

Eau Claire County Democratic Party Coffee Klatch Notes

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Present: Loralee Clark, Kristin Deprey, Jim & Carolyn Dunning, Dave & Debbie Gratz, Ann Heywood, Ray Hilfiker, Gloria Hochstein, Deirdre Jenkins, Tom Kristo, Mike Lindsay, Bob Matthews, Ann McKinley, Linda Norton, Mike O'Brien, Kathy Olson, Jackie Pavelski, Connie Russell, Nick Smiar, Margetta Souder, Phil Swanhorst, Kathy Tuttle, Eleanor Wolf, Larry Wicks

Guest: B. J. Hollars, author of "Wisconsin for Kennedy."

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next Coffee Klatch – Thursday, April 25, 10 a.m. – Noon

PLEASE join virtually on Zoom: -- <https://zoom.us/j/96096295765?pwd=Y1A2L3gxZINIUIhvN3UrUUxPYmZ2dz09>

We are **meeting in-person** at the Dem Resource Center, 440 Broadway St. but space is limited. Anyone not fully vaccinated must wear a mask. Please do not attend in person if you have any symptoms of COVID or flu.

Earth Week Open House – Thursday, April 25; 4 – 8 p.m.; The Brewing Projekt, 1807 N. Oxford Ave.

Explore a variety of interactive displays and booths about topics ranging from energy, transportation, recycling, biodiversity, and more from 40 Chippewa Valley vendors who will be educating visitors on their sustainable services, products, and community resources. Prizes, food and beverages will be available. Sponsored by Eau Claire County, Beaver Creek Reserve, and JONAH.

Chamber of Commerce Event: Annual Business Community Breakfast – Wed., April 30; 7 – 9 a.m.; Ojibwe Ballroom, Davies Center, UW-EC. *"Empowering the Future: Enriching the Chippewa Valley Community."* The Chippewa Valley is a strong, interconnected and dynamic region where community partners work together to address needs and trends. Hear how partners are working to address workforce needs for employees and businesses. Chancellor Jim Schmidt and Deans Lisa Jepsen and Carmen Manning will be featured presenters. There is no cost to attend the breakfast, but you need to **register in advance by Wednesday, April 24.** [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Note: The Eau Claire County Democratic Party is a member of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce.

Individual Rights and Democracy: A Conversation with Garry Kasparov – Wednesday, May 1; 7 – 8:30 p.m.;

Schofield Auditorium, UW – Eau Claire campus. Hear from the chess grandmaster and global advocate for human rights about the interplay between democracy and individual freedoms.

This event is free, but you must reserve a ticket. [Click here to secure a ticket.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nomination papers – As Democrats file for candidacy for the November elections, there will be opportunities to sign nomination papers between April 15 and June 3. Remember that you can only sign for one candidate in a given race, i.e., if there are two or more Democrats running to be in the August primary, you should choose only one to sign papers for to avoid signatures being disallowed and not counted.

New Assembly Districts – People in the Eau Claire area should double-check to see what Assembly District they are residing in before signing nomination papers. The MyVote.wi.gov site is up-to-date for the 2024 maps. Scroll down to "Check my Elected Officials" to find your Assembly District number.

RECOMMENDED READING AND RESOURCES

Book: Wisconsin for Kennedy: The Primary that Launched a President and Changed the Course of History

(March 2024) by local author B J. Hollars. When John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960, he did something no candidate had done before: he leveraged the power of state primaries to win his party's nomination. Kennedy's first battleground state?

Wisconsin—a state that would prove more arduous, more exhausting, and more crucial to winning the presidency than any other. *Wisconsin for Kennedy* brings to life the stories behind JFK's history-making 1960 Wisconsin primary campaign, and how Kennedy's team managed to outmaneuver his politically seasoned opponent, Hubert Humphrey. From Jackie Kennedy commandeering a supermarket loudspeaker in Kenosha, to the Wisconsin forklift driver who planned President Kennedy's final trip to Dallas, this captivating book places readers at the heart of the action

Book: The Blood of Abraham: Insights into the Middle East (1985) by Jimmy Carter

The former president and architect of the Camp David Accords elucidates the historical and political background of Middle East enmities and presents an analysis of the structure of tensions and conflicting points of view of today.

Redistricting: Sources of information about the new legislative maps for Wisconsin:

- The [Recombobulation](#) site. [Dave's Redistricting](#) site [Wisconsin Legislature](#) site
- [Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition](#). Also, check out [The North Shore Fair Maps](#) group updates.

[LINK](#) to the **HSHS/Prevea Recovery Task Force** – subcommittees, FAQs – on Chamber of Commerce’s website.

Organizations offering free virtual events:

[The Miller Center](#) – At the University of Virginia offers webinars on topics such as: *Bipartisan Solutions in Congress* and *The 2024 Election and the Struggle for America’s Economic Future*.

[Brennan Center LIVE](#) – The [Brennan Center for Justice](#) at NYU Law hosts speakers and panels on topics such as: *The Failed Experiment of Mass Incarceration*, *The High Cost of Public Service*, *Decoding the Trump Indictments*.

