California Green Party Calls For Sweeping State-wide Campaign Finance Reform

Official Statement from the Green Party Of the State of California

Greens cite need for state campaign reform after the conviction of two San Diego councilmen for 'nuke' contributions

SAN DIEGO - The conviction of San Diego council members this week for trading favors for campaign contributions from special interests should ignite renewed public concern regarding immediate campaign reform, said the Green Party of California Wednesday.

The Green Party - whose candidates do not accept contributions from business groups or corporations - has long advocated public financing of elections, as well as limits on campaign spending as a way of reducing the influence of business interests, and empowering the public interest in the election process.

Both the Republican and Democratic parties have resisted such changes. In San Diego Monday, acting mayor Michael Zucchet and city councilman Ralph Inzunza were convicted of doing what elected officials from the Democratic and Republican parties do every day - accept money from business interests.

Each received $23,000 contributions from the owner of "Cheetahs Totally Nude club" and in exchange agreed to work toward easing a city law that prohibits nude dancers from the owner's Grove entrance to San Diego. "It's a sad fact that our politicians are, as many say, the best that money can buy," said Stuart Bechman, a Southern California GPCA spokesperson.

"There is nothing in this case in San Diego that is really any different than what happens on a daily basis in the state Legislature or in local elected bodies. Special interest money is bribery," said Beth Moore Haines, the Nevada City GPCA spokesperson.

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"It's a sad fact that our politicians are, as many say, the best that money can buy," said Stuart Bechman, a Southern California GPCA spokesperson. "Campaign financing laws must change before the citizenry completely tunes-out of the electoral process. This is a reform that is long past due as evidenced by the unfolding events in San Diego."

It was a 3 day weekend filled with fun, family and friends as the Green Party sponsored a Convergence at the Bohemian Grove.

"Convergence at the Bohemian Grove" is an annual two-week encampment by ritually burning the "Dull Cares of the Marketplace" at their 40-foot owl shaped altar.

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Covengers at Bohemian Grove

Continued From Page 1

I am a Green because...

I'm a Green, because I believe that working within the Democratic Party to reform it is futile - but not because it is irredeemable, per se. Just a portion of it... but that portion, unfortunately, is the tail wagging the dog.

At the same time, I think it is extraordinarily silly to say, "the Democratic Party IS the problem". The problem is the domination of our entire political system by corporate/commercial interests - instead of the interests of the average person (and the planet/other living beings we share it with). This domination prevails, to a greater or lesser degree depending on the the area and level, from the President and Congress on down to non-partisan local government offices (witness San Diego) - and the Democratic Party's dysfunctionality is a "manifestation of this"; it is a symptom, not a cause.

The problem is "not" the elements of the duopoly, it is not "The Democrats" or "The Republicans". It is the self-interest of the corporate/commercial elites running this country that leaves them blind to the long-term implications of their actions for the welfare of humanity and the planet as a whole. It is the arrogance and fear that drive them to do anything in their power (quite considerable) to crush and suppress anything which threatens to disrupt the status quo.

It is also the shared blindness of well meaning people in power everywhere, who simply cannot see their way to a solution to the problems we are confronting, who are convinced by realpolitick and experience that, even in the face of total disaster, the ones we protest, the positive messages and interactions over the weekend are recognized for what they are... it's a chance to understand them on a more human level.

The Democratic Party can and will continue to shed a light on the social barrier that divides our thought as a nation from the ones we protest, the positive messages and interactions over the weekend are recognized for what they are... it's a chance to understand them on a more human level.

The good news is that the Democratic Party is not irredeemable, because it doesn't exist, per se: it is an agglomeration of people who share (relatively) similar beliefs (witness constant party line votes in the California Legislature on real issues of substance), but who are forced to co-habitate with powerful counter-forces that control enough of the political purse strings and media's spotlight (and the ones who control the country's military might, political purse strings and media's spotlight (and dark places).

And as a protest site at the end of a two lane road into the redwoods of Northern California, even with the conspicuous police presence, many people who came voiced the same surprise at how inti- mate this encounter positions the demonstrators and some of the most powerful men in the world. It was likened by some as watching the Wizard of Oz enter his dear closet.

