

*The Voice of Benton County Democrats*  
**THE DEMOCRATIC REPORTER**



**July 2008**

[WWW.BENCODEMS.ORG](http://WWW.BENCODEMS.ORG)

**HOTLINE 509-585-7682**

**Officers**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Bob Parazin</b>	<a href="mailto:chair@bencodems.org">chair@bencodems.org</a> 946 6363
<b>Vice Chair</b>	<b>Regina Speer</b>	<a href="mailto:vicechair@bencodems.org">vicechair@bencodems.org</a> 946 5744
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Jamie Lennick</b>	<a href="mailto:treasurer@bencodems.org">treasurer@bencodems.org</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Gloria Cummins</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@bencodems.org">secretary@bencodems.org</a> 430 8718
<b>Editor</b>	<b>Steven Link</b>	<a href="mailto:newsletter@bencodems.org">newsletter@bencodems.org</a> 948-0054
<b>SCW</b>	<b>Mimi Latta</b>	<a href="mailto:scw@bencodems.org">scw@bencodems.org</a> 627 2679
<b>SCM</b>	<b>John Latta</b>	<a href="mailto:scm@bencodems.org">scm@bencodems.org</a> 627 2679

**From the Chair**

On the national scene, the only thing remaining is the National Convention in August and who'll be selected to join Obama on the ticket. We've been through three Caucuses, the County Convention and the State convention. And now the intense politicking will begin. Hang on to your checkbooks and those credit cards. If you're already getting too many e-mails, letters and phone calls, let me apologize in advance. If any of this does become a nuisance, please call or drop us an email and we'll see what we can do.

We have a report in this issue from Brad and Kirby Taylor who went to the State Convention June 13<sup>th</sup> thru 15<sup>th</sup>, three tumultuous days. Brad went as a Clinton Delegate and got a full measure of what it means to be a member of the State Election Committee. This is the committee that elects many of the at-large national delegates. He also got a ground floor understanding of what it takes to run as an at-large delegate at the state level. It's as much a question of endurance as it is politics. Look further in this issue for his article.

We had other Bentonites in attendance and in general were pretty well represented. All Alternates that attended were seated including those from Benton County!

We have a number of events coming up in July to announce. On July 20<sup>th</sup> at the Finger Nail in Howard Amon Park in Richland we're joining forces with the Franklin County Democrats and the Tri-City Dems for our '08

Democratic Picnic. There will be music and as many of our candidates/campaigns in attendance as possible, including State Party officials. Food and beverages will be provided but we'll be asking attendees to bring a side dish i.e., salad, and desert, to share with their fellow Democrats. We'll be asking for a \$5 donation per person at the event. Mark it on your calendar: July 20<sup>th</sup> 1 – 5 PM Howard Amon Park in Richland.

But BEFORE the Picnic we're having the GRAND OPENING of our Campaign Headquarters. Now many of you may have dropped by to support the George Fearing Campaign already. Starting the week of July 7<sup>th</sup>, the Benton County Democrats, the Party Organization, will be manning the Headquarters and we'll continue to do so through November 5<sup>th</sup>. We'll be there to answer phone calls, support the campaigns using the facility, handle walk-ins looking for signs, registration forms, and candidate literature. We'll also be holding our meetings in the facility and use it for staging visibility, training, literature distribution, relaxation therapy. We're hoping to kickoff the event with a Film Festival, which we hope to continue periodically on weekends throughout the campaign season. Watch for e-mail announcements and HOTLINE reports on this and other upcoming events. We haven't identified the exact time and date for the Grand Opening, but it WILL BE the week of July 7<sup>th</sup>!

**To My Fellow Democrats**

**Brad Taylor, National Delegate  
 Benton County Democrat 4th CD**

I have three words to describe my weekend in Spokane, at the State Democratic Convention. Busy, Busy, Busy! The weekend began on Friday, after arriving at The Double Tree and checking in, we spent an hour or so meeting up with several other Hillary Clinton National Delegates in the coffee shop, going over our plan for the weekend. Yes, we had a plan. I was a little surprised that there were so few seminars/caucus meetings for delegates to attend. I speak mostly from the prospective of a Hillary National delegate when I describe my experience at the State Democratic Convention, as that was my main focus while there. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend some of the events that I had wanted to, but we were able to make the Gala Banquet Friday evening. The attire was from casual to semi-formal. (I must say we democrats clean up nicely.) Speakers were mostly our party leaders, including

Senator Patty Murray, State Chair Dwight Pelz, Gov. Chris Gregoire and the keynote speaker, Kansas Lieutenant Governor Mark Parkinson.

