

DEMOCRATIC REPORTER

A Newsletter for Bay Area New Democrats

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Democrats attending the Texas Democratic Convention in June enjoyed a beautiful view of the water and boats near the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi. See stories about the convention beginning on page 2.

Global Warming Expert to Speak

Don't miss a timely discussion on global warming at the next BAND meeting.

Dr. Inayatullah Ibrahim Lalani, M.D., a retired surgeon, is the author of *Al-Battani Shield: Counteracting Global Warming*. He will speak on a proposed solution to global warming at the meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 14 at the Harris County Courthouse Bay Area Annex.

Dr. Gordon Johnson, a BAND member and mathematics professor, wrote the foreword for the book. Copies of Dr. Lalani's book will be for sale, and the author will be available for autographs.

Join Us for Fun, Food and Candidates at the Park!

It will be hot outside, but we'll have a cool time at the BAND Family Picnic and Rally.

Mark your calendars and plan to bring the kids for an old-fashioned family event 4 to 8 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 1 at Landolt Pavilion at Clear Lake Park on NASA Parkway.

Plans are in the works for the picnic and rally, featuring fun games and amusements, music, food and appearances by the candidates in the upcoming election. Activities will include a moonwalk, water slide, ring toss, Bingo and more.

Tickets to the picnic are \$10 for anyone six and older, and free for anyone five or younger. The price includes admission to the event and all games and amusements. Picnic-type food, including vegetarian options, will be for sale at the event.

Tickets will be available for purchase at the next BAND meeting on Wednesday, July 14, or you can buy them at the door. Watch for more details in the coming days.

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Bill White Revs Up State Convention

“We need Bill!”

Usually when a popular candidate speaks at a convention, you hear, “We want (fill in the name)!” But the state of Texas desperately *needs* Bill.

Bill White, the Democratic nominee for Texas governor, enlivened the crowd at the Texas Democratic convention at Corpus Christi’s American Bank Center in June. His speech took place shortly after the announcement that he and his opponent, a 10-year incumbent, were tied in the polls.

White touted his own outstanding record as mayor of Houston and lambasted Republican Gov. Rick Perry for working only seven hours a

week on state business and living in a sprawling \$10,000-a-month rented mansion while the traditional governor’s home undergoes repairs following arson damage.

White said that as mayor he cut crime rates, expanded parks and health clinics and improved services for veterans. “We did so while building surpluses for four straight years and cutting property tax rates for five straight years,” he said. White said the state faces an \$18 billion budget crisis and is living beyond its means.

Perry has frequently left the state for places like China, ostensibly to bring business to Texas. White, however, said he believes that improvements in education and job training would have a far more beneficial effect on the economy. “After all, people with more skills earn more, spend more, invest more, and that helps the whole economy,” White said.

Texas has one of the worst dropout rates in the country, but as mayor, White personally knocked on doors to persuade dropouts to return to school. His proposals for decreasing dropouts include expanded access to pre-kindergarten and voluntary summer enrichment programs. He called for replicating best practices from high-performing schools and criticized the current practice of spending valuable classroom time teaching to “how to make a minimum score on an annual high-stakes multiple-choice test” instead of reading, writing and critical thinking. White would also like to make college educations more affordable.

A native of San Antonio, White briefly addressed the crowd in Spanish. He noted that

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Bill White, the Democratic nominee for governor of Texas, rallied the delegates at the state convention in Corpus Christi June 25-26..

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growing up in the largely Hispanic city taught him to believe in respect for everyone. His daughter Elena also said in Spanish that her father hoped to be the governor for all the people.

White, known for his low-key manner, showed flashes of dry wit as he poked fun at his Republican opponent. Noting that Perry's taste for opulence includes personal chefs and a subscription to a food and wine magazine, White said "Ooh-la-la!" He told the cheering crowd that greeted him that he had been told to say "Sarah Palin" when he wanted the crowd to be quiet.

White also had fun encouraging the crowd to join in the refrain that Perry "is in it for himself." He promised that while repairs to the Governor's Mansion are ongoing, he would live in a double-wide trailer on the grounds.



Bill White and Boyd Richie, later re-elected as chairperson of the Texas Democratic Party, share a laugh at the podium during the state convention.

State Party's Platform Appeals to Mainstream Voters

When Texas Democrats got together in Corpus Christi last month, they put together a platform that says what is important to mainstream Texans.

State Rep. Garnet Coleman, who served as chair of the Texas Democratic Platform Committee for the last five state conventions, summarized the 43-page document and compared it to the Texas Republicans' platform. Below are some of the most important differences between the parties, as outlined by Rep. Coleman.

