



The Jackrabbit News

May — June

2010

Saturday, June 19

The 4th Congressional District Democrats will meet at YVCC Deccio Bldg., Parker Room at 2:00 p.m.

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Annual Diversity Dinner at Filipino Hall in Wapato, 5:30 p.m. Barbecued Columbia River Chinook salmon, as well as Filipino cuisine. Entertainment by ethnic groups. A silent auction. A chance to visit with old friends. Sponsored by 15th Legislative District Democrats. Sharon Smith, Vice Chair of Washington State Democrats, will be the keynote speaker. Admission: \$25. You can pay at the door.

Sunday, June 20

Signing for peace at the intersection of 16th Ave. & Nob Hill Blvd., 12 noon to 1 p.m. Bring your own sign or use one of ours. We need more participants to take the places of some of our elderly peace activists who have literally given their all and now can't come due to health problems. They would feel honored if new recruits for peace action would step in to fill the ranks. Why not give it a try?

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, July 9 - 11

28th Annual Yakima Folklife Festival. Entertainment downtown on Friday and Saturday. On Saturday and Sunday at Franklin Park, there will be dances by ethnic groups, music and singing. Also, crafts for sale, ethnic foods, and booths managed by a variety of organizations. Be sure to stop by and visit the Peace Booth, which will be staffed by members of Veterans for Peace, the Yakima Valley Peace Advocates Network, and the Jackrabbit Alliance. Peace literature will be available. Look for the Veterans for Peace banner.

Monday, July 12

The Yakima Valley Peace Advocates Network (YVPAN) will have its monthly meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 225 N. 2nd St. in Yakima, 6:30-8:00 pm. Enter from the alley in back of the church. YVPAN is the group that plans local peace actions, such as military counter-recruitment and signing for peace at street corners. All who wish for peace and are willing to work for it are welcome to attend the meetings. Why not join us and help plan? To find out about YVPAN, as well as peace activities in the Northwest, go to www.yvp.net. At the same website, you can reach links to national peace organizations, such as Veterans for Peace. Also, you can now read *The Jackrabbit News* online.

New START needs to be ratified by Senate

On April 18, President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a historic agreement. Called the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, it would make serious cuts in U.S. and Russian stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Shortly after the signing, the Obama Administration revealed the number of nuclear weapons in the U.S. stockpile — 5,113.

The U.S. and Russia together possess 95% of the world's nuclear weapons. This treaty would reduce each country's number of deployed strategic weapons to 1550 — a cut of about 30%. The long-running arms race between the USSR and the U.S. led to the creation of far more of these deadly weapons than could ever be justified as a deterrence against attack. New START sends a signal to the world that the U.S. and Russia are serious about reducing the threat that has been hanging like a sword over the world for 65 years.

Unlike the secrecy of presidents from Truman to G. W. Bush, Obama has adopted a policy of transparency regarding nuclear weapons, as, for example, when he revealed that we have 5,113 nukes in our arsenal. "To my mind, it is one of the single most important declassifications that have ever been taken," said Steven Aftergood, director of the Federation of American Scientists' Project on Government Secrecy.

Now that the treaty has been signed by Obama and Medvedev, it needs to be ratified by the U.S. Senate before it can go into effect. As the Constitution requires, this will take a majority of two-thirds of the Senate — 67 Senators voting in favor. There is optimism that this can be achieved. It's a given that the 57 Democrats and two Independents will vote aye, and some think that eight or nine Republicans can be rounded up to vote with them. Republican icons Henry Kissinger, George Schultz and James Schlesinger, among others, have strongly endorsed the treaty.

On the other hand, there are Republicans who want to deny Obama any success and bring him down at all costs — men like Sen. John Kyl, former U.N. Ambassador John Bolton and former Vice President Dick Cheney.

Supporters of New START are encouraged to contact their Senators by phone or fax. To call any member of Congress, call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected.

(Continued on Page 4.)

NAS reports on climate change

Often accused of avoiding communication with the general public, leading scientists are beginning to show signs of willingness to share their expertise on global warming. Acting on a request from Congress, the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, which includes the best and the brightest, has issued the first of a series of reports on climate change and what we can do about it. The report is titled, "America's Climate Choices."