Perhaps next year we will call our event the Convergence at Oz.

Don Eichellerber lives in San Francisco and is active with the SFGP local. He helped in founding the state Green Party and is Co-Convenor of Green Party of California Green Issues Working Group.
Proposal: Lowering the GPA Voting Thresholds

By Cat Woods - delivered at the 5/22/05 GPA plenary in Sylmar, Ca.

Lowering voting thresholds is not about destroying consensus. I don’t propose parliamentary procedure for the GP, and I am aware that there are valuable aspects of current process we need to preserve. Yet many people condemn parliamentary procedure without knowing the first thing about it. It also has some features that are valuable. In the 17th century, the invention of parliamentary procedure enabled British parliament to arrive at a “common will” and to keep the king in check. If they had used supermajority voting, they would have been able to do more and to enforce their wishes. If they had used supermajority voting, thresholds they would have gone to much earlier and would have achieved many goals. The relative democracy of different voting methods has been studied exhaustively. There are objective fair criteria used to rate the relative democracy of decision-making processes. IRV rates well because of how it seeks majority opinion from plurality. Supermajority thresholds do not rate as fair or democratic at all. Democracies use them for Constitutional changes because, in those cases, the default has already been arrived at democratically.

What a 2/3 threshold means is that a “no” vote counts twice as much as a “yes” vote. An 80% threshold means that a “no” vote counts four times as much as a “yes” vote. This is only justified in situations where the default situation is much more preferable to the proposal. We realize this implicitly when we use IRV for candidate elections. We don’t require one candidate to get four times as many votes as another candidate, because the candidates deserve an equal chance at election. The question is: which situations are analogous to a candidate election and which situations demand a supermajority advantage for the default?

Supermajority voting thresholds are appropriate for platform planks and any amendment that overturns standing policy. Since these are rarely urgent, the demanding process can also help improve the quality of proposals.

A democratic process is appropriate whenever the pro & con positions are roughly equal in standing and when a timely decision is required. In a political party there are situations where no action is much worse than imperfect action.

The recent Treasurer nomination was a case in point. After much planning, we ended up in violation of our own bylaws because we could not get 2/3 agreement on any method. Neither faction had enough incentive to support one of the many compromises, because both knew they had enough votes to block passage. This did not serve consensus.

Ethics list. ©2005 C. Woods. Used by permission.

Tulare Greens Stand Firm For Constitutional Rights

By David Silva, Tulare Greens

Last November, 2004 the local Target store at the Tulare County seat, the city of Visalia, at Packwood Creek denied access to any of their property, entrance ways, parking lots or other stores by denying the Salvation Army or anyone access to Christmas Shoppers in the public commons as defined by Chief Justice Rehnquist in the Pruneyard decision. They made a determination based on a suit by their parent company Dayton Hudson Corporation, a Minnesota Corporation, on behalf of its unincorporated Target Stores Division. The case against the Salvation Army of Church of Soldiers of the Cross of Christ of the State of California was filed in Superior Court in the County of Los Angeles. The Salvation Army told Target Executives and lawyers that they would not contest and would not show for the hearing. The Target parent company also never showed but has been using their (Proposed) Revised Judgement Case No BC 025473 as if it had been decided against the Salvation Army to scare away all comers. After reading of this face in the papers the Green Party of Tulare County determined to challenge their outwardish position.

We showed up in the rain as six disabled veterans and an elderly woman to register voters despite Target's claims. We had for warned the Visalia Police of our action and requested protection if Target's Security thugs were to try to force us out from in front of their doors. This approach for the delivery of ‘Tresspass Papers” by the Target Management under the condition we go into negotiation. The Girl Scout Director in Fresno, a Shane Bernet. He did. He gave us case after case that did not apply and could not provide us with any proof that the Pruneyard Decision had been abolished. Their tactic was to provide us with all but one bogus case per month. It was winter and we were ready to re-group and re-organize anyway. We never specifically told them what they had won if they would into court. Next Christmas we imagine they will be allowed if they come and show us to fight for them.

