

January 2018 Newsletter

Co-Chair's Message

by Michael Smuksta

First, thank you for your votes in electing me as co-chair of the LCDP for 2018. I thought that since I only had two minutes to introduce myself to many of the members at the November meeting, I would use the January newsletter to provide an additional introduction about myself. In subsequent newsletters, co-chair Peter Gorski and other Executive Board members may use this space to provide information about themselves.

As I mentioned at the November meeting, I am a Chicago native. My dad had only a sixth grade education. He was a union member of the United Steel Workers of America and worked as an assistant pipefitter at US Steel South Works from 1939 to 1974. My mom emigrated from Italy in 1921 when she was nine years old. She was a waitress before owning a small diner. Growing up in post-WWII America in the golden age of American manufacturing, I felt neither poor, nor even thought of myself as working class.

I attended Northern Illinois University, graduated debt-free with a BA in history in 1972 and an MA in history in 1974. I met my wife, Kris, in a college history class (Serendipity!). We have been married for 45 years, and have two adult children and three grandsons. I taught high school social studies in a rural Illinois for about 12 years. My mid-life "crisis" was not to purchase a sports car but to return to graduate school part time in 1985 and full time in 1987, earning a doctorate in history from Northern Illinois University in 1991. That same year, I



Upcoming Events

The next Regular Meeting of the LCDP will be held at **5:30 p.m.** on Monday, January 15, 2018 at the Ho-Chunk Three Rivers House, 724 Main Street, La Crosse, WI. **Note the time change to 5:30 p.m.** At this meeting, we will be hearing from Shaundel Spivey, La Crosse School District Multi-Cultural Liaison, founder of the group Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge (BLACK), and Chair of the La Crosse Human Rights Commission. The meeting will end no later than 6:30 p.m. to allow members to attend the La Crosse Area Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration.

The La Crosse Area Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration, January 15, 2018 at the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, 900 Viterbo Drive, La Crosse, WI. Guest speaker: Dr. Duchess Harris, author and Professor of American Studies at Macalester College, will reflect on the topic "Chaos or Community: Fifty Years with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." The Program includes the presentation of the 2018 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, and performances by the Coulee Regional Gospel Choir and the Viterbo Choir.

started teaching at Viterbo University until my retirement twenty-five years later in May, 2016. At Viterbo, I taught a variety of courses in American

History and held several key administrative leadership positions, including History Department Chair for twenty years. In addition, I led four spring break student service trips to the Cheyenne River Youth Project on the Cheyenne River Reservation (Lakota) in Eagle Butte, SD.

So, as a historian and a life-long educator, what can I offer the LCDP? My study of American history revealed to me the active role of ordinary people in the making of America. I was especially inspired by what individuals and groups did for themselves to improve their lives, whether the struggle of workers to form unions, women seeking equality, or African-Americans challenging Jim Crow laws. Anti-Trump activism, starting with the Women's March on January 21, 2017 and the recent elections in Virginia and Alabama producing Democratic victories, clearly demonstrate the importance of grass-roots organizing and the power of individuals to force change.

I am a Democrat and a democrat. History has enhanced my capacity for informed citizenship, something we need dearly in the Walker/Trump era. With your help, we can make 2018 a good year for Democrats and those of us who believe in democracy: a wave election in the fall of 2018, a favorable ruling by the US Supreme Court on ending Wisconsin gerrymandering, and the defeat of Walker and Republicans. So join me is taking on this important task for Democrats to regain political power and make changes that benefit the many, not just the few.

Ron Kind's Message

This month, House Republicans passed a tax bill that gave large tax cuts to the wealthiest people and most powerful special interests in the country. It comes at the expense of Wisconsin's hard working families, family farms, and seniors. The Tax Policy Center, a non-partisan group, says that the GOP tax scam will jack up taxes on 86 million working class households and give 83% of the tax cuts it does contain to the most wealthy 1%.

I voted against this tax cut to millionaires, billionaires, and the special interest.

Without a doubt, our tax code needs some fixing. It's too big, too unwieldy, and full of loopholes and tax breaks that benefit only those who have enough to exploit them. The "reforms" in this bill aren't the kind of reform that Wisconsinites need. Instead of making our tax code easier to understand and helping people, this bill borrows \$2 trillion from China to give tax cuts to very wealthy, multinational corporations.

In the new year, we can expect them to come for Medicare and Social Security to help plug the holes they've blown in our budget with their tax cut giveaway. We must remain vigilant and ready to speak out when they come to cut programs that represent promises made to our seniors and other citizens.

