

The Republican Club of Sun City NEWSLETTER

March 2011

Everett Schmidt, Editor

Sun City Texas

EXPERT ON HEALTH CARE TO ADDRESS CLUB

Arlene Wohlgemuth (pronounced "Wol-ge-muth"), Executive Director of the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) and Director of the Center for Health Care Policy at the TPPF, will address the club during its dinner meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 10 in the ballroom of the Social Center in Sun City. Her address is expected to include the status of various health care plans at both the state and federal levels. The topics will likely include ObamaCare, Medicare and Medicaid.

She has served 10 years as a state representative, and has authored a bill concerning the consolidation of healthcare services. Her current duties include working with state legislators on legislative matters relating to health care. More information about our speaker and the Texas Public Policy Foundation is presented in news articles below.

The Social Hour, Dinner and Program. A social hour will begin at 6:00 PM. The dinner will begin at 6:30 PM and will be followed by the program. The dinner will be catered by **Namec Catering** which will serve meat/cheese lasagna, salad, bread, rolls and peach cobbler.

Cost. Cost is \$16 per person. Checks, made out to **The Republican Club of Sun City**, should be mailed to **The Republican Club of Sun City, Bernie Miller, Treasurer, 1530 Sun City Blvd., Suite 120, Box 227, Georgetown, TX 78633** by no later than Friday, March 4. Bernie has also set up a special box on his front porch at 265 Trail of the Flowers for those club members wishing to hand deliver payments. For information about reservations, contact Bernie at 868-9125 or bimiller1@Verizon.net

MAYORAL "CANDIDATES' FORUM" PLANNED FOR APRIL MEETING

A "Candidates' Forum," featuring candidates who have filed for the position of Mayor, City of Georgetown, is planned for the club's dinner meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 21. In the event that only one individual has filed (as possibly the incumbent), that person will provide a general discussion of the state of the city plus some issues which may surface during the next term.

Inasmuch as the filing period for the mayoral position extends from February 14 through March 14, the number of mayoral candidates cannot be known at this time. Election day is May 14.

Inasmuch as the term of District 4 Councilman Bill Sattler does not expire until May of 2013, there is no election for that position this coming May; however, it may be safely speculated that by May of 2012, in the wake of the anticipated re-districting of council positions, Sun City will have another council position and an election for that position will then take place.

City elections are non-partisan, meaning candidates are not designated by party on the ballot.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE TO END IN FEBRUARY

The current membership drive will end February 28, the deadline for 2010 members to pay their renewal membership dues (\$10 per person) for the year 2011. After that deadline, those who are delinquent in payment are subject to having their names removed from the mailing list used to transmit newsletters and various announcements, and from the membership roster.

In connection with efforts to increase club membership, current club members are urged to electronically transmit copies of this newsletter to prospective new members, and, via a personal message, invite them to attend the March 10 meeting as visitors with the thought that they could, if they so wished, join the club at that meeting.

While being a political activist who attends rallies, sends correspondence to political leaders, etc. is probably the most effective means of countering leftists, it should be recognized that simply being a member of a Republican club, including this one, can provide some counterbalance to the left. This is said because the more members Republican clubs have, the greater is the stature, gravitas and importance of the Republican message to our law makers and to our fellow citizens. Williamson County, because it strongly Republican, is unique because it provides a counterbalance to the leftist People's Republic of Travis County. Strongly Republican Sun City plays an important role because of its remarkably high voter turnout, generally well over 80%.

OTHER CLUB NEWS

Club president Julian Bucher reports that the club treasury has grown to the point where consideration should be given to donating some of those funds to worthwhile causes. Consequently, he invites club members to submit to him suggestions concerning possible recipients of club funds.

Currently, the club's treasury is reported to be something over \$7,000; however, not all of that amount is available for donation inasmuch as some funds must be reserved for this year's expenses, and some funds may be set aside for use next year when the all-important presidential election will be held.

