



The SCPD Progressive Patriot

The Newsletter for Progressive Activists in NE Ohio

"A Grass Roots Coalition for Change"

WHAT IS SCP?

SCP 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 SCP, contact Ingrid Kunstel at ikunstel@neo.rr.com

JUNE, 2006

SCP Celebrates Juneteenth in Akron



Steve Cochran and Denise Woods man the SCP Booth at the Juneteenth Celebration

General Gordon arrived with the exciting news.

In the contagious spirit of democracy celebrated at **Juneteenth** in Akron, SCP PAC handed out literature on candidates, collected signatures in support of the ballot initiative to increase Ohio's Minimum Wage, assisted with voter registration, and encouraged voters to sign a petition board to demonstrate their commitment toward the success of the candidacy of Democrat Ted Strickland for Governor.

New SCP members were recruited, including a new participant in the SCP-Rapid Response network. Many local citizens expressed appreciation for the visibility of SCP in the grassroots effort in their community to forge a solid front to return our government to "we the people".

Many thanks to all the volunteers who worked at the SCP tent in spreading the word!



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Bruce Freeman

Many dedicated SCP volunteers worked the crowd at the celebration of *Juneteenth* this past weekend on South Hawkins Avenue in Akron. Surrounded by community members in a festive mood, the message of the importance of upcoming elections was circulated among young and old.

Juneteenth is the oldest known national day of celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers under Major General Gordon Granger landed at Galveston, Texas with news the Civil War had ended. The Emancipation Proclamation had declared slaves were free 2 1/2 years before, but there was little impact on Texans until

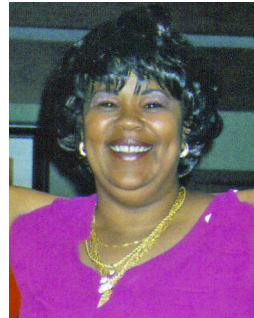
Tamela Lee Elected to Summit County Democratic Party Executive Committee

Tom Liston

A meeting of the Central Committee of the Summit County Democratic Party was held on June 14, to install newly elected precinct committee persons and to elect officers. Several SCPD members who had campaigned and won in their respective precincts were in attendance.

After the swearing in of the new precinct committee persons (PCs), the floor was opened to nominations to fill the five seats on the Summit County Democratic Party Executive Committee: Chairperson, First and Second Vice-Chairpersons, Treasurer, and Secretary. Four of the five incumbent officers won unanimously, without opposition, including chairman Russ Pry.

James Field, who heads the Hudson Democrats and is a member of the SCPD, surprised everyone in the hall when nominations for Second Vice-Chairperson were called for. He went to the podium and officially nominated SCPD's Tamela Lee for the position. When nominations were closed there were two candidates for the position: the incumbent Elsie McGrady, and our own Tamela Lee.



Before ballots were cast by the precinct representatives, the candidates were asked to address the assembly. Tamela, who had not prepared a statement and had not anticipated having to do so, was visibly anxious as she walked to the podium.

However, any doubts about her ability to handle the situation were dispelled as she coolly articulated her qualifications and her commitment to the Democratic Party.

The assembled PCs were obviously impressed. In the secret balloting which followed, they voted 90 to 81 in her favor.

Members and officers of the Summit County Progressive Democrats are proud to extend their congratulations to Tamela, who has served as Treasurer of our organization since 2005. Another job well done by a lady with the "right stuff."

Editor's note: Over 20 SCPD members were elected as precinct committee persons in the May primary. We'll have more on this in our next newsletter.

My Night at the Ohio Democratic Party Dinner

Scott Piepho

The full story of how I got to meet Barack Obama is in itself interesting only to people who religiously follow blogs and think about Big Issues like the nature of blogging. Suffice it to say, some Ohio



bloggers asked the Ohio Democratic Party (ODP) for complimentary tickets to the Annual Dinner at which Senator Obama was the keynote speaker, ODP declined, bloggers got irritable (as they are wont to do) and Obama stepped in to buy a table of ten seats and promise a special sit-down. Happily, part of ODP's response to the controversy was a new process for credentialing blog-

gers. Our credentials gave us access to the media room where Senator Obama, ODP Chair Chris Redfern, DNC vice-chair Susan Turnbull and Senator Joe Biden each stood for questions from the press.