DISCUSSION

Party News

Everyone was encouraged to attend the Eau Claire County Caucus on **Sunday, April 28, 1 p.m.** at the Childrens Theater on Oxford Ave. to show support for Phil Swanhorst and Linda Norton to be delegates to the DNC Convention in Chicago. The next step is to also attend the 3rd CD caucus **on May 19 in Stevens Point** where the 18 counties will be select 3 men and 3 women to represent us at the DNC Convention.

Guest: B.J. Hollars

Hollars is a professor of English at UW Eau Claire and a renown local author. He was invited to come and speak about several of his recent projects. Klatchers who have read “Wisconsin for Kennedy” thoroughly enjoyed the read and many others are looking forward the showing of “When Rubber Hit the Road,” a documentary by B.J. and Steve Dayton about the 1991 closing of the Uniroyal Goodrich Tire Co. plant in Eau Claire.

The hour-long documentary will premiere at The Pablo Center on **Friday, May 3**, followed by a Q&A with several factory workers featured in the film, former Local 19 Union President Darrel Wekkin, and the filmmakers themselves. One member reported that tickets are selling fast! Hollars said he and Dayton tried to tell the story honestly and candidly, including interviews of people who had never spoken on the record before. The film speaks to the resiliency of the community, reflecting a microcosm of what was happening in many “rust-belt” cities across the country.

His book on Kenney’s campaign focuses on how smalltown Wisconsin had a role in Kennedy’s successful winning of the Democratic Party’s nomination. It includes descriptions of many local hometown heroes and is another testament to our area’s resiliency. It underscores the Kennedy lesson: “politics is also personal.” Kennedy wrote many personal Thank You notes to people and remembered individuals long after meeting them. He knew the importance of relationships. Hollars shared stories of Kennedy’s wit and sense of humor, something that won many people over. The stories include some well-known Wisconsinites, like Bill Proxmire and Patrick Lucy, but mostly it was the local, regular folks who played a part in his journey through Wisconsin.

Hollars’ last reading will be at **6pm Thursday, April 25, at the Heyde Center for the Arts**, 3 S. High St., Chippewa Falls. The event is free, and books will be available for sale.

Wisconsin News

People are watching what happens with a case before the State Supreme Court now that Governor Evers has brought against the Republican-controlled Legislature arguing that the Legislature’s powerful budget-writing Joint Finance Committee is exceeding its constitutional lawmaking authority and effectively acting as a fourth branch of government. The Republicans counter by saying that the committee’s powers are well established in state law and court precedent. One area of contention is the approval of certain state land conservation projects. In response to the Legislature’s lawyer’s assertion that deciding for Evers would “*overturn how our state government has functioned for almost a century*,” Judge Jill Karolfsky said “*Maybe they’ve been wrong for the last century and shouldn’t double down on how wrong this is.*”

The JFC is now holding up the \$15 million earmarked for health care support in western Wisconsin after the closures of HSHS hospitals.

Religion and Divisiveness

- School board members in a Sheboygan County district listed “Christian values” and “conservative politics” as desired characteristics in a posting for a superintendent position at a **public** school. The original post for the Cedar Grove-Belgium School District job was amended after potential candidates raised questions. Full story at [WPR](#)
- How times have changed. When JFK was campaigning, he tried to distance himself from the Catholic Church because of anti-Catholic sentiments and fear that he would be influenced by the Pope, and now multiple Catholics have been won appointment to the US Supreme Court.
- Antisemitism: Last year, it was reported that antisemitism is at near-historic levels. *“For a group that makes up 2.4 percent of the American population, that same population accounts for something like 60% of all religious-based hate crimes,”* according to FBI Director, Christopher Wray. One member related his experience working at a Jewish golf club in the 1960’s when Edina, Minnesota didn’t allow Jewish residents. The war in the Middle East now is generating pro-Palestinian support and suspicions about Netanyahu’s objectives. What was “The Plan?” If “nothing happens by accident,” we need to look at who gains power and makes money on the war.
- Conspiracy theories flourish across the Bible Belt. People right here in Eau Claire are keeping collections of AR 15 rifles to defend their families in the coming civil war against Christians.
- Do some religions preach inequality and push fear of globalism? Fear of differences can turn to hate, which can inspire violent actions.

The Elderly and the Young

After U.S. Senate candidate Eric Hovde comment about how most nursing home residents are not “at a point to vote” because of limited life expectancy ([WPR article](#)), it’s dismaying to see the decline in respect for the elderly and the value of intergenerational activities and engagement. Social Security is not enough to live on for most retired persons, especially women who may not have been in the workforce full-time. It’s been noted that more people are claiming their parents as dependents on their tax returns.

Meanwhile, Republicans in Wisconsin are trying to get on the child labor bandwagon as a part of the solution to work force shortages. Immigration reform would be a better solution. There are many industries that need more adult workers, especially in customer service and health care.

B.J Hollars reminded us of an inspiring quote:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Meade, Anthropologist