Club vice president Brenda Leisey reports that 2011 club membership currently stands at 184.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

The Honorable Arlene Wohlgemuth was appointed the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Executive Director in January 2010, and continues her role leading the TPPF Center for Health Care Policy. She served 10 years as a state representative for District 58. During the 77th legislative session, she served as chairman of the Appropriations Article II Subcommittee (Health and Human Services), vice-chairman of Calendars, CBO for Human Services, and member of the Select Committee for Health Care Expenditures. Wohlgemuth authored HB 2292, the sweeping reform bill of Health and Human Services which improved service delivery for the recipients, saving taxpayers more than \$3.7 billion during its first five years.

Wohlgemuth has twice been named to *Texas Monthly's* "Ten Best" for her outstanding leadership as a chief conservative in the legislature. She has also served as president of the Texas Conservative Coalition as well as chairman of various task forces within that organization.

ABOUT THE TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

It would be easy to justify the claim that what the much-respected Heritage Foundation has meant to the nation in terms of safeguarding the liberties of U. S. citizens, the Texas Public Policy Foundation has meant to the citizens of Texas.

While Heritage has provided valuable information and advice to members of Congress and the citizenry, so too the TPPF provides valuable information and advice to members of the Texas legislature and citizens of Texas. Indeed, one could speculate that Texas' economic success may be attributed to some of the policies developed and promulgated to one extent or another by the TPPF. For evidence of that success, one has only to note the state's population growth, the number of jobs created in the state, and the fact that the state has gained 4 additional Congressional seats.

And what does the TPPF stand for? Its literature answers that question succinctly: "The Texas Public Policy Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan research institute guided by the core principles of individual liberty, personal responsibility, private property rights, free markets, and limited government."

One can gain some insight into the role the TPPF plays in Texas governance by noting the following sampling of some of its activities and resources persons:

- **The Armstrong Center for Energy and the Environment** whose director is Kathleen Hartnett White, former chairman of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Because of the on-going attempt by the EPA, a federal agency, to strip the authority of the Texas Commission to issue air control permits to Texas industries, Texas can experience a severe financial blow. The state is fighting back – legally and politically – and TPPF is playing a role in that effort.
- **The Center for Fiscal Policy** is directed by Talmadge Heflin, former chair of the House Appropriations

Committee, who, in 2003, was responsible for navigating the state through an \$11 billion budget shortfall without an increase in taxes. In his present capacity at TPPF, he is performing a similar function in dealing with the state's \$20+ billion shortfall – only this time he is doing so “behind the scenes.”

- **The Center for Tenth Amendment Studies** is important because the federal government and the federal courts have paid little heed to the 10th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution which states: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” To counter that situation, the Center is established to “show states how to get out from under the federal boot and restore government to its constitutional role.”
- **The Center for Health Care Policy**, directed by Arlene Wohlgemuth, the Center offers ideas on how to protect Texans from the adverse effects of national health reform and on other healthcare issues.

The TPPF has other such initiatives, including Economic Freedom, Education Policy, Higher Education, and Effective Justice. Economist Arthur Laffer, best known for the “Laffer Curve” used by President Reagan, recently became affiliated with TPPF as a Senior Fellow.

THE MEDICAID PROGRAM IN TEXAS

Background. For general background information, the following excerpt from *The Big Squeeze* by Wohlgemuth and Spencer Harris is provided:

- Medicaid, established under the Social Security Act of 1965, is the government-sponsored health care delivery program to the nation's indigent. It is a dually funded, stated administered, federal entitlement welfare program for health care. Though participation in Medicaid is optional for a state, once in, benefits and eligibility are not. Therefore, the state's obligation to pay for Medicaid is set by the federal government.
- Medicaid has grown consistently since its inception, both in size and scope. Numerous efforts to curtail its growth have failed. It is currently the second largest program in the state budget and serves 3.3 million Texans. Medicaid required 26.8 percent of the General Revenue Expenditures (GRE) for 2010.
- Future prospects for Medicaid funding are bleak. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, known as ObamaCare, adds considerable stress to the program while removing the state's ability to adjust to the changes. Under the most conservative estimate of the impact of the PPACA, the next decade will see Medicaid costs triple. The first ten years of full implementation, which begins in 2014, Medicaid is slated to cost the state an additional \$31 billion of general revenue.