"Science has made enormous progress toward understanding climate change," says the report. "As a result, there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that Earth is warming. Strong evidence also indicates that recent warming is largely caused by human activities, especially the release of greenhouse gases through the burning of fossil fuels."

The report warns of "rising sea levels, increases in intense rainfall events, decreases in snow cover and sea ice, more frequent and intense heat waves, increases in wildfires, longer growing seasons, and ocean acidification."

The scientists predict more flooding, but also more severe droughts. There will be less water in some areas that are already subject to droughts and where rivers are fed by snowpack and glaciers. Heavy rainfall in some areas could spread water-borne diseases.

In coastal areas, higher storm surges and rising sea levels will cause the intrusion of salt water into freshwater aquifers. Increased temperatures, rising sea levels and ocean acidification will bring widespread bleaching of coral reefs.

The scientists' report is a step in the right direction, but one wishes they could somehow convey to the public the urgency that they must feel. So maybe it's time for scientists such as those in the Academy to climb down from their ivory towers and start making some noise. Most people in this country don't read scientific reports, but they do watch TV. So maybe scientists should do something to get on the evening news. Marching in the streets? Flagpole sitting? Whatever it takes!

Alaska senator fails to trash EPA

On June 10, the U.S. Senate came close to blocking the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases. Leading the charge for Republicans was Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. The final vote on Murkowski's resolution was 47-53, with all of the Republicans voting for the measure, together with six Democrats.

Although the Senate majority was able to stop this attempt to trash the EPA, the closeness of the vote is not good news for the climate legislation that President Obama wants passed this year. The Republican leadership is able to exercise iron discipline over GOP members of Congress, who often toe the party line 100%.

Just before the vote on the resolution, the Obama administration issued a statement that urged the Senate to vote NO on the resolution. Here are some excerpts from

the statement:

"The Administration believes that comprehensive energy and climate legislation is the most effective way to transition to a clean energy economy that will create jobs, protect the environment, and increase national security. SJ Res 26 would do just the opposite: it would increase the nation's dependence on oil and other fossil fuels and block efforts to cut pollution that threatens our health and well-being."

"...SJ Res. 26 would block implementation of a [Federal program] to promote fuel standards that will reduce oil consumption, save American consumers more than \$3,000 in fuel costs over the lifetime of a model year 2016 vehicle, and limit pollution from tailpipe emissions. SJ Res. 26 also would undermine the Administration's efforts to reduce the negative impacts of pollution and the risks associated with environmental catastrophes, like the ongoing BP spill. As seen in the Gulf of Mexico, environmental disasters harm families, destroy jobs, and pollute the nation's air, land and water. Further, SJ Res. 26 is contrary to the widely-accepted scientific consensus that GHG's (greenhouse gases) are at increasingly dangerous concentrations and are contributing to the threat of climate change. SJ Res. 26 would strip EPA of its authority to protect the public from GHG pollution..."

"Finally, SJ Res. 26 would undo EPA's carefully constructed approach to reducing pollution generated by the largest oil companies, oil refineries, and other large-scale polluters. EPA's reasoned approach will provide industry certainty, which is essential to jumpstarting private-sector investments and innovation in clean, renewable energy. SJ Res. 26 would block the United States from taking action to control damaging GHG's while other nations take the lead in transitioning to clean energy economies that create the jobs of the future."

CIA operators oppose drone strikes

(Based on information from the Institute for Policy Studies.)

According to Jeffrey Addicott, former legal advisor to U.S. Special Forces, some CIA drone operators who kill with drones are opposed to what their job calls for. Addicott said that the CIA personnel that he knows view the drone strikes as counterproductive and a boost to al Qaeda and Taliban efforts to recruit new members.

Addicott said that CIA officers "are very upset" with the drone strike policy. He said, "They'll do what the boss says, but they view it as a harmful exercise. They say we're largely killing rank and file Pakistani Taliban, and they are the ones who are agitated by the campaign." He said that the CIA officers have expressed their concern to high-level CIA officials, telling them that the drone program is backfiring.

In April, 2009 Jonathan Landay of McClatchy newspapers reported the same kind of warnings from military and intelligence officials. An intelligence official involved in Afghanistan and Pakistan told Landay that the Taliban uses the drone strikes for propaganda to "portray Americans as cowards who are afraid to face their enemies and risk death." Another official called the strikes a "recruiting windfall for the Pakistani Taliban."

