

# Eau Claire County Democratic Party Coffee Klatch Notes

## Thursday, November 7, 2019

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Present: Jeanie Aloia, Margot Bouchard, Chris Hambuch Boyle, Marjorie Bunce, Jackie Christner, Carol Craig (facilitator), Sally Derksen, Carolyn Dunning, Dennis Erickson, Judy Gatlin, Bonnie Golden, Ed Gorell, Barbara Gosch, Deb & Dave Gratz, Twink Hanson, Ann Heywood, Sharon Hildebrand, Sally Lee, Linda Lodolce, Bob Matthews, Pam Mahler, Mary Mickel, Jeannene Nelson, Mike O'Brien, Connie Russell (recorder), Maureen Slauson, Liz Spencer, Darla Sorenson, Margetta Souder, Kathy Tuttle, Pat Williams, Robert Wojnowski, Eleanor Wolf

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Next Coffee Klatch** -- Thursday, November 14; 10 a.m. – 12 Noon; Resource Center, 440 Broadway St.

Come join a lively conversation about current events – share opinions, experiences, resources with a progressive-minded community. Come when you can, leave when you must. The coffee will be on and the treats will be out. Encourage your friends, neighbors, and others to join us for respectful conversation leading to constructive action.

**Mark your calendars! We have some interesting guests scheduled to come to Klatch:**

December 5, Susan Wolfram and Judi Moseley, Community Resource/Organizers advocating for citizens of poverty.

December 12, Ed Fallone, Candidate for the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

**DPW Outreach Potluck & Informational Meeting** -- Thursday, November 14; 6 p.m.; 322 W. Grand Ave.

Find out how to join the “Brown Team” in reaching out to voters and how to support Democrats in the 2020 elections.

**Debate Watch Party** -- Wednesday, November 20; 8 – 10 p.m. CT; on MSNBC; The fifth Democratic Primary debate will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, hosted by MSNBC and The Washington Post.

The moderators will be ALL WOMEN! -- Rachel Maddow, Andrea Mitchell, Kristen Welker, and Ashley Parker [Ten candidates have qualified](#) thus far, ahead of the November 13 deadline.

**We need a volunteer to coordinate the watch party at the Resource Center (open the door, set up chairs, etc.)**

Let Carol Craig know if you would be willing to do this very easy task: [craig07cj@gmail.com](mailto:craig07cj@gmail.com)

**Monthly Membership Meeting** – Thursday, November 21; 5:30 – 7 p.m.; Democratic Resource Center, 440 Broadway St., Light refreshments provided; Invite friends! **PROGRAM:** Guest speakers **Judy Walters and Mike Hanke** will talk about **HOMELESS AND AT RISK VETERANS** in the Chippewa Valley.

**Community Conversation: Partisan Gerrymandering** – Saturday, November 23; 1 – 3 p.m.; Menomonie Public Library, 600 Wolske Bay Rd.; Free and open to the public. Speaker will be Matt Rothschild, executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. He will discuss the effects of partisan gerrymandering on voting: loss of equal representation, fewer candidate choices, muffling of political speech, and hyper partisanship. Learn what citizens can do to unrig our voting districts.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Letter Writing Group** – Contact Sharon Hildebrand – [sahildebrand@gmail.com](mailto:sahildebrand@gmail.com) if you would be interested in having help writing letters-to-the-editor on important issues. The letters will be sent to local and regional newspapers.

**Dues** – Now is the time to pay dues, which are used to fund campaign efforts. Funds donated at the annual Spring fundraiser are used to support the Resource Center.

**Alternate Street Parking** – is now in effect in the City of Eau Claire between Midnight and 7 a.m.; Odd-number days – park on side with odd-numbered addresses; even number days – side with even-numbered addresses.

### RECOMMENDED READING and VIEWING

Washington Post: [article](#): All Eyes are on Wisconsin, the state that's gearing up to define the presidential election. Eau Claire County Dems' Coffee Klatch is mentioned in the article!

Washington Post opinion [article](#) – Nov. 4 – **Wisconsin might decide 2020.** Interview with Ben Wikler.

**Book: Storm Lake: A Chronicle of Change, Resilience, and Hope from a Heartland Newspaper** by Art Cullen (2018). Cullen is editor of *The Storm Lake (Iowa) Times* and winner of the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing. His tiny paper took on big corporate agri-industry for poisoning the local rivers and lake.

**Voting Machine Insecurity** – Last Week Tonight with John Oliver [November 3 episode](#)

**Impeachment Inquiry Public Hearings** – The House Intelligence Committee will begin public hearings on Wednesday, November 13. The hearings will be broadcast live on CSPAN, CNN, Fox News and other cable news channels. ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS will preempt their regularly scheduled programming.

William Taylor, chargé d'affaires for Ukraine, and George Kent, deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, will testify on Nov. 13. Marie Yovanovitch, former ambassador to Ukraine, will testify Nov. 15. Both hearings are expected to begin at 10 a.m. ET, 9 a.m. CT.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **K-12 Funding**

The [Wisconsin Public Education Network](#)'s latest effort to raise awareness of the legislature's dismal track record of funding public schools is the production of a Report Card rating legislators' voting records on bills related to K-12 education. Even Luthor Olsen (R-Ripon), co-chair of last year's Blue Ribbon Commission, received mostly "Fail" marks in supporting adequate funding.

Another WPEN effort is underway to inform parishioners of how much taxpayer money is infused into the Catholic Schools in each of the state's dioceses. For the LaCrosse Diocese, it's \$11.8 million, prompting the question: why is the diocese still requiring the same/more support from parishes?

School boards keep trying to inform taxpayers. See an interesting [story](#) about the Kaukauna school district's explanation of the impact of voucher schools on the increasing tax levy.

