Slam Jam Romp Stomp II
A Cultural Showcase to benefit the IMC and Books2Prisoners
Saturday, November 11 from 8pm–11pm
Independent Media Center, 202 S. Broadway in Urbana
Sliding Scale: $5–$20
Poetry, Music, Food & Dancing with Aaron Ammons, the Greg Spero Trio, DJ Victor Carreon, and much more...

Volunteers needed for... Books To Prisoners, Community Book Sale
Thursday, Nov 8 – Monday Nov. 12, 2006
Thousands of high quality books at absurdly low prices!
Urbana-Champaign (Independent Media Center),
202 E. Broadway
in the downtown Urbana Post Office
All proceeds fund postage and supplies for "UC- Books To Prisoners" which has shipped 7000 books into Illinois prisons and stocks and staffs the library at the Champaign County jail.
Please visit www.books2prisoners.org to volunteer to work a shift at the sale, to find out about other volunteer opportunities or to make a donation.
For more information: Sandra 217-367-6345, sandra.ajten@gmail.com

NET NEUTRALITY PANEL
What you need to know about your internet before the elections!
October 25, 2006, 7-8:30 pm
Main floor Independent Media Center
For more information contact: Marcia Zumbahlen drdoula@gmail.com

SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTORS
The Public i wishes to express its deep appreciation to the following sustaining contributors for their financial and material support:

Socialist Forum: An Open Discussion and Action Group, Meets 3rd Saturdays of the month, 3-5 pm at IMC, Broadway & Elm. (U)
World Harvest International and Gourmet Foods
519 E. University, Champaign
Union of Professional Employees (UPE)
The Natural Gourmet
2225 S. Neil, Champaign: 355-6365
The Social Equity Group, Financial West
Socially Responsible Investing
Jerusalem Cafe
601 S. Wright St; Champaign; 398-0202
The AFL-CIO of Champaign County
Tribal Life, Inc.

Get Involved with the Public i
You don't need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The Public i is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC), to post a story to the web site (http://www.ucimc.org), or to contact one of the editors.
- Become a citizen journalist, write a news story or opinion piece.
- Make a tax-deductible contribution.
- Help distribute the Public i around the Champaign-Urbana area.
- Help with fund-raisers.
- Join the editorial board.

Driving While Muslim
Anonymous
Page 9

Today I Voted
Marcia Zumbahlen
Page 1

War and Impeachment
Ricky Baldwin
Page 2

Decisions by Referenda
Brian Gaines
Page 7
“TODAY I VOTED”

By Marcia Zumbahlen

Soon after I began attending Print Group meetings, I heard someone ask, “are you going to block consensus?” When I asked what was happening someone whispered, “we practice anarchy here.” Immediately I expected a group with no structure, no organization, and no action. Contrary to my expectations the group accomplished a lot.

As I participated in more groups at the IMC, I routinely discovered how the anyone-can-joint philosophy and the consensus-vote format enabled a kind of decision-making that I had never witnessed in academia, the cooperative housing organization where I live, or the supposedly grassroots movements I had joined. In my previous experience, differences were often shut down rather than built upon. When voting we were left with winners and losers (all those in favor say “aye”), little understanding (“You can spout off for the next 5 hours and my opinion will not change”), and a tendency for issues to surface at the IMC I was participating in a dialogical process whereby participants could seek to understand and to be understood, with unforeseen higher-level solutions to differences often arising from the dialogue.

Given my excitement to have finally found a less hierarchal, less bureaucratic, grassroots practice, I was eager to share this approach with others. Alas, others were not as excited as I. “The only reason consensus works for your group is because you all think alike” or “you are a small group” or “you have more time than those of us in the real-world.”

Indeed, we do have many comparable values like harmony (not avoidance of conflict, but collective over competitive solutions). But we DO NOT always agree. We believe that the dialogical process inherent to consensus-voting format can bring harmony about differences are explored without categorizing views as inferior or superior. Since such exploration inevitably spawns creative prospects, we respect the time that the dialogical process takes. We are not interested in efficient decision-making that ineffectively fits the people we represent: that would not be grassroots. Although a looser concept of time likely smooths this process, one should not assume that we ignore time. Papers must be published. Grants have deadlines. Bills must be paid. Meetings must end. Instead, group members save time by searching for the intentions behind proposals and rephrasing proposals so they fit the intentions of all. Obviously this will be easier to accomplish in a group of eight people than a group of 40, but it is not impossible for a larger group. Time and again I see IMC members who have honed the skill of “reframing proposals until creative solutions arise” assume the role of facilitator in larger groups. In other words, size does have an impact, but ultimately it’s what you do with it that counts.

After reflecting on how much goes in to making consensus-voting work, I had to reconsider my hopes for broader use of this method. After all, there is very little opportunity for our citizens to develop such advanced diplomacy. Political leaders are not very good models (you’re either with us or against us). Robert’s Rules of Order dominate most adult committees. Schools that are pressed to test by No Child Left Behind policies have little time for student dialogue. Early childhood educators plagued by large class-sizes find responses in teacher-directed class structures. Parents that are working countless hours to make ends meet have little time for family meetings or harmonious parenting: the “no ifs, ands, ors, or ifs” is far easier in stressful moments.

In light of the degree to which children practice decision-making in early childhood (see interview insert), early socialization should not be ignored. Most of us remember raising our hands to vote for this or that in school. But years of exposure to this winners-losers-majority-voting may be one reason why citizens fail to question the voting styles in our country. I wonder what would happen if children were schooled in variety of group decision-making skills. Might we see a world with more mutual aid and voluntary cooperation?

The Project Approach is one early learning model that can foster collaborative decision-making. Teachers use responsive and inductive strategies to guide small groups of children through in-depth investigation of topics that interest them. Locally, professors like Lilian Katz have helped teachers finesse the art of problem-solving with children during these projects (exploring hypotheses, generating creative solutions, establishing joint goals, etc.). The Project Approach capitalizes on children’s natural tendencies to organize and empowers children to develop views and integrate these views with others.

Can you give me an example? If I say, “do you want to read this book or this book and take it to the library?” then we vote. And whoever has the mostest team gets to take it to the library. “Okay, this team has the most so we’re going to take this one” (stated in teacher’s voice).

What about the team that was the smallest? What happens to their book?

Some people are sad. Some people don’t care.

Tell me about the sad ones.

I don’t know if anyone is sad or not.

Has that ever happened to you, that you didn’t get to take the book you wanted to?

Yup.

What happened?

I didn’t care.

What about the kids who get to take their book with them?

I think they’re happy.

Are you happy when you get your book chosen?

Yeah. But I’ve never really gotten it (stated in a frustrated tone).

Today I Voted.

When you choose a book to go to the library? Tell me how that works.

We both raise our hand. Whoever has the most, we take that book to the library.

When you choose a book to go to the library? Tell me how that works.

Early childhood educators plagued by large class-sizes find responses in teacher-directed class structures. Parents that are working countless hours to make ends meet have little time for family meetings or harmonious parenting: the “no ifs, ands, or buts” is far easier in stressful moments.

