

43rd District Democrats Monthly Meeting
University Baptist Church, Seattle
May 15, 2007

Hillary Madsen, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:32pm.

She introduced the LD's two members of the state House of Representatives for their review of the recently-completed session in Olympia. Senator Ed Murray is out of town and unavailable to participate in the review.

Speaker Frank Chopp began by expressing his pride in being a Washington state Democrat. His – and the caucus's -- orientation in the legislature is to work on building *one* Washington benefiting all of our residents. In this, he said, the goal is completely different from that of the Republicans. He reviewed a number of important achievements:

- Washington leads the nation in health care for children, covering every child, even undocumented immigrants. In the next two years, the Democratic caucus intends to extend and expand that coverage under the Health Security Trust concept.
- It was the best session in decades for environmental protection, with significant advances in dealing with climate change, emissions controls, and more. They will continue to collaborate with all significant stakeholders statewide.
- A special committee will work on developing a rational approach to education funding. A key component will be passing the constitutional amendment for simple-majority school levies (which will be on this year's ballot). They passed measures for decreasing class sizes, for supporting all-day kindergarten statewide, and significantly increasing the school construction budget. As with environmental issues, the Democratic caucus worked with all sorts of stakeholders to build common ground.

First-term Representative Jamie Pedersen described the workload during the session, as they dealt with about 1500 House bills plus some 400 arising from the Senate. He expressed excitement about the collaboration he experienced with the Speaker and Senator Murray. He highlighted several achievements:

- The domestic partner registry was a real bipartisan victory, but only a big first step. Significantly, it is not facing a referendum or initiative campaign aiming at overturning it. Strategically, the incremental approach to build toward eventual full equality appears to be working, and the caucus intends to continue making progress next year.
- Transportation remains a vexing issue. The Viaduct, SR520, and Sound Transit's light rail all impact the 43rd in one way or another, so he is working with many others to come up with a workable plan that will be able to get underway in good time. With respect to SR520 and the western end of the bridge, neighborhood coalitions are vital participants in the process.
- The Legislature passed bills that will help foster youth transition into regular society when they age out of the system. In the past, those youth have been left to their own devices, without resources. An especially valuable bill provides some housing subsidies for these individuals.

The Representatives took a number of questions from the members:

When will the SR520 project get underway?

Chopp noted that a neighborhood mediation bill was just signed by the governor. Design and plans haven't yet been worked out. In addition, the upcoming RTID levy vote and other factors still need to be worked out.

Speaking of RTID, why won't it fund the biggest transportation project of them all (SR520 and its western portal)?

Pedersen noted his disappointment that state-controlled funds are being distributed away from SR520 and "peanut-buttered" across a variety of other projects. Chopp informed the members that big planning and strategy meetings are still happening. Reminding the group that the new Tacoma Narrows bridge, financed completely with government money, is about to open (and was completed ahead of schedule and under budget), he reported that any suggestion to privatize the SR520 project is a non-starter.

What will be the design weight for new road projects? Will they be able to carry vehicles as heavy as rail cars?

After asking for clarification of the issues involved, Chopp indicated that he will look into the issue.

Why aren't there more opportunities to employ foster youth on fishing boats or ships? The maritime industry used to employ many young adults.

Chopp described current initiatives for improving apprenticeship programs, suggested working together to explore possible arrangements.

With all the positive environmental actions in this year's session, why was there no legislative protection for the Maury Island preserve?

Chopp noted his disappointment in that result, and stated that he'll try to get something done next year in the short session. This session, they got only 45 votes (44 Democrats and one Republican). The Speaker released the list of House members who voted against Maury Island, and activists should address those Representatives to apply pressure on them. In truth, the environmental community in the state had bigger fish to fry ... and was highly successful with them.

What can interest groups desiring to advance the Health Security Trust concept do to push it?

The Washington effort started with children, for reasons of finances and public appeal. FC. Nationally, Democrats are trying to reinstitute federal child-health programs. Chopp expressed the desire to meet with and work with the interest groups, to build both policy and political campaigns leading toward universal health care.

It was a fine session, but the failure of the payday loan and condo conversion bills disappointed us. Is the Democratic caucus interested in consumer protection?

Chopp would prefer completely ending payday loan business, but he's a realist and knows that will never happen. The Senate, where there's an odd coalition of conservatives and liberals, seems to support payday lending more strongly. He pointed out that the legislature did pass the Insurance Fair Conduct Act, so companies are legally compelled to pay claims. He also mentioned that mental health parity was supported in this session.

Also on consumer protection, why did the homeowners' bill of rights fail?

Chopp explained that, as with many other issues, the caucus, interest groups, and stakeholders need to work behind the scenes to build support and coalitions.