President Obama inherited the drone program from President Bush, but has expanded it. It now includes strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan. The idea behind the expansion of drone strikes is to destroy or disrupt al Qaeda. But Addicott points out that al Qaeda is less a major organization than a mentality in Middle Eastern countries. He said that CIA officers fear that the drone strikes will only reinforce that way of thinking.

The official Obama justification for the drone strikes is that it's aimed at high-value targets, degrading al Qaeda by "decapitating" it. But administration officials now privately admit that the real objective of the strikes is to demoralize the rank and file, according to Addicott. But that won't work because "These are tribal people. They don't view life and death the way we expect them to."

Karzai may make a deal with Taliban

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has lost faith in the ability of the U.S. and its NATO allies to win in Afghanistan, according to a recent report in *The New York Times*.

Two senior Afghan officials abruptly resigned after meeting with Karzai. Amrullah Saleh, director of the Afghan intelligence service and Interior Minister Hanif Amar resigned a few minutes after showing Karzai evidence concerning a rocket attack on a national peace conference. Saleh and Hanif said they resigned because Karzai indicated that he no longer considered them loyal.

"The president did not show any interest in the evidence — none. He treated it like a piece of dirt," said Saleh. Karzai suggested at the meeting that it might have been the Americans that attacked the peace conference, according to a prominent Afghan official.

Saleh and other officials say that Karzai is seeking to make a separate peace with the Taliban. "The President has lost his confidence in the capability of either the coalition or his own government to protect this country," said Saleh. "President Karzai has never announced that NATO will lose, but the way that he does not proudly own the campaign shows that he doesn't trust it is working."

Quote of the month

What's happening in Afghanistan is not only tragic, it's embarrassing. The American troops will fight, but the Afghan troops who are supposed to be their allies are a lost cause. The government of President Hamid Karzai is breathtakingly corrupt and incompetent — and widely unpopular to boot. And now....the erratic Mr. Karzai seems to be giving up hope that the U.S. can prevail in the war and is making nice with the Taliban. There is no overall game plan, no real strategy or coherent goals, to guide the fighting of U.S. forces. It's just a mind-numbing, soul-chilling, body-destroying slog, month after month, year after pointless year.

.....Bob Herbert, New York Times columnist

Israeli commandos attack flotilla

(Based on a June 21 *The Nation* article plus news reports.)

In a nighttime raid on May 31, Israeli commando troops boarded the lead ship of a flotilla bearing relief supplies for the blockaded people of Gaza. The hand-to-hand battle that ensued left nine of the ship's passengers dead and many wounded on both sides.

Hundreds of activists aboard the ship, including many Turkish citizens, along with some Europeans and Americans, were towed from the international waters to Israeli detention centers and hospitals.

Aboard the ships in the flotilla were human rights activists, a Nobel Prize winner, two former U.S. diplomats, and MPs from around the world. They were attempting to deliver much needed humanitarian aid to the 1.5 million Gazans that are suffering because of the Israeli blockade. The Gazans are virtually prisoners in their own homeland, with Israel controlling everything that comes in or goes out.

The attack on the flotilla generated immediate demonstrations in cities worldwide, as well as nearly universal condemnation from human rights groups and governments, including Turkey, which up to now has been one of the few nations in the Middle East friendly to Israel.

The U.S. government, however, was an exception, adhering to its decades-long policy of not faulting Israel for anything it does, no matter how outrageous. Our UN representative merely expressed regrets at the loss of life. The UN Security Council demanded an end to the blockade, but the U.S., as a permanent member with veto powers, was able to get the UN statement watered down, and was also able to block an independent investigation of the raid.

One of the ships in the flotilla was the Rachel Corrie, named after the young woman from Olympia, Wash., who was killed by a bulldozer when she was trying to stop Israelis from demolishing a Palestinian home. The Israeli Prime Minister promised President Bush a "thorough, credible and transparent investigation." But no investigation occurred.

The U.S., along with some other countries, was complicit in setting up the Israeli siege of Gaza, which has been devastating. According to UN agencies, the economy has collapsed, and 80% of the population is now dependent on the UN for their food, with increasing levels of malnutrition. The infrastructure is in shambles.