In light of the degree to which children practice decision-making in early childhood (see interview insert),
**Need a Reason to Vote? War and Impeachment**

By Ricky Baldwin

**Cities for Peace**

The Urbana City Council early on passed a resolution opposing the invasion of Iraq, joining over 100 other “Cities for Peace.” At the time 300-400 area residents were protesting every Saturday on North Prospect Avenue in Champaign against the Bush Administration’s plans to invade Iraq, which it was claiming was not the plan.

There has been a constant anti-war presence at local events, from the Martin Luther King Day celebration, to the Taste of Champaign, the Fourth of July parade, Sweet Corn Festival and Urbana Farmers’ Market. And last year a new Urbana City Council passed another resolution, this time calling for withdrawal of US troops from occupied Iraq. Residents again filled the Council chambers to speak up for the resolution, while a handful of opponents wrote bitter letters to the editor, portraying supporters as “activists”, as if the designation somehow meant they couldn’t also be neighbors, community members and voters.

Opponents, including some at the News-Gazette, asked rhetorically, if anti-war council members were so sure their position represented the city populace, why not let the voters decide?

**WAR AND IMPEACHMENT**

Stated reasons for impeachment run very close to arguments against the war. Bush lied. Cheney lied. The Administration intentionally distorted intelligence reports to make them seem like reasons for war. They said they would go to war only as a last resort, but in fact they acted openly within days of learning of the opportunity. AWARE organizers proposed two referenda, one calling for an immediate troop withdrawal, another for both Bush and Cheney’s impeachment. Activists at both meetings, Cunningham Township in Urbana and Cunningham Township in Champaign played to packed houses. These meetings usually consisted of about two people, whose thankless job it is to attend. Participation for a change was welcome - at least in Urbana.

Spirits ran high in the Cunningham Township office, jammed with anti-war voters, as township officials patiently explained the process. The only debate was over specific wording and the order in which the referenda would appear.

In Champaign, Mayor Schweighart, upon learning of the effort, sent out a call for war supporters to attend and defeat the move, apparently unwilling to hear from voters on the issue. Anti-war attendees in Champaign did achieve the required two-thirds majority to place their items on the ballot for voters, after heated debate, by a single vote.

Anti-war activists in a few other Illinois townships added anti-war referenda the same night. Apparently no others succeeded in adding a referendum for impeachment, although some reportedly tried. In at least one township, officials blocked the item from the agenda.

**The Campaign**

AWARE has purchased yard signs in support of the referenda (available at the Urbana Farmers’ Market), sponsored signs in MTD busses, and attempted to purchase a billboard ad (but the company turned them away).

Door-to-door canvassing, voter registration up until October 10, and fundraisers small and large are helping to spread the word throughout the month of October.

Rep. Karen Yarbrough will speak in the Urbana City Council chambers October 17 at 7pm, and at a campus rally for impeachment the next day at noon.

Other events fill out the month. There may be a demonstration on October 28 to coincide with national protests against the war.

On November 7, it will fall to the voters to decide the referendum questions. It could go either way, regardless of public opinion. Mid-term elections are typically low-turnout elections. Numerous studies have found that low turnout often means conservative turnout. In a local election such as this one single vote, as in the Champaign Township meeting, could decide.

National polls consistently show a clear majority in the US oppose the ongoing war, in line with polled majorities of US troops, including those currently stationed in Iraq. In forum after forum, activity after activity, campaign after campaign, local residents have shown that they oppose this war and they oppose the Bush Administration. It appears that the support is there in the community for these referenda, but their success depends upon supportive voter turnout on November 7.

---

**Kids Art Space at the UCIMC**

On October 21st, 2006 the Independent Media Center is proud to announce the Opening of the Kids Art Space, located in the north-east corner of the building. The KAS features lockers, cubbies spaces, a myriad of art supplies, and a special table for kids that has no corners and is low to the ground. The mission of the Kids Art Space is multifarious. The idea is that the space provides an area for children while parents/adults are engaged in IMC activities, and that it allows all children in Champaign-Urbana to have access to art supplies and an opportunity to release creative energies. Additionally, we hope that the space draws children and adults alike into the IMC and fosters the sense of the IMC as a public space. We encourage educators and caregivers to consider how they might use the space to hold art classes or after school programs. It should be noted however, that this space is intended for supervised activity, and is not a ‘drop-off’ for children.

In the Spring, AWARE took their detractors up on this. At the founding conference of the Illinois Coalition for Peace and Justice, here in town, AWARE members learned that a little-known provision in Illinois law provides that every year in every township in the state, at one particular township meeting, a majority of voters who live in the township and attend the special annual meeting can choose to add up to three referenda to the November ballot. The annual meeting was about two weeks away.

The Mayor of Champaign would later accuse activists of a kind of stealth campaign, but in fact they acted openly within days of learning of the opportunity. AWARE organizers proposed two referenda, one calling for an immediate troop withdrawal, another for both Bush and Cheney’s impeachment. Activists at both meetings, Cunningham Township in Urbana and Cunningham Township in Champaign played to packed houses. These meetings usually consisted of about two people, whose thankless job it is to attend. Participation for a change was welcome - at least in Urbana.

Spirits ran high in the Cunningham Township office, jammed with anti-war voters, as township officials patiently explained the process. The only debate was over specific wording and the order in which the referenda would appear.

In Champaign, Mayor Schweighart, upon learning of the effort, sent out a call for war supporters to attend and defeat the move, apparently unwilling to hear from voters on the issue. Anti-war attendees in Champaign did achieve the required two-thirds majority to place their items on the ballot for voters, after heated debate, by a single vote.

Anti-war activists in a few other Illinois townships added anti-war referenda the same night. Apparently no others succeeded in adding a referendum for impeachment, although some reportedly tried. In at least one township, officials blocked the item from the agenda.

**THE CAMPAIGN**

AWARE has purchased yard signs in support of the referenda (available at the Urbana Farmers’ Market), sponsored signs in MTD busses, and attempted to purchase a billboard ad (but the company turned them away).

Door-to-door canvassing, voter registration up until October 10, and fundraisers small and large are helping to spread the word throughout the month of October.

Rep. Karen Yarbrough will speak in the Urbana City Council chambers October 17 at 7pm, and at a campus rally for impeachment the next day at noon.

Other events fill out the month. There may be a demonstration on October 28 to coincide with national protests against the war.

On November 7, it will fall to the voters to decide the referendum questions. It could go either way, regardless of public opinion. Mid-term elections are typically low-turnout elections. Numerous studies have found that low turnout often means conservative turnout. In a local election such as this one single vote, as in the Champaign Township meeting, could decide.

National polls consistently show a clear majority in the US oppose the ongoing war, in line with polled majorities of US troops, including those currently stationed in Iraq. In forum after forum, activity after activity, campaign after campaign, local residents have shown that they oppose this war and they oppose the Bush Administration. It appears that the support is there in the community for these referenda, but their success depends upon supportive voter turnout on November 7.

