

Benton County Democrats' World

Volume 14 Issue 3 Mar 2015 Ken Swindle, President Hal Spangenberg, Editor

Our March luncheon/meeting will be Monday March 23rd, 11:00 am, Golden Corral, 2605 Pleasant Crossing Rogers Don't forget to make your reservations with Connie Williamson by Friday, 20th at (479)531-7985 Our speaker this month will be:

Janet Riefkohl-Spencer who will discuss
Issues Hispanics face in NWA.

Janet was born in Puerto Rico. Graduated from law school In 1994 and is a licensed attorney in Arkansas and Puerto Rico. She has a private practice and focuses on domestic

And criminal law.

We are looking forward to seeing all of you, and bring a friend along to meet and hear this speaker.



A note from Ken:

February has been quite a month for Arkansas politics. Anyone who says that the two parties are the same is simply not paying attention. In the elections the past November, the Republican Party took over the Arkansas Legislature for the first time since 1874, and anyone can look at the bills that they have proposed to see the dramatic difference in the values and vision of the Republican Party compared to the Democratic Party. If I were to detail each of the many bills proposed this past month, and why those bills run contrary to the values of the Democratic Party (and, I think, contrary to the values of the overwhelming majority of Arkansans), this president's message would become a book. For this forum, allow me to share just a few of the most

extreme actions of the Republicans this past month.

Probably the bill that has gotten the most attention is Senate Bill 202 that restricts the rights of individuals to those under State Law. In practice, this Bill (which has now passed) prohibits local communities from enacting ordinances granting rights to individuals in that community. Sadly, this bill is in direct contradiction to the principles espoused by the Republican Party in favor of local rule. We all know that this bill was prompted by the ordinance passed in Fayetteville protecting gay individuals from discrimination in that community. (Of course, that ordinance was repealed by referendum of the voters in Fayetteville.) A similar state law prohibiting

Benton County Democrats' World

protection of gay people (this one from Colorado) was struck down by the United States Supreme Court in 1996 for violation of the Equal Protection Clause. Therefore, Senator Hester (from here in Benton County), drafted this bill without specifically referencing gay people, but merely to have a uniform set of laws throughout the State to promote business interests. In response to the bill, the city councils in Eureka Springs and Conway both passed their own ordinances prohibiting discrimination against gay people in their communities. The showdown is now set for a battle potentially all the way to the United States Supreme Court again.

Another bill that has gotten much attention is House Bill 1158. This Bill allows anyone whose occupation is regulated causing a "substantial burden" to bring a lawsuit and force the State to show by "clear and convincing evidence" that the regulation furthers an "important interest in protecting against present and recognizable harm" and is the "least restrictive means for furthering" that interest. This may sound like a lot of legal jargon, but it is a dramatic shift away from the present law, in which the government is merely required to show a "rational basis" for a regulation. It places the government in the same position as in a criminal law case, where the Defendant is presumed innocent and the State must prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt. This potentially could set off a waive of lawsuits invalidating regulations that protect our communities just because a judge decides that the government did not prove by clear and convincing evidence that the regulation furthered an important governmental interest and was the least restrictive means for doing so. If passed, such a law would be a dramatic step backwards in protecting our communities. Senate Bill 600 would require all welfare recipients to submit to drug testing. This is

doubly troubling. Firstly, other states that have implemented such laws have proved them to be wildly inefficient and wasteful for the amount of money spent compared to any money saved. Secondly, such tests are extremely invasive and violate the principle of presumption of innocence, the very opposite of the presumption for any government regulation of an occupation in House Bill 1158.

The Republicans may talk about fighting government waste and limiting the size of government, but this Bill shows that they, in fact, value the very opposite things.

House Bill 1423 would place a 90% tax on the receipt of any punitive damages. Punitive damages are assessed by juries to protect their communities from wealthy wrong-doers. In the words of the Court, they are meant to "send a message" that such conduct is not acceptable. But by taxing such awards at a 90% rate, Republicans know that few attorneys or litigants would have the incentive to bring lawsuits against wrong-doers who are harming communities. It is telling that, like Senate Bill 202, this Bill also contradicts a fundamental principle espoused by Republicans - lower taxes. It would seem that the Republican Party only wants lower taxes on the corporations that harm our communities, but dramatically higher taxes on individuals who stand up to those corporations.

