

## Words From the President

Joyce Weissbach

We all understand that individual actions, taken by a collective group, can bring about important and lasting change. With this idea in mind, over twenty-five members of the Democratic Women's Club of Lee County met on March 14, 2009 for their first Retreat. Robert Schaeffer expertly served as our facilitator.

The groups, their members and the chairs of the groups, later appointed by the President, did splendid work in formulating goals, methods of achieving the

goals and time lines for completion. The reports appear elsewhere in the Newsletter. The day was charged with energy and a sense of accomplishment. I sincerely regret that not all members of our Club were able to attend,

I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Jane Kuckel and Frankie Jennings for their valuable contributions to the Retreat. Claire de Elizade is to be congratulated for her always accurate minutes.

## JJ Gala: the Democratic social event of the year

On Saturday, March 28th, many Democrats from Lee, Charlotte and Collier Counties put on their best duds and celebrated the election of President Barack Obama. The gala was held at the Sanibel Harbour Resort and Spa and had a reception and silent auction, a dinner, live entertainment, and Alex Sink, Florida's CFO, as the keynote speaker.

The silent auction was filled with many valuable items: there were four three-day vacations to various resorts on Captiva, Cape Coral or Fort Myers, several river cruises, several golf outings and golf balls, a number of gift certificates for goods and services, several sets of tickets to the Broadway Palm Dinner Theater, the Florida Repertory Theater, the Naples Philharmonic and the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Center, a beautiful serving tray, and fifteen pieces of art work by local artists. Some of the art included works by Doug McGregor, the editorial cartoonist for the Fort Myers News-Press, and two pieces by Tom

Prather, the father of Will Prather, the Lee County Democratic Party Chair.



FL. CFO Alex Sink & DWC Pres. Joyce Weissbach

After dinner Alex Sink, the only Democrat of the top four positions in the state, spoke briefly about the financial crisis in Florida and how her department was attacking the problem. It seems that the most important job ahead for the Florida Democratic Party is to get enough petitions signed to place the Fair Elections Amendment on the ballot. Passage of this Amendment is critical for fair politics



To reserve for the April 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting:

- Send e-mail to:  
[DWC@dwc-lee.com](mailto:DWC@dwc-lee.com)  
or
- Click on link on our website:[www.dwc-lee.com](http://www.dwc-lee.com)  
or
- Call:  
\* Pat Fish: 466-8381  
\* Vi Niggel: 768-6511

President  
**Barack Obama**

Vice-President  
**Joe Biden**

[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)



Questions or Comments  
DWC Officers 2008-2009

Joyce Weissbach President	454-6350
Nancy Simms Vice President	337-7920
Pat Carnevale 2nd Vice President	368-7947
Claire de Elizalde Secretary	482-1389
Patti Duffy Treasurer	481-7421

Newsletter:

Pat Fish, Editor  
(fishpatricia@yahoo.com)

Claire de Elizalde and Donalie  
Benyak, Proofreaders

Pat Fish, Editor, Graphic Designer  
(fishpatricia@yahoo.com)

Lori Spencer, Photographer

DWC Mailing Address:  
DWC, Box 07117  
Fort Myers, FL 33919

[www.dwc-lee.com](http://www.dwc-lee.com)

## Preview: Act I!

At our April meeting we will enjoy a special treat by our very own in-house “theater troupe!” The Redistricting Committee will demonstrate what we should and should not do during our signature collection campaign.

We will also hear from the newly elected President of the Lee County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, James Mulwakkil.

*Nancy Simms,  
Vice-President and Program Chair*



*Lori Spencer, our photographer (we don't see her in photos often!), with Phyllis Bogen*



*Bob Shaeffer leads the organizational discussion*

JJ Gala, continued from page 1

since one-third of all state legislative seats go unopposed because of the gerrymandered districts.

During dinner entertainment was provided by the Danny Morgan Band with Andrea Prather doing the vocals. The evening concluded with dancing to the music of the band.

To see more photos of the event click on [www.dwc-lee.com](http://www.dwc-lee.com).



*CFO Alex Sink is introduced by Ellis Robbins, DWC member & DEC State Committeewoman at fundraiser for Alex's reelection, held at Cypress Cove on March 28.*



*Annie Estlund, Alice Applegate and Frankie Jennings, in Gala finery*

*Line Dance at the Jefferson-Jackson Gala*



# Two Reports from our March Meeting Retreat

## **SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICTING:**

DWC President, Joyce Weissbach, selected me to chair group 3. This committee's members are Joyce Weissbach, Phyllis Bogen, Claire deElizalde, Nancy Simms and myself, Joan Patterson. This committee will carry forward the issue of (5) Five-Single-Member-Districts, (with help of DWC Members).

