



WDRC Newsletter

Military Escalation in Afghanistan Reps. Lee, McGovern, Jones and Colleagues ask Speaker for Up-Or- Down Vote

Washington, DC – Representatives Barbara Lee (D-CA), James McGovern (D-MA), and Walter Jones (R-NC) joined a bipartisan group of Members in delivering a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi requesting that Members of the House are provided the opportunity for a separate debate and up-or-down vote on the President's proposal to escalate the United States military presence in Afghanistan.

"President Obama spent three months reviewing and deliberating United States strategy in Afghanistan. At



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Progressives and the Democratic Party

The January 28 Wellstone Club Meeting will feature a roundtable discussion on an assessment of the first year of the Obama administration, the always perplexing question of the relationship of progressives to the Democratic Party, and what the future should hold for the club.

Panelists will be club members and the floor will be open for discussion and questions.

A useful view of the issues involved in this complex discussion is contained in a posting by Chris Bowers from Open Left (*reprinted below*).

We hope you will attend and participate in this important meeting.

A fifth major lesson of 2009: Center-left Disagreement is essential to Center-left Governance

by Chris Bowers

The co-directors of the Campaign for America's Future have four great lessons for progressives to learn from the frustrations of 2009 <www.ourfuture.org/blog-entry/2010010104/learning-frustrations-2009> . Here are the lessons summarized in the form of bullet points:

- Change is brutal, and will always be resisted by powerful entrenched forces.
- No matter how popular a reform idea is, like the public option, it still faces the buzz-saw of the United States Senate.
- Progressives cannot wash their hands of the political process. We have to organize more, independent of the political parties.
- This is still the best opportunity in 30 years for progressive reform.

If there is no one in the center-left coalition willing to accept more incremental progressive change, then progressive change is never going to happen at all.

I agree with all these lessons.

I would add a fifth major lesson: stop expecting, or even hoping, for the center-left coalition to agree with itself. The longstanding internal argument within the center-left coalition over whether the change on the table goes far enough or not is an essential part of the process to any progressive change happening at all. Without that disagreement, progressive governance of any sort would be impossible:

Without people on the left arguing that the coalition isn't going far enough in terms of candidate selection or legislative policy, then there would be no way to push candidates or legislative policy to the left. In order to continually make progressive ideas mainstream, you have to push the Overton window

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Join the California For Democracy Campaign Help Restore Democracy Rule in CA

The Wellstone Democratic Club has endorsed the California Democracy Act - one sentence that will change California history:

"All legislative actions on revenue and budget must be decided by a majority vote."

We hope you'll not only sign this important Petition, but also become a petition circulator. We cannot collect 1,300,000 signatures without YOUR HELP.

To become a petition circulator, you can contact any one of our

Alameda County Coordinating Committee members: Ruby Bernstein, Oakland, 510-655-2553; rubita7@sbc-global.net; Sharon Maldonado, Berkeley, 524-2316, maldonadosharon@att.net; Tom Shaw, Union City, dt_shaw@hotmail.com

If you can not attend the Club's January 28th meeting, but you want to get involved, (including learning to speak on the topic) please contact us via the committee members listed above or online at <www.trivalley-dems.com/CA4D.htm>.



The Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club (WDRRC) is composed of individuals working together to renew and invigorate the Democratic Party. **Our goals are to:**

- 1. BUILD A GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT** for progressive change.
- 2. TRANSFORM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY** to make it a consistent vehicle for the articulation and mobilization of populist and progressive values and political power; and
- 3. ELECT DEMOCRATS TO ALL OFFICES** up and down the ballot and end the right wing stranglehold of our government in Congress.

Check our website for further information:
www.wellstoneclub.org

Join Us!

If you share our passion for peace, freedom, civil liberties, racial and gender equality, a sustainable environment and economic justice, help us renew America's Democracy. **We meet every 4th Thursday of the month.**
info@wellstoneclub.org

The WDRRC Newsletter is published once a month and is put together by the Communications Committee.

Editors: **Vicki Cosgrove, Nancy Friedman, Jack Kurzweil, Judy Pope and Ces Rosales**

To send comments, articles or letters to the editors, contact communications@wellstoneclub.org

or snail mail to:
WDRRC Newsletter Committee
P.O. Box 65
Berkeley, CA 94701

Afghanistan Vote ...

