



Portage County DEMOCRAT

GETTING TOGETHER, MOVING FORWARD

JANUARY 2008

PORTAGE COUNTY, WI DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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www.PortageCountyDems.org

MESSAGE from PARTY CO-CHAIRS

Dear Friends,

2008 is the year to ring out the old—a miserably failed Republican administration—and ring in the new: a Democratic President supported by a legislature with a strong enough majority to forestall filibusters and other stalemating strategies. At our General Meeting on January 8 we will have speakers supporting the Democratic Presidential candidates and have a straw poll to see who we in Portage County would elect. Come to hear the speakers, express your preference, and sign up to help in the campaign of your choice!

2008 is a now or never year.

It is a crucial, never to be repeated opportunity to reverse the direction of our country, and to address significantly the global climate changes threatening the well-being of our world as we know it.

2008 is ushering in three new Executive Board members elected at the December Meeting. We welcome Jan Way, Roberta Bie, and Noah Schnell-Harrison. They will assist the rest of the Board and our general membership in hosting the 2008 State Convention, in establishing a Democratic booth at the MREA fair, holding caucuses, helping at the polls, and opening and organizing an office location for headquarters this year. (We are looking for a reasonably priced location downtown with Main Street access, so if anyone has anything to offer in this area, please contact Gary.)

We are filled with gratitude for the people that have, during 2007,



laid the foundation for the work of the new year. We are especially thankful for the two members of the Portage County Democratic Party Executive Board who concluded their service on the Board—Mary Thurmaier featured on page 7—and Will Stites, who was 7th CD Rep and for several years and provided leadership in setting up programs for our General Meetings. We will miss their presence with us.

Finally, we call your attention to a special insert in this newsletter. The acceptance speech given by Al Gore when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway was so impressive, and so clearly set a direction for 2008, that we thought we would include it in case you have not yet had a chance to read it.

Have a Happy New Year! Please come to our meeting January 8th!

Gary Hawley Lois Lawler

Gary Hawley Lois Lawler
 Co-Chairs, Portage County Democratic Party

Inside this issue...

page 7...

Read about AWARDS
 given to longtime
 Democratic Leader

MARY THURMAIER



2008 Calendar

JANUARY

- Thurs. Jan 3 **Executive Board Meeting** at the County-City Building, 1515 Strong's Ave., at 6:00 p.m.
- Tues. Jan 8 **General Meeting** at The Blue Top, 3425 Church Street in Stevens Point, at 7:00 p.m. (Socialization begins at 6:30.)
- General Meeting/Updates of Elected Officials
 - Guest Speakers presenting on behalf of Dem Presidential Candidates
 - Beverages will be provided

FEBRUARY

- Tues. Feb 5 **Executive Board Meeting** at the County-City Building, 1515 Strong's Ave., at 6:30 p.m.
- Tues. Feb 12 **General Meeting** at The Blue Top, 3425 Church Street in Stevens Point, at 7:00 p.m. (Socialization begins at 6:30.)
- Tues. Feb 19 **Spring Primary**

Psssst! Have you checked out our Web Site?

www.PortageCountyDems.org



County News

County Clerk Update

December and January are busy election months for the County Clerk, Municipal Clerks, and School Board offices as candidates are coming in to file campaign finance, declaration of candidacy, and nomination papers for the spring elections. All 29 county supervisory districts will have an election in April with the filing deadline of January 2, 2008. Preparations are also underway for the Presidential Preference Primary election here in Wisconsin on February 19, 2008.



Hope all had a happy and healthy holiday season!

