

Benton County Dems' World



David Bernstein, Editor

Upcoming Meetings

Due to the recent resurgence of COVID-19 and Delta variant, the Board of the BC Dems has recommended that our July general meeting should be held online. Use the "Register, Get Link, & Join" link in the yellow highlighted area below to attend the 12:00 to 1:00 Zoom meeting.

~~**We're back at Golden Corral!**~~

Mon., July 26
11:00 –12:00 Social Time
12:00 – 1:00 Meeting

(4th Monday)
BC Dems Luncheon
[Golden Corral Rogers](#)

Mon., August 23
11:00 –12:00 Social Time
12:00 – 1:00 Meeting

In coordination with the restaurant, we will be applying and observing all the Covid safety protocols. If you have any questions, please contact either [Julia Bailey](#) or [David Bernstein](#)

Don't worry if you do not feel up to it yet. We plan to live stream the meeting so you can participate. [Register, Get Link, & Join Meeting](#) by registering in advance you help us take attendance more easily and accurately.

Our July Speaker

Jesse Gibson

Democratic Candidate for Attorney General

I am a lifelong Arkansan and the son of two teachers. I was born and raised in Lead Hill, Arkansas, population 271. I graduated from Lead Hill High School in 1992 alongside 26 classmates, most of whom I had been in school with since Kindergarten. In 1996, I earned my B.S. in Business Administration, cum laude, from the University of Arkansas. At the University, I was a member and President of Alpha Omicron Chapter of Kappa Alpha Order. I earned my J.D., with honors, in 1999 from the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law, where I was also a member of the Law Review.

I am licensed to practice in Arkansas, as well as U.S. Federal Courts. After obtaining my law license, I

worked for Dover Dixon Horne, in Little Rock, until 2002, when I founded the Gibson Law Firm, PLLC. I focus primarily on personal injury, medical negligence, and general civil litigation. I was named the Outstanding Young Trial Lawyer in 2005 by the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association, served as President of the Arkansas Trial Lawyer’s Association in 2018-2019, and am a past winner of the Roxanne Wilson Advocacy Award in 2018.



Locally, I serve as Chairman of the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Commission, and also on the Board of Trustees of the Arkansas Bar Association. My wife Amanda is originally from Pine Bluff, and we have two children, Jack and Jude. We live in Little Rock and attend Pulaski Heights Methodist Church, where we have been active in establishing hunger missions and feeding programs for the needy and homeless.

The Vice President's Memo

Arkansas is leading but in the wrong direction.

(Note: While President Julia Bailey is taking a short leave to focus on some consulting work, David will share his notes here.)

I may never get used to Arkansas being ranked toward the bottom of most national metrics. For example in the 2021 US News & World Report ranking of all 50 states shows Arkansas 49 on healthcare, 48 on crime and corrections, and 41 on education¹. So when I saw a headline announcing we were tied for number one, I was briefly delighted. But in the end, shocked and let down once again.



It appears Arkansas and Montana are tied so far for having the highest number of restrictive voting bills enacted this year². Our legislature has already completed some awful actions like these below.

AR SB 643	Shortens deadline to deliver mail ballot; Shortens window to apply for a mail ballot	APPROVED: BECAME LAW ON 4/27/21 WITHOUT THE GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE
AR HB 1715	Restrict assistance in returning a voter's mail ballot	APPROVED
AR HB 1112	Tighten or impose voter ID requirements for in-person voting	APPROVED
AR HB 1244	Tighten or impose voter ID requirements for in-person voting	APPROVED

As expected, these enacted laws are being challenged in the courts. But why only go after the voters? Arkansas SB 644, allows the State Board of Election Commissioners to decertify local election officials or even take over the administration of local elections based on any violation

(even if inadvertent) of voter registration or election laws they deem severe enough. And if these chilling efforts don't drive enough election officials or volunteers to turn and run, a Georgia bill could charge election officials with criminal penalties.

It appears Arkansas's legislators have completely swallowed, hook, line, and sinker the Trumpian fairytales of widespread voter fraud. I assume they are either getting pressure from their constituents to "do something about it" or are just fearful

Consider that at least four of these voting rights bills became law without the Governor's signature. Which is generally seen as disapproval by the Governor's office, but not an outright veto.³ After all, Hutchinson clearly has his eyes on the White House.

As I see it, the only hope for ending this race to the bottom is for others to stand up, tell the truth, and demand action. Since the four acts above are now law, we can at least let their sponsors know our displeasure and that we will not forget their choices when election time rolls around. And it always comes around again.

You can find the bill's primary sponsors at this web address: <https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/> Just type in the bill number at the top (e.g., HB1244). It will take you to a screen showing who sponsored the bill and allow you to directly email them.