---

To get involved, see www.anti-war.net or stop by the Urbana Farmers’ Market on Saturday. AWARE also meets downstairs every Sunday from 5-6:30 pm at the Independent Media Center at the corner of Broadway and Elm in Urbana. Enter from Elm St. All are welcome.
Torture Exposed In The Champaign County Jail

By Brian Dohnar

October 2006 www.ucimc.org / www.publici.ucimc.org

Continued on page 4

many are now familiar with the infamous abuses of Sergeant Jon Burge in Chicago. In 2002, it was found that Sgt. Burge and his underlings had tortured over 150 Black men in Chicago jails. Burge had used a stun gun, a 300,000 volt polyvinyl chloride (PVC) device that emitted 40,000 pulses per minute between each shot. He was later found to be mentally ill and probably needed medication for his behavior in the jail. But before he could be treated by a nurse, he was treated with the brutal shock therapy of Sgt. Myers.

One inmate told an investigator that the officers “were just kind of laughing it off and stuff.” Another inmate who was interviewed said that officer Matthews joked, “He’s just kind of laughing it off.”

Afterwards, Myers told Heath, “This is going to take some creative report writing.” Myers typed up a falsified police report and emailed it to Heath, telling him “Make your report look like mine.” Myers’ report read: “Mr. Rich was beaten down by Hsieh and I saw him lay on the ground. At some point Mr. Rich was tied up and officers Mathews and Heath were able to handcuff Hsieh behind his back. We placed Hsieh in the restraint chair. The entire time we were doing this, Hsieh was spitting so I ordered a spit hood placed over Hsieh’s head to prevent him spitting on us anymore.”

When officer Heath saw the report, he was offended that it had been altered and fired his gun. He says that he was there.” Heath told an investigator. “The main thing that really bothers me is that he said I was there while he was being tased.” Of course, Heath was not bothered by the torture of an inmate, but that he was implicated in the incident.

Officer Heath left the jail that night without finishing his report. His defiance angered Myers, who told officer Jones to relay a message to Heath: “You tell him as soon as he gets off work, I need to know what he had to do from the beginning. It was just a matter of, I don’t even know what it was a matter of. I just know we had to do it from the beginning. It was just a matter of doing it, I guess.”

Officer Mathews was also named in the report. When he read it he responded, “The report kinda like made, I felt, kinda like made me look like a jerk ass.” Matthews also was not concerned for the health of Hsieh, but for the future of his job. He told an investigator, “I got a house and kids, I can’t lie.”

Myers then talked to officers Heath and Jones who decided to go to the police union representative, who notified Captain James Young that night. Sgt. Myers was arrested on November 10 and taken to the Patti County Jail in Monticello for his own safety.

An internal investigation was conducted that involved interviewing several witnesses, whose testimony is included in Myers’ criminal case file and is the basis of this account. When investigators finally cornered Myers about his lying, they lectured to him, “When someone does that, then they question the integrity of us all.” Myers claimed he panicked and said he didn’t realize he had committed a crime, “I didn’t think about it till now.”

Ray Hsieh was one of two inmates Myers had tortured that very same week. According to Sgt. Mengena, Myers later joked about torturing inmates, “I have had to Taser somebody twice within the past week, they might start thinking I am getting trigger happy.” Myers had also used a Taser on inmate Michael Alexander that same week. He even bragged to Mengena, “It seems like I am the only one with enough balls to use the Taser.”

On September 19, 2005, Sgt. Myers also used a Taser on Trina Fairley, a Black woman who was one month pregnant. But Myers’ use of Tasers and torture goes back even further, to an incident with Michael Rich a year before the altercation he had prior to coming to the jail” (Case no. S-2004-5123).

Ironically, also present were Jeremy Heath and Joshua Jones, the same two officers who turned in Myers a year before this. After hearing about an altercation between two inmates, Myers arrived at the downtown jail at approximately 8:00 pm on November 14, 2005. He had called in the media.

As violence escalates overseas, with the United States tightening its imperial grip in the Middle East, we see a 21 year-old Michael Rich was hooded and hand-cuffed army for his own safety. James Young that night. Sgt. Myers was arrested on October 2006 the Public i 3
Independent in Illinois
By Jen Walling

Jen Walling is a third year law student and master’s student in environmental science at the University of Illinois. She has assisted several local candidates in obtaining ballot access and has assisted attorneys in defending challenges to the candidacies of new party candidates. She considers herself an Independent voter.

Even get on the ballot, he would need to collect 6,995 valid signatures. He would need to file his petitions 323 days before the general election (two and a half months before any other independent candidate in the country). And the signatures that he collected would need to come from registered voters who did not want to vote in the primary election. Discouraged by his chances, Lee gave up his bid for the 44th state senate district and sued the members of the Illinois State Board of Elections.

Lee won his suit in the 7th District Court of Appeals this September. In Lee v. Keith, 2006 U.S. App. LEXIS 23686, (7th Cir. 2006), the Court described Illinois’s ballot access requirements as “the most restrictive in the nation” and having the result of eliminating Independent candidates from the Illinois political scene. Indeed, the effects of this case may have a significant effect on the Illinois political scene.

There is a sharp distinction between independent candidates and third party candidates. Third party candidates, such as Joe Parmauskes, Socialist Equality Party candidate for state senate, and Tom Abram, are third party candidates. In order to get on the ballot, they were required to collect a number of signatures equal to five percent of the voters that voted for that office in the last election. In addition, these candidates must file in June the year of the General Election, instead of the Independent filing deadline of 323 days before the election.

Independent candidates, those without any party affiliation whatsoever, were required to collect signatures from 10% of the number of voters that cast a vote for that office in the last election. There currently are no elected independent officials in the state. State Senator James Meeks is often described as an independent, but he ran and won using the third party ballot access requirements as an “Honesty and Integrity Party” candidate.

The prohibition on the ability of new parties and independent candidates to appear on the ballot in the United States has only arisen in the last century. In 1896, twenty-two members of the United States House of Representatives and five held seats in the Senate. Significant parties in the early 1900s included the Union Labor Party, the Socialist Labor Party, Progressive Party, Populist Party, and the Prohibition Party. Minor political parties have been attributed with the introduction of ideas such as certain rights (child labor laws, women’s right to vote, minimum wage etc.) into the political debate.

Restrictions to ballot access in the United States arose for several reasons. Illinois, for example, raised its statewide signature requirements from 1,000 signatures to 25,000 signatures in the 1930s in an attempt to keep Socialist Party candidates off the ballot. In other states, the reasons were more invidious; in many Southern states, ballot access restrictions were put into place to prevent black political parties from gaining ground.

The restrictions to Independent candidates in Illinois are more recent. The signature requirement to get on the ballot as an Independent was increased from 5% to 10% of the number of votes in the last election for that office in 1979. Prior to 1979, 16 independent General Assembly candidates qualified for the general election ballot from 1956 through 1978. After the enactment of the 10% requirement, three independent candidates qualified for the ballot in 1980, but since that time, not a single independent General Assembly candidate has qualified for the ballot in Illinois.

The U.S. Supreme Court has acknowledged that there is a First Amendment right to appear on the ballot with a person’s party of choice, but more recent decisions have focused on the state having a “compelling state interest” to limit the number of candidates on its ballots. The Court in Lee v. Keith considered the compelling state interest of Illinois’s Independent candidate restrictions and found that the restrictions, were “not sustainable based on the state’s asserted interest in deterring party splitting, factionalism, and frivolous candidates.”