Our Goals for the present will be distribution of a non-partisan white paper to all members of the DWC and all Democratic Club members. We will seek more volunteers to:

- 1) Expand our communicating base.
- 2) Educate the public to the unfairness of the voting-at-large system which under-

mines democracy itself.

3) Educate the public to the many advantages of the (5) Five-Single-Member-District system.

Methods we hope to implement are:

- 1) Use of multi-media outlets.
- 2) Connect with LWV, NAACP, and the ACLU.
- 3) Seek an interview with the Ft. Myers News-Press' Editorial Board.
- 4) Expand to a regular letter-writing campaign in favor of 5-Single-Member-Districts.
- 5) Lobby Lee County Commissioners to voluntarily change over or at least facilitate this process.

*Joan Patterson*

**EDUCATION:** At the DWC Retreat on March 14, 2009 the Education Session determined that an Educational Candidate Recruitment Committee is to be established to recruit qualified Lee County School Board candidates for the 2010 & 2012 elections by our May meeting. Participants during this planning session were Suzie Weiss, Patricia Lochner, Frankie Jennings, Patti Duffy, and Janice Cass.

The purpose of the Educational Candidate Recruitment Committee is to: search for viable candidates to the Lee County School Board, identify the issues; establish competencies for School Board candidates; establish ways that the Committee and the DWC can assist the candidate. It was established that the Committee be composed of 5 members from which the President of the DWC appoints the Chair. The Chair of the Committee in turn sends out a request to the membership to seek those people who would be interested in serving on the Committee. Those inter-

ested in serving on the Committee then must submit their rationale for serving on the Committee to the Chair with an estimate of their time commitment to this process. The Chair then selects the members of the Committee.

After the meeting was held Patricia G. Duffy was appointed Chair of the Educational Candidate Recruitment Committee by our President, Joyce Weissbach. The Chair is seeking members who are interested in serving on the Committee. Interested members may email Patti a brief note on why they are interested in serving on the Committee along with an estimated time commitment to her email address at [pgd17@aol.com](mailto:pgd17@aol.com) by April 17, 2009. If e-mail is not available then please direct all interest to the Club's mailing address to arrive by the deadline. Committee meetings will be held at 9:00 a.m. prior to our regularly scheduled DWC meetings at the Fort Myers Royal Palm Yacht Club.

*Patricia G. Duffy*

Charles Blow (op ed writer, NYTimes) has created a wonderful word:

LIMBAUGH-TOMIZED...

## April Food Donations

**B**ecause the Harry Chapin Food Bank is able to buy \$5-worth of food for every dollar they receive, the DWC is asking that each month you bring a check, in ANY amount, to the general meeting. Make the check out to the HCFB. (We also will accept cash!)



To Contact Our  
Democratic Officials

Dave Aronberg  
Florida State Senator  
220 Senate Office Building  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100  
Phone: (850) 487-5356  
Fax: (850) 487-5496  
Ft. Myers: (239) 338-2646 or  
1-877-435-7351  
[aronberg.dave.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:aronberg.dave.web@flsenate.gov)

Senator Bill Nelson  
Florida US Senator  
716 Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-0905  
Phone: (202) 224-5274  
Fax: (202) 228-2183  
Ft. Myers: (239) 334-7760  
Contact via web form at  
<http://billnelson.senate.gov/contact>

Suggestion: Use postcards rather than letters in envelopes since these are delayed in order to check for poison.

# How the American Health Care System

## Got That Way

by Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello and Brendan Smith

As Americans respond to President-elect Obama's call for town hall meetings on reform of the American health care system, an understanding of how that system came to be the way it is can be crucial for figuring out how to fix it.

The American health care system is unique because, for most of us, it is tied to our jobs rather than to our government. For many Americans, the system seems natural, but few know that it originated not as a well-thought-out plan to provide for Americans' health, but as a way to circumvent a quirk in wartime wage regulations that had nothing to do with health.

As far back as the 1920's, a few big employers had offered health insurance plans to some of their workers. But only a few: By 1935, only about two million people were covered by private health insurance, and on the eve of World War II, there were only 48 job-based health plans in the entire country.

The rise of unions in the 1930's and 1940's led to the first great expansion of health care for Americans. But ironically, it did not produce a national plan providing health care to all, like those in virtually all other developed countries. Instead, the special conditions of World War II produced the system of job-based health benefits we know today.