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the very least, Congress owes our men and women in uniform an honest debate regarding the benefits, costs, affordability, and strategic importance of a military escalation," said Lee. "Our responsibility to ensure the U.S. is most effectively and sustainably combating terrorism around the globe will not be fulfilled by sidestepping this critical debate."

"President Obama's decision is a big deal, and Congress has a role to play," said Rep. McGovern. "We haven't had a full, meaningful debate about this critical issue in 8 years. Now is the time for Congress to act."

"Those of us who have signed this letter have differing views on how to move forward in Afghanistan," said Rep. Jones.

"I, for example, do not believe that 'doubling down' on the strategy of propping up the Karzai regime in Afghanistan is the correct strategy, but rather we should work with and through the tribal structures that have existed in the country for centuries. We can all, however, agree that this is an issue that deserves a debate. The American people deserve a debate on something that could so deeply affect their loved ones and their country."

The letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi expressed the urgency of holding such a vote prior to the deployment of additional troops to Afghanistan, or otherwise as soon as possible. It further reiterated the importance of Congress' role and responsibility in overseeing and providing for our nation's commitments while at war.

The text of the letter and list of co-signers follows:

December 18, 2009
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Madam Speaker:

We write to urge you to ensure the House will hold a separate debate and floor vote on the President's proposal to escalate the United States military presence in Afghanistan.

President Obama has estimated that the deployment of 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan will increase the military costs of the war by \$30 billion a year. Members may agree or disagree with the President's decision in pursuing a military escalation in Afghanistan, but we all appreciate your response to the President's announcement that "The American people and the Congress will now have an opportunity to fully examine this strategy."

At a time when the American economy continues to face enormous challenges and individuals across the country are struggling to get by, these costs are especially worthy of Congressional deliberation.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee
Congressman James P. McGovern
Congressman Walter B. Jones
Congresswoman Lynn C. Woolsey
Congressman Eric J. J. Massa
Congressman Fortney Pete Stark
Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva
Congressman Bob Filner
Congressman Keith Ellison



Congress's consideration of the President's revised policy in Afghanistan will be critical to reasserting the undisputed role and responsibility of the Legislative

Branch in overseeing and providing for our nation's commitments while at war. To that end, when the resources required for the proposed troop increase are brought to the floor for consideration, we believe it is vital that the House is provided an opportunity for a robust floor debate and up-or-down vote on the issue of a military escalation. Ideally, this should occur prior to the deployment of any additional troops to Afghanistan, or otherwise as soon as possible.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you to ensure Congress holds an honest and full debate regarding the benefits, costs, affordability, and strategic importance of a military escalation in Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Congressman José E. Serrano
Congressman Michael M. Honda
Congressman James P. Moran
Congressman Michael E. Capuano
Congresswoman Janice D. Schakowsky
Congressman Barney Frank
Congressman Peter A. DeFazio

Chris Bowers ...

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<www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overton_window> . In order to make legislative policy under a Democratic administration more left-wing, you need people demanding that it become more left-wing. If there is no left-wing criticism, of the actions of the center-left coalition, which in this country means the Democratic Party, then the conveyor belt of promoting left-wing ideas into the mainstream-much less into actual legislation, stops dead.

At the same time, if there is no one in the center-left coalition willing to accept more incremental progressive change, then progressive change is never going to happen at all. The federal government is simply never going to be as, much less more, left-wing than the country as a whole (much less the actual left-wing). Even in a representative democracy, the power and resources of status-quo and regressive institutions will always provide them with government disproportionate control of government at all levels. This power and resource imbalance will always render

governance relatively regressive compared to the country as a whole.

What this means for progressive governance is that we need people willing to accept, or even favor, partial, slow, incremental change. Even extremely partial, extremely slow, and extremely incremental change. Without that, no change will ever happen at all.

All of this makes ongoing, prominent, the center-left disagreement absolutely necessary to making progressive change happen within government.