SHIRLEY M. SIMONIS
Portage County Clerk

MEET OUR 2008 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED AT THE DECEMBER MEETING

Gary Hawley, Co-Chair	Julie Brazeau, 7 th CD Rep
Lois Lawler, Co-Chair	Charlene Figge, Newsltr Ed.
Corey Ladick, 1 st Vice-Chair	Saul Newton, UWSP Dem Pres
Wes Halverson, 2 nd Vice-Chair	Jack Allgaier, At Large
Betty Bruski-Mallek, 3 rd V-Ch	Mary Arnold, At Large
Tom Mallison, 4 th Vice-Chair	Michael O'Meara, At Large
Roberta Bie, Statutory Chair	Jan Way, At Large
Jerry Ugland, Treasurer	Noah Schnell-Harrison, At Lg.
Carol Gawlik, Secretary	

Announcing: Slogan Contest for Portage County Dems

The Executive Board has begun plans for hosting the State Democratic Convention in June 2008. Signs (4' x 4') with winning slogans will be painted and placed in locations throughout Stevens Point prior to the Convention.

First Step: Creating *catchy* slogans for the signs. (What would *you* like to see on a billboard?)

Next step: Send your slogan(s) to Gary Hawley (see pg. 1 for e-mail address or send to PO Box 515)

Due Date: Submit all entries by March 1, 2008.

Maximum word length: Keep it brief. The sign must be able to be read at a distance.

Individuals can submit as many slogans as they wish.

Winning slogans will be selected by a committee of the Executive Board. Winning slogans, and the names of those submitting them, will be published in a future newsletter.



From the Editor —

We want to hear from *YOU*. If you have something to include in a future newsletter, please contact me at cfigge@charter.net or call me at 345-1371.

The due date for sending items for our February issue is January 20th.

— Charlene Figge

Thank you to our 2008 Newsletter Sponsors:

- Jo Ellen Seiser
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- Sally Overholt
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We are grateful for your generosity.

To add *your* name to our growing list of sponsors, send your donation (payable to PCDP) to Charlene Figge, Newsletter Editor, 5411 Woodland St., Stevens Point, WI, 54481

(Any amount is appreciated.)



SPEECH BY AL GORE

***ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
DECEMBER 10, 2007 OSLO, NORWAY***

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Honorable members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen.

I have a purpose here today. It is a purpose I have tried to serve for many years. I have prayed that God would show me a way to accomplish it.

Sometimes, without warning, the future knocks on our door with a precious and painful vision of what might be. One hundred and nineteen years ago, a wealthy inventor read his own obituary, mistakenly published years before his death. Wrongly believing the inventor had just died, a newspaper printed a harsh judgment of his life's work, unfairly labeling him "The Merchant of Death" because of his invention—dynamite. Shaken by this condemnation, the inventor made a fateful choice to serve the cause of peace.

Seven years later, Alfred Nobel created this prize and the others that bear his name.

Seven years ago tomorrow, I read my own political obituary in a judgment that seemed to me harsh and mistaken—if not premature. But that unwelcome verdict also brought a precious if painful gift: an opportunity to search for fresh new ways to serve my purpose.

Unexpectedly, that quest has brought me here. Even though I fear my words cannot match this moment, I pray what I am feeling in my heart will be communicated clearly enough that those who hear me will say, "We must act."

The distinguished scientists with whom it is the greatest honor of my life to share this award have laid before us a choice between two different futures—a choice that to my ears echoes the words of an ancient prophet: "Life or death, blessings or curses. Therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

We, the human species, are confronting a planetary emergency—a threat to the survival of

our civilization that is gathering ominous and destructive potential even as we gather here. But there is hopeful news as well: we have the ability to solve this crisis and avoid the worst—though not all—of its consequences, if we act boldly, decisively and quickly.

However, despite a growing number of honorable exceptions, too many of the world's leaders are still best described in the words Winston Churchill applied to those who ignored Adolf Hitler's threat: "They go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful to be impotent."

So today, we dumped another 70 million tons of global-warming pollution into the thin shell of atmosphere surrounding our planet, as if it were an open sewer. And tomorrow, we will dump a slightly larger amount, with the cumulative concentrations now trapping more and more heat from the sun.

As a result, the earth has a fever. And the fever is rising. The experts have told us it is not a passing affliction that will heal by itself. We asked for a second opinion. And a third. And a fourth. And the consistent conclusion, restated with increasing alarm, is that something basic is wrong.

We are what is wrong, and we must make it right.