The U.S. continues to give Israel \$billions in military aid, courtesy of U.S. taxpayers. We have vetoed dozens of UN resolutions critical of Israel. The U.S. corporate media continues to give Israel a free pass and slants the news in Israel's favor. Congress and both political parties are loaded with Israeli defenders. They are afraid of the powerful lobbying group AIPAC, and afraid of antagonizing Jewish voters in states such as Florida, which has 27 electoral votes.

Israel's contempt for the opinions of the rest of the world has gotten worse since the election of the right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. There is only one thing that will get Israel's attention, and that is for the U.S. to threaten to cut off military aid and really mean it.

(New START — continued from Page 1.)

The Jackrabbit has been very disappointed with the foreign policies of Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan; military involvement in Colombia; backing the coup in Honduras; failure to condemn Israel for its illegal and immoral blockade of Gaza; and support for "free trade" agreements like CAFTA). But in signing New START and working toward the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, he is definitely doing something right.

Hershey Company not so sweet

Thousands of children in Western Africa, and especially in the Ivory Coast, are being held as slaves. Their job is to harvest and work with cacao, from which cocoa and chocolate are made. These children are forced to work long backbreaking hours under appalling conditions. Many have been forced to work while ill or with open wounds and covered with their own excrement. The children are beaten if they try to run away or refuse to work. They cannot attend school to get an education.

The product of the children's labors ends up in chocolate candy bars. Some major candy manufacturers have used the cocoa from the Western African plantations because it's cheap. For the past decade, there has been a campaign to persuade chocolate companies to stop buying cocoa from the slavers and to buy fair traded cocoa instead. Many of the companies have agreed to this, but not the Hershey Company, maker of Hershey bars, Reese's, Kit Kat, Almond Joy, Heath, Mr. Goodbar, Pay Day, Mounds and Caramello. Before buying any candy bars, it's a good idea to look for the "Fair Trade Certified" logo on the label.

Several human rights organizations are urging consumers to call the company in Hershey, Pennsylvania, 1-800-468-1714 or 1-717-534-4200. Something like this is suggested: "Hi, I'm calling today to ask Hershey to become a leader in sustainable cocoa production by purchasing Fair Trade Certified cocoa for your candy bars. With a label from an independent certifier, consumers have a way of knowing that Hershey is working to respect farmers and the environment, and end abusive child labor in the industry."

Keeping Congress Democratic not easy

Holding on to Congress this fall will not be an easy task for Democrats. We are confronted with a variety of adverse circumstances this election year.

First of all, the party that holds the presidency often loses seats in Congress in midterm election years. That's what happened to Bill Clinton in 1994.

Second, Republicans tend to turn out to vote in midterm elections in greater numbers than Democrats do. Many working people don't get interested in voting when there is no president at the head of the ticket.

Third, the Republican Supreme Court has ruled that corporations have the same voting rights as people, and can therefore spend unlimited funds advertising their support for Republican candidates.

Fourth, right wing TV and radio talk show hosts will be out in force with a steady drumbeat of villification of Democratic candidates.

Fifth, two very wealthy Republican women running in Nevada and California primaries have now proven that although money can't buy happiness, it can certainly buy an election, and they'll settle for that.

Sixth, in hard economic times, the party in power generally gets blamed. Obama seems to be getting the blame for everything — from the economic mess he inherited to the Gulf oil spill.

The anti-incumbent mood of the electorate does not bode well for hard-working conscientious Democrats like Sen. Patty Murray of Washington state. In spite of all the good she has done for the people of the state, it's not a sure bet that she can keep her job. Voters are fickle. Who could have predicted that voters in the very Democratic state of Massachusetts would vote to replace the revered Ted Kennedy with a Republican?

We can't take anything for granted this year, but will just have to work harder than usual to elect Democrats.

About the Jackrabbit

The Jackrabbit News, an independent, nonprofit newspaper, is published by the Jackrabbit Alliance in Yakima. The editor, Gene Rupel, is solely responsible for the opinions expressed herein. To contact us: **phone/fax, 509-965-6061. e-mail, geno1924@aol.com.**

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