Chairman Redfern's joint press conference with Ms. Turnbull was particularly interesting. He outlined the 88 county strategy – presence in every county, try to improve performance in rural counties, leave nothing unchallenged.

He also said he is taking seriously the allegations of wrongdoing in the 2004 election. Democrats will be running a strong voter protection effort with at least one lawyer retained in each county. Senator Obama in person is every bit as impressive as on TV. Even speaking impromptu he

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My Night at the ODP Dinner, continued—

shows both a deep understanding of policy and an uncanny command of the language of politics. He hit on his favorite themes: progressives should not cede the ground on values, that we should build credibility on national defense.

Obama pulls off the singular feat of combining terrific intelligence with the ability to turn complex ideas into workable policies and the ability to express himself in a way that appeals to everyone from average joes to policy wonks. It's not often the best politician and the smartest guy in the room are the same person.

Still, the night truly belonged to gubernatorial candidate Rep. Ted Strickland. He gave a rousing speech, but also showed his down-home side as his wife Francis sang a biographical song to the tune of the Davy Crockett theme, intercut with Ted's one-liners.

At one point Senator Biden pointed out that, because Bush will be present for the next two years, winning this year is crucial. "If we win one house, we can stop a lot of bad stuff from happening." Judging by the reaction of the crowd, people are ready to do just that.

Scott's blog: <http://phosnorkapages.blogspot.com>

SCPD Present at Cleveland Pride Festival

Sandra J. Kurt

On Saturday, June 17, SCPD participated in Cleveland PRIDE, the festival that celebrates the region's Gay / Lesbian / Bisexual / Transgender (GLBT) community. The day was a long one, with set-up starting at 10:00 AM at Voinovich Park on Lake Erie and wrapping up about 8:15 PM. But it was an incredibly successful day for SCPD!

Bobbie Carper, Tina Jarosch, Sandra Kurt, and Lauren Stith marched in the parade, carrying the SCPD banner while Guy Marentette staffed the booth back at the park. In the mid afternoon, we were joined by David and Cheryl Eckman, with their adorable black lab puppy.

Having the petitions was an effective tool to educate people about SCPD – those who signed the Summit County petition got a card with our website and the date, time, and location of our next meeting.

We had plenty for the festival attendees to do at the booth – register to vote, sign the petitions to get the a referendum to raise the minimum wage on the November ballot, pick up a free jar of bubbles, and have their picture taken with "Georgina" Bush, "Dixie" Cheney, or "Kendra" Blackwell. The SCPD booth had a steady stream of folks all day, thanks to our location near the acoustic stage and food vendors, and our "multiple personality" mannequin who drew people in.



Bobbie Carper, Sandra Kurt, Tina Jarosch, & Lauren Stith at the SCPD booth

Having the petitions was an effective tool to educate people about SCPD – those who signed the Summit County petition got a card with our website and the date, time, and location of our next meeting. In addition, having a presence at PRIDE allowed us to network with Cleveland Stonewall Democrats, PFLAG (Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Akron, and Equality Ohio.

Overall, it was a very fun and productive day for SCPD celebrating PRIDE.

Meet Penny A. Sells

SCPD member Penny Sells dates her political activism to 2003, when the Barberton City Council was considering selling Tuscora Park. Penny strongly opposed the idea, and when she couldn't sway Council's opinion she decided to run for Council herself.

"I ran as an independent. I came in second out of six." Unfortunately, the park got sold. But Penny found she was hooked on political activism.



She began to go to Council meetings and Committee meetings religiously, every week. She got involved with her neighborhood conservation group. She got involved with other issues she cared about, like protecting social security, fixing education, worker's compensation, and universal healthcare. She credits her many friends in labor unions, along with Michael, Patrick, and Lisa Zeno Carano, with helping her to realize that her views aligned with the Democratic party.