I suspect our legislators believe all this will be forgotten in a few weeks. Let's make sure they know some of us are not going to forget.

Vice President
David A. Bernstein
June 21, 2021

¹<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings>

²<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-may-2021>

³Wickline, Michael R. "Unsigned, 7 Bills Become State Law." Arkansas Democrat & Gazette (2021).

Board News

Nominating Committee Update

The Nominating Committee is seeking expressions of interest in becoming a BC Dems Board member for 2022. Two positions still needing to be filled are Treasurer and Secretary. If interested, contact Walter Hinojosa tuhats@sbcglobal.net.

BLUE BOWLS



Go Ahead! Click or tap on the beautiful blue bowl image right here.

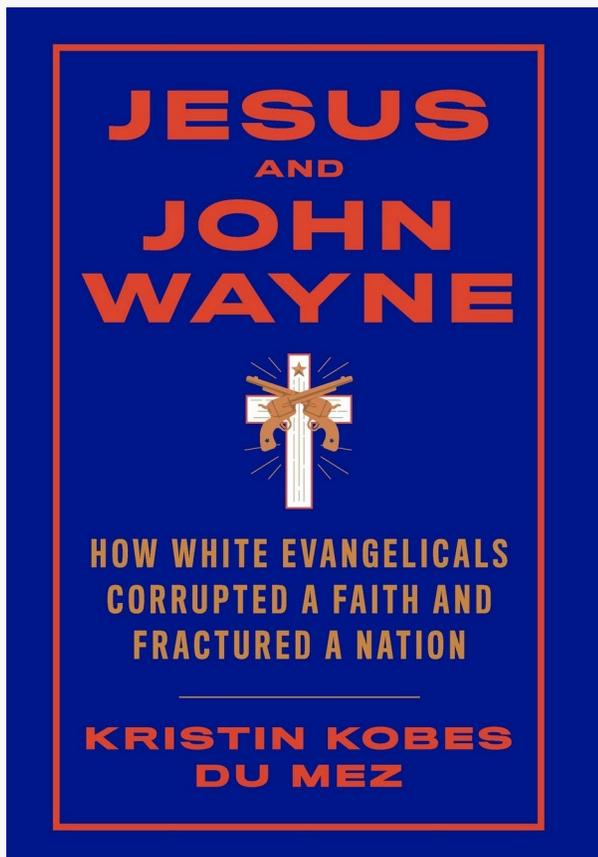
Stuff a few dollars into the virtual blue bowl. Believe it or not, your dollars are used during both **off-election and election years** to support Democratic candidates for office within Arkansas.

We only ask for a contribution of \$5 or more to offset those unavoidable transaction fees.

July Book Recommendation

Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation

by Kristin Kobes Du Mez



A scholar of American Christianity presents a seventy-five-year history of evangelicalism that identifies the forces that have turned Donald Trump into a hero of the Religious Right. How did a libertine who lacks even the most basic knowledge of the Christian faith win 81 percent of the white evangelical vote in 2016? And why have white evangelicals become a presidential reprobate's staunchest supporters? These are among the questions acclaimed historian Kristin Kobes Du Mez asks in *Jesus and John Wayne*, which delves beyond facile headlines to explain how white evangelicals have brought us to our fractured political moment. Challenging the commonly held assumption that the "moral majority" backed Donald Trump for purely pragmatic reasons, Du Mez reveals that Donald Trump in fact represents the fulfillment, rather than the betrayal, of white evangelicals' most deeply held values.

Jesus and John Wayne is a sweeping account of the last seventy-five years of white evangelicalism, showing how American evangelicals have worked for

decades to replace the Jesus of the Gospels with an idol of rugged masculinity and Christian nationalism, or in the words of one modern chaplain, with "a spiritual badass." As Du Mez explains, the key to understanding this transformation is to recognize the role of culture in modern American

evangelicalism. Many of today's evangelicals may not be theologically astute, but they know their VeggieTales, they've read John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*, and they learned about purity before they learned about sex—and they have a silver ring to prove it. Evangelical books, films, music, clothing, and merchandise shape the beliefs of millions. And evangelical popular culture is teeming with muscular heroes—mythical warriors and rugged soldiers, men like Oliver North, Ronald Reagan, Mel Gibson, and the Duck Dynasty clan, who assert white masculine power in defense of “Christian America.” Chief among these evangelical legends is John Wayne, an icon of a lost time when men were uncowed by political correctness, unafraid to tell it like it was, and did what needed to be done.