Center-left unity would actually end any prospect for change, both in the short-term and the long-term, rather than

increase it. This is a basic principle for progressive governance that more people should learn, no matter which side of the center-left divide they fall on at any given time. It is interesting that former President Bill Clinton has long been one of the biggest proponents of understanding the need for center-left disagreement <www.openleft.com/diary/14682/democratic-presidents-need-space-on-the-left> , and perhaps explains quite a bit about his political career.

<www.openleft.com/diary/16800/fifth-major-lesson-of-2009-centerleft-disagreement-is-essential-to-centerleft-governance> Tue Jan 05, 2010

CALIFORNIA Fair ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN



**Come and Join Us for our
"Passion Raiser" for
Fair Elections that money can't buy!**

**Saturday, Feb 6, 2010, 1:00 - 3:00 pm
Oakland City Hall @ 14th St. and Broadway)**

Featuring: Senator Loni Hancock, author of the California Fair Elections Act; Assemblymember Nancy Skinner; State Senator Liz Figueroa (ret.); Michael Lighty, California Nurses Association; Trent Lange, Chair of Californians for Fair Elections

SB810 Single Payer Update

On January 11th, four buses hired by California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) traveled from around the Bay Area to Sacramento to support the annual healthcare students and professionals rally, led by a statewide medical students' group. Between 300-400 students assembled over the weekend to strengthen their organization and learn how to lobby for SB810, California's single payer bill. Those of us from CA School Employees Association (CSEA) and communities in Northern California matched them in numbers, and it was a spirited rally, with several WDRC members in attendance.

SB 810 will be voted out of the Senate Appropriations Committee by January 31 and will then be heard in the State Assembly.

To work on California's campaign to pass single payer health care legislation, contact Nancy Friedman (nmf123@pacbell.net). The WDRC Health Care Committee meets on the 3rd Monday of each month. *Join Us!*

Membership and the Endorsement Process

The Coordinating Committee anticipates that the Club will be considering endorsements of initiatives and candidates at the March and August club meetings.

Since IRV (Instant Runoff Voting) will be implemented for local races in this

election cycle, there will be no endorsements in local races in March. There will be a considerable number of initiatives that will require our attention. There also will be primary endorsements in Assembly and statewide primary races.

The August endorsement process will involve many local races as well as the General Election.

Please consult the By Laws section of the club website www.wellstoneclub.org for eligibility requirements for voting on these endorsements.

Oakland Community Meetings Bus Rapid Transit

Formal Presentation Questions / Comments

Tuesday, Jan 26 6PM – 8PM
Faith Presbyterian Church
430 49th St., Oakland

Wednesday, Jan 27th
Oakland City Hall
11AM – 1PM Hearing Room 2
5PM – 7PM Hearing Room 4

These are opportunities to hear and comment on the plans for Bus Rapid Transit in Oakland. Please take the opportunity to become informed.

National Women's Political Caucus, Dinner Meeting Series Monday February 1, 6 – 7:30 PM

Buttercup Grill, 229 Broadway at 3rd St
Oakland, CA 94607

The California Budget: Where Does the Money Come From and Where Does it Go?

**Presenter: Lenny Goldberg, Executive
Director, California Tax Reform Assn**

For more info: Ellen Augustine, 510-428-1832, ellenaugustine@earthlink.net;
Miriam Rokeach, 510-658-3805, miriamrokeach@gmail.com.



www.wellstoneclub.org

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Next WDRC Meeting

Thursday, January 28, 2010

6:45 PM – 9:00 PM

Humanist Hall

390 27th Street

(between Telegraph and Broadway)

Agenda

Progressives and the Democratic Party

A Club discussion on the role of progressives in
the era of President Obama

***Come and join us at 6PM for a pot luck!
GOOD FOOD! GREAT COMPANY!***

Sustain WDRC

Sign on to our Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT)

The Club has monthly expenses that need to be covered like Humanist Hall Rental, Website Maintenance, Postage for Mailing and Printing and Miscellaneous items. In addition, we need additional money to support and expand Club activities.

It's easy; just give a credit card number or voided check to our Club Treasurer, Dan Barki <treasurer@wellstoneclub.org> and let him know how much you want to contribute each month. That amount is drawn from your credit card or checking account. It's safe: an email or phone call to the Treasurer will immediately end your contribution at any time. And you never again have to worry about timely renewal; the monthly contribution pays for your membership.

Support US Now!