Come the 4th of July and we again planned to Register Voters in front of this Target Store. We had gotten commitments from the Republican Congressman, Devin Nunes, that if we got in legal trouble they would help us with legal matters. We got commitments from the Democrat Party that we would have access to their volunteers should we enter into a protracted struggle. As the fourth approached we did the courteous thing and let them know we were coming. Once again they said we could not. Once again we said we must certainly could. And we did.

We showed up on the 2nd of July and not knowing the Press was present. This approach for the delivery of ‘Tresspass Papers” by the Target Management was rough and rude and crude. This gave our articles in the local papers making Target look silly more once. Even former Governor Davis Franco called the Supreme Court “bullshit” and the California Penal Code “bullshit”. After the press announced their presence the team of managers and security guards ran into the building and never came out again. Then of the 4th of July we showed up again and the local ABC affiliate was waiting outside trying to get management to come out. They never did. We as the Voter Registration Work Group will be in Porterville at Target on the 10th of July.

The Green Party Voter Registration Working Group are not the first unwelcomers “trespassers” we learned from the low level employees at Target before we as a family of ducks had returned to Packwood Creek. (See Photo) NATURALLY, the Target Management called the Visalia Police on these creatures and the Police reported it to the proper authorities but Target was ordered by the courts to let them stay. So we had great company and a great time. Many passers by were very glad that we were there because it seems none of them knew of the impending August 15th mail in ballot that would be tried in our county for the first time. We regressed and said there is no problem whatever with 25% defeated 75%. The minority report option preserves the pro- phetic voice of minorities without turning that into minority rule.

What tends to happen in a consensus process or supermajority organization is that clinques form in order to get things done. The members of these cliques do a lot of gate-keeping to protect the basic functionality of the group and eventually become rigid and domineering. Democratic process opens things up and makes it much safer to have full participation, because the group has less risk of being manipulated by someone who happened to get through the gate.

Anyone who is interested in continuing this dialogue and drafting a report comparing group processes, please join the Internal Democracy & Ethics list. ©2005 C. Woods. Used by permission.

Local Greens Find Success in Battle with Target Stores for Right to Register Voters on Site

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By Linda Piera-Avila — Los Angeles Greens

As environmental concerns increasingly demand our collective attention, so Earth Day serves as an ever-evocative anchor, convoking with us the need to address our first Green key value, ecological wisdom. To observe Earth Day this year, we Los Angeles Greens hosted Rex Weyler, co-founder of Greenpeace International and author of a new book recounting the organization’s illustrious history.

Mr. Weyler honed us with his stories, his wisdom, his humor and his very warm presence on April 20, 2005, at the Peace Center in Los Angeles. Our executive committee, both excited and humbled to be organizing for this event, put their “all” into preparations. We saw the fruits of our labors as the audience in the rather small conference area swelled to standing room only! Videographers and audiographers recorded the event for others to experience later and for our archives. An International Studies class attended as part of their course.

This man, along with his colleagues, literally changed history and the world when, armed with cameras, media skills and uncommon courage, they challenged the status quo and took a stand for the environment, for the wildlife that calls the planet home, and for peace. Ecology is now part of the common lexicon and society’s consciousness is more evolved thanks to their efforts.

This intrepid soul lived in Midland, Texas for a while as a youth and even attended school with the future first lady Laura Bush! Subsequently, Rex discovered the Beat writers at City Lights Book Store in San Francisco, joined the Vietnam War draft resisters movement (taking up residence in British Columbia) and left engineering school to pursue journalism. Indeed, Rex received a Pulitzer Prize nomination for his Native American history, “Blood of the Land,” and his book “Chop Wood, Carry Water” was on the best American history, “Blood of the Land,” and his book “Chop Wood, Carry Water” was on the best

Editor’s Note: Marla was an active member of the Green Party of California and was a frequent participant at state plenaries as well as serving as a campaign aide to Medea Benjamin in her run for the US Senate in 2000. This article edited for length.

Just about every day we hear of bombs going off in Iraq, and perhaps we pause for a moment and think what a tragedy it is, and then we go back to our daily routine. But when someone close to you is killed by one of those bombs, the world stops spinning.

On Saturday April 16, our colleague and friend, 28-year-old Marla Ruzicka of Lakeport, California, was killed when a car bomb exploded on the streets of Baghdad. We still don’t know the exact details of her death, which makes it all that much harder to deal with the utter shock of losing this bright, shining light whose work focused on trying to bring some compassion into the middle of a war zone.