"One of the reasons I switched from being an independent to a Democrat, especially a Progressive Democrat, is that they put their money where their mouth is. They get out there and do it. And that's what I wanted."

"The recent years have shown all of us the great need to elect Democratic Candidates into all offices. Only then can we change the course of this State and our Country from its path of common greed, back to its path of common sense."

Penny got involved in a big way, working on the Kerry-Edwards campaign, the RON campaign, the Save our Social Security Coalition, and working against CAFTA. She estimates that she's registered hundreds of new voters. Over the last few months she has worked hard gathering signatures in support of the minimum wage initiative, setting up a booth outside of a local Kmart on the weekends.

Last month she was elected committee chair in her precinct. She has big plans for organizing her

precinct. "I get out and talk to people and I like to try to get phone numbers, email addresses—I like to be able to contact the voters." Penny is a big believer that voters need to be educated on the issues, and that many are apathetic because they don't understand. The voters in her precinct can expect to hear a lot from her in the coming months.

"I'm hardcore—I can't just go with the flow. I think you should question things, ask questions, and educate yourself. That way you can make a wise decision with your vote. And if you don't do that, you've got no right to complain."

Penny's husband of 22 years Randy is also involved in Democratic politics. As the unit vice chair of Local 2 of the Steelworker's union, this year he'll be working on behalf of the Ted Strickland, Sherrod Brown, and Judy Hanna campaigns. Penny will be working on those campaigns too.

Penny is the fourth generation in her family to live in the same house in Barberton—it's been in the family nearly 100 years. Besides Randy, she shares the house with three dogs, Nikita Marie, Kiya, and Travis Lee.

Even the dogs are involved in political activism. "I run a sled dog team. I run them in parades. In the Labor Day parade I turned the dog sled into a float with a sign that said 'working like dog to save Social Security'. I won second place."



"Right now I'm working with Judy Hanna to get her elected. I'm having a house party fundraiser for her later this month." (Hanna is running for the 27th District State Senate seat).

Looking forward, Penny plans on running again for Council, in 2007. Ten years from now, she may run for mayor in Barberton. "I believe in working your way up, and learning as you go. I think you've got to know how deep the water is before you jump in."

Economic Unfairness — Part II

Frank Kunstel

Part 1 noted that over the past 30 years the rich are getting richer and the rest of us are sliding. Further, mobility from one economic class to another has slowed considerably. So what impact is George W. Bush having on all this?

The U.S. economy has been growing at a rate of about 3.5% per year recently, but the public is not optimistic about it and the President wonders why. The reason is that only those who read the Wall Street Journal and have investments worth several hundred thousand dollars are benefiting from the growing economy:

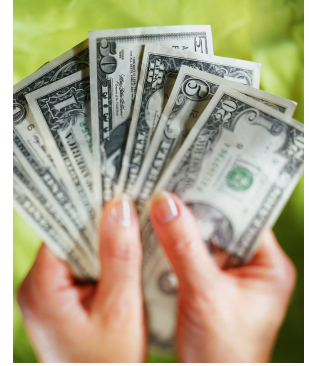
-The Akron Beacon Journal (2/24/06) carried an AP article reporting that average family incomes in 1998-2001 soared by 17.3%, but that in 2001-2004 they actually fell by 2.3%.

-The Houston Chronicle reported (1/1/06) that median household income has fallen an unprecedented five years in a row.

-The Bloomberg Financial News (1/17/06) reported that in the middle of 2005 wages and salaries as a percentage of the cash which corporations generate stood at the lowest in government records going back to 1929.

-Bloomberg also reported (12/5/05) that for the twelve-month period that ended in September, 2005, consumer prices rose 4.7% but hourly wages fell 2.7%.

A NY Times article on 4/5/06 reveals that Bush's tax cuts for investment income have had a tremendous impact on income fairness—negatively. Among taxpayers with incomes greater than \$10 million, the amount of their investment tax bill was reduced by an average of \$500,000 in 2003 and their total tax savings, including the two Bush cuts on compensation, totaled more than \$1 million.