Last September 21, as the Northern Hemisphere tilted away from the sun, scientists reported with unprecedented distress that the North Polar ice cap is "falling off a cliff." One study estimated that it could be completely gone during summer in less than 22 years. Another new study, to be presented by U.S. Navy researchers later this week, warns it could happen in as little as 7 years.

Seven years from now.

In the last few months, it has been harder and harder to misinterpret the signs that our world is spinning out of kilter. Major cities in North and South America, Asia and Australia are nearly out of water due to massive droughts and

melting glaciers. Desperate farmers are losing their livelihoods. Peoples in the frozen Arctic and on low-lying Pacific islands are planning evacuations of places they have long called home. Unprecedented wildfires have forced a half million people from their homes in one country and caused a national emergency that almost brought down the government in another. Climate refugees have migrated into areas already inhabited by people with different cultures, religions, and traditions, increasing the potential for conflict. Stronger storms in the Pacific and Atlantic have threatened whole cities. Millions have been displaced by massive flooding in South Asia, Mexico, and 18 countries in Africa. As temperature extremes have increased, tens of thousands have lost their lives. We are recklessly burning and clearing our forests and driving more and more species into extinction. The very web of life on which we depend is being ripped and frayed.

We never intended to cause all this destruction, just as Alfred Nobel never intended that dynamite be used for waging war. He had hoped his invention would promote human progress. We shared that same worthy goal when we began burning massive quantities of coal, then oil and methane.

Even in Nobel's time, there were a few warnings of the likely consequences. One of the very first winners of the Prize in chemistry worried that, "We are evaporating our coal mines into the air." After performing 10,000 equations by hand, Svante Arrhenius calculated that the earth's average temperature would increase by many degrees if we doubled the amount of CO² in the atmosphere.

Seventy years later, my teacher, Roger Revelle, and his colleague, Dave Keeling, began to precisely document the increasing CO² levels day by day.

But unlike most other forms of pollution, CO² is invisible, tasteless, and odorless—which has helped keep the truth about what it is doing to our climate out of sight and out of mind. Moreover, the catastrophe now threatening us is unprecedented—and we often confuse the unprecedented with the improbable.

We also find it hard to imagine making the massive changes that are now necessary to solve the crisis. And when large truths are genuinely inconvenient, whole societies can, at least for a time, ignore them. Yet as George Orwell reminds us: "Sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield."

In the years since this prize was first awarded, the entire relationship between humankind

and the earth has been radically transformed. And still, we have remained largely oblivious to the impact of our cumulative actions.

Indeed, without realizing it, we have begun to wage war on the earth itself. Now, we and the earth's climate are locked in a relationship familiar to war planners: "Mutually assured destruction."

More than two decades ago, scientists calculated that nuclear war could throw so much debris and smoke into the air that it would block life-giving sunlight from our atmosphere, causing a "nuclear winter." Their eloquent warnings here in Oslo helped galvanize the world's resolve to halt the nuclear arms race.

Now science is warning us that if we do not quickly reduce the global warming pollution that is trapping so much of the heat our planet normally radiates back out of the atmosphere, we are in danger of creating a permanent "carbon summer."

As the American poet Robert Frost wrote, "Some say the world will end in fire; some say in ice." Either, he notes, "would suffice."

But neither need be our fate.

It is time to make peace with the planet. We must quickly mobilize our civilization with the urgency and resolve that has previously been seen only when nations mobilized for war. These prior struggles for survival were won when leaders found words at the 11th hour that released a mighty surge of courage, hope and readiness to sacrifice for a protracted and mortal challenge.

These were not comforting and misleading assurances that the threat was not real or imminent; that it would affect others but not ourselves; that ordinary life might be lived even in the presence of extraordinary threat; that Providence could be trusted to do for us what we would not do for ourselves.

No, these were calls to come to the defense of the common future. They were calls upon the courage, generosity and strength of entire peoples, citizens of every class and condition who were ready to stand against the threat once asked to do so. Our enemies in those times calculated that free people would not rise to the challenge; they were, of course, catastrophically wrong.