Marla was working for a humanitarian organization she founded called CIVIC (Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict), which documents cases of innocent civilians hurt by war. Marla and numerous other volunteers would go door-to-door interviewing families who had lost loved ones or had their property destroyed by the fighting. She would then take this information back to Washington and lobby for reparations for the victims.

A case in point, taken from Marla’s own journal, as published November 6, 2003 on AlterNet:

“On the 24th of October, former teacher Mohammad Kadhum Mansoor, 59, and his wife, Hamdia Radhi Kadhum, 45, were traveling with their three daughters — Beraa, 21, Fatima, 8, and Ayat, 5 years old — when they were tragically run over by an American tank. "A grenade was thrown at the tank, causing it to lose control and veer onto the highway, over the family’s small Volkswagen. Mohammad and Hamdia were killed instantly, orphaning the three girls in the backseat. The girls survived, but with broken and fractured bodies. We are not sure of Ayat’s fate; her backbone is broken. "CIVIC staff member Faiz Al Salaam monitors the girls’ condition each day. Nobody in the military or the U.S. Army has visited them, nor has anyone offered to help this very poor family.”

Marla first came to the Global Exchange office when she was still in high school in Lakeport. She had heard a talk by one of staff members about Global Exchange’s work building people-to-people ties around the world and she wanted to do something to help. She was a quick study and took to the work with a passion and energy that were inspiring to us older activists. She later chose a college (Friends World College) that allowed her to travel to many countries and learn from diverse cultures. She quickly develop “big love”-love of the human race, in all its joy, frailties and exotic permutations.

Marla worked with AIDS victims in Zimbabwe, refugees in Palestine, campesinos in Nicaragua. Following the US invasion of Afghanistan, Marla traveled to Afghanistan with a Global Exchange delegation and she was so moved by the plight of the Afghan victims that she dedicated the rest of her too short life to helping innocent victims of war. She was on a similar mission in Iraq when she met with her untimely death.

Marla was once asked by a San Francisco Chronicle reporter if she would ever consider doing

The LA Greens Earth Day Event a Model For Green Outreach

Rex Weyler, founding member of GreenPeace offered stories and inspiration for a green future to a full house that included many visitors.

Marla Ruzicka, above left, was cut down in the youth of her activist life by a car bomb in Bagdad.

Marla Ruzicka, above right, is the author of “Blood of the Land” and interned at the U.S. Army's Fort Bragg - a history of American involvement in this country.

Remembering a Friend Killed in Iraq, Marla Ruzicka

by Kevin Dunaher and Medea Benjamin

Editor’s Note: Marla was an active member of the Green Party of California and was a frequent participant at state plenaries as well as serving as a campaign aide to Medea Benjamin in her run for the US Senate in 2000. This article edited for length.

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By Béa Tiritilli and Don Boring

Minuteman leader Jim Gilchrist and former Republican congressman "B-1 Bob" Dornan are two of the reasons Béa Tiritilli finds the 48th congressional district race so exciting. Although she’s the only Green running, she’s not the only non-Republican. Dornan broke ranks with his party in July to state he will vote against President Bush to become the American Independent candidate in this Orange County district.

The seat caught Tiritilli’s interest in November 2004, when she went to the polls disappointed that no Greens had bothered to contest Republican Christopher Cox’s 16-year tenure. She was aware that no one, including any local Democrat, stood much of a chance against a Republican incumbent in one of the country’s most conservative districts (50% Rep., 25% Dem., 25% undecided or other). Busy raising children, Tiritilli had been an AWOL Green for a few years after several years as an activist; but with the kids nearly ready for school, she thought she might have enough freedom to get involved again. Tiritilli has been intensely frustrated with the extremely conservative, war-driven deviation our country has taken the last few years, and she feels determined to be a positive force for peaceful change.

A few months ago, she was elected to fill a vacant GP Orange County council seat, and was making plans to run against Cox in November 2006. To Tiritilli’s surprise last spring, President Bush appointed Cox to head the SEC. His confirmation is expected before summer ends, at which point Gov. Schwarzenegger will probably decide whether to fill the seat. Although the election may coincide with that already planned for November, it will likely happen later. This has put Tiritilli’s leisurely campaign plans on the fast track. She may have as little as 48 hours to gather signatures and file her campaign paperwork after the election is called.