Recommended: Check out WPEN's website and Like them on FaceBook.

### **DPW Outreach – All eyes are on Wisconsin in 2020!**

Several articles and analysts have portrayed Wisconsin as THE state to watch next year. Wisconsin will be "the decider." Trump won the state by a small margin of 22,748 votes. Obama was an outlier, but most Democratic presidential candidate wins in the recent past have been by very small margins (John Kerry by 11, 384 and Al Gore by 5,708). It's critical that the Dem 2020 candidate can win Wisconsin.

That's why we need all hands on the canvassing deck – now. Why this early? First, we are building bridges, finding out what's important to voters we haven't talked to before. What are the big issues for citizens in our region? Second, we need to identify voters' party leanings to prepare for next summer's canvassing and to be more effective in campaigning for our candidates. And, third, these data will enable canvassers to focus on our voters closer to the election in November.

Consider getting involved by joining the "Brown Team." It has been focusing on Eau Claire and a few surrounding townships thus far, but needs more volunteers to start covering other townships and municipalities (Seymour, Washington, Brunswick). Neighbor-to-neighbor contact is much more effective than canvassers pulled in from other parts of the state. Find out more about how to join the team at a [potluck](#) supper informational meeting: **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 6 p.m.**, 322 at the Slauson home, 322 W. Grand Ave. There will be great energy in this cross-generational gathering.

**Health Insurance** – This is a key issue for 2020. Canvassing consistently brings out voters' frustrations with the cost of health insurance, among both rural and urban voters. Hard choices and high costs face families who want to protect their assets. The top Democratic candidates must have a "do-able" plan. Right now, they are split between Medicare for All or Single-Payer solutions and incremental phased in approaches. Any proposal that threatens the profits of insurance companies will be faced with a well-funded opposition campaign. Employers are the "hammer" that has to push for affordable insurance.

**Messaging** -- If you want to hear what the Republicans are pushing out, listen to the Trump ads on radio stations like Moose Country 106.7 FM. Voters need to be reminded, succinctly, of what the Democrats have fought and won for American workers in the past. Stop letting Republicans define Democrats ("socialists"). Let's promote a policy platform of "Rural Renewal."

**Voter Registration** – We had a review of the deadlines for registering to vote, registration requirements, and procedures for changing addresses online. Check out the [MyVote](#) website for information.

**Election Security** – This is still a vital concern. (Watch the John Oliver November 3 episode). All signs point to even more sophisticated foreign interference and disruption of US elections in 2020. Concern was raised about the process of voter roll purges, especially for deployed military who don't receive and return the verification postcards.

**Wind Farm** – A town hall meeting on Tuesday drew a huge crowd. Most of the speakers were against the siting of a wind farm in southern Eau Claire County, south of Cleghorn, between Highways 53 and 93 in towns of Clear Creek and Pleasant Valley. The company, RWE Renewables Americas (headquartered in Germany) is exploring the possibility of putting 40 to 70 wind turbines on about 20,000 acres of farmland. Landowners would be paid for leasing land to place the 500-foot-tall turbines – more than what most farmers would be able to make through farming. In addition, RWE would make payments totaling about \$26 million, or about \$800,000 a year, to Eau Claire County (42%) and two towns (58%) over the 30-year life of the project. Xcel Energy's pro-clean energy initiatives is one of the factors that attracted RWE to Eau Claire county.

Although there are risks with any of the energy forms, wind turbines have been operating safely in other states and countries. However, there is a great need to get accurate information out to residents and elected officials. It's possible that there might be push-back from out-of-state companies that profit from selling energy to Wisconsin. Check out information at [Renew Wisconsin](#). For example:

- RENEW Wisconsin's wind energy [page](#).
- A printable [fact sheet](#) about wind farms in Wisconsin.

Company representatives did not have much time at the meeting to respond to residents' concerns about the health and safety aspects of wind farms. In the end, the Town Board voted to draft a moratorium on wind energy development at its next meeting on November 11. There was some discussion at Klatch whether or not state statutes allow municipalities to place moratoriums on wind energy projects.

**Wage Rates in Eau Claire** -- A recent Leader-Telegram article, *[Report ranks EC No. 3 in pay for young people](#)*, was discussed briefly. Some were surprised to learn Eau Claire ranked as the third-highest-paying metro area in the country in 2017 for full-time workers under age 25. The study factored in the cost of living and included both Eau Claire and Chippewa counties. The report indicated that median annual earnings for workers 16 to 24 years old in this area totaled \$32,000, which was adjusted to \$35,516 after accounting for a C-O-L 10 percent below average. Members noted that a few people can skew the average or median and the study did not include part-time workers. While many in the region have lower-paying or part-time jobs, employers are seeking workers in the skilled trades (electricians, constructions, etc.).

**7<sup>th</sup> CD** – There are two Democrats who have announced they are running for Sean Duffy's open congressional seat: Wausau School Board President, Tricia Zunker, and businessman, Lawrence Dale. [\(story\)](#) Tom Tiffany is the only Republican declared. Tiffany has been a strong voice in opposing environmental protections in Wisconsin.

**Positive News** – Big wins in Virginia and Kentucky. For the first time since 1994, Dems have trifecta control of the Virginia's government – good news for gun control reform, LGBTQ protections, climate legislation, increase to minimum wage, and the ERA – Equal Rights Amendment. The most interesting win in the state belongs to Juli Briskman, who will join the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors in the suburbs of D.C. In 2017, she was fired from her job at a government contracting firm after flipping off the Trump motorcade, frustrated by his administration's underwhelming response to Hurricane Maria and his decision to revoke DACA.