Senate Bill 183 attempts to block the federal Environmental Protection Agency proposal to reduce carbon emissions by 30% by 2030. Of course, by reducing such emissions, we would be forced to invest in clean energy sources, such as solar and wind. Moreover, we would stop buying out-of-state energy sources, such as coal from Wyoming. The Sierra Club estimates that this would create a \$675 million dollar windfall to the State, creating a boon for

Benton County Democrats' World

State jobs. Unfortunately, our Republican State Attorney General has joined a federal lawsuit attempting to stop the federal proposed regulation, thus contradicting another espoused principal of Republicans - creation of jobs.

To further illustrate the differences in the parties, a Democratic Senator introduced a bill to ban the death penalty case (Senate Bill 298). He might know something about that topic. He is the former judge in the Damien Echols case. In response a Republican Representative from Rogers pondered a bill to bring back the firing squad, something that extremists in the Middle East would certainly applaud.

Other bills offered by Republicans include one that allows teachers to say "Merry Christmas" (House Bill 1272), while carrying loaded guns in school (Senate Bill 164), and introduced the Stand-Your-Ground Law to this State (House Bill 1240). They also introduced a bill prohibiting

the application of "foreign laws" in this state (Senate Bill 229). Of course, application of any "foreign law" would be limited by the Constitutions of the United States and Arkansas, as would any statute passed by the legislature. Further, the Republicans voted down their own member's proposal to withdraw the birthday of Robert E. Lee as a state recognized holiday, and one of their members suggested dropping nuclear weapons in the Middle East, while one of our Federal Senators seemed quite content with throwing our Constitutional protections out the window, saying that detainees held in Gitmo could "rot" in detention without any trials.

I am convinced that the extremist agenda outlined above endangers our communities and is rejected by the people of this State. We must tell our neighbors and friends what is happening. The next election is already taking shape and the challenge is upon us.

Ken Swindle President, BC Dems _____

Plan to join a theater of Democrats!!
March 14th, Saturday, 10:00 am
Malco Pinnacle Hills, Rogers
Starring: Maggie Smith, Bill Nighy,
Richard Gere, Judi Den
Call or email to reserve your ticket **NOW**
Bill Beck, 479 855-1872
thebillbecks@att.net
Karen Smenner 479 866-9906
mkskas0119@gmail.com
TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE
THEATER DOOR

A reminder: Dues must be current to continue receiving the mail version of our newsletter.

Benton County Democrats' World

Meet our Board members

Bio of Eunice Van Tuyl:

I was born, raised and got my BA in French, English and Spanish in Iowa. After studying for my MA in France, I finished it and took two more years of classes, once again in Iowa. My entire career, teaching for 33 years, took place there as well. About every other year I took my French and Spanish students abroad for trips of from three to six weeks.

I was active in my professional organization, serving as a representative at the local, state (ISEA) and national (NEA) level for many years and also worked for the Democratic Party. One of our greatest regrets at leaving the state is that we no longer get to attend the caucuses and to meet all the Presidential candidates in person.

After my retirement in '01 and Jim's in '03, we moved to Bella Vista and this is where we plan to stay. We enjoy movies and playing cards and love the activities at Crystal Bridges. Our passions are international travel, charity work, education and, of course, politics.

Eunice Van Tuyl, Recording Secretary

Bio of Gaye Bland

I was born and grew up in Salisbury on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. After two years at the local college I transferred to the College of William and Mary, where I majored in history. I got my love of history from my mother, who made sure family vacations revolved around visits to historic sites. Got my love of my favorite reading matter, murder mysteries, from her as well!

After college I went on to graduate school in history at the University of Kentucky, and that

was where I met Benton County native Richard Bland, who also was studying for his Ph.D. in history. We married in 1973. In 1980 we moved back to Benton County, first living near Maysville.

Our twin daughters were born in 1981. When they were three I started work at the Siloam Springs Museum, and we moved to Siloam Springs a few years later. In 1991 I came to the Rogers Historical Museum and we moved to Rogers. Richard soon began teaching history at Rogers High School and I continued to work at the museum, becoming director in 1995.

Now that we are both retired, we enjoy gardening, cooking, travel, and spending time with our grandchildren, who live here in Rogers. After retiring I also wanted to take the opportunity to get more involved in Democratic politics. In addition to the BC Dems I am a member of the Central Committee and was, with Nicole Mozzoni, co-manager of Grimsley Graham's campaign for the Arkansas House.

Gaye Bland , Treasurer

FLEA FOR ALL (Yard Sale)

May 1 & 2, (War Eagle weekend)

On West Walnut, Rogers

Exact location to be announced.

As you doing your spring cleaning, please set aside Your "stuff" to donate to the BC Democrats spring fund raiser

Further details to be announced next month

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