 75 boys have signed up for this amazing program.

Summit County Progressive Democrats have raised \$760 to sponsor the boys by providing them with a book bag and tee shirt with the program logo on it.

DIPLOMACY WORKS!

U.S. Marine squad was marching north of Faluijiah when they came upon an Iraqi terrorist, badly injured and unconscious. On the opposite side of the road was an American Marine in a similar but less serious state.

The Marine was conscious and alert and as first aid was given to both men, the squad leader asked the injured Marine what had happened. The Marine reported, "I was heavily armed and moving north along the highway here, and coming south was a heavily armed insurgent. We saw each other and both took cover in the ditches along the road. I yelled to him that Saddam Hussein is a miserable, lowlife scum bag."

He yelled back that Dick Cheney is a good-for-nothing, fat, right-wing draft dodger. So I said that Osama Bin Laden acts like a mean-spirited %##&@%! He retaliated by yelling, "Oh yeah? Well, so does George Bush!"

And, there we were, in the middle of the road, shaking hands, when a truck hit us.

REMINDER

If anyone has a member in good standing who they would like to nominate for office, it must be done by 3/27/07. Names can be given to John Cross at 330-620-1476.

In order to vote for the candidates on April 10, you must be a member in good standing which means you must have paid your dues and be present at the General Membership Meeting.

The *Progressive Patriot* is edited by the SCPD Communications Committee. To submit an article or a comment contact Tom Liston.

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Progressive Democrats,
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