Once elected to congress, Tiritilli’s number-one priority will be to convince her coworkers in Congress to bring our troops home from our ill-justified war with Iraq. Number two: reduce America’s dependence on fossil fuels, particularly oil. In addition to polluting our air with carcinogens, our oil obsession has spawned two wars and led many in power to justify disturbing the balance of nature in ANWR.

With Gilchrist likely to run, one hot topic of this campaign will be undocumented immigration. Tiritilli firmly agrees we need to curb undocumented immigration, which leads to the tragic deaths of hundreds near our borders, especially the Mexican border. With Ted Kennedy and John McCain promoting bipartisan work-visa legislation for immigrants I might find ways to make a difference in Congress.

Tiritilli proposes phasing out allinternational free-trade agreements in favor of what she prefers to term the “International Fair Trade Treaty.”

Working in conjunction with the international community, this treaty calls for a ban on trade with any company that has unethical work standards. Trade won’t be authorized with businesses that: employ forced or child labor; have unsafe work conditions; produce environmentally unsustainable goods; and/or do not pay a living wage. Tiritilli also believes we should forgive the debts of any impoverished nation which agrees to invest in ethical job growth and sustainable business practices. She firmly believes that better jobs in foreign countries will reduce the economic desperation that leads to dangerous border crossings.

Because she believes in decentralizing government whenever it dictates, she wants to keep local control to our schools. Bush’s No Child Left Untested Act is government bureaucracy run amok. Tiritilli has been a public schoolteacher for more than a decade, and “in that time I can’t recall seeing legislation that was a greater hardship on schools,” she said. “This act presumes that America’s millions of children fit into the same one-test-assesses-all pattern. The needs of all-ages students, those who have English as a second language, and special education students, for example, are much different than those of a typical student (if such a student exists). Expecting all students to thrive under the same curriculum standards is like expecting all human beings to adopt the same personality. It can’t and shouldn’t happen.”

As a federal congresswoman from California, Tiritilli will write legislation on medical marijuana that recognizes and respects laws created in individual states, including ours. Further, she declares, "I support freedom of choice on individual liberties in general.”

Béa Tiritilli considers herself a Christian who believes in firmly the separation of church and state, and she strongly believes it’s unfair for any religion to dictate its views on such issues as gay marriage, abortion, and federal stem-cell research to the general public; thus, she’s in favor of legalizing all three.

There are dozens of other issues pertinent to this campaign. For more information, please visit my web site at http://www.beatiritilli.us.

Béa Tiritilli (above) is running for the Green in the 48th.

Although Tiritilli believes Gilchrist and Dornan (who is staunchly pro-military and anti-homosexual) would be her most interesting opponents in a debate, they won’t be the only ones. Democrat John Graham and Republicans Marilyn Brewer and John Campbell have declared they will run. Brewer and Campbell have already amassed at least $150,000 each in their war chests, with Campbell saying publicly that he hopes to raise a million dollars for campaign for the seat.

Some may wonder why Béa’s bothering to run in a district that is less than 1% registered Green. But she believes partisan campaigns are one way to spread the message of nonviolence, social justice, ecological wisdom, and other Green values. Whether she wins or loses, she is determined that at the end of this campaign there will be many more Greens registered to vote in Orange County and that the Green’s will become a force to be reckoned with on the regional scene.

Contribute
Contributions to Béa’s Campaign May be Sent to: P.O. Box 11385, Santa Ana, CA 92711
Contribute
Contributions of $100 or more must include your name, address and phone, and your occupation and name of employer.

Greens See Growing Pains at the State Plenary

The fact that GDI proposals received nearly a 2/3 approval vote across the board in Sylmar means that the issues represented in these propos-
als are important to a great number of Greens in California.

