



Gettysburg Area DFA

Progressive Values/Fiscal Responsibility
DEMOCRACY for AMERICA

Energizing democracy
at the grass roots

June 2008

Iraq Veteran Against the War to Speak at Gettysburg Area DFA June Meet-up

—Sandra Mackie—

On Wednesday evening, June 4, Iraq Veteran Nick Morgan will come to Gettysburg from Annapolis, Maryland, to address "The Iraq Experience, A Veteran's View." Morgan served on active duty for 16 months including time served in Iraq from February 2004-February 2005 with the 1st Calvary Division, 45th Engineering Battalion out of Pennsylvania. After serving in the Army for 4 years and 3 months, Morgan left military service as a sergeant deeply concerned about the effect of the war on all its participants. He not only observed death and injury within his own unit while serving in Baghdad, but also lost a cousin who was killed while on a tour of duty in Iraq.

Nick Morgan is only 24 years old but since he became an active member of the Iraq Veterans Against the War he has been appointed the Mid Atlantic Regional Coordinator. He recently gave taped testimony for a Congressional hearing on the Iraq conflict.

DFA members are encouraged to bring guests to hear Morgan address several specific issues:

- the experience of the soldier on the ground in Iraq,
- the situation for the veteran when she/he returns home
- the financial costs to the US and the effect on social services.

The Meetup will begin at 7:00 p.m. but members are invited to join us at 6:30 for refreshments and a time to "Meet and Greet" the speaker in Valentine Hall at the Lutheran Theological Seminary on Seminary Ridge in Gettysburg.

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This, as we all know, is a critically important year for democracy in America. We need YOU:

- **To attend a Meet-up and bring two friends**
- **To attend monthly Issues and Action meetings and help guide DFA**
- **To write an article for the newsletter**
- **To join a DFA Task Force**
- **To get involved in whatever way seems right for you.**

Letter from the Chair

Friends,

First I want to thank you for your support and trust as I assume the chair of the Gettysburg Area DFA for its fourth year as a voice for progressives in Adams County. We've done a lot to strengthen the voice and presence of progressives in and around Gettysburg. One of our members at Issues & Actions on May 21 told us that he had learned an enormous amount on issues ranging from the Middle East to PA property taxes over the past three years.

DFA members volunteered to work on local, state, and national elections and helped to transform the Democratic Committee into a vibrant band of workers with enough resources to open a headquarters near the Gettysburg square from June to November in this critical election year. The grand opening will be held at the new facility on June 12 at 46 Chambersburg Street at 7 pm.

Members of the Gettysburg Area DFA will work closely with Democrats, but also with Republicans, Independents and Greens to "Take Back Our Country," the mission that started DFA. Our issue focus for 2008 is closely aligned with other DFA's all over the nation:

- Moving Toward Universal Health Care;
- Ending the War in Iraq and Preventing War on Iran;
- Stopping the Global Climate Crisis;
- Holding Government Accountable for Denying Americans True Democratic Values

Locally, we are in a unique position to sponsor programs and events that can draw people from all over the county and from all walks of life to shatter the myths that many Adams Countians may believe about these key issues. Many of our neighbors and people we know believe that:

- Any government-subsidized health care is "socialized medicine" and it won't work.
- The war in Iraq is being fought so we don't have to fight Al Qaeda on US soil.
- Global Warming is not a real threat, certainly not worth serious changes in lifestyle
- Pre-emptive wars are necessary to protect our security.

One of our election year goals is to become the Myth-Busters - and to protect our friends and neighbors from the "Swift-boating" that we know will show up on our local TV screens as the election heats up. Stay tuned...and be ready to show up and act out!

Elaine Jones



Iraq Task Force Delivers a Plan

—Alan Olson—

On May 1, the 5th anniversary of President Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech on an aircraft carrier, members of DFA's Iraq Task Force gathered at Rep. Todd Platts' office in Gettysburg to present him with a copy of the Responsible Plan to End the War in Iraq. The plan, prepared by Congressional candidates from more than a dozen states in cooperation with a group of retired military officers, calls upon the U.S. government to

- end U.S. Military Action in Iraq in an orderly way
- make full use of U.S. diplomatic power
- address humanitarian concerns
- restore our Constitution
- restore our military
- restore independence to the media
- create a new, U.S.-centered energy policy

The full document is available at www.ResponsiblePlan.org. For more information, you may contact Alan Olson at 642-8110 or AlanOlson@earthlink.net

Health Insurance Task Force Meets

—Ginny Ciliotta—

At the invitation of chairperson, Pat Hammann, seven members of this task force met on May 22nd at the Hammann residence (Hundred Fold Farm). Following discussion of the intricacies and pitfalls of our current health care system and the promise of the Single Payer Universal Healthcare plan under consideration in Pennsylvania (SB 300 and HB 1660 of 2007), the group decided on the following action plan: draft a letter to send to Adams County businesses pointing out the advantages of this plan for the business community. Further, members will write individual letters to the editor each focusing on one or more aspects of the health care issue, such as, myth busting, our country's ranking in the world for quality of health care, the existing system (good and bad points), and the benefits of the proposed Single Payer Plan. This is just the beginning. The overall strategy is to broadcast the merits of the Single Payer Plan and to put pressure on our legislators to pass it. For more information contact Pat Hammann at 334-4488.

