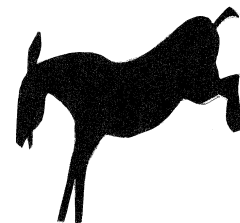


The Benzie Kicker

The Benzie County Democratic Newsletter



The Benzie County Democratic Party is a dynamic part of the community working inclusively and creatively for the betterment of all

Winter—2008

Visit our Web site: www.BenzieDemocrats.com

Volume 12 Issue 1

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Voter Guide On The January 15, 2008 Michigan Democratic Presidential Primary

1. Voters will vote at their regular polling places between 7 A.M. and 8 P.M.
2. Voters can vote by absentee ballot if they meet one of the requirements - out of town, age 60 or older, disability, etc.
3. The deadline to register to vote is 30 days before January 15, 2008 or December 17, 2007.
4. In order to vote at a polling place, a voter must show a photo ID or sign a statement that they do not have a photo ID with them. Absentee voters do not have to produce a photo ID.
5. Voters will be asked whether they want a Democratic or Republican ballot, and a record will be made of which ballot they take.
6. The voter's choice of candidate will be secret as in all public elections.
7. The Democratic ballot will have 6 choices

Hillary Clinton
Christopher Dodd
Mike Gravel
Dennis Kucinich
Uncommitted
Write-in

1. A vote for "uncommitted" is a vote to send delegates to the Democratic National Convention who are not committed or pledged to any candidate. Those delegates can vote for any candidate they choose at the Convention.
2. Supporters of Joe Biden, John Edwards, Barack Obama and Bill Richardson are urged to vote "uncommitted" instead of writing in their candidates' names because **write-in votes for those candidates will not be counted.**

Candidates Wanted

All Township and County Offices are up for re-election in November 2008. Each Township has a Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and 2 Trustees.

The County Clerk, Treasurer, Prosecutor, Sheriff, Register of Deeds, Drain Commissioner, and all 7 County Commission seats are up for re-election.

Democratic Precinct Delegates will be elected in the August 2008 Primary.

News from the Chair

Welcome to the New Year 2008. That's right, it is time for another election cycle and lots of hard work. This year promises to be full of excitement, hope and change in Benzie County, Michigan and Washington D.C.



We will be electing individuals this November for township, city, county, state and federal offices. We will have a large number of people running for office. The need for time, talent and money from the local Democrats and Independents will be great. That is where you, the person reading this newsletter comes into the picture.

We need at least on hundred and twenty volunteers, that means you and me stepping forward to help elect those people who will change the landscape at the township, county, state and national level with a Democratic Party victory in November. Please do not stand on the sideline and say that some else will do it. You are very necessary to the success of this election cycle. We started in 2004 and 2006 by taking back county, state and federal seats for the Democratic Party, it is now time to finish the job in 2008 by winning a House seat in Michigan for Dan Scripps and taking a solid majority in the U.S. Senate, so the next President, a Democrat is capable of carrying out the wishes of the American People. If you would like to volunteer to help us win in November, you can call or e-mail Ray Nichols, Susan Pyne or Carroll Volpe. Our phone and e-mail address can be found on the front page of this newsletter in the far left column.

We would like to make more changes in our local county and township governments, but we need you and your family, friends and neighbors to step up and be candidates. We will help you; if you know of someone who may be interested in running for office, please call me or Susan Pyne and we will follow up with that person.

We need you to help finance this years campaign. The cost of posters, signs, paper, pencils, office supplies, postage, phones, electric, heat and office rental is a great expense during the election cycle. We will also have to pay for ads for newspapers and radio spots. Candidates who will run will also be sponsored in some way by your local county party. All this means we will need around \$18,000



Continued...

this election year. I hope you can put aside some dollars to support a victory in Benzie county. If we each Democrat could donate \$50.00 to the party this year, it would go a long way to meeting our goal. If you would like to donate to the party you can make a check out to the Benzie County Democratic Committee. Please mail the check to Benzie County Democratic Committee, P.O. Box 63, Honor, MI 49640. If you can't afford to give any dollars to the Party, please consider giving your time and effort, every little bit helps bring about change.