The debate over ballot access centers on the very purpose of elections. Is the purpose of our elections solely to pick a winner? Or is there a broader purpose to elections that involve the important role elections serve in the debate over policies in this country? If so, it’s important that many viewpoints be represented in that debate and in giving the opportunity to play a meaningful role in the political process.

That debate will play an important role in the future of Independent candidates in the state of Illinois, a future which will be determined by the state legislature. In other words, a future determined by a group of elected persons who chose to appear with the terms “Republican” or “Democrat” next to their names on the ballot in an election where the voters did not have the option of choosing an Independent candidate. The results of this debate could contribute to a trendier atmosphere to those who want to appear on the ballot as an Independent or a new party candidate, leading ultimately to a livelier election process in Illinois.

E-CO Lab Hosts Training and Symposium
Non-Profit organizes energy efficiency and ecological design weekend to conclude with Ribbon cutting at the Fairview House

Urbana e-co lab, a local non-profit Community Housing Developer, is hosting an Energy Efficiency Training Session and the 4th Annual Ecological Construction Symposium on October 13-15, 2006.

It will begin on Friday October 13 with Energy Efficiency training for local individuals, non-profit community groups and for-profit construction professionals. Learn about methods and techniques that, when implemented together, make homes or commercial buildings that use 90% less energy than standard buildings.

It will continue through the weekend of October 14-15 and will conclude with a free celebration of the opening of the new Black-owned E-CO Lab building, which will be completed on October 15.

At the center of the E-CO Lab is a green residential redevelopment of the Kerr Avenue site in Urbana. Via presentations on Saturday and tours on Sunday, the symposium will present and investigate different local design examples employing concepts based on creating an overall beneficial relationship with interrelated and surrounding aspects.

For more information on the 4th Annual Ecological Construction Symposium, the Energy Efficiency Training, or e-co lab in general; contact Katrin Klingenberg or Dave Stecher at 217-344-1294 or info@e-colab.org. More information can also be found at www.e-colab.org.

Torture Exposed In The Champaign County Jail
Continued from page 3

This story is largely based on public https://secure.jtsmith.com/clerk/clerk.asp. court documents. For more information search the Circuit Clerk website at...
Imagine the Internet as being like cable television: if you choose to access websites of your choosing, you’ll have to pay extra to put up your own website or blog, or have to pay an additional surcharge to ensure that your website is easily accessible to your friends. If your ISP has a special relationship with, for example, Barnes & Noble, then you may not be able to easily access its rival Amazon.com, or independent bookstores like Pages for All Ages. There’s even a chance that your ISP will decide to block certain content (like political websites challenging its authority) or ban certain devices (like free Internet phone service)—all for your own good, of course.

If powerful interests get their way, this nightmare scenario could easily become the new reality. Up until now, a safeguard called “net neutrality” has prevented this from happening. But at this very moment, the fate of net neutrality rests on legislation pending in Congress.

The debate over whether to preserve net neutrality has become one of the most contentious policy issues of 2006. What began as an obscure telecom policy debate has spilled outside the rarified aisles of Congressional committees and the Federal Communications Commission to rage across the blogosphere as well as the business, editorial, and front pages of major newspapers, YouTube videos and multiple episodes of The Daily Show. Meanwhile, as Congress debates whether network neutrality protections should be written into current legislation, the battle lines began to draw.

In addition to large content providers, Internet retailers like Amazon, Google and Microsoft, service providers like Google, large swathes of the public across the country, and mainstream organizations like AARP, the League of Women Voters, and the American Library Association, as well as right-wing groups like the Christian Coalition, have been drawn between large telecommunications companies who own the Internet pipes (like AT&T, Verizon, and Comcast) on one side, and Internet content companies (like Google and Yahoo) and public interest groups (like Free Press and Consumers Union) on the other.

WHAT IS NET NEUTRALITY?

But what exactly is net neutrality, and why the fuss? A tremendous amount of time, energy, and money is being spent to convince the public that it’s a highly technical and complex issue—when in fact, net neutrality rests on core democratic principles that have guided U.S. telecommunication development for decades. The argument put forward by some commentators as the “First Amendment of the Internet,” net neutrality is broadly defined as the non-discriminatory interconnection of communication networks. This allows Internet users to both access the content and run the services, applications, and devices of their choice, while permitting preferential treatment by network operators. In other words, net neutrality prevents network operators like AT&T and Comcast from acting as gatekeepers and ensures that all users have access to the content of their choice.

Net neutrality is the foundation for the Internet as we know it and has created the most vibrant communications medium of our generation. Historically, net neutrality principles have encouraged rapid innovation and safeguarded the openness of the Internet. Stems from telephone system development, the principle of “common carriage” mandated that telephone operators could not discriminate against certain types of content and could not treat different customers differently. Moreover, telephone companies, given their monopoly status, were forced to lease their lines to competitors. These provisions were transferred to the Internet.

But as the cable television industry got into the Internet game, it brought a different model. It lobbied the FCC to categorize cable broadband as an “information service” and not a telecommunications service, thus arguing that it should be exempt from common carrier requirements. This move was contested in the courts until, on June 27, 2005, the Supreme Court ruled (in the infamous Brand X decision) to allow the FCC to “declassify” Internet service as an information service and phone lines, allowing service providers to refuse access to their networks.

These decisions marked a dramatic departure from nearly a century of telecommunications policy making. With the removal of the foundational democratic principle of common carriage, telecommunications companies have signaled that they are eager to create tiered Internet services paralleling the cable television business model. According to this “pay to play” model, those who “ante up” will reside in an Internet superhighway, while those who don’t are relegated to a one-lane dirt road. Even though content providers are already paying for access to the Internet, network owners want to charge them a second time to have speedy delivery of their media. Left there be any doubt about the intentions of these companies to set up tollbooths on the Internet, the ever impolitic CEO of AT&T, Ed Whitacre, offered his point of view to Business Week, saying, “For a Google or a Yahoo or a Vonage or any body to use these pipes for free is nuts!”

In addition to large content providers, Internet retailers like Amazon, Oracle, and Microsoft, service providers like Google, large swathes of the public across the country, and mainstream organizations like AARP, the League of Women Voters, and the American Library Association, as well as right-wing groups like the Christian Coalition, National Religious Broadcasters, and Gun Owners of America, and left-leaning groups like Move On and Code Pink. Net neutrality advocates count among their chief backers the “Father of the Internet,” Vint Cerf, and the inventor of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee.

THE TELECOM INDUSTRY’S OPPOSITION

Unfortunately, the public discourse on this issue has been polluted by over 100 million dollars spent by telecom industry groups. In addition to campaign contributions and armies of lobbyists hounding key congressional offices, this money supports an extensive network of coin-operated think tanks, propaganda both in and outside the Beltway, industry-funded academics and PR flacks, and a bumper crop of apily named “Astorfronts”—lake grassroots organizations like netcompetition.org and “Hands Off the Internet.” These machinations combine to obscure structural linkages (like the relationship between market failures and the digital divide) by obfuscating the terms of debate, ignoring empirical analysis that undermines their position, and outspending pro-network neutrality advocates 1,000 to 1.