Democrats placed education at the top of their list of priorities. Texas has a horrific high school dropout rate, and Democrats proposed specific solutions such as school-community collaboration that brings educational and social services together to assist at-risk students and their families; expansion of access to early childhood education; dual-credit and early-college programs that draw at-risk students to college and career paths while still in high school; equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers; enforcement of daytime curfew laws to reduce truancy; and providing access to affordable programs for adults who have dropped out of school.

The Republican platform did not mention the



Democrats head into the exhibit hall at the American Bank Center during the state Democratic convention in Corpus Christi.

dropout problem but sought to "create flexibility" with requirements limiting class size. Democrats wanted to maintain limits on class size "to allow every student to receive individualized attention."

Conservatives, who have changed the schools' curriculums to represent their view of the world, currently dominate the State Board of Education

platform, continued on page 4



(SBOE). The Republican platform endorses the SBOE's continued sole authority over curricula content, while the Democratic Party says that non-partisan experts should review substantive changes to curriculum, and that the review should be made public prior to SBOE changes to the curriculum.

The Republicans oppose mandatory preschool and kindergarten, while Democrats seek proper funding for universal access to pre-K and kindergarten as a means of targeting at-risk students very early.

While Republicans selfishly call for the abolition of property taxes for the purpose of funding schools and the repeal of the revised franchise tax, Democrats wish to establish an equitable school finance system with sufficient state revenue to allow every district to offer an exemplary program. Democrats would like to reduce reliance on the "Robin Hood" recapture plans. They seek to make state funding formulas reflect the impact of inflation and state mandates.

As in the past, Democrats oppose school voucher programs, while Republicans want to send tax dollars to help pay for students to attend private schools.

Republicans continue to seek the repeal of what they call "the national health care takeover." Democrats are proud of the legislation that bans disqualification from medical insurance for a preexisting condition or development of a catastrophic illness. They oppose Republican attempts to repeal tax breaks to aid in the purchase of health insurance and the closure of the donut hole that forced seniors to pay high prices under the Republican Medicare Part D plan.

Democrats would like to raise the minimum wage, while Republicans would like for there to be no minimum wage. Democrats do not want sales taxes to be extended to food and medicine, but Republicans endorse a national sales tax.

On the subject of Social Security, the Democratic platform opposes the privatization of the Social Security program. The Republican platform supports a transition to a system of private pensions, gradually phasing out the Social Security tax.

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At the top, Hector Uribe, candidate for land commissioner, greeted delegates at the Tejano Democrats caucus. In the middle, Linda Chavez-Thompson, candidate for lieutenant governor, charmed the crowd. At bottom, Senate District 11 chair Sherrie Matula tallied the district's votes for state Democratic Party chair.

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Democrats call the use of our tax dollars as capital to invest in the stock market a threat to the income security of working Americans.

Republicans have been de-regulating the insurance industry for some time and continue to advocate for a free market, to the detriment of Texas consumers. Democrats support the strict enforcement of policies requiring insurance companies to roll back their rates to provide residents with affordable insurance. They also seek to pass measures to reduce and eliminate unfair underwriting practices and provide more oversight of homeowner's insurance.

Similarly, the Democrats would like to see the utility companies reined in. The Republicans side with business interests and advocate free markets for both industries.

In spite of Gov. Rick Perry's opposition to Arizona's new immigration law, the Republicans' state platform supports the creation of a state offense for an undocumented immigrant to be present in this country. Democrats strongly oppose any law that would result in discrimination, intimidation or victimization of citizens based on their race, ethnicity or appearance. The Democratic platform actually agrees with Gov. Perry that law enforcement agencies should not be forced to divert their resources and manpower from their primary duty to protect citizens and prevent crime.

The Republicans, who created horribly gerrymandered Republican voting districts, say they oppose the creation of voting districts that are created by identifying citizens by race, origin or creed. Democrats support redistricting standards in compliance with the Voting Rights Act.

The full text of the Texas Democratic Party's platform can be found at <http://www.txdemocrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/TDP2010Platform.pdf>.



Joyce Supima and Parvin Richardson were among the BAND members at the reception at the Texas State Aquarium the night before the convention began. At the exhibit hall, crowds found merchandise to express themselves. John Cobarruvias participated in the convention as a delegate and a blogger.

A First-Time Convention Delegate Picks Hits and Misses

For this first-time delegate at the state Democratic convention, there was a mixture of emotions -- excitement to be in the middle of it all, confusion about procedure and a tad bit of disillusionment about the importance of a delegate's role.