In closing, I hope to see you at our monthly meetings and events during the year. Please support the Local Democratic Party because it represents you. Sincerely,
Ray Nichols, Chair

Voter Contact

We began the voter contact last fall in Weldon and Colfax Townships, knocking on over 400 doors. Our plan is to start in Almira Township in **April** on 3 Tuesdays—the **8th**, **15th** and the **23rd**. **Dan Scripps** will be joining us in this effort.

Going door to door talking with the people is a very rewarding experience as those who participated in the Thompsonville area found out, they would much rather do that than phoning.

Please put the April dates above on your calendar, we will meet at 5 p.m. to begin the walk, if you can't walk, we can use you as a driver also. Contact Carroll Volpe if you can participate in the walk and we will let you know where to meet to get the information and lists for the walk, after the walk we meet up again to talk about the experience and turn in the lists.

2nd District Candidates

There are 3 candidates vying to run against Hoekstra their websites are listed below:

Fred Johnson: fredjohnsonforcongress.com

Scott Killips: killipsforcongress.com

Kimon Kotos: kotosforcongress.com

District meetings are held at 2 p.m. on the 2nd Sunday or each month at China Buffet on US. 10 just outside Ludington city limits on the south side of the Hwy. Come early and eat, meetings in back room.

Courting Trouble –A League of Women Voters Forum
held 10/25/07 about threats to a fair, open and independent
Michigan Supreme Court– by Jane Lean

“AN INDEPENDENT AND HONORABLE JUDICIARY IS
INDISPENSABLE TO JUSTICE IN OUR SOCIETY.”
Michigan Code of Judicial Conduct

"JUDICIAL ELECTIONS ARE BECOMING POLITICAL
PRIZEFIGHTS WHERE PARTISANS AND SPECIAL INTER-
ESTS SEEK TO INSTALL JUDGES WHO WILL ANSWER TO
THEM INSTEAD OF THE LAW AND THE CONSTITUTION."
Sandra Day O'Connor, July 2007

We learned at the forum that the partisans and special interests have already taken control here in Michigan. We learned that, as former Governor Milliken wrote to the group, we needed to "... focus on questions of whether there are systemic problems in the way that we choose our justices that undermine trust and confidence in the fairness and impartiality of our Supreme Court." The forum was jam-packed with disturbing, detailed information, with concerned people (at least 150 attended, many from Benzie County), and with ideas and energy. Here is my report ..

The first speaker was Brian Dickerson, a columnist for the Detroit Free Press. ALL citizens of Michigan are 'parties' to recent decisions by the court which have, in effect, often rewritten the law and constitution, and taken away our established rights. He showed us very clearly three cases (among many) where this has happened. For instance, a recent court decision has stripped the right of 'any citizen' to sue on environmental damage regardless of where the damage occurs in the State. Two other court decisions have removed some of our rights to sue for uninsured motorist coverage under our insurance contracts, and some of our rights for protection under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act. These and many other cases are cases where the current court has reinterpreted laws and overturned precedents to favor special interests.

Why and how did these types of decisions and reinterpretations happen? How did we let OUR Supreme Court run away with our rights? Rich Robinson, the Executive Director of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, spoke on a major reason –the election financing methods for the Supreme Court. He advocates public financing for State Supreme Court elections.

Next year it is expected that the campaign for the court may cost \$20 MILLION dollars, twice as expensive as any other state. Eighty-six percent of the cases that came before the Michigan Supreme Court in the 1990s involved at least one campaign contributor to at least one of the judges.

ISSUE ADVOCACY ADS now account for half or more of all judicial campaign expenditures. Issue advocacy ads are not covered by the Michigan Campaign Finance Act, and are more candidate specific than those permitted at the Federal level. There are no limits to spending, and donations and donors are not disclosed on any campaign finance report. They are anonymous – transparency is totally lacking. You will have seen many TV ads in the last election cycle telling you why certain candidates were soft on crime or otherwise unfit for office, or ads supporting certain candidates. Who paid for those ads? What if they have (or have already had) a case before the court?



Judicial campaigns are financed in three ways. In addition to issue advocacy ads, campaigns may be financed by candidate campaign committees and political party independent expenditures. There are ethical problems with these other financing methods, also. Candidate campaign committee donors are publicly disclosed, and the donations of PACs, political parties, and individual donors are limited. Many lawyers in the state may contribute to these committees. All these donors may have cases before the court in subsequent years. Also, there are no formal requirements separating political party 'independent expenditure' activity and the candidate's campaign committee activities.