As has happened with other important social issues such as global warming and evolution, these efforts help create a facade of contention, needlessly problematizing issues that are already settled in the scientific community, and propping up positions that would be discredited in any rational conversation or objective analysis.

The corporate capture of this public discourse is thrown into stark relief when certain sobering facts are considered. A recent report on the state of broadband connectivity showed the U.S. ranking globally 16th in broadband penetration and 15th in growth—a precipitous decline just a few short years from being the number one connected country on Earth. This same report found that consumers in other countries enjoy broadband connections that are both far cheaper and an order of magnitude faster than what is available in the U.S. Thus, Americans pay nearly 200% as much as the Japanese for broadband speeds that are less than 5% as fast.

If the U.S. had true competition in service provision, the loss of net neutrality would be less dire. In a competitive business environment, if one company engages in price gouging, or blocking/degrading content, the consumer could simply switch to another provider. But the sad truth is that most Americans live in monopoly or duopoly markets where their only choice is often between one cable provider and one DSL provider—an inconceivable fact that’s often left out of the equation.

FALLACIOUS ARGUMENTS

But it’s relatively easy to identify purveyors of misinforma- tion in this domain. Opponents of net neutrality almost always turn to one of several basic rhetorical themes. First, they point out that there’s never been pure net neutrality. Technically this might be true in some cases, such as the so-called “good discrimination” against spam, but it completely misses the point. Introducing the logic of tiering will irrevocably change the end-to-end logic of the Internet.

Second, opponents of net neutrality argue that fears of content blocking and a tiered Internet are unfounded and we should wait until it becomes a problem before we invite the government to intervene. Yet already there’s been extensive documentation of abuse of power from network owners. For example, in 2004, North Carolina ISP Madison River blocked DSL customers from using its rival Vonage’s Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services. In 2005, the Canadian telecom corporation Telus blocked its users from accessing a pro-union website during a Telus labor dispute. And in 2006, Time Warner blocked a mass email campaign from its customers that was critical of AOL’s proposed tiered email system.

Third, net neutrality opponents argue that creating a new category of preferential services will allow the telecoms to raise revenue necessary for building out and innovating new infrastructure. However, there’s much evidence to refute this claim, especially the exceptions systematically documented in Bruce Kushnick’s book The $20 Billion Broadband Scandal, which shows that even when publicly subsidized, the telecom industry diverts money away from infrastructure toward its profit margins.

Continued on page 8

What you don’t know about the internet might hurt you!

NET NEUTRALITY PANEL
October 25, 2006, 7-8:30 pm
Main Floor Independent Media Center
202 S. Broadway, Urbana, IL (Next to Lincoln Square Mall)

Moderator
Greg Kline (News Gazette Tech Columnist)

Panelists
US Congress: David Gill (candidate)
(Tim Johnson will send a statement)

Academic Voice: Victor Pickard (UIUC)
Alternative Media: Paul Rissmandel (WEFT)
Access Provider: Peter Folk (Volo Broadband)
Local Citizen: Jim Hall

Questions will be opened to the audience.
Currently Hosted by IMC, AWARE, Free Press, and the Graduate School of Library & Information Science
Contact Marcia Zunbahlen at drdoula@gmail.com to co-sponsor this event, or arrange childcare.
Some Specific Alternatives to Our Predominant Single-Member System

• One-Vote System

In the one-vote system (also called “limited voting”), voters cast one vote in a multi-seat race. In variations of the system, they might cast more votes, but still fewer than the number of seats; the greater the difference between the number of seats and the number for which one can vote, the greater the opportunities for minority representation. Versions of limited voting are used in Philadelphia, Hartford and numerous other local jurisdictions. It has been adopted to resolve at least 30 voting rights cases in Alabama and North Carolina since 1987.

Example: In a race to elect five candidates, voters each cast one vote. Winning candidates are determined by a simple plurality: the five candidates with the most votes.

• Cumulative Voting

In cumulative voting, voters cast as many votes as there are seats to be elected. But unlike winner-take-all systems, voters are not restricted to giving only one vote to a candidate. Instead, they can cast multiple votes for one or more candidates. Cumulative voting was used to elect the Illinois state legislature from 1870 to 1980. In recent years it has been used to resolve voting rights cases for city council and county commission elections in Alabama, Illinois and New Mexico and for school board elections in Alabama, South Dakota and Texas.

Example: In a race to elect five candidates, voters can cast one vote for five candidates, five votes for one candidate or any combination in between. The five highest vote-getters win.

• Choice Voting

Also known as “single transferable vote” and “preference voting,” choice voting is the most common candidate-based full representation system used in other nations. Each voter has one vote, but can rank candidates in order of choice (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.). Candidates win by reaching a “victory threshold” roughly equal to the number of votes divided by the number of seats. If a candidate has too little first-choice support to win, votes for that candidate are transferred to those voters’ next choices. This transfer of votes facilitates coalition-building and allows a candidate to run without fear of being a “spoiler” splitting the vote.

Choice voting has been used for city council and school board elections in Cambridge, Massachusetts, since 1941. Ireland and Australia use choice voting for national elections. The city council in Cambridge (where blacks are 13 percent of the population) has had black representatives since the 1960s. Choice voting in other Americans cities, including for five elections to the New York city council from 1937 to 1945, also resulted in fair racial, ethnic and partisan representation.

Example: In a race to elect five candidates, voters can rank in order of choice as many candidates as they wish. Candidates win by gaining the support of about one-fifth of the voters. A ballot counts towards the election of that voter’s top-ranked candidate who needs that vote to win.
Some Pros and Cons of Making Decisions by Referenda
by Brian J. Gaines

INTRODUCTION AND A DEFINITIONAL POINT

Direct democracy has a natural appeal that transcends ideological schemes: both the left and the right frequently complain that institutional features of democracy thwart the will of the people, badly distorting public opinion in its translation to public policy. Why not, then, strip the legendarium of lobbyists and legislators, and let the public decide? Plebiscites obviously have populist appeal, but serious analyses of how referenda work, where they have been most frequent, have raised a range of somewhat surprising conclusions about the merits and demerits of letting the public decide. In some contexts, “Referendum” is a specialized term referring to a subset of all policy issues put to public vote as ballot items. In this article, I will eschew technical usage, so that all references to referenda may also have the most plebiscites also have higher average levels of voter turnout, including potential constitutional amendments—being put to a public vote.

TOO DEMANDING OR TOO PARTISAN?

An immediate concern about referenda is whether they aren’t too demanding of the ordinary voter, whose interest and expertise in public policy is bound to be limited. On the plus side, there is some evidence that even fairly inattentive voters can navigate tricky policy matters without necessarily submerging themselves in the details. By relying on shortcuts (e.g. knowing whether the insurance industry is backing the “Yes” or the “No” side of a ballot question), people knowing few details about complicated ballot propositions are able to vote in pretty much the same manner as the (far less numerous) wonks, who’ve delved into the intricacies of the issue. That’s not to say that they are voting the “right” way in this objective measure of public interest or by the standards of some commentators (me, for instance). But if commitment to democracy means taking your chances on your fellow citizens making mistakes, at least it is good to know that the low level of engagement in public policy does not necessarily signal that direct democracy is bound to fail. It is also true that there is ample evidence that much decision making by ordinary voters is strongly colored by partisan leanings, so that a great deal of what strong Democrats and Republicans do when picking favorites is to rationalize their pre-determined partisan picks by concocting post-hoc explanations based on, say, issue contrasts. Accordingly, political pre-determined partisan picks by concocting post-hoc explanations based on, say, issue contrasts.