He was very funny and a great storyteller, his experience as a former GOP member prompted him to tell of the importance of party unity and the ability to embrace our Republican friends and Independents, as the swing vote will be in play in November. The evening ended for most of us with visits to the many hospitality suites available. Some carried on until very late in the evening or early morning for those who had it in them. We did not. After what seemed like just a few hours of sleep, we attended the morning congressional breakfast at 7:00 a.m., where Darcy Burner introduced our 4th CD candidate George Fearing. George did a great job and all enjoyed his speech. We heard from Congressman Jay Inslee, via computer-recorded message. Congressman Jim McDermott also spoke of contribution, whether sweat equity or financial, both being equally important.

The convention began at 9:00 am. Dwight Pelz, State Dem. Chair began the proceedings. Our own 8th LD candidate, Carol Moser led us in the pledge of allegiance. Mary Verner and Spokane County Chair, Christina Reeves welcomed us to Spokane. The delegation voted to install Lt. Gov. Brad Owens as permanent chair of the convention. There were special addresses by Governor Gregoire, Senator Patty Murray, and Senator Maria Cantwell, as well as others. Business began with various reports from the committees. The credentials committee reported attendance at about half of the elected delegates present, allowing ALL alternates to be seated. (That made for some very happy newly seated delegates). I feel that to be elected as a State Delegate is an honor and a privilege and should be taken quite seriously. I was shocked that over half of those elected chose not to attend. Business concluded with the election of Presidential Electors and recognition of elected officials and statewide candidates. During a lull in the proceedings, George Fearing was asked by State Chair Pelz, to give an impromptu speech to the delegation. George was like a rock-star; he had the audience sitting on the edge of their chairs and they loved him! Standing ovation and all. We are so lucky to have such a strong candidate. After the convention adjourned, many crossed the bridge to beautiful Riverfront Park to partake in the Spokane Democrats Annual Salmon Feed, where again Senator Cantwell spoke to the crowd. The weather was fantastic for most of the weekend, and all enjoyed the Salmon feed. They did run out of salmon, but had a backup meal planned. I hear you haven't had a hot-dog until you have had a \$40.00 hot-dog. Personally, I had dinner at the Hotel in a rushed effort to get to my next meeting of our group of Hillary delegates. The meeting was to prepare for the following day's caucus and election of at-large delegates. We poured over each and every nominee one by one, making our own personal notes. Some of us had knowledge of a few of the nominees' accomplishments and qualifications for this position. Some

were unknown to all of us. But all were viable, and worthy of election, making it a very difficult decision. This meeting lasted until late in the night. It is rare to have a diverse group of people who have never worked together, be able to make rapid-fire and fair decisions, but that is what we were able to do. The following morning in our sub-caucus we listened to over 75 one and a half minute speeches. Then we elected as new members of the WA delegation 9 new at-large delegates, and 1 alternate, 3 committee members, and 3 PLEO's with a bonus of 1 add-on delegate. Paul Berendt, past State Chair, described this "add-on" as: "Having been through many State Conventions, I must say that the election of Victor Collymore was one of the most stunning victories I have ever witnessed at such an event. It is one of those events that will keep me smiling for months to come."

One of my personal victories this weekend was my ability to persuade the committee to vote for our female candidate from the 4th district, Cheryl Adams as an at-large National Delegate. Cheryl is from Cashmere, WA and is a pleasure to know and will be an asset to our team in Denver. I should apologize for reporting so little on any of the Obama activities, however it would have been impossible to attend both sub-caucus at the same time. The gist of the weekend was that our two groups found unity in the Democratic candidate for President of the United States, Barak Obama. I was proud and honored to be an elected representative to this convention. Thank you all for your votes and your confidence of my ability to carry out the will of the people in our 4th congressional district as National Delegate. I will do my best to keep you all informed and updated of the activities planned for me in Denver. Again, THANK YOU for your support. [Ed. and thanks to Brad and Kirby for all their time and hard work!]

## **Primary versus Caucus**

### **Kendall Miller, 8th LD Chair**

I recently served on the resolutions committee and attended the Washington State Democratic Party Convention. As you might imagine there is a strong controversy about whether the state's national convention delegates should be determined by caucus or primary. It pits state electoral traditions against national party rules. It pits populists against party regulars. And it is going to continue to be a problem until an equitable solution can be worked out. This article is an attempt to arrive at what such a solution might be.

How did we get here? In 1996, California voters approved Proposition 198 that change the state's traditional closed primary system to a blanket primary system similar to that that used in Washington State in which voters could voter their preferences regardless of party. In the 2000 case of California Democratic Party v. Jones, the US Supreme Court ruled that the recently-enacted California blanket primary violated the political party's first amendment right

of freedom of association. In this case the California Democratic Party, the California Republican Party, the Libertarian Party of California, and the Peace and Freedom Party had all filed suit against the state of California and won. That decision also applied to the Washington state primaries (thank you, California).