Despite the failure of the 3 proposals as amended at the national meeting in Tulsa, the voices of the GDI movement probably not stop calling for a strong and independent Green Party. And all Greens will continue to be concerned with the best means of representing individual states at both the Presidential nominating convention and the National General Meetings. This is a growth issue and no easy answer will be available till all states have obtained ballot status and comply with other demands of the FEC. The Green Party is less than 20 years old in the US and as a teenager is experiencing growing pains. Due diligence and care by all in seeing the party through this difficult time will pay dividends throughout the life of the party. And all signs point to a leadership and a constituency that’s up to the challenge.

By Don Boring

The process and the outcome of the May 21-22nd statewide quarterly Green convention in California (known as the Plenary) proved that the Green Party is at once a vital group, yet struggling with defining democracy and consensus for Greens in the 21st Century.

It is the credit of the California Green Party that they are striving to wrestle with these issues and should not be seen as a sign of impending doom, but of forthcoming growth.

GDI Proposals

GDI addresses questions that answered will help to define the Greens as a vibrant and distinct alternative to the corporate political parties. Reading through their question at their website: http://www.greens4democracy.net/

GDI has been about setting out viable methods for Greens to be represented in a national body during the transition phase from some states’ having official Green Party status, to a time when all states will be registered parties with their respective Secretaries of State.

Make no mistake that this is a difficult time, but with the open minded ‘Future Focus’ of the Green rank and file and their elected representatives we will most probably see this process through to fruition. No matter a person’s opinion of the GDI proposals, a vibrant future for the Green Party as a strong voice in partisan politics is a vision that all members can appreciate.

Peter Camejo is seen working the base of his constituency for GDI at the May 21-22nd Plenary in Sylmar, CA. While all three proposals past with at least 60% of the delegate vote, the proposals failed in Tulsa.
By Mike Feinstein, Los Angeles County

If the Green Party is going to truly become a significant player in U.S. politics, its ability to win urban, multi-cultural seats is one of the key political tests it must pass. The recent Oakland District Two City Council campaign of Aimee Allison gives much hope for just that.

The Opportunity

Aimee Allison’s race – and the opportunity to succeed in it -- came about unexpectedly, as did even her own entry as a Green, when incumbent Democrat Danny Wan resigned in January and a May 17th special election was called. Amidst the immediate aftermath, Ward-5, Wan’s chief staff aide, Patricia Kernighan announced her intentions to run for the seat, and Mayor Jerry Brown and the local Democratic establishment quickly got behind her.

Enter Allison, 35, an African American activist and Stanford graduate who made national news in 1991 when, as a medic in an Army Reserve unit that was re-deployed to Saudi Arabia, she took a public stand against the Persian Gulf War, and forced the Army to award her an honorable discharge as a conscientious objector.

With her political affiliation registered as ‘decline-to-stated’ when the special election was called, Allison met with a number of Oakland progressive community leaders, who were searching for a candidate they could support, amidst the increasingly disappointing performance of Mayor Brown and his local Democratic machine.

One of those leaders was Wilson Riles, Jr., a long-time African-American community leader who had ran against Brown for Mayor in 2002, and who had earlier served three terms on the Oakland City Council. He brought together the progressive (former Congressmember) Ron Dellums camp, Riles publicly switched his registration to Green after that campaign, in part a result of the ‘level of Green-ness’ that had, as well as the sweat equity Oakland Greens put in for progressive causes over the years.

Now it was his turn to convince Allison, which he and other progressive leaders did.

Oakland’s District Two represents the Grand Lake area, along with the Eastlake, San Antonio, and Chinatown neighborhoods. The district’s diversity is reflected by streets with beautifully restored Victorians and California bungalows, located nearby rundown apartment buildings and street crime.

In the 1990s, the district was intentionally realigned as an “Asian district”, putting Chinatown together with Vietnamese and Southeast Asian neighborhoods. More recently, the district has been characterized as “lavender”, because of the number of gays and lesbians that have moved into neighborhoods near Park Boulevard, and Lake Shore and Grand Avenues.

Out of 27,000 registered voters in District Two, approximately 800 are registered Green. Many others are progressive and share Green values. Allison’s campaign sought to reach those voters, irrespective of their party affiliation.

“It’s much easier to get them to vote for Aimee than it is to get them to change their registration to Green,” said Ray Tobey, one of Allison’s campaign staffers. “Let’s get them to vote for Aimee first. If they’re led for the next two years by a Green sitting on their city council, they’ll change their mind about the Green Party.”