THE CALIFORNIA PARADOX: REFERENDA VERSUS ELECTIONAL CHOICES

In the United States, direct democracy is a state-level phenomenon, with wide variance in how common are any referenda. Many states, most of them in the west of the country, have long histories of holding regular and frequent votes on ballot measures. But, as in so many other realms, California overshadows all others when it comes to evaluating direct democracy. What have academics learned from hundreds and hundreds of ballot initiatives stretched nearly a century in the Golden State? The conclusions, and debates, are many, but a few interesting patterns stand out.

First, not surprisingly, special interests are not absent just because policies are being made in the ballot box, not in Sacramento. Many complain that the whole process of has become a mockery of grass-roots politics, as successful initiatives normally engage professional signature-collection firms to get on the ballot, advertising agencies to build support, and sometimes even get-out-the-vote operations to persuade voters. Frequently, a good deal of money is spent by both sides. There is also much loud complaint that campaigns feature as much disinformation as information, and that the public too often fails to understand the matters at hand, even though the state provides a neutral voter’s guide that lists the arguments from both sides. One school of commentators urging that what is most needed in democracy is more and better deliberation has delivered mixed verdicts on whether the public at large seems to engage more fully in debates when they are choosing outcomes rather than choosing outcome makers. Turnout patterns reveal higher abstention on ballot initiatives—sometimes much higher—than on top-of-the-ticket races like Governor, Senator, or President.

Somewhat more interesting and much less obviously, there seems to be a curious asymmetry in what works in persuading voters. Both campaign spending and elite endorsements seem to work better at driving up the No vote. Some advocate that the left’s strategy is to persuade people to pass a measure. So for all the complaints that big money has taken over the ballot initiative, there are very few examples of measures passing because of skewed spending.

It is difficult quickly to summarize the policy directions endorsed by Californians over this long history. In some cases, measures opposed by both major parties have passed comfortably. Occasionally, shrill interest groups have used direct democracy to break deadlock in the legislature. Particularly, the public has endorsed a mixture of the two is feasible and probably useful, even if the mixture is sometimes messy.
 Citizens of the State of Illinois are leading the way in the movement to impeach the President of the United States. The contentious debate over the constitutionality of state and local movements will occur in Urbana-Champaign in mid-October when State Representative Karen Yarbrough (D-Maywood) comes to town. On April 20, 2006, Yarbrough introduced into the Illinois General Assembly House Joint Resolution 125 which called for the impeachment of President Bush. Illinois thus became the first state in the Union to have such a resolution put forward. Although the impeachment process is usually thought of as a bill introduced by a member of the U. S. House of Representatives, Yarbrough was utilizing a different method for setting an impeachment in motion.

She followed a process laid out in 1801 by Thomas Jefferson in the Manual of Parliamentary Practice, a book of parliamentary procedure and additional guidelines for the United States House of Representatives. Jefferson opposed centralized federal power and frequently sought balances giving states greater liberties and rights. The House uses ‘Jef ferson’s Manual’ as a supplement to its standing rules. Section 603 states:

Inception of impeachment proceedings in the House: there are various methods of setting an impeachment in motion: by charges made on the floor of the responsibility of a Member or Delegate, by charges preferred by a memorial, which is usually referred to a committee for examination; by a resolution dropped in the hopper by a Member and referred to a committee; by a message from the President; by charges transmitted from the legislature of a State or territory or from a grand jury.

Twenty co-sponsors in the Illinois House signed on to support HJR 125. It was referred to the Rules Committee and not reported out for a vote before the session was adjourned. Yarbrough has announced plans to resubmit the resolution in the upcoming session. Joint Resolution 125 reads as follows:

WHEREAS, Section 603 of Jefferson’s Manual of the Rules of the United States House of Representatives allow federal impeachment proceedings to be initiated by joint resolution of a state legislature; and

WHEREAS, President Bush has publicly admitted to ordering the National Security Agency to violate provisions of the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a law specifically authorizing the Agency to spy on American citizens without warrant; and

WHEREAS, Evidence suggests that President Bush authorized violation of the Torture Convention of the Geneva Conventions, a treaty regarded a supreme law by the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, The Bush Administration has held American citizens and citizens of other nations as prisoners of war without charge, trial, and

WHEREAS, Evidence suggests that the Bush Administration has manipulated intelligence for the purpose of initiating a war against the sovereign nation of Iraq, resulting in the deaths of large numbers of Iraqi civilians and causing the United States to incur loss of life, diminished security and billions of dollars in unnecessary expenses; and

WHEREAS, The Bush Administration leaked classified national secrets to further a political agenda, exposing an unknown number of covert U. S. intelligence agents to potential harm and retribution while simultaneously refusing to investigate the matter; and

WHEREAS, the Republican-controlled Congress has declined to fully investigate these charges to date, therefore it is

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE SENATE CONCURRING HEREBY, that the General Assembly of the State of Illinois has good cause to submit charges to the U. S. House of Representatives under Section 603 that the President of the United States has wilfully violated his Oath of Office to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and be it further

RESOLVED, That George W. Bush, if found guilty of the charges contained herein, should be removed from office and disqualified to hold any other office in the United States.

A little over a week ahead of Representative Yarbrough, residents of Cunningham Township (Urbana) and City of Champaign Township (Champaign), attending their respective town meetings on April 11, 2006, amended the meeting agendas to consider advisory referenda for the November 7 ballots and then voted to place those referenda on the ballots. By these actions, Urbana and Champaign became the first communities in the nation to offer their residents the opportunity to express their opinion on impeachment in the voting booth. Voters will also be able to express their opinions regarding the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

Yarbrough is scheduled to speak on her efforts to initiate impeachment proceedings against President George W. Bush at 7pm on October 17 at the Urbana City Council Chambers, 400 S. Vine St, Urbana. This presentation, free and open to the public, will also be recorded by Urbana Public Television, Channel 6. Please check the UPTV schedule for times this will be shown. At noon on Wednesday, October 18, she again will address impeachment at a rally on the Quad on the University of Illinois campus. The rally will be followed from 1-2pm by a discussion and meet-and-greet in Room 314B at the Illini Union, 1401 W Green St., Urbana. The above events are sponsored by AWARE, local anti-war anti-racist effort. Please consult www.AWAREPresents.com for more information and a complete schedule of presentations.

Years prior to Representative Yarbrough and the groups of Urbana and Champaign taking the above actions, Francis A Boyle, Professor of Law, University of Illinois School of Law, began his own campaign to impeach the president. Professor Boyle published his first draft Impeachment Resolution against President George W. Bush in January 2003. Prof Boyle will host a brown bag discussion with Yarbrough of her state bill at noon on October 17 at UIUC Law Bldg, 504 E Pennsylvania Ave.C. He will be joining her at the campus rally and speaking about his efforts at the national level for impeachment.