Now comes the threat of climate crisis—a threat that is real, rising, imminent, and universal. Once again, it is the 11th hour. The penalties for ignoring this near point would be unsustainable and unrecoverable.

For now we still have the power to choose our fate, and the remaining question is only this: Have we the will to act vigorously and in time, or will we remain imprisoned by a dangerous illusion?

Mahatma Gandhi awakened the largest democracy on earth and forged a shared resolve with what he called “Satyagraha”—or “truth force.”

In every land, the truth—once known—has the power to set us free.

Truth also has the power to unite us and bridge the distance between “me” and “we,” creating the basis for common effort and shared responsibility.

There is an African proverb that says, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” We need to go far, quickly.

We must abandon the conceit that individual, isolated, private actions are the answer. They can and do help. But they will not take us far enough without collective action. At the same time, we must ensure that in mobilizing globally, we do not invite the establishment of ideological conformity and a new lockstep “ism.”

That means adopting principles, values, laws, and treaties that release creativity and initiative at every level of society in multifold responses originating concurrently and spontaneously.

This new consciousness requires expanding the possibilities inherent in all humanity. The innovators who will devise a new way to harness the sun’s energy for pennies or invent an engine that’s carbon negative may live in Lagos or Mumbai or Montevideo. We must ensure that entrepreneurs and inventors everywhere on the globe have the chance to change the world.

When we unite for a moral purpose that is manifestly good and true, the spiritual energy unleashed can transform us. The generation that defeated fascism throughout the world in the 1940s found, in rising to meet their awesome challenge, that they had gained the moral authority and longterm vision to launch the Marshall Plan, the United Nations, and a new level of global cooperation and foresight that unified Europe and facilitated the emergence of democracy and prosperity in Germany, Japan, Italy and much of the world. One of their vision-ary leaders said, “It is time we steered by the stars and not by the lights of every passing ship.”

In the last year of that war, you gave the Peace Prize to a man from my hometown of 2000 people, Carthage, Tennessee. Cordell Hull was described by Franklin Roosevelt as the “Father of the United Nations.” He was an inspiration and hero to my own father, who followed Hull in the Congress and the U.S. Senate and in his commitment to world peace and global cooperation.

My parents spoke often of Hull, always in tones of reverence and admiration. Eight weeks ago, when you announced this prize, the deepest emotion I felt was when I saw the headline in my hometown paper that simply noted I had won the same prize that Cordell Hull had won. In that moment, I knew what my father and mother would have felt were they alive.

Just as Hull’s generation found moral authority in rising to solve the world crisis caused by fascism, so too can we find our greatest opportunity in rising to solve the climate crisis. In the Kanji characters used in both Chinese and Japanese, “crisis”

is written with two symbols, the first meaning “danger,” the second “opportunity.” By facing and removing the danger of the climate crisis, we



Former Vice President Al Gore in his home office in Nashville, TN. (Time magazine)

have the opportunity to gain the moral authority and vision to vastly increase our own capacity to solve other crises that have been too long ignored.

We must understand the connections between the climate crisis and the afflictions of poverty, hunger, HIV-Aids and other pandemics. As these problems are linked, so too must be their solutions. We must begin by making the common rescue of the global environment the central organizing principle of the world community.

Fifteen years ago, I made that case at the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro. Ten years ago, I presented it in Kyoto. This week, I will urge the delegates in Bali to adopt a bold mandate for a treaty that establishes a universal global cap on emissions and uses the market in emissions trading to efficiently allocate resources to the most effective opportunities for speedy reductions.

This treaty should be ratified and brought into effect everywhere in the world by the beginning of 2010—two years sooner than presently contemplated. The pace of our response must be accelerated to match the accelerating pace of the crisis itself.

Heads of state should meet early next year to review what was accomplished in Bali and take personal responsibility for addressing this crisis. It is not unreasonable to ask, given the gravity of our circumstances, that these heads of state meet every three months until the treaty is completed.

We also need a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store carbon dioxide.