Thanks for all you do and Happy New Year,

Ron Kind

Wisconsin & Foxconn: The Most Expensive Taxpayer-Funded Jobs Program In History

By Allan Golombek, *RealClearMarkets.com*

The people of Wisconsin gave Taiwan-based Foxconn a billion-dollar gift for Christmas, on top of \$3 billion they had already promised the company. So far, they haven't even received a thank-you card – just the promise of the most expensive taxpayer-funded jobs in history.

This summer, Wisconsin politicians announced they had lured a new Foxconn LCD flat panel plant to southeast Wisconsin with a \$3 billion incentive package, in return for a \$10 billion investment from the company. But, like many government giveaways to the corporate sector, the bill to taxpayers has gotten even bigger. The Wisconsin Economic Development Agency agreed to a significant reduction in Foxconn's commitment, down to \$9 billion. This was after the state legislature okayed the deal without nailing down the details.

The state legislative bureau estimated it would take 25 years – until 2043 – until the Wisconsin government received enough in additional tax revenues to match the initial \$3 billion investment. At \$4 billion-plus, the break-even point will recede even further into the future.

A former U.S. senator once talked about how government spends a billion here and a billion there, and pretty soon it adds up to real money. The Foxconn giveaway already adds up to a lot of money – close to \$1800 per Wisconsin household, even in parts of the state that won't benefit directly from the plant.

Rather than investing in people, too many governments are giving money to corporations in the pursuit of jobs that may not last long and may never return the investment. Wisconsin is

setting the pace right now with its multi-billion dollar giveaway to Foxconn. Maybe it is time for governments to kick the habit. Sometimes, just saying 'no' could be a viable strategy.

To read the full article, go to:

http://www.realclearmarkets.com/articles/2017/12/26/wisconsin_foxconn_the_most_expensive_taxpayer-funded_jobs_program_in_history_103076.html



This past fall, LCDP members Ralph Knudson and Wayne Goeldner launched "Coulee Conversations – Listening to Your Concerns" on a trial basis on the issue of health care. They were successful in contacting individuals they knew in Soldiers Grove, WI. Over two visits, they assisted individuals who previously lacked health insurance to successfully sign up for the Affordable Care Act.

Ralph trained six people in active listening. The idea is to build relationships with individuals, spend some time talking to one another, and find some common ground. Together with Pete Klitzke, he is interested in continuing the Coulee Conversations program. Ralph is particularly interested in issues that affect rural Wisconsin, such as schools, local economic concerns, roads and infrastructure, and internet access, to name a few. He is currently thinking more about this project, and will provide updates as it develops.



Martin Luther King Jr., 1968 and 2018: “Déjà vu all over again”?

by Michael Smuksta, Co-chair LCDP

2018 marks the fiftieth anniversary of a very polarizing year, 1968. Then as now, there was war (Vietnam / Afghanistan), an unpopular president (Lyndon Johnson / Donald Trump), demagogues (George C. Wallace / Donald Trump), racial tensions (urban riots / Charlottesville), Black protest (Black Power / Black Lives Matter), and feminist consciousness (women’s liberation / #Me Too), to name a few similarities. Our current political polarization in the first year of Trump’s presidency recalls the words of the late Yogi Berra, “It’s déjà vu all over again.” 2018 is also the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, TN, while he was supporting black sanitation workers in their effort to unionize.

Dr. King is most often remembered for his famous “I Have a Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C., that drew an interracial audience of 250,000 people. He called for racial reconciliation in a spirit of brotherly love to heal the wounds of slavery and Jim Crow apartheid. His conclusion is famous: “And when this happens and we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and city, we will be able to speed up the day when all God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing together the words of the old Negro spiritual: ‘Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.’” This message of non-violence and racial harmony was, and still is, what most appealed to white, middle-class liberals.

What is often forgotten in the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life is another speech, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” delivered in New York City on April 4, 1967, one year to the day of his assassination in 1968. King spoke forcefully and without restraint in denouncing American foreign and domestic policy. He cited the death and destruction in Vietnam and linked the oppression of the Vietnamese to the oppression of the poor, black and white, in America. He was critical of the cost of the war that meant less funding for Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs. King concluded that one could not separate the unequivocal immorality of the war from the undeniable immorality of

American domestic issues of economic inequality, poverty, and racism.

The reaction to this speech was overwhelmingly negative among major media outlets, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, and even the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Dr. King was swiftly and harshly rebuked because his words did not echo the uplifting message of his “I Have a Dream” speech of 1963. In sharp contrast, King spoke as a prophet of the Old Testament, chastising America to reassess its values in order to save its soul.