No Room for Neutrality on Net Neutrality

Continued from page3

Fourth, when all else fails, they test out the tired bogeyman of regulation. A prevailing myth characterizes the Internet as some Wild West frontier bereft of regulation, when, in fact, the Internet has always been highly regulated by both the government and other forces. In other words, there are many kinds of regulation. To lose net neutrality would remove a governmentally enforced safeguard and allow corporations to regulate the content we receive online as they see fit. Looking ahead, the stakes are even higher. In the coming years, with increased convergence of all forms of media and market players, Americans will be forced to rely on single providers to deliver so-called ‘triple play’—Internet, television, and phone—via one pipe to each household. This creates the potential for one telecom giant to take control over all of these media—not just in terms of pricing, but, without net neutrality, gate-keeping power over all content as well.

THE POLITICS OF NET NEUTRALITY

The situation in Congress right now, at least on the surface, looks promising for net neutrality advocates. Though anti-net neutrality legislation passed the House, it’s been tied up in the Senate. However, many observers believe that industry-backed legislators may try to sneak anti-neutrality legislation through during the coming “lame-duck” session after the November elections when Congress is less accountable. Now more than ever, the public needs to pay attention to net neutrality and other key media issues (for example, the media ownership debate that will be raging at the FCC this fall and winter). The net neutrality debate is fundamentally about nothing less than the future of the Internet. Ultimately it has less to do with ownership and control of wires and everything to do with the health of American and global democracy. Without net neutrality, what was once heralded as a great global resource for promoting diversity, civic participation, and freedom will be reduced to little more than a profit-making instrument with special benefits for a privileged few. Considering the public subsidies lavished on telecom companies over the decades, it’s high time we begin a national conversation that renegotiates the social contract between telecom providers and the public, and demand that social benefits, not private profits, be first and foremost in our national telecommunications objectives.

The degree to which the public has mobilized on this issue is unprecedented in modern telecommunications history. But there is much more to be done. Everything that we cherish about the Internet—especially its openness and democratic potential—is under attack. Everyone of us needs to contact our members in Congress and urge them to ignore the telecom lobbyists and do what’s best for their constituents. At this critical juncture in the development of the Internet, our actions will reverberate for generations to come.
Driving While Muslim

The following letter was sent to the ACLU, CAIR (Council of American Islamic Relations) and to family friends in Urbana-Champaign regarding a recent incident. CAIR called the FBI, which simply recommended that the victim get a lawyer to make further enquiries and in case he was stopped again or arrested. It appears that ‘Driving While Muslim’ has joined ‘Flying While Muslim’ as a reason for senseless profiling and harassment. Names, places and other details have been removed to protect the identity of this family and to help prevent additional harassment.

I was returning a U-haul truck as my wife and daughter followed behind. I pulled into a gas station and began to fill the truck. My wife pulled behind me, stopped, and waited for me to finish. My wife wears the full Islamic covering including the face veil and I have an Islamic beard. My 2-year-old daughter crawled out of her car seat and sat in my wife’s lap, waiting for me to finish. My wife then noticed a police vehicle circling around her. He then pulled up beside her, so she rolled down her window and told him that our daughter has a car seat but was just sitting up front until I finished. She assumed he was just going to tell her to make sure to put our daughter in the car seat before she pulled away. Instead he asked her if I was her husband. She said yes. At that point I saw him speaking with her so I went over and asked the officer if I could help him. He asked my name. He then told me he needed to speak with me. He pulled me to the side and began asking me if I was ever questioned by the FBI or was on a terrorist watch list. I said no, I had never spoken with the FBI. I told him that I had issues in the airports with having to get cleared with DHS (Department of Homeland Security) before boarding. He then told me that when he ran the plates on my vehicle, his computer screen returned a message that he should detain me as I may be a member of a terrorist organization and that he had to call me in. I laughed when he told me this. He asked me why I thought this message came up and I told him I have no idea.

He then said, “You are Muslim, right?” I told him yes. My wife then got out of the car and asked the officer why I was being questioned. He repeated the message on his computer screen and offered to let us see it if we wished. Then she said that she is tired of being harassed all the time because we are Muslim and because of the clothing she chooses to wear.

The police officer got defensive and said it had nothing to do with her, that it was only me. So I asked him why he ran our plates to begin with and he said because he just randomly runs plates. He said he called the situation in and he had to hold me until he received a response on his radio. He walked away and spoke into his radio and then 2 more police cars came and 2 other officers got out. They pulled the first officer to the side and spoke with him privately. Then all three officers came over and the first officer told me I could go. I asked for all of their cards and they did not have any but rather the first officer gave me his information. One of the other officers said that if I had a complaint he was the Sergeant and I could complain to him. I explained that I did not have a complaint with them, only that I wanted to understand why this was happening and that I found it unacceptable to be harassed in such a manner without cause.

The first officer then asked me if I was moving and I said yes. He then asked me where. At this point I told him I would not answer any more questions and he confirmed that I did not have to answer his questions. I then asked them if this would happen again and they said probably. I then asked what I could do to stop this and he said I might want to start with calling a federal agency. I asked him which one and he said he did not know. My wife and I then got back into our vehicles and drove off.

continued from page 1

They can’t take two books?
No, only uno.
Do they take turns?
They could take one book this time and the other book the next time.
Is that the way it works?
No, it’s just one.
How do they decide which books to vote on?
The teacher takes two books and the kids have to vote on whichever teams wants this book, takes it. And then the other team doesn’t get to take their book.
Do the kids get to suggest another book?
They would have to raise their hand and say, “I don’t like those two books.”
And what would happen if they said that?
Well, what they get is what they get. Remember last year when you voted on what songs to sing for weddings?
I voted on “Love Can Build a Bridge.” That was my favorite.
The teacher asked you to raise your hands?
Yeah and then we got it. Because a lot of the kids wanted it so we got it.
I wonder about the other kids.
I don’t remember. I was happy and I wanted Fireman because I wanna be a fireman.
How do the kids feel about the puppet?
They can do the puppet. If they want to.
What if the kid feels left out and wants their puppet?
They could make it the next day.
What if they say it’s not fair to wait?
No response.
What questions could you ask that kid to find out why the kid wants to do that?
I’d ask, “do you want to do that in the afternoon today?”
What if the kid says no?
I could say, “Why do you want to put it on?”
What if the reason is that it is the only thing that is long and grey?
Well, just have to not let that kid put it on.
What if that kid asked you why you don’t want the grey snake on the puppet? Because it would look ugly.
What if the kid said, “What is it about the grey snake that looks ugly to you?”
it’s the color.
I wonder if you could ask the kid to change it in some way to make it look better.
The color. I could ask him if he could draw a different color of snake on the puppet.
Let’s imagine you ask him but he says he likes the color.
I sorta kinda like grey.
I wonder why he likes the grey color.
Maybe if the other kids put grey on it then they’d like it. Maybe the other people could put grey on it to make it a little bit
ugly then he could.
He could put one different color and on the other end he could put grey.
What if said he liked grey because it was the color of his mom’s hair?
Then he could do it.
What if to him grey is a color that is a bad mean color?
Then he could put a different one.
So if he says mean things?
I would say, “I don’t want to be around him”
At work when we make a rule we have to have everybody agree. But there was one person who didn’t like it.
I don’t like it.
Why?
Because one person didn’t like it and everybody had to like it and he has to move.
Yeah?
To a different town where he likes the rules.
What if he couldn’t find a town that he liked or didn’t have money to move?
Then he’d have to work really hard to get his money before he moves.
Did you know that people vote in the US for presidents and presidents make rules?
What if they couldn’t make a law that the people would have to move?
Then they’d have to work even harder to get his money before he moves.