And most important of all, we need to put a price on carbon—with a CO² tax that is then rebated back to the people, progressively, according to the laws of each nation, in ways that shift the burden of taxation from employment to pollution. This is by far the most effective and simplest way to accelerate solutions to this crisis.

The world needs an alliance—especially of those nations that weigh heaviest in the scales where earth is in the balance. I salute Europe and Japan for the steps they've taken in recent years to meet the challenge, and the new government in Australia, which has made solving the climate crisis its first priority.

But the outcome will be decisively influenced by two nations that are now failing to do enough: the United States and China. While India is also growing fast in importance, it should be absolutely clear that it is the two largest CO² emitters—most of all, my own country—that will need to make the boldest moves, or stand accountable before history for their failure to act.

Both countries should stop using the other's behavior as an excuse for stalemate and instead develop an agenda for mutual survival in a shared global environment.

These are the last few years of decision, but they can be the first years of a bright and hopeful future if we do what we must. No one should believe a solution will be found without effort, without cost, without change. Let us acknowledge that if we wish to redeem squandered time and speak again with moral authority, then these are the hard truths:

The way ahead is difficult. The outer boundary of what we currently believe is feasible is still far short of what we actually must do. Moreover, between here and there, across the unknown, falls the shadow.

That is just another way of saying that we have to expand the boundaries of what is possible. In the words of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, "Pathwalker, there is no path. You must make the path as you walk."

We are standing at the most fateful fork in that path. So I want to end as I began, with a vision of two futures—each a palpable possibility—and with a prayer that we will see with vivid clarity the necessity of choosing between those two futures, and the urgency of making the right choice now.

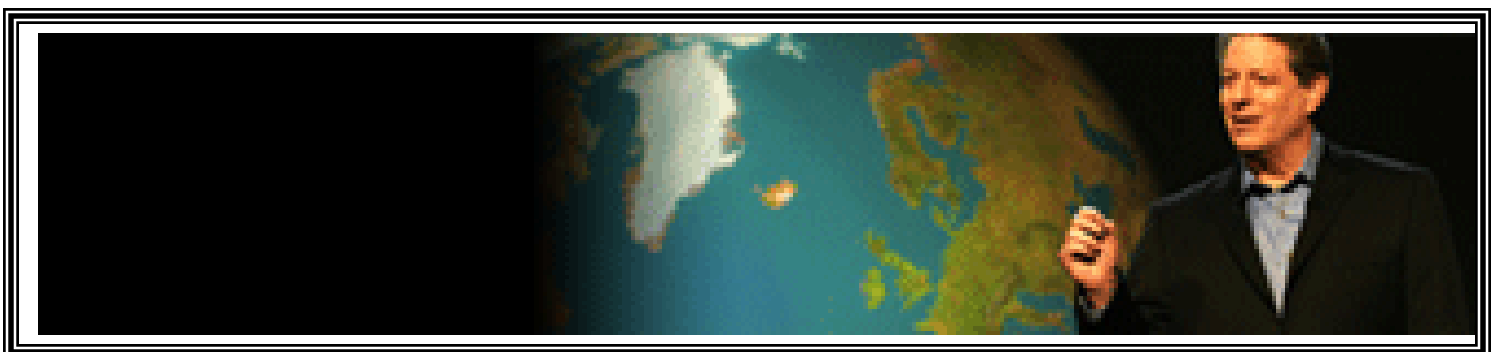
The great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, wrote, "One of these days, the younger generation will come knocking at my door."

The future is knocking at our door right now. Make no mistake, the next generation will ask us one of two questions. Either they will ask: "What were you thinking; why didn't you act?"

Or they will ask instead: "How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?"

We have everything we need to get started, save perhaps political will, but political will is a renewable resource.

So let us renew it, and say together: **"We have a purpose. We are many. For this purpose we will rise, and we will act."** ■





Dear Portage County Democrats,

I hope that everyone had a safe and happy holiday season. While I will continue to stand up for the values we share, the New Year brings with it increased opportunity to get our country moving in the right direction.