Presidential Abuse of Power

—Bob Klunk—

In the last seven years, our constitutional rights have been compromised through a systematic attack by the Executive Branch of our government. Mr. Bush determined that his duty as president extended beyond his responsibility "to take care that the laws are faithfully executed." In fact, Bush has claimed authority to disobey more than seven hundred and fifty laws since he took office. This has been accomplished through the use of signing statements. A most useful tool, these signing statements allow any statute passed by Congress found to be in conflict with the President's interpretation of the Constitution to be set aside. The President vetoed none of these laws as they came across his desk. Instead, a signing statement was issued, which made it legal for him to change the original intent of that law to suit his cabal's agenda.

But the list of transgressions against our liberties is long and, frankly, very depressing, and it continues with unwarranted, illegal wiretapping, not only by The National Security Agency but by publicly owned phone companies as well. Their invasive practices include data collection, storage, tracking and data mining, which taken together create a surveillance society that should make the most trusting individuals paranoid about our government's powers. The Patriot Act makes such actions legal. Government secrecy, another facet of the policy of abusive power, is preserved due to weakening of the Freedom of Information Act. Also, an expansion of the Sensitive but Unclassified Materials category permits sweeping state secrets to remain hidden from public scrutiny. Initiatives such as a national ID card called "Real ID" also erode our privacy, and a database called TALON (Threat and Local Observation Notice), supposedly discontinued June 27, 2007 due to unfavorable media coverage, illegally gathers information on anti-war activists.

The fit between Bush's agenda and a legal structure to protect his actions compliment each other like Mr. Cheney's hand in a leather shooting glove. In addition to the abuses of power listed, we should also add the Bush policies on torture, kidnapping, detention, and rendition of POW's to secret camps in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The Military Commission Act, which strips habeas corpus rights and guts Geneva Convention protection against abuse of prisoners of war, is another tool empowering Mr. Bush's administration.

The impact of Bush's presidential abuse of power can be seen, too, in compromises in academic freedom, scientific inquiry, censorship, screening of scientific articles, whistle blower protections, nuclear regulations and safeguards against political interference in federally funded research.

Legal actions should begin immediately to rectify these abuses of our constitutional rights. We should carefully examine all Bush initiatives and interpret their impact to determine whether they are in the best interest of the people. Subsequently any and all initiatives conflicting with our constitutional freedoms and rights should be corrected. If criminal acts were performed, consequences appropriate to the crimes should be meted out to the guilty parties.



Not since Hoover?

—Will Lane—

One of the biggest “elephants in the living room” of our time is probably economic inequality. People feel pinched and stressed as they try to make ends meet without really understanding the sources of their distress. But is inequality really all that bad? Isn't a little bit of inequality inevitable when free markets do their thing?

Pulitzer Prize-Winning reporter David Kay Johnston's *Free Lunch* documents dramatic growth in economic inequality over the last decade but also reveals the origins of that inequality in government policy on taxes and hidden subsidies for big corporations and the already well-to-do. These policies and subsidies, according to the author, have produced a pattern of wealth distribution unheard of since the days of Herbert Hoover. Here's what they have meant for Americans in recent years according to studies of tax returns cited by Johnston:

“The vast majority's slice of the income pie was thinner in 2005 than it had been in 1980. The bottom 90 percent had almost two-thirds of America's income pie in 1980, but only a little more than half in 2005.... The top 10 percent of Americans got more pie. Their slice grew from more than a third to almost half... but the slice is not distributed at all evenly among the top 30 million Americans. For the bottom half of the top 10 percent, the slice of pie was unchanged.... For the next group, those standing between the ninety-fifth and the ninety-ninth rungs on the income ladder, the slice of pie grew somewhat. [But] at the top 1 percent things get really interesting. Their share... more than doubled, from 10 percent to 21.8 percent... [And] for the top tenth of 1 percent [300,000 Americans earning \$1.7 million or more in 2005] the slice more than tripled in size [while] the very best off, the 30,000 Americans earning more than \$9.5 million [that year enjoyed] a slice of income pie in 2005 more than four times larger than in 1980” (Johnston 273-274).

Neo-conservatives may argue that economic inequality is inevitable, even beneficial. But *Free Lunch* tells a different story, documenting in chapter after chapter how government policies have created the unjust and economically unproductive pie we are living with today. Surely the idea that these policies can't be changed is one of the big myths we should think about busting as we work to implement a progressive agenda in the months and years ahead. Money that should be invested in the American people—in universal health care, in a renewed commitment to public education, in job training for gold and green collar jobs—and in dealing with problems like global climate change is sitting at the top of the wealth pyramid. We build casinos and sell off our turnpikes when we should be fighting to restore a progressive tax system.

Gettysburg Area DFA Calendar of Events

- June 4** DFA Meetup, special guest Nick Morgan on Iraq: A Veteran's Story at 7 pm
Valentine Hall 206, Lutheran Seminary. Contact Sandra Mackie,
smackie8@embarqmail.com
- June 12** Grand Opening Democratic Campaign Headquarters at 46 Chambersburg
Street at 7 pm. Contact Tim Diehl, SECFOR1@aol.com
- June 14** 11-12 noon Peace Vigil at Old Visitors Center on Steinwehr Ave. Contact
John Speck, Jkspeck@superpa.net
- June 18** Issues & Actions Valentine 310 7:00 pm
- June 19** Environment Task Force at 7:00 pm Biglerville Library; Contact Sue Bum-
baugh, longpinelake@yahoo.com
- June 25** Iraq Task Force, Ragged Edge at 7:00 pm; Contact Alan Olson, [AlanOl-
son@earthlink.net](mailto:AlanOlson@earthlink.net)

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