“Introducing Workers Rights, Living Wages and Undocumented Immigration”

sat., november 4th open doors at 5pm

At www.ucimc.org / www.publici.ucimc.org
Bob’s Response to John Forman’s Editorial in the News-Gazette

by Robert Wahlfeldt

October 7, 2006
Letter to the News Gazette

I would like to request a correction to the Editorial N-G Publisher John Forman wrote Sunday September 17, 2006. In his lengthy editorial Mr. Forman was critical of the “usual suspects.”

Mr. Forman states he got a “lack” out of the writer (me: Robert Wahlfeldt) who identified himself as a WWII military veteran. Forman states that I said that I only respected members of the military who served in the “good wars.” He has made a number of errors in his writing, which I hope the N-G will have the respect and also take the responsibility to correct. My September 13 letter to the editor stated I felt uniformed military in elementary schools to be discouraging and that Col. Rudzinski’s response to those who question his appearance was disrespectful. Calling us ignorant fools is his right as well as Mr. Forman’s, but it is hardly respectful. I never stated in my letter, that I only respect those who fought in the “good wars.” I am a veteran and I am also currently working in opposition to war and am especially concerned regarding those who say they support the troops yet do nothing to bring them safely home or work for their ongoing needs upon return. The US is in Iraq due to lies and no amount of so-called “patriotic” spin will make this easier to defend.

For Mr. Forman’s information I was not a draftee. I left high school at a young and impressionable age and joined the navy. I was in the US navy from 1943-1946 and was aboard the USS Waldron in the Pacific Theater of Operation. I was a rescue swimmer who pulled my fellow soldiers from the Pacific Ocean among other tasks. I have grown in age and wisdom over the years since then and now devote my time and life to working to end war since it has not ever really resolved much; there are no good wars.

The current war is perhaps no worse than others but due to the misleading reasons for the invasion, the lack of planning, misuse of soldiers and loss of innocent civilian life we need to oppose it whenever we can. I currently work for “full-disclosure recruitment” so that our young folks know what they are getting into when they join the military. Those wearing a military uniform are obligated not to dissent from US Policy and therefore unquestionably will present a certain bias when speaking. I find it disappointing that the N-G’s publisher says he is often paraphrased incorrectly and yet he proceeds to do the same thing himself in regards to me. I joined the navy at 17, I was not a “draftee,” and I was not “peeling potatoes in Virginia to help lick Hitler,” though an interesting assumption on Mr. Forman’s part.

Can you imagine a WWII veteran who has realized the racket of war and now wants to work to support our troops by making sure they learn that what is going on in Iraq is a misuse of their sacrifice? Col. Rudzinski’s disrespectful response to those who questioned his presentation given in military uniform and Mr. Forman’s lack of a truthful portrayal of my service completes the picture of why the military should not be talking to youngsters about war. The war in Iraq is devastating to those who serve and to the civilians who are suffering. I see no humorous side to this misadventure and it is wrong to suggest otherwise: Col. Rudzinski’s presentation was incomplete at best. In addition, the N-G misquoting of my statement is a real affront to those like myself who love our country always and our government, fellow military and the News-Gazette publisher only when it is deserved.

I hope Forman will be both respectful and responsible and retract the incorrect assumptions he made about my military service and me. Do I feel an exception coming on to his typical editorials? How about one that informs the readers of those who actually do support the troops but want the current debacle shown for what it is; a tragic mistake? Mr. Forman’s suggestion that those who questioned the school presentation are “bashing America” is a real affront to those like myself who love our country always and our government, fellow military and the News-Gazette publisher only when it is deserved.

Robert Wahlfeldt
Champaign, Illinois 61820

City of Champaign Township Presents: A “Town Hall” Meeting

Please join the City of Champaign Township as we embark on a series of “Town Hall” meetings intended to ignite the collective efficacy and expertise of community members, social service professionals, township officials, health care advocates, mental health professionals and other critical actors on our landscape of services to inspire our community to IMPACT of POVERTY.

This is the first township Town Hall meeting in the history of the City of Champaign Township, designed to address poverty in our community. Our guest speaker will be James Anderson, PhD, professor of Education, in Educational Policies and Studies. This Town Hall meeting is a call to action to develop solutions to address the impact poverty and its on the most vulnerable citizens in our community.

Date: October 19, 2006
Place: City of Champaign Council Chambers
102 North Neil Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Reception 6:15 – 7:00 p.m. (immediately before the Town Hall meeting)
Third Annual Unity March: This Is What Unity Looks Like!

By Brian Dolinar

On a beautiful Saturday afternoon, October 7, 2006, a crowd of nearly 200 participants joined in the Third Annual Unity March. This year, we took the Unity March to the community. We went into the Garden Hills neighborhood, ground zero for the effects of racism and poverty in our community.

The march started at Bradley and Prospect. From there we walked west to McKinley and north passing through the Dorsey apartments, where there are many individuals who receive Section 8 vouchers. These are the people that certain members of the Champaign City Council would like to keep segregated. Champaign City Council member Ken Pirok recently attempted to repeal a city ordinance passed in March to prohibit landlords from discriminating against Section 8 recipients. This pro-discrimination policy was also supported by Vic McIntosh, the City Council representative from this neighborhood.

The march also went past the sites of several tragedies that have struck this embattled community in the last year. The first was the block of Honeysuckle where police called out the S.W.A.T. team and an armored truck to deal with Carl “Dennis” Stewart, a suicidal black man with a gun. Pushed into a corner by police, Stewart allegedly put the gun to his head and killed himself.

Next we walked down Hedge Road past the home of Quentin Larry who died over Memorial Day weekend in the Champaign County jail. Larry was one of five deaths that have occurred in the jail in the last two years. His mother came out to greet the crowd and there was a moment of silence for her son.

Moving down Hedge Road, marchers chanted “This is what community looks like.” We walked past a burned and boarded up house at 1313 Hedge Road. On September 25, a 3 year-old boy named Demetrus Lenard, Jr. died in the fire. In a News-Gazette article, writer Mary Schenk was more concerned about the property damage and blamed the mother for her son’s loss, emphasizing there should have been an escape plan. Unity marchers again bowed their heads in a moment of silence and Carol Ammons placed a wreath of flowers in front of the home.

The march ended in Thompson Park with a rally. Several politicians were in attendance and a voter registration table was set up. Members of the community who had joined in the march sat on the grass with their children or stood under trees for shade.

Once again, the Unity March was a sign that people prefer community and togetherness over war and destruction.

(Photographs by Wendy Edwards)