And while we must fight hard this year to take back the State Assembly, increase our seats in the State Senate, get veto-proof majorities in Congress, and elect a Democrat to the White House in November, there is an election in April that deserves our attention.

If last year's volatile State Supreme Court race was any glimpse of things to come, outside special interests will do everything they can to unseat Justice Louis Butler.

Justice Butler is a highly regarded legal scholar who attended Lawrence University in Appleton and law school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the last 11 years, he has served with distinction as a faculty member of the National Judicial College, where he teaches criminal law to judges from across the country and around the world. Justice Butler has spent the last 15 years as a judge, building a record we can all be proud of as he's worked to make our state stronger and safer.

There are so many important issues that the Wisconsin Supreme Court rules on every year, and the Justices that serve on the Court make decisions that can have a dramatic influence on our state for generations to come. We need leaders like Justice Butler to continue to bring his values, experience and independence to the highest court in Wisconsin.

I'm going to fight to keep him on the State Supreme Court and I hope you will join me. For more information, or to join our effort to support Justice Butler, please contact Butler Campaign Coordinator Peter Knudson at peter@louisbutler.com or (414) 755-2067.

With high hopes,

Russ Feingold
United States Senator
www.russfeingold.org

MARY THURMAIER RECEIVES AWARDS

At the December 11th Christmas Party meeting several awards were presented to longtime member, Mary Thurmaier. Wes Halverson presented her with a "Medal of Honor" for her years of service on the PCDP Executive Board. Michael O'Meara presented her with the Portage County Democratic Party "Lifetime Achievement Award." Senator Julie Lassa and Rep. Louis J. Molepske, Jr. prepared a CITATION which was presented, in their absence, by Lois Lawler, Co-Chair of the Portage County Democratic Party.

Testimonial to Mary Thurmaier

*Excerpts from words of Barbara Eckblad
daughter of Mary Thurmaier*



– Photo by David Blado

Mom and Dad taught us that real patriotism was trusting this county to be strong enough to handle dissent, disappointment, and challenge to its policies, especially when the policies fly in the face of what our country really stands for.

Mom and Dad taught us that a responsibility to our country was to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves.

My parents had little patience for complaints about paying taxes. Dad reminded us that being in a position to pay taxes is a privilege. The alternative was far worse. Being the voice of those who have no voice is the role of the citizen, and, according to my parents, the heart of the Democratic Party.

As Democrats, our challenge today is to grow more Mary and Roland Thurmaiers, in our generation and in the next...

On behalf of my mother, I would like to thank you for this honor. And on behalf of my brothers and our family, we'd like to thank you for honoring our mom.

My mother grew up in the small farming community of Delavan, Illinois, just outside Peoria. She was the first member of her family to attend college. While living in Virginia, where my father was a chemist with DuPont, my mother confronted injustices and racism. She joined in founding the League of Women Voters in Waynesboro and spent many Saturday mornings registering black women to vote. The year was 1962. ...

Here is to rising to the challenge and ensuring that the values of Mary and Roland Thurmaier and the Democratic Party will continue into the future.

Again, thank you for honoring our mother.

Portage County Democratic Party

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www.portagecountydems.org

Democratic Party Meeting
Tuesday, January 8th at 7:00 pm
at The Blue Top
3425 Church Street in Stevens Point



Democratic Party JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

Date: Tuesday, January 8, 2008
Time: 7:00 p.m. (socializing begins at 6:30)
Location: **The Blue Top**, 3425 Church Street, Stevens Point
Program: Presenters will attend to speak in favor of the various Democratic Presidential Candidates, prior to our PRIMARY Elections.

SPEAKING FOR:

- **Hillary Clinton:** Nancy Nusbaum (Former Candidate from Green Bay for US Congress in 8th CD)
- **John Edwards:** Senator Russ Decker has been invited. (WI Senate Majority Leader has not yet confirmed at the time of printing this newsletter.)
- Presenters supporting other Candidates have been invited, but their attendance has not yet been confirmed.



Meeting is Open to the Public.
All are welcome...
Join us!

Beverages will be provided.