The Issues

An exceptional and articulate orator with a winning smile, athletic figure and energetic manner, Allison campaigned on four main issues – increased revenue sharing by Oakland’s Port with the city, promoting affordable housing and tenants rights, regaining control of the public schools and increasing school programs, and limiting recruitment on local high school campuses.

Unlike the West Coast’s other major ports - Seattle and Vancouver – Oakland receives little revenue from its Port. Allison argued that from a regional economic development perspective, the Port is a regional economic resource and should be treated as such, especially since Oakland’s Mayor appoints the Port’s Board of Directors. Increased revenue, she advocated, could be used to fund schools and needed social programs. Even the Port’s International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 supported this kind of independent thinking, backing a Green for the first time ever when they voted to endorse Allison.

On housing, in contrast to Mayor Brown’s attempts to gentrify Downtown Oakland through the introduction of high-end condominiums, Allison argued for stronger inclusionary affordable housing policies and strengthening rent control. Two years ago earlier, local tenants won a huge victory with the passage of a ballot measure called “Just Cause Eviction”. This time, both Just Cause Oakland and the Oakland Tenants Union endorsed Allison.

With Oakland’s school system in disarray, the Oakland Teacher’s Association also endorsed Allison, pointing to her support of the union’s efforts to stop school closures and improve teacher’s benefits. Said one union leader, Allison “is the independent voice we need in city government to help us fight Schwarzenegger’s attempts to dismantle public education in Oakland.

With nine candidates in the race, getting media coverage was challenging. But the campaign made headway, emphasizing Allison’s personal experience as a war resister and conscientious objector. This served to reinforce the perception of her integrity, strength of character, passion of her convictions to District voters, bolstering her credibility in the process. According to the campaign media coordinator Forrest Hill, “our good press was the result of this emphasis, combined with frequent, well-written press releases and op-eds and letters to the editor to several Bay Area newspapers from Allison and supporters.”

The Election

The election itself was conducted entirely by postal mail, with voting commencing 30 days prior to the official May 17th election date. Although Oakland voters passed a charter amendment in 2000 to fill City Council vacancies that allows the use of Instant Run-Off Voting (IRV) “to the greatest extent feasible”, the City Council did not vote to use it for District Two.

In opposing IRV, some Councilmembers said it would be “too difficult for immigrant voters to understand.” This drew a quick response from Green Matt Gonzalez, who had endorsed Allison, and the former President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, had helped bring IRV to San Francisco. “I think it’s condescending to say that foreign-born people are incapable of ranking their choices.”

Oakland also faced a technical problem (as do nearby Berkeley and San Leandro, which also have adopted IRV for local elections) – Alameda County voting machines are not programmed to use IRV and Diebold, r manufacturer, has not been willing to write the needed new code, even though it is not a technically difficult task. As a result, the election was held without IRV, or even a traditional two candidate run-off, meaning the winner could likely end up with 30% of the vote of less. This made it even more challenging for Allison, because the number of left-leaning candidates meant that share of the vote would be spread thin.

By Election Day, the campaign had grown dramatically and claimed more than three hundred volunteers. Allison led the way, spending more than two hundred hours walking precincts herself in the District. The campaign also raised $30,000 from small donations, enough to hire staff and produce attractive literature, signs and targeted direct mail.

When the final results came in, Allison finished fourth with 14.2% of the vote. This was impressive because it not only came amidst the split of the left vote in the absence of IRV, but also because Allison’s campaign grew and peaked at the end, after many voters had already cast their ballots in the month-long voting period. Kernighan won, but received only 28.8%, meaning she’ll face re-election in June 2006 with the knowledge that over 70% of voters did not vote for her, despite the fact that she greatly outspent all competitors, including more than three times what Allison’s campaign did.

The Future

Keeping her options open for 2006, Allison has indicated that this Special Election may have been the first, but not the last time she will run. Observed Hill, “this was a historic campaign. We took a candidate that was mostly known only among activists and in a few months, made her a house hold name in the community. People are now asking Aimee to come to City Council meetings and speak on behalf of their issues. When someone offers something historically different, it takes time. But time is on our side. We are all excited about 2006 and beyond.”