Trump, in other words, is hardly the first flashy celebrity to capture evangelicals' hearts and minds, nor is he the first strongman to promise evangelicals protection and power. Indeed, the values and viewpoints at the heart of white evangelicalism today—patriarchy, authoritarian rule, aggressive foreign policy, fear of Islam, ambivalence toward #MeToo, and opposition to Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ community—are likely to persist long after Trump leaves office.

A much-needed reexamination, *Jesus and John Wayne* explains why evangelicals have rallied behind the least-Christian president in American history and how they have transformed their faith in the process, with enduring consequences for all of us.

-- Recommended by Julia K. Bailey

Minutes

Benton County Dems General Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting – Golden Corral and Zoom

Monday, June 28, 2021

- I. Call to order by Vice President David Bernstein at 12:09
- II. Welcome and announcements.
 - A. Visitors and new members welcome
 - B. Nominating Committee still needs volunteers for 2022 Secretary and 2022 Treasurer contact Walter Hinojosa at tuhats@sbcglobal.net or text him at 512-940-2006 or contact Julia Kilbourne-Bailey
 - C. Please remember to renew your membership
 - D. Don't forget the Blue Bowl contributions which go toward our campaign contributions to Democratic candidates in Benton County, AND they can also be given through the BC Dems Webpage. <https://www.bcdems.org/blue-bowl-fund.html>
- III. Speaker—James Russell III, Independent candidate asking for Democratic nomination
 - A. Overview
 1. Owner/Administrator of a mental health clinic in Little Rock for the past seven years
 2. Running because he saw that Gov. Hutchinson didn't give guidelines when the pandemic was beginning

- a. He knew a psychiatrist who was exposed to CoVid nine times in one day
 - b. His business had to make protocols and take precautions without state government guidelines
 - c. He had friends serving as street medics worried about catching COVID
 - d. He networked communications to those medics to coordinate protocols for medical workers
 - e. Governor's role should be to give those guidelines for consistency and efficiency
3. Black Lives Matter influenced him
 - a. He witnessed chemical irritants used on medics who were working with the protesters
 - b. He saw Arkansas National Guard and Military line up to work against peaceful protesters with no attempt at de-escalation
 - c. Governor made no attempt to de-escalate the situation by communicating with community leaders
 4. He realized someone must stand up against the current political climate in Arkansas
 5. Right-to-work states force workers who are dependent on work insurance NOT to speak out; therefore, as a business owner he feels he has the freedom to speak out

B. Issues

1. Education—Fund public schools and include insurance for them
2. Arkansas has \$980 million in surplus, some of this should be used for children, education, and health care
3. Tell the truth, don't give political platitudes—Society suffers from Societal PTSD because of the assault on the truth and safety by some politicians and news sources
4. Allow voters to vote AND educate people about voting
5. De-militarize the police NOT defund them

C. More information at <https://vote4rus.com/>

D. Benton County Dems presented James Russell with a \$50.00 honorarium

IV. Business

A. Acceptance of May Treasurer's Report

1. The report is posted on Webpage and in Newsletter
2. No questions
3. Stan moved/seconded by Joel / accepted unanimously

B. Acceptance of May Minutes

1. Minutes posted on Webpage and in Newsletter
2. No questions
3. Eunice moved / Mike seconded/accepted unanimously

C. Announcements

1. July 26 meeting will be a hybrid: In-person at Golden Corral for those vaccinated / must sign up so we can set up to meet restrictions. ALSO, Meeting will be broadcast via Zoom link.
2. The next guest speaker will be Jesse Gibson, running for the Democratic Candidacy for Governor of Arkansas

V. The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m. Tim moved / Deb seconded/passed unanimously

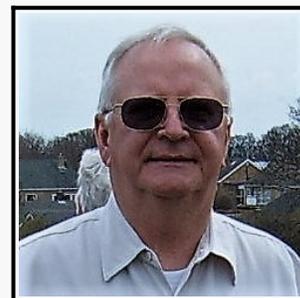
Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Ostas

Treasurer's Summary

June 2021

by Timothy Boyer, Treasurer



Beginning Balance: \$2,632.20

INCOME:

Dues \$140.00

Blue Bowls \$165.97

Total Income: \$305.97

Ending Balance: \$2,878.00

EXPENSES:

Speaker Honorarium \$50.00

Speaker Lunch \$10.71

Total Expenses: \$60.71

2020 Benton County Dems Officers & Committee Chairs

Position

President

Vice President

Membership Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Social Media Chair

Publicity Chair

Communications Chair & Events Coordinator

Name

Julia K Bailey

David Bernstein

vacant

Deb Ostas

Tim Boyer

Joel Ewing

Catherine Deeley

Anna Knecht