These taxpayers, whose average income was \$26 million, paid about the same share of their income in income taxes as those making \$200,000 to \$500,000 because of the lowered rates on investment income. By contrast, Americans with modest incomes did not benefit from the investment tax cuts because these people, if they hold any stock at all, hold it in their retirement accounts and earnings from that are taxed at withdrawal as regular wages rather than as investment income.

In addition to the very significant point that these trends cause pain at the individual level, they also create a structural weakness in our society and our culture. When middle income and lower income people feel that they aren't participating in the economic growth, they are less committed to participating in the society and are more cynical about our entire system.

The Summit County Precinct Loss Project

Guy Marentette

Summit County voters, especially those in larger precincts, can again expect long lines and delays up to several hours when they go to vote in the next major election. There is no current plan to deal with the main culprit, namely the larger precinct sizes that resulted from cuts in the number of precincts after the 2000 election. And changes to the election laws introduced in HB3, especially the requirement to produce acceptable identification before voting, will likely make matters worse. It will mean more time spent by poll workers processing each voter and dispensing more provisional ballots.

It would be bad enough if this were just a major

inconvenience for voters. But the analysis of the Nov. 2004 election I presented at the March 2006 SCPD meeting showed strong evidence that some voters in larger Akron precincts were discouraged from voting because of impossibly long lines.

Precinct size, in terms of the number of registered voters, is not uniform in Summit. In Akron, they vary from 800 up to 1,100. My analysis shows that turnout dropped significantly and consistently as the precinct sizes got larger.

But the end result was even worse for Democratic voters in Akron. George Bush got most of his votes

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 Communications Committee. To submit an
 article or a comment, email
 SBAUMAN@NEO.RR.COM

Summit County Precinct Loss, continued—

in the smaller precincts, where the turnout was highest. Kerry got most votes in the larger with their lower turnout. This strongly suggests that the redrawn precincts in Akron favored Republican voters with smaller precincts and thus easier access to voting. It also suggests all Democratic candidates in Akron probably lost votes given that many (perhaps even most) voters vote a straight party ballot.

The next major election will be the 2008 Presidential election, and so we have about two years to solve this problem, right? Perhaps not. About 95,000 voters turned out for the primary election last month, a number which is considerably higher than the 55,000 in 2002. For comparison, 105,000 voted in the 2004 primary. So this may indicate that voters are motivated to change political leaders at the state and federal levels.

After my presentation in March, I received approval from the SCPD membership to initiate a project to develop and implement a solution to this problem. Consider this newsletter article as an interim progress report. The project team has met once and proposed we do the following:

1. Get the word out to as many Democrats in Summit County as possible. Our message should describe the problem and offer our proposed solutions. To this end, I will be making presentations at the Cuyahoga Falls Democratic Club and the Hudson Democrats, and will be contacting other Democratic groups shortly.

The team also felt this would be an opportune time to resurrect the SCPD Speakers' Bureau to make presentations before community groups, unions and other organizations where we expect high concentrations of Democratic voters.

2. Urge voters in larger precincts, especially in Akron, to use absentee voting by mail or advance voting in person at the Board of Election. The new voting laws allow anyone to vote absentee on request. With the new optical scan equipment, voters who go to the poll will have a slight advantage in that the scanner rejects over-vote errors, but if the alternative is giving up one's vote because the wait is too long, we believe the lack of error checking is an acceptable tradeoff.
3. Involve Democratic Precinct Committeepersons in our project. Another finding of my analysis is that intelligent and motivated poll workers can speed up the voting process in large precincts. We need to convince PCs that the poll workers they appoint can win or lose elections for Democratic candidates in major elections.

I sincerely hope that all SCPD members join in the effort to overcome the effect of the precinct cuts. If nothing else, urge voters you know to vote absentee. If you're working on a campaign, ask the organizers to promote advanced voting along with the voter registration effort. Join us at fairs throughout the summer and/or become part of our Speakers' Bureau.

**Summit County
 Progressive Democrats,
 an Ohio chapter of**