The Medicaid Program in Texas. Screaming headlines describe the status of state Medicaid programs:

Some States Weigh Unthinkable Option: Ending Medicaid (Wall Street Journal)

Medicare Budget Short Billions (Austin American-Statesman)

Obama Care and the Medicaid Mess (Wall Street Journal)

Commenting on the “Medicaid Mess” of states, in general, a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece reports, “At roughly 21% of total state spending, Medicaid is already the single largest item in state budgets...” Confirming the axiom which holds that “to increase something, then subsidize it,” is the report that, “Between 2008 and 2009 (the latest year for which figures are available), annual spending growth on the program nearly doubled, growing to 9% from 4.9%.”

Texas has experienced and is projected to suffer similar increases. According to the report cited above, Texas spends just over \$1,600 per household per biennium on Medicaid, and that even if ObamaCare were repealed, Medicaid costs to Texas would double over the next 10 years.

New federal mandates will additionally impact Texas taxpayers. Currently, according to a report by Frogue and Wohlgemuth, Texas received about 58% of its Medicaid dollars from the federal government, roughly the national average. The remaining 42% is borne by Texas taxpayers.

But the new federal law requires Texas to cover 2.2 million more people on Medicaid, an increase of 60%. Although the new law includes 100% federal funding of these newly eligible individuals, that funding begins to phase out after 2018. But the mandate to cover all those people does not.

Happily, as reported above, states may “opt out” of the Medicaid program. And that is what is being

contemplated for Texas. Reacting to the spiraling costs and inefficiencies, Gov. Perry, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, “has proposed that his state get out of Medicaid in favor of a state-run system unburdened by federal mandates.”

The obligations to the indigent Texans have assumed are already staggering. Note the following statistics provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission:

Texas Medicaid:

- Assists nearly two thirds of Texans in nursing homes
- Pays for more than half of all births in the state
- Provides billions of dollars to hospitals to help cover the cost of care to indigent, uninsured Texans and unauthorized immigrants
- Along with Children's Health insurance Program (CHIP), covers about 3.8 million low income recipients per month

The *Wall Street Journal* summarizes the present situation as follows: “ Medicaid has been a joint federal-state mess for so long that we don't know exactly what states would do if allowed to innovate. But we certainly know what the consequences and the costs will be if they aren't.”

But what is not being addressed is the morality and lack of Constitutional authority for government to confiscate the wealth of some of its citizens and give it to other citizens – and, in some cases, non-citizens.

RE-DISTRICTING CAN AFFECT TERMS OF SOME ELECTED OFFICIALS

Although citizens of Texas may have thought that as of last November they elected state Senators and State Board of Education members for the usual 4-year terms, that may not be the case in the wake of the redistricting which will soon be enacted by the legislature. Note the following language from the state Constitution affecting state Senators, and the statutory language affecting State Board of Education members:

Sec. 3. ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE OF SENATORS (from Texas Constitution)

The Senators shall be chosen by the qualified voters for the term of four years; but a new Senate shall be chosen after every apportionment, and the Senators elected after each apportionment shall be divided by lot into two classes. The seats of the Senators of the first class shall be vacated at the expiration of the first two years, and those of the second class at the expiration of four years...Senators shall take office following their election, on the day set by law for the convening of the Regular Session of the Legislature, and shall serve thereafter for the full term of years to which elected.

Sec. 7.104. TERMS. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION (from statutes)

(a) At each general election immediately following a decennial reapportionment of districts, one member shall be elected to the board from each district. Except as provided by Subsection (b), members of the board shall serve staggered terms of four years with the terms of eight members expiring January 1 of one odd-numbered year and the terms of seven members expiring on January 1 of the next odd-numbered year.