Within the parties there is strong sentiment against blanket primaries not only because of the technical first amendment violation but because they inhibit the control parties have over their own "brand". Fringe candidates (such as the followers of Lyndon LaRouche) can claim a party affiliation even though the party itself finds the candidate abhorrent. On the other hand, there is strong sentiment within the voting community that rejects the idea of any strong party affiliation. A great many voters want to have the capacity to select candidates regardless of party. Furthermore, in localities in which one party dominates, the primary serves as the more significant election. Voters who wish to cast a vote in a race in the minority party have no vote in other races between candidates in the majority party.

At the moment party rules leave it to the jurisdictional party legislative bodies to designate and officially sanction party candidates. While this is traditional and reasonably democratic, it is cumbersome and requires potential candidates to jump through some procedural hoops. In jurisdictions in which a party is barely functioning an appropriate endorsement body might not convene in a timely manner for a campaign. This could be streamlined somewhat if the party decided to allow executive committees to sanction candidates but at the price of democratic process. Furthermore, putting it completely in the hands of the party leaves non-aligned voters with NO direct input whatsoever. Their only hope is that the party keeps them in mind when selecting candidates.

It should be noted that compared to other countries the party system in the United States is abysmally weak. In parliamentary systems, all significant political action takes place through the party. American parties are just not that strong and I don't think Americans would want them to be. (While American parties may aspire to that sort of dominance, they should, as a practical matter, just give up that dream. It isn't going to happen.)

So what might a reasonable middle ground be? On the face of it, it seems odd that a state government can spend taxpayer money running an election that is essentially a party function. It bespeaks a certain amount of collusion between the major parties to co-opt public resources for their own particular benefit. Indeed, constitutionally the government is only required to hold a single election, not a bunch of pre-election elections. One could argue that it is in the government's interest to narrow the field of candidates such that a majority rather than a potentially small plurality elects final office holders. This is a reasonable justification for a top-two primary. And by this reasoning the primary is

a party-neutral process by which to have a meaningful general election at the end of an electoral process. Essentially the general election becomes a run-off election between the two highest vote getters.

One might ask, how is a top-two primary effectively different from a blanket primary? In a blanket primary each party is assured of having at least one candidate in the general election even if the party candidate had fewer votes than two or more candidates of the opposing party. This may be a tad undemocratic but it does throw a bone to the official parties. The parties may have cut their own throats by having blanket primaries thrown out. In a top-two primary system party identification is taken out of the equation entirely and parties have to actually meet a competitive threshold to have their candidates on the general election ballots.

The parties' only hope of recovery of their capability to have a sub-minority candidate on the general election ballot lies in a potential lawsuit that may be brought in which a given party can argue they were damaged by a candidate who self-identified as a member of the party without official party sanctioning. The court will have to decide between the right of a party to protect its brand and the right of the government to meaningful elections in which a sub-minority candidate takes precedence over a minority candidate. It seems to me that the proper decision would be the one that makes for a more democratic election process than one that protects the privilege of a political organization, that is to say, the top-two primary process.

The political parties need to suck it up and prepare to operate in a regime that gives them no special privileges. To the degree that people grasping for power by undemocratic means occupy party ranks; it would certainly frustrate their efforts. Every general election would be a decision between the candidates who have clearly-demonstrated popular support.

Since I am skeptical that the Republican Party would ever cede any of its political clout for the greater good I make no appeal to them. But I do appeal to the Washington State Democratic Party to embrace the top-two primary system as the more democratic solution to electoral process. And I call on the Washington State Democratic Party to adjust their rules and practices accordingly for life in a new sort of world. I also call on them to stop wasting time and money trying to fight a process that more accurately expresses the will of the people merely to protect the party's selfish interest.

## Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday Night Drinking Liberally, 7 PM, at the Shilo... O'Callahan's

**NOTE: Headquarters Grand Opening date hasn't been finalized. BUT it will be during the week of July 7<sup>th</sup>.**

# July

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	** Obama Mtg- 7 pm HQ	1*Drinking Liberally Shilo/O'Callahans 7pm	2	3	4 NO TriCity Democrats Meeting- CANCELLED due to July 20 Picnic	5
6 Later this week! Grand Opeing of HQ	7** Obama	8 * Drinking Liberally	9	10 E-Board 6:30 HQ	11	12
13	14 ** Obama	15* Drinking Liberally	16 Central Comm Mtg 7 pm HQ	17	18	19
20- 08 Picnic Democratic Picnic 1 – 5 pm Richland	21 ** Obama	22* Drinking Liberally	23	24 Org Comm Meeting, HQ 6:30 PM	25	26
27	28** Obama	29* Drinking Liberally	30	31		

\* **Drinking Liberally** - Every Tuesday at the Shilo/O'Callahan's in Richland - 7 pm soft drinks and water are available!

\*\* **Obama** meeting time and location may vary, PLEASE call our HOTLINE 585-7682 to verify or e-mail leader.

RCC -- Richland Community Center HQ – 1315 Geo Washington Way, Richland [behind Denny's]

**NOTE:** Headquarters Grand Opening Date hasn't been finalized. BUT it will be during the week of July 7<sup>th</sup>.