My point in juxtaposing these two speeches is to remind us that in the current political situation we need these two perspectives of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We need to share with Wisconsinites a Democratic uplifting message of optimism, that working together, we can become a better America. But we also need to channel the anger over the immorality of a Republican regressive tax plan that will exacerbate economic inequality by transferring wealth from the middle and lower income classes to the top 10% and the top .1%, will deprive 13 million Americans of health care, and add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over a decade, which will be used as a pretext to cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. And at the state level, we need to work to remove Walker and Republican Assembly Representatives and Senators so we can restore worker’s rights and environmental protections, to name just two issues.

So, in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., join me and fellow Democrats at the La Crosse Area Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Community Celebration at Viterbo University’s Fine Arts Center at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, January 15, 2018. The keynote speaker is Dr. Duchess Harris, a professor and chair of the American Studies Department at Macalester College, who will speak on “Chaos or Community: 50 years with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” In order to encourage your attendance at this event, the regular January meeting of the LCDP on January 15th will convene at 5:30 p.m. and conclude by 6:30 p.m. at the latest.

For further reading on the GOP tax plan and income inequality:

David Leonhardt, “A Tax Plan to Turbocharge Inequality, in 3 Charts” 12/17/17

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/17/opinion/taxes-inequality-charts.html>

“The Tax Bill that Inequality Created” 12/16/17

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/16/opinion/sunday/tax-bill-inequality-created.html>

**“If you can’t fly then run,
if you can’t run then walk,
if you can’t walk then crawl,
but whatever you do you have
to keep moving forward.”**

~ Martin Luther King Jr.



LOCAL SPOTLIGHT



SIERRA CLUB

by Cathy Van Maren

The Sierra Club is the oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental organization in the country, founded in 1892 by John Muir to promote the protection of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Muir believed that people had to experience the mountains before protecting them, so the club started an outings program early. The club lost its tax exempt status in 1963 after waging a successful campaign to prevent a dam in the Grand Canyon (though now there is also a 501(c)(3) associated Sierra Club Foundation). Today's club of more than three million people reaches across the country providing outings, education, advocacy and lobbying for environmental protection.

Current Sierra Club priorities include the Beyond Dirty Fuels and Ready for 100 initiatives to encourage businesses and governments to move quickly away from fossil fuel use; protecting lands, wildlife, and waters from pollution, depletion and degradation; promoting non-polluting transportation options that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide a more equitable system; and ensuring access for all to vital natural resources and public spaces for all.

In Wisconsin, the John Muir Chapter, founded in 1963, has focused on fighting mining bills, tar sands pipelines, high capacity wells, CAFOs, water pollution, wetlands destruction, coal fueled power plants, and the decimation of our state's Department of Natural Resources. They are working to improve public transportation options and transportation equity, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, solar and wind installations, and much more. In addition, the chapter sponsors dozens of outings per year. Sierra Club members are automatically members of their state chapter and regional group.

The Coulee Region Group is one of several regional groups in the state and includes members from Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. The Coulee Region Group has sponsored and collaborated with others on water quality issues, solar initiatives, and transportation issues. The club has just initiated a Ready for 100 team to help Mayor Kabat, who has signed the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 pledge, move La Crosse to 100% renewable energy as quickly as possible. A new water team will work with the state team and local organizations to educate and advocate for policies that protect our water resources.

Our club hosts or co-sponsors speakers, public meetings like the recent Water Quality forum in October or the upcoming citizen conference on Industrial Ag in the Driftless (see link for details), and events. We have adopted River Valley Drive and do highway clean up there three times per year. Annually, the Coulee Region Group provides environmental education grants for educators and organizations in the region.

We welcome new members who are interested in helping to preserve and defend our area's natural resources and recreation areas and in joining with millions to move our country in a more environmentally sustainable direction. Please visit us at www.sierraclub.org/wisconsin/coulee or cr-sierra.blogspot.com or contact Pat Wilson, club president, at pbwilson@centurytel.net, for more information. And everyone is invited to attend the January 20 conference on Industrial Ag in the Driftless, co-sponsored by the Coulee Region Sierra Club and many other organizations (tinyurl.com/Jan20-DriftlessAg)



Our Elected Officials

Senator Tammy Baldwin

717 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ph: 202-224-5653, Fax: 202-224-9787

Senator Ron Johnson (R)

328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. Office Building
Ph: 202-224-5323

Congressman Ron Kind

1406 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ph: 202-225-5506, Fax: 202-225-5739

State Senator Jennifer Shilling

State Capitol 106 South
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53703-7882