In 1942, the US set up a National War Labor Board. It had the power to set a cap on all wage increases. But it let employers circumvent the cap by offering "fringe benefits" - notably, health insurance. The fringe benefits created a huge tax subsidy; they were treated as tax-deductible expenses for corporations, but not as taxable income for workers.

The result was revolutionary. Companies and unions quickly negotiated new health insurance plans. Some were run by Blue Cross, Blue Shield and private insurance companies. Others were "Taft-Hartley funds," run jointly by management and

unions. By 1950, half of all companies with fewer than 250 workers and two-thirds of all companies with more than 250 workers offered health insurance of one kind or another. By 1965, nearly three-quarters of the population were covered by some kind of private health insurance.

This private, job-based insurance covered millions of workers, who had never had health care insurance before. But this victory also set patterns that are responsible for many of the problems the health care system faces today.

Because this private system was tied to employment, it did not provide health insurance for all. Millions of people outside the workforce were without coverage. Those most likely to be covered were salaried or unionized white men in northern industrial states. Two-thirds of those with incomes under \$2,000 a year were not covered, nor were nearly half of nonwhites and those over 65.

Employer-based plans tied workers to their jobs - something that benefited employers, but not workers or the economy as a whole. The quality of the coverage was spotty - some plans were excellent, others completely inadequate.

Doctors accepted this revolution because it didn't challenge their power; but, as a result, the system provided no public control over medical costs.

This revolution had a subtle political effect as well. By giving much of the workforce health benefits, it reduced the incentive for them to pursue a system of universal care. And it gave unions a stake in the private, employer-based health care system. As one opponent of publicly financed health care put it, "the greatest bulwark" against "the socialization of medicine" was "furthering the progress already made by voluntary health insurance plans."

Since then, many layers have been  
*continued on page 5*





## Letters and Calls for a Better Democracy

Make your voice heard and keep our representatives working on our Democratic issues:

### Speaker-of-the-House

Nancy Pelosi  
H-232, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-0100  
<http://www.house.gov/pelosi/>

### Governor Charlie Crist

The Capitol, 400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001  
Phone: (850) 488-4441  
Fax: (850) 922-4292  
[charlie.crist@myflorida.com](mailto:charlie.crist@myflorida.com)

### Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL)

716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-5274  
Ft. Myers: (239) 334-7760  
<http://billnelson.senate.gov/contact/>

### Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL)

356 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-3041  
Contact via web form at  
<http://martinez.senate.gov/public>

### Rep. Connie Mack

115 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-5274  
Ft. Myers: (239) 573-5837  
E-mail from website:  
<http://mack.house.gov>

### News-Press

P.O. Box 10, Ft. Myers, FL 33902  
Fax: (239) 334-0708  
Phone: (239) 335-0362  
[mailbag@news-press.com](mailto:mailbag@news-press.com)

Suggestion: Use postcards rather than letters in envelopes since these are delayed in order to check for poison.



## Getting to Know You: Lynne Cooper

Eight years ago, Lynne Gonyea Cooper moved to Fort Myers with her husband Everett (Sonny). They had both lived in Michigan all their lives, but by 1998 both were medically retired and their lives changed forever.

As an elementary school child and as a high school student, Lynne was active in many activities which foreshadowed her life. She attended Eastern Michigan University, earning a B.S. in English language and literature and a high school teaching certificate. While waiting for a position to open up, Lynne sold real estate. The following year, she received a high school English position which she kept for eight years. During that time, she earned her M.A., also from EMU.

Lynne served on the teacher's negotiating team, which is what prompted her to attend law school. She graduated from University of Detroit Law School in in December of 1980.

With one more semester to go, Lynne gave birth to a baby girl, Holly. Two years later, a second daughter joined their family. At this time, Lynne's general law practice was growing. She was active in her community, her church, her family life, her professional life and her social life.

As a result, Lynne was showered with many awards. She was awarded the Spokette and Sparkette awards from the Jaycees. Also bestowed upon her were: Woman of the Year, Woman of Distinction in Youth Involvement, twice for Woman of Distinction in the area of Education, Women helping women, Woman in History, and the Ed Crowe award issued by the Diocese for work done with Catholic youth.

As if that wasn't enough, Lynne ran for

District Judge, unsuccessfully. There were two reasons for this. Leaving Lynne with no chance to respond, her opponents at the last moment circulated the rumor that Lynne had M.S. The most important reason, however, was the fact that her opponents had their father's names, both of whom had been sitting judges.