Those are some of the reasons why Rich Robinson spoke so forcefully in favor of public financing for State Supreme Court elections.

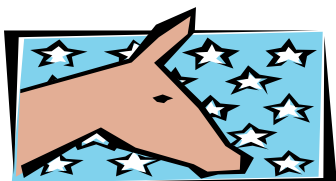
The forum brought out many other issues of importance related to the court, but did not have time to discuss them depth. I want to mention a few of them. (1) Political parties select individuals to run for the court on a nonpartisan ballot. (2) The governor has unchecked power to appoint judges when there are vacancies. (3) There are no standards for recusal for the judges, that is, self-disqualification when there are conflicts of interest. In fact, because of the methods of financing campaigns, it is often not possible to know whether there is a conflict of interest. We often do not know whether a party before the Court is also a contributor to a particular Judge's campaign. Michigan is the ONLY STATE without a standard process for self-disqualification. (4) We elect our judges, usually with very little information about them. Is this the best way to get an independent, fair, and competent Supreme Court?

As Michigan Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Weaver said after the two speakers, "This is just the tip of the iceberg." She suggested that we need independent judges who are restrained persons with common sense. Without those qualities, judges can, and obviously do, abuse the power of interpretation, as Brian Dickerson so ably illustrated with just 3 cases. She further suggested that, because at present the Supreme Court power is unchecked by any check or balance, judges can (and do) promote their own personal agendas, the agendas of special interests, and even their own biases and prejudices. She suggested a number of ways to add some checks and balances to the court, including an 8-year term limit for all justices, and changes in the method used for vacancy appointments.

The Forum was sponsored by the League of Women Voters, the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, the Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council, and the Traverse City Record Eagle. After the presentations, the crowd broke into work groups and developed suggestions for follow-through on issues to emphasize and actions to take.

Some action ideas that came out of the work groups which followed the forum can be read on our web site at: www.benziedemocrats.com or for further information, contact : courtreform@lwgta.org
.Submitted by Jane Lean

BENZIE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE
P O BOX 63
HONOR MI 49640



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BENZIE DEMS DATEBOOK

January 15th Presidential Primary Election

February 2, 9 a.m.: Regular Meeting, Benzonia Twp. Hall

March 1, 9 a.m.: Regular Meeting, Benzonia Twp. Hall

April 5, 9 a.m.: Regular Meeting, Benzonia Twp. Hall

May 3, 9 a.m.: Regular Monthly Meeting, Benzonia Twp.

***May 17, :** Honoree Dinner/Silent Auction, Crystal Mtn.

June 7, 9 a.m.: Regular Monthly Meeting, Benzonia Twp

***July 5, Noon—?** Chicken Bar B Que, Maley Park Honor

August 2, 9 a.m.: Regular Monthly Meeting, Benzonia Twp.

September 6, 9 a.m.: Regular Monthly Meeting at HQ

October 4, 9 a.m.: Regular Monthly Meeting at HQ

November 1, 9 a.m.: Regular Monthly Meeting at HQ

Note: **Designates fundraiser*

All Meetings are on the 1st Saturday, No meetings in July, and December.

Everyone is welcome to attend meetings - to be on the agenda, please call Ray Nichols prior to the meeting .

Help Wanted

Volunteers for campaign activities! Want to get involved? Contact Carroll at **325-6692** or e-mail at **mcvolpe@centurytel.net** or mail contact info to:
Benzie Democrats, P.O. Box 63, Honor, MI

Benzie Democrats' Core Values

Integrity: *We believe that government, as well as the Benzie Democratic Party, must operate with transparency.*

Stewardship: *We are responsible for caring for and nurturing our human and natural resources.*

Tolerance: *We believe respecting differing points of view and the dignity of others are strengths.*

The Benzie Kicker Newsletter Staff

Jim Dulzo - Carroll Volpe

Please let us know what you think! Send us your comments and suggestions! Call Carroll at 325-6692 or e-mail her at **mcvolpe@centurytel.net**. If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter—send a note.