Ph: 608-266-5490, Local: 608-782-2785

94th Assembly District Representative Steve Doyle

Room 124 North, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952

Madison, WI 53708

Ph: 608-266-0631 or 888-534-0094

Fax: 608-282-3694

95th Assembly District Representative Jill Billings

Room 4 West, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952

Madison, WI 53708

Ph: 608-266-5780

Governor Scott Walker (R)

Office of the Governor
115 East State Capital
Madison, WI 53702

Ph: 608-266-1212

LCDP Executive Board Officers

Co-Chairs: Michael Smuksta & Peter Gorski

608-784-4219 / 312-231-9884

Vice Chair: Dave Wulf

608-799-8977

Treasurer: Diane Oldani Wulf

608-780-7007

Secretary: Avery Van Gaard

608-769-1034

At-Large Board Members:

Sara Bentley
Austin Goodrich
Obbie King
Peter Klitzke
Greg Schams

Past Chairs: Susan Goeldner, J.D. Wine

Call for Canvassers

The LCDP will be undertaking a major canvassing effort for 2018. This effort will be in conjunction with the DPW's statewide canvassing program.

We need volunteers to head up this important canvassing effort, leading into the all-important 2018 election cycle. Specifically, we need a Coordinator and three group leaders to be part of the canvassing team. The Coordinator will need to be trained on the VAN system, and a training session will be provided if needed.

The Coordinator will be responsible for getting turfs cut on VAN, getting packets to group leaders, and collecting packets for data entry. The group leaders will coordinate canvasses with their teams – one for West Salem, one for Onalaska, and one for La Crosse.

Please contact Michael Smuksta at mikejeromesmuksta@gmail.com or Peter Gorski at peter.k.gorski@gmail.com if you are able to help with this very important activity.

Some Facts On Your LCDP Membership

The best and easiest way to renew your La Crosse County Democratic Party membership is through your local county treasurer. Once you are a member of the county, you are automatically a member of the 3rd Congressional District (3rd CD) and the Democratic Party of Wisconsin (DPW). You need to submit membership dues only once a year to be a member of all three. It is unnecessary to submit duplicate memberships through the county and also through the state. If you have questions about your membership, please contact Diane Oldani Wulf, your current LCDP treasurer, at 608-780-7007, or at eap11111@aol.com.

We Welcome Your Input

Any thoughts or suggestions you may have for your Executive Board are greatly appreciated. You can express them by contacting any board member, either by phone or email.

Renewing Your Membership!

You can renew your membership using the membership form found at the end of this newsletter. If you are receiving this newsletter via mail, please look at your mailing label to see when your membership expires. Thank you for your continued support!

If you are receiving this newsletter in the mail and would prefer to receive it via email instead, please contact Diane Oldani Wulf at 608-780-7007 or eap11111@aol.com.



La Crosse County Democratic Party
 P. O. Box 1861
 La Crosse, WI 54602 -1861

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 La Crosse County Democratic Party,
 Diane Oldani Wulf, Treasurer.
 The contents herein are not authorized by
 any candidate or candidate's committee.

For the LCDP to do the activities we want to do this year, we are going to need funding and volunteers. The party is only as strong as the engagement of its members and friends. And that is where you come in. We need you to volunteer and contribute. Please consider a contribution of any amount to help us provide the activities and events and broaden our base to prepare for 2018.

You may send a contribution to:
 LCDP, P. O. Box 1861, La Crosse, WI,
 54602-1861.
 For online contributions go to our website
www.laxdems.com.

Thank you.

Become a member of the La Crosse County Democratic Party. Clip bottom of page and send to LCDP.

Received _____
 Renewal Month _____

Please check the dues structure that applies:

- \$10 Senior, Student, Limited Income
- \$25 General Membership (1 member)
- \$35 Pairs (up to two members)
- \$45 yearly Activist (up to 3 members)
- \$75 yearly (family)
- \$120 Supporting Membership
- \$240 Friend
- \$600 Patron

I would like to support the LCDP with a donation of \$ _____

Total Amount Paid \$ _____

Make checks payable to:
 La Crosse County Democratic Party
 P. O. Box 1861
 La Crosse, WI 54602-1861

You may also donate online: www.laxdems.com.
 Authorized and paid for by the La Crosse County Democratic Party, Diane Oldani Wulf, Treasurer

Name(s) _____
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Contributions are not tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. Your contribution may be used in connection with federal elections and is subject to the limitations and prohibitions of the Federal Election Campaign Act.

*Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

I recommend contacting as a possible member:
 Name _____
 Phone _____
 Email _____