(b) Seven members of the board elected at each general election following a decennial reapportionment of districts shall serve two-year terms and eight members shall serve four-year terms. Members shall draw lots to determine who serves which term.

PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS AND THE BUDGET SQUEEZE

Background. As of this writing, the ongoing clash between public sector union employees and certain Republican governors is far from settled. And the stakes are extremely high for both sides.

To understand the significance of this clash, one should first understand that states vary as to the power that is given to public sector union employees. In some states, like Indiana and Wisconsin, if a union bargains for a group of employees at a workplace, all workers covered by the contract must belong to the union. And their dues are automatically deducted from their paychecks. Not all states – Texas, for example – permit that kind of authority to public sector workers.

The mandatory collection of union dues can, of course, enable those unions enjoying that authority to enrich their coffers considerably more than unions not having such authority. To understand the impact of that

authority on union coffers, note that teachers in the state of Wisconsin, where there is a much publicized dispute between the union and the governor, have union dues ranging from \$700 to \$1,000 per year automatically deducted from their paychecks. While that deduction may seem formidable, also note that the average salary and benefits package of those unionized teachers is considerably higher than the average salary and benefits package of nonpublic sector employees in America: \$89,500 to \$61,000.

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, aware that his state has simply run out of money, is determined to not only end the practice of automatically making such deductions, but to also allow workers to “opt out” of paying union dues. But unions are battling such efforts by Gov. Walker and other governors because, as a *Wall Street Journal* columnist describes the situation, “the money [unions] collect from dues is at the heart of their power.”

That writer also notes, “the public sector unions especially have become the nation's most aggressive advocates for higher taxes and spending,” a position perfectly consistent with the goals of the Democrat Party which received some 95% of public union contributions. The relations between public sector unions and Democrats may thus be viewed as being symbiotic.

The Teachers' Union. The “power” derived from the collection of union dues has emboldened the demands and stance of unions, including the National Education Association (NEA). Note how that power was publicly flaunted by the NEA's top attorney who made the following comments during a convention of that organization:

It is not because of creative ideas; it is not because of the merit of our position; it is not because we care about children; it is not because we have a vision of a great public school for every child. NEA and its affiliates are effective advocates because we have power, and we have power because there are more than 3.2 million people who are willing to pay us hundreds of millions of dollars in dues each year, because they believe we are the unions that can most effectively represent them, the unions that can protect their rights and advance their interests as education employees....NEA and its affiliates should never lose sight of the fact that they are *unions*. (emphasis added)

The NEA manifests its raw “power” as expressed above not only in terms of personal benefits accruing to its members, but also in terms of its promotion of left-wing causes consistent with the leftist ideology of today's Democrats. Note in this regard the following sampling of resolutions (presented in summary form) passed during the 2010 NEA convention in New Orleans:

- **National Health Care Policy.** The NEA believes that affordable, comprehensive health care...is the right of every resident. The Association supports a single-payer plan.
- **International Court of Justice.** NEA urges participation by the U. S. in deliberations before the court.
- **Global Climate Change.** NEA believes that humans must take steps to change activities that contribute to global climate change.
- **Family Planning.** NEA supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom.
- **Immigration.** NEA opposes any immigration policy that denies educational opportunities to immigrants and their children regardless of their immigration status.
- **Linguistics, Diversity.** NEA believes that efforts to legislate English as the official language disregard cultural pluralism; deprive those in need of an education, social services, and employment; and must be challenged.
- **Equal Opportunity for Women.** NEA supports an amendment to the U. S. Constitution (such as the Equal Rights Amendment)

These kinds of resolutions suggest the NEA is no longer a professional organization, but is, instead, simply a political one – and a leftist one to boot. And do we not empathize with the multitude of dedicated teachers who do not espouse NEA's expressed ideology, but who, because of state policies, find their hard earned money confiscated and then, without their permission, find it turned over to the NEA in the form of dues?

Now compare the values which stem from those resolutions with the values which stem from the following excerpt from a publication of the NEA dating back several decades – to 1951:

It is important that people who are to live and work together shall have a common mind – a like heritage of purpose, religious ideals, love of country, beauty, and wisdom to guide and inspire them.