Aimee Allison is a 35-year old biracial businesswoman and mother raised in Antioch, California. She holds a BA in History and an MA in Education from Stanford, and has lived in Oakland since 1991. She took time out of her professional duties with non-profit groups to run for City Council.

Aimee Allison Campaign Takes the Oakland Greens to New Level

Greens mount successful ‘high profile’ campaign in the District Two Council Campaign, Gaining Wide Support
Are Your Core Green Issues Being Held Hostage by the Corporate Media?

By Nancy Doyle

Editor’s Note: Nancy Doyle is founder of the “Free Media Greens,” a media reform caucus of the Green Party of Minnesota which can be visited on-line at http://www.mngreens.org/ She may be contacted at: nancyjdoyle@yahoo.com

White House press releases and consumer trivia—these are the tools we’re given to make some of the most important decisions governing the world today. Not vibrant debate, not minority viewpoints, but which of the best barbecue grill? Which rock stars’ four favorite hotels? Which basketball celebrity injured his knee? This is the problem with the media.

The media are important because we are making decisions in this country that matter a lot, not only to us, but to people all around the world—people who don’t speak English and can’t navigate journalistic competence. United States of America mean very literally life and death.

Thus, if you are truly committed to serving the public rather than any other economic model devised by mankind. Thus, if you are committed to building policy that is centered around market economics . . . Market systems, far from being the bane of consumers, have unquestionably produced more consumer welfare than any other economic model devised by mankind.

Taking back the media

Change number one: Advocate for a national media policy that truly serves the public interest.

It’s an old story—this “capturing” of a federal agency for corporate benefit. According to the Center for Public Integrity, in the last eight years FCC commissioners and staff have received almost $2.8 million in travel and entertainment expenses, mainly from the telecommunications and broadcast industries it’s supposed to regulate. They received 330 trips to Las Vegas alone.

Even media professionals agree and the FCC’s implementation of that policy overwhelmingly favor Big Media corporations at the expense of the people and our democratic system. That means corporate consolidation, but not differences independent voices, rubber-stamping of the status quo—trends that few citizens want to see continue.

How we got here

Our policy approach to media in this country was put on paper in the late 1920s when people were trying to figure out what to do with this new medium called radio. Commercial broadcasters wanted it, but many warned that freedom of the press was impossible as long as broadcasting was under intellectual John Dewey called “controlled capitalist-inclined control.”

In a nod to citizens’ ownership of the airwaves, Congress created the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to regulate them according to the public interest.” Policy was heavily influenced by commercial broadcasters who made sure that radio policy primarily supported a commercialization of the medium.

In decades since, corporate interests have remained at the reins. Consolidation sped up under Reagan and the first George Bush. In the corporate-friendly Telecommunications Act of 1996, the term “public interest” appeared 112 times.

Because early makers of media policy never said what they meant by the term “public interest,” there’s been much confusion and contradiction. Under current changes to the FCC, Colin Powell’s son Michael, has decided it means the FCC helps the media industry make lots of money.

In this environment, we can no more ask NBC to stop trying to figure out what to do with this new medium called radio than ask McDonald’s to serve nutritious meals. It’s a matter of money. In a 2001 speech, Powell addressed the delicate question himself, saying:

“I am committed to building policy that is centered around market economics . . . Market systems, far from being the bane of consumers, have unquestionably produced more consumer welfare than any other economic model devised by mankind. Thus, if you are truly committed to serving the public interest, bet on a winner and bet on market policy.”

“It is time for Greens To Come to the Aid Of Their Party!”

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The Green Party of the State of California is working hard to promote candidates and provide financial support to campaigns on the local and regional level that we feel we have a chance of winning, or in which we feel we can make a spectacular showing in the media. Further, we are increasing our ability to speak truth to power, provide training programs for candidates and managers across the state and gaining media access through a viable network of spokespersons and a press agent for the party. To do this, and to fulfill our dreams of a permanent office in our state capital, we are looking for people who can step up and become Monthly Sustainers to the Green Party of CA. And as your added benefit, you will receive a free subscription to the GREEN FOCUS newspaper.

We invite you to fill out the form below and help grow the party in a meaningful way. Today!