Lynne had been appointed Magistrate of the District Court, which is a judge with limited powers, and belonged to the American Judges Association. Also, she

had been appointed as a Mediator for the Wayne County Circuit Court. She had already been diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1988, but didn't let it stand in her way until December of 1998, when the medicines were no

longer working. She opted for an experimental surgery which was not yet FDA approved. Lynne agreed to have two Deep Brain Stimulators in her brain, connected to wires going down into stimulators in the chest. The surgery was a complete success in that it did exactly what it was supposed to do: stop the tremors and do away with the rigidity and "freezing." Lynne decided to retire to spend time with her family.

Once she moved to Florida, Lynne joined the AAUW, volunteered at the hospital, served as a mentor, acted as a judge to choose which teacher projects received mini-grants, served as a judge for scholarship applications, and joined the DWC. She also received an award for her writing from the Free-Press.

Lynne has been blessed with her first grandchild and is expecting 2 more during 2009.



“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.”

— Booker T. Washington

## Cooper's Corner

Here we go again. Big Brother is rearing his ugly head. Although compared to "the Patriot Act", everything else pales. But, these little laws added together indicate an erosion of the rights granted to us, supposedly, by the "Bill of Rights".

I thought: tracking devices for parents to use on their children, police paying citizens for turning in drunk drivers, legislating how boys wear their pants in school, were ridiculous. The latest proposed legislation is so ludicrous, I think it is time to recall or fire our legislators. Maybe their pay should be based on merit. They obviously have too much time on their hands.

In case you haven't heard, our elected officials are thinking of making it illegal for people under the age of 16 to enter a tanning booth. Whether you agree or not that tanning is hazardous to your health isn't relevant. There are less insidious, less intrusive ways of protecting people from themselves and others.

*Lynne Gonyea Cooper*

## Senator Gwen Margolis Inducted into Florida's Women's Hall of Fame

Senator Gwen Margolis is a longtime elected official whose historic achievements in office have paved the way for many other women. First elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1974, she was re-elected three times before being elected to the Florida Senate in 1980. In the Senate, she chaired several committees including Finance, Tax and Claims, and Appropriations, where she helped deal with the budget crisis facing Florida at the time.

In 1990, Senator Margolis was named President of the Senate, becoming the first

woman in the United States to serve as president of any Senate. While President, she spearheaded landmark open government and open records legislation. She also helped secure passage of legislation which at the time was called the toughest ethics in the country.

Senator Margolis left the Senate in 1993 to run for the U.S. House of Representatives. Having lost the campaign, she served eight years on the Miami-Dade County Commission before being elected in 2002 to the Florida Senate, where she served until 2008.

## WELCOME to new members

Look for these new members to say hello!

### **Arvella Clare**

1832 Hancock Bridge Parkway, Cape Coral, FL 33909  
Phone: 242-6661

### **Michelle Guerin**

8670 Wesleyan Drive, Fort Myers, FL 33919  
Phone: 839-6118      E-mail: nymush@aol.com

### **Priscilla Hardaway**

3255 Cypress Legends Circle #401, Fort Myers, FL 33905  
Phone: 278-9959      E-mail: pdh246@aol.com

## Newsletter

If you are receiving the Newsletter by regular mail but would like to receive it now by email (and in color!), please contact Pat Fish and Jan Guardiano to make the change. You will be saving money for the DWC and trees for our planet!

Log on to [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html) for instructions on how to download and install the FREE Adobe Reader program that will allow you to read any .pdf file.



## Coming DWC/Democratic Events

Sat., Apr. 11<sup>th</sup>, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m . . . . DWC Breakfast Meeting. Program: James Mulwakkil, new president of NAACP, and our own “Theater Troupe” (our DWC’s Redistricting Committee).  
At the Royal Palm Yacht Club, 2360 West First Street, Ft. Myers  
(From McGregor: one block north of the Edison & Ford Estates, turn left into West First Street)

Saturday, May 9, 10 a.m. to 1 pm DWC Breakfast Meeting

### To Reserve for Meetings:

• E-mail [DWC@dwc-lee.com](mailto:DWC@dwc-lee.com) • Or call Pat Fish or Vi Niggel (See page 1)



**ON THE WEB**

DWC – our own Lee County Democratic Women’s Club site:  
[www.dwc-lee.com](http://www.dwc-lee.com)

DWCF, Inc. – Democratic Women’s Club of Florida  
<http://democratic-women.org>

DEC -- Democratic Party of Lee County  
<http://leecountydems.org>