NOTES ON THE PASSING SCENE

(Some random observations on the crazy world in which we live)

Oregon's Unusual Election. When the dust settled, the outcome was a true standoff: Republicans and Democrats each won 30 seats, splitting the 60-seat legislature down the middle.

So which party rules? They both do. Under a unprecedented arrangement, Republican Bruce Hanna and Democratic Rep. Arnie Roblan will be “co-speakers” and divide up the constitutional duties of overseeing the house. This “shared governance” arrangement will also apply to all House committees.

School Discipline for Students and Their Parents. *National Review* reports of one Eva Moskowitz who started a charter school in Harlem, probably in a ghetto area. The *New York Times* describes her educational philosophy as a mix of a liberal college of education approach combined with “the traditional Catholic school model.”

Following is a description of her approach which is radically different from that of today's public school. To be especially noted is the discipline expected not only of students, but also of *their parents*. Recall the now numerous reports of bullying and other discipline problems in public schools, then note that her approach demands decorum not only in the classroom, but also in the hallways. Reports *National Review*:

“Parents must sign the [school's] 'contract,' a promise to get children to class on time and in blue-and-orange uniform, guarantee homework, and attend all family events, *New York* magazine explains. Children who defy the school's strict rules must show up for “Saturday Academy” together with their parents. New students get instruction on how to walk appropriately in the school's “zero noise” hallways and how to engage in active listening - “legs crossed, hands folded, eyes tracking the speaker.”

“Moskowitz realizes that learning depends on certain virtues – engagement and responsibility on the part of parents; self-control and respect for rules on the part of children. Her schools are a conveyor belt for those for those virtues, inculcating them in children and parents alike.” “A nun somewhere is beaming with pride.”

Yet More Switchers. In what is a continuing story around the South, five elected officials in Angelina County, Texas [Lufkin is county seat], announced in January they were switching from the Democratic Party to the Republican. The district and county clerks, tax assessor/collector, Precinct One Commissioner and Precinct 3 Constable all made the switch, signing a statement that is fast becoming almost a mantra throughout the South: that the Democratic Part “no longer reflects our values and our conservative principles. It moved, we have not.” (Source: *Human Events*)

Follow the Money. Former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff preached a singular message in the media: The federal government must put more full-body scanners in airports. But what Chertoff didn't mention for months was that his security consulting firm, The Chertoff Group, worked with RapiScan, one of only two manufacturers of X-ray scanners having Transportation Security Administration approval.

The other manufacturer, L-3 Communications, employs a lobbyist also with a big name: former FAA official Linda Daschle, wife of former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle.

Before the Christmas bomb attempt involving the underwear terrorist, just 40 full-body scanners were in use at 19 U. S. airports. But the scare, coupled with hundreds of millions of dollars in unappropriated American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, created a windfall for well-connected scanner makers.

With little technical evidence that such scanners would have detected Abdulmutallab's bomb, the government inked a \$175 million deal with RapiScan and awarded a \$165 million contract to L-3 for new machines. To date, about 345 of the full-body scanners have been deployed in 70 U. S. airports. Roughly 1,000 of the controversial machines will be in use nationwide by the end of 2011.

Meanwhile, eight members of Congress own stock in L-3, according to financial disclosure filings. Topping the list is Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., who owns between \$500,000 and \$1 million in L-3 stock.

(Source: NewsMax)

U. S. Failing to Take Enough Steps. A study published in the October 2010 issue of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* found that the average adult in the U. S. takes just 5,117 steps a day. Western Australians take 9,695 steps, the Swiss 9,650 steps, and the Japanese 7,168 steps. This means on average, the Japanese walk about a mile – or about 2,000 steps – more a day than do Americans.

A sedentary lifestyle is a risk factor for heart disease and many other diseases. Adding 2,000 steps to daily activity can typically be done with as little as 20 minutes of brisk walking a day. (Source: Mayo Clinic Health Letter)