After thanking the Representatives, the Chair introduced a number of candidates for office:

- Jean Godden (incumbent City Councilmember, Position #1) informed the members that she has chaired Council's Energy & Technology Committee. During her term, City Light's financial position has improved, allowing the utility to lower its rates. In addition, City Light is now greenhouse-neutral. She also led the recent renegotiation of the city's cable contract with Comcast.
- Sally Clark (incumbent City Councilmember, Position #9) is running for a full term, following her 2005 appointment and 2006 election to complete the current term. She leads Council's Economic Development & Neighborhoods Committee. Clark noted the disconnect between hiring and displaced workers. She is reviewing, and seeking input on, the city's many neighborhood plans, which are halfway through their planned 20-year lifetime. Also, she is working to build support for the housing levy, which emphasizes badly-needed middle-income housing.
- Gael Tarleton (challenger, Port of Seattle Commission, Position #2) is a longtime member of the 36th District Democrats. She is running against Bob Edwards, seeking to change the way the port operates. We need a working port, she states, with good jobs and good safety. In addition, the Port must recapture public trust. Her background is in military security analysis, financial management and budgeting, and Vice President Gore's commission on the environment. She is now working at UW, in global health and disaster preparation.
- Venus Velazquez (candidate for the open City Council Position #3) lives in the 37th District. As a mother and as a social worker, social change is her passion. She has seen dysfunctional families and systems up close, and has seen the problems arising from bad governments and bad leadership. As a former city project manager, a public school parent, board member of CASA Latina and other organizations, and as the owner of a public affairs firm, her concern is to be one of the good people "at the table" to get the right things done for everyone in the city. She wants to see the city stand up for schools as it stands up for neighborhoods and for the environment.

Kirk Shirley, Vice Chair for Events, updated the membership on this Saturday's 43rd District Democrats' Spring Fling. The event will be held at Pioneer Hall in Madison Park, featuring our Congressman Jim McDermott. There will be plenty of great auction items, good food and drink. C'mon out!

Neal Traven, head of the committee developing rules for this year's 43rd District Democrats' endorsements, discussed the proposed rules. Approval of the 2007 rules was moved, seconded, and passed. The meeting for making endorsements for the 2007 primary will take place in July.

Treasurer Karelina Resnick introduced the proposed budget for the organization, and led discussion of it. Approval of the budget was moved, seconded, and passed.

Stephanie Pure, Vice Chair for Membership, announced and introduced newly appointed PCOs: Elizabeth Patterson, David Kunselman, Emily Walters, Keith Sculley, Kelly Pelz, Chris Gregorich, and Stephanie Pure. Approval of these PCOs was moved, seconded, and approved by the members.

A number of the organization's officers gave brief reports:

- Hillary Madsen, Chair, announced that the organization now has a permanent address (PO Box 31527, Seattle 98103). Because mailing the newsletter eats up a lot of our money, she encouraged members to choose to opt for email delivery or to read the newsletter online. She announced the result of the E-Board's study of possibly moving monthly meetings to a more amenable location – beginning next month, the 43rd District Democrats will meet at University Heights Center (www.uhcca.org/, 5031 University Way NE, Seattle 98105). Large-attendance meetings, such as the endorsement meeting in July, may move to other venues.
- David Kunselman, State Committeeman, reported on the late-April WSDCC meeting in Bellingham. The state party is organizing a “blue wave” visibility event on May 28. It was announced that the 2008 national convention will be in Denver (assuming that some issues with labor unions are worked out), a recognition of the importance of Dr. Dean's 50-state Strategy. The 2008 Washington state convention will be held in Spokane, date not yet settled. The Democrats will choose national delegates through the caucus process, beginning with precinct caucuses on Saturday, February 9. This is, of course, immediately after the Super Tuesday primaries, so if that isn't conclusive there may be appreciable national attention paid to Washington.
- Will Affleck-Asch, County Committeeman, reported that the KCDCC has endorsed a resolution in support of the recently-announced recall petition against Port Commissioner Pat Davis.

A number of Good of the Order items were announced:

- Julian Saucedo Wheeler mentioned two June 9 events -- SeattleWorks Day and a demo of a “knowledge as power” discussion forum
- Neal Traven announced that SeattleKos (local participants in the DailyKos blog, www.dailykos.com) were having a picnic at Golden Gardens on Sunday afternoon, May 20.
- A member announced that presidential candidate Barack Obama will be in Seattle for a low-cost fundraising event on June 1, and that there will be a national Obama canvass on June 9.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12pm.

Respectfully submitted, May 15, 2007,

Neal Traven
Secretary