Below are the hits and misses from a first-timer's view:

Hits

1. Favorite button at the exhibit hall - "Do I look like an illegal alien?" - worn frequently by Hispanics concerned about the Arizona immigration law.
2. Favorite T-shirt - On the front, it says, "Democrat. End of Discussion." On the back, it lists legislation passed by Democrats, starting with the Women's Suffrage Amendment and including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Clean Air Act, to name a few.
3. Favorite caucus - At the packed environmental caucus were some relevant discussions about lignite coal mining, the BP oil disaster and water quality, as well as brief talks by candidates Jeff Weems and Barbara Radnofsky, who both made it clear that if elected as railroad commissioner and attorney general, they would spend far more time enforcing environmental regulations than the current officeholders.
4. Speeches - All the statewide candidates were impressive.
5. Spanish - There seemed to be a great



At the environmental caucus, railroad commissioner candidate Jeff Weems stood in front of a photo of the BP explosion and warned, "That can't happen in Texas."

realization among the candidates that speaking the language of the state's largest minority, figuratively and literally, is really important.

6. Rep. Senfronia Thompson's Friday night party - Wow! There was free food and drink and a nice band playing. Thanks, Rep. Thompson!

7. Sensible vehicles - I saw more hybrid vehicles in one place than ever before.

8. Social time with like-minded people.

Misses

1. Between important procedures at the convention, almost all state officeholders were paraded in front of the microphone. They attempted to rally us, but mostly it was wasted time.

2. On the night before the convention, the Party hosted a reception at the Texas State Aquarium for delegates who made a substantial donation. We were treated to a fun dolphin show and chips and salsa, period. The rest of the entry fee was, well, pure donation to the Party, and drinks were available for purchase. No Democrats spoke at a microphone and no statewide candidates seemed to be in attendance.

3. Some chairpersons conducted votes by saying, "All in favor, say 'aye,' all opposed, say 'no,' the ayes have it" all in one breath, without pausing to hear the vote. It did not seem all that democratic.

4. Much of the convention seemed to be a foregone conclusion. Fortunately, the platform turned out nicely, but in reality, only the very experienced few had anything to say about it.



Gordon Johnson, Tom and Sylvia Gederberg, and Vicki Cherewaty attended the reception the night before the convention. photo by Nancy Johnson

Vicki M. Cherewaty

BAND Members Train to Register Voters for 2010

Marty Morrison works for the Harris County voter registrar's office, and she is counting down the days until early voting and then the Nov. 2 election.

"It's time for us to get off our rear ends," said Morrison, as she noted that she was off the clock at her county job. Morrison spoke at the June 8 BAND meeting, when there were 92 days left before the cutoff for voter registration for this election.

Democrats in attendance filled out forms to apply for or renew their designation as deputy voter registrars, and then Morrison handed out manuals and sample voter registrations. She advised the deputy registrars-in-training to use a yellow marker to highlight the required blanks on the form.

Among her tidbits of wisdom was, "No one sleeps at a post office box." She said deputy registrars must make sure applicants fill out a street address on the form.

Morrison also advised deputy registrars to hand back the forms to applicants who cannot present a driver's license or social security number. The applicants should be told to mail in their own form before 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 4. Registrars must sign and date any forms they hand in, and they can lose their right to be a registrar if they hand in an incomplete form.

Many folks think making an address change with the Department of Public Safety (on your driver's license) or the post office changes your address on the voter rolls. It does not, Morrison said. Citizens who have moved since the last time they voted need to fill out a new voter registration as well.

Deputy registrars must fill out the receipt at the bottom of the voter registration form and give the receipt to the applicant. In the event of a dispute about the validity or date of the registration, the receipt serves as important proof.

Locally, deputy voter registrars can hand in the forms at the same courthouse where BAND meets, but on the first floor. Deputy registrars should make sure they get a receipt to show the forms were turned in within five working days. If there is an emergency, Morrison said voter registrars should call



Marty Morrison, with the Harris County voter registrar's office, met with BAND president C.J. Farley before the registrar training class in June.

her so she can pick up the forms if necessary.

Morrison said that if the lines are long in the courthouse's registrations office, deputy registrars should ask a deputy constable to get a manager to open a separate window just for the registrars. BAND member Nancy Johnson pointed out that in the Clear Lake office, the line on the far right is already available for that purpose.

Morrison also advised the deputy registrars not to pre-sign or pre-number the forms in case the forms are lost or someone else fills out the form.



The dolphins provided the entertainment at a pre-convention reception for Democrats at the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi.