

Meeting Minutes  
Progressive Democrats of Genesee Valley  
American Association of University Women  
494 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607  
9 July 2008  
6:30pm – 9:00pm

Recorded by Dave Nevin and Nicholas Wilt

Attendees:

Paloma Capanna  
Richard Dollinger  
David Garretson  
Suzanne Anicette  
Jerry Seward  
Robin Wilt  
Jim Swarts  
David Nevin  
Gerry Miner  
Tim Miner  
Ann Diehl  
John Diehl  
George Pixley

Endorsement Proceedings:

Paloma Capanna

Bio/Intro:

- Limited campaign contributions to \$1000 – state limit is \$15500
- Has declined fundraising parties that NYS Democratic Party wanted her to attend
- Supports public financing of campaigns for statewide office
- More than 700 grassroots donors who live and work in District
- First candidate ever for this district to seek Working Families Party line
- First woman to run for this district
- Opponent will post close to \$1M in fundraising
- 90% of donors have never been involved in politics before – contributing, volunteering, coming up with own ideas on how to campaign
- Family law attorney for 16 years – much trial experience and considerable pro bono work; greatest passion is to give voice to those who don't have one – ties in nicely with Senate race
- Believes the people in her District have no voice in Albany
- \$43,200 median income in district from two people working full-time. Minimum wage is below poverty line.

Much discussion on universal v. single payer healthcare. Capanna advocates a state-administered program that would operate in parallel with private insurers. PDAGV members

want to know if this would “ghettoize” the system by skimming the healthiest people out of the pool. Capanna isn’t sure this would happen - even wealthy people would be attracted to the state plan if it were less expensive, and she expects it would be less expensive due to economies of scale and lower overhead. She points out that NYS can regulate private insurers, e.g. by providing a standard claims form akin to the standard Purchase & Sale Agreement for real estate.

Q (George Pixley): Would you open SUNY for the poor?

A: Inconclusive, but SUNY system is critical. Her law degree is SUNY Buffalo 1991. Sum total of loans was \$110.48 for ten years. Not sure why college tuition has increased 343% since 1992 – can’t reconcile that with tax increases.

Q (George Pixley): Would you favor a kind of GI Bill of Rights for kids that provide in-kind services to society to offset tuition?

A: Yes - huge fan of loan forgiveness. Or programs that trade tuition benefits for work (e.g. teachers in rural areas, public works projects). One potential public works project: fixing the fact that only 40% of the district has access to high speed Internet.

*Note: Discussion tabled at this juncture to allow for consideration of Dave Garretson to proceed*

Dave Garretson – 134<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

#### Intro/Bio

- First time to run for public office
- Manufacturer’s rep – work in 3-state area selling furniture to furniture stores
- Goal for 2008 in January was to do everything he could to unseat Congressman Tom Reynolds
- Active in Powers campaign
- Goal was accomplished in March because Reynolds decided to step down, the day after Garretson participated in a petition delivery in which Reynolds’s staff locked the petitioners out of the office.
- Active in the Greece Democratic Committee, Garretson was recruited to run for Assembly
- Enjoys engaging with people who do not agree with him on everything
- People in the District care about taxes, taxes and taxes. Economic development is another big area. IDAs, Empire Zones, closed door sessions, insiders in the room, no transparency.
- Better government gets Garretson going, especially the idea of reforming the rules of the Assembly. Speaker of the Assembly has total control.
- New York State the most dysfunctional state government in the union. Let’s shoot for at least incremental improvement

Q&A had two main topics:

- 1) Are there any other Democrats in the Assembly now who would support the idea of reforming the rules?

A: Not clear. Some have been very forthright supporting the good government agenda. The problem is that Assembly members who favor reform seem to get punished by the powers that be.

Garretson believes that that most Democrats in the Assembly probably would prefer to behave like Democrats than Republicans. 100% of Republicans would favor the reform, so 40-50 more Democrats would be needed.

2) Voter ID cards: why not research this instead of responding that you're not sure? Do you support the idea or not?

A: This is more a product of not having a specific proposal. Garretson is a dues paying member of the ACLU, so civil liberties are very important to him.

The ensuing discussion entailed PDA Genesee Valley members discussing with Mr. Garretson why progressives perceive voter ID initiatives as tied to issues of civil liberties.

The concern is hypothetical so far since NYS is not considering a voter ID law.

Paloma Capanna (cont'd):

She has stopped accepting cases and transitioned to full-time campaigning.

Discussion on education:

Average cost of public education K-12 is \$15.5k/pupil. Harley is \$17k. But we are graduating only 40% of students. "We are cheating our kids." Believes the diverse sources of tax money that fund the schools are a problem.

Continued active discussion on voter ID requirements. Capanna reiterated the support for voter ID requirements voiced in her questionnaire, over objections from PDA GV members citing the absence of "voter fraud." One PDA member recalled the nuns who were not allowed to vote in Indiana after the SCOTUS ruling supporting that state's voter ID law, and said that his own mother voted for years and years from assisted living conditions, absentee with no voter ID. The same member has three college-educated cousins who have never driven in their life. Other people use mass transit, e.g. in NYC.

Capanna does not perceive requiring photo ID to be onerous and proposed that the state should make getting the IDs free and easy (e.g. by sending personnel into assisted living facilities to take their pictures and issue the IDs).

Capanna thinks the bigger issue is that only 70% of eligible voters are actually registered.

Q: What can people do to help?

A: Canvassing. Best use of resources is probably to concentrate on Webster, Geneva, Auburn. 10 people in 2-car caravans, accomplish results in 4-6 hour time frame. Ongoing

any Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Saturday. Phone banking also helpful, especially toward election.

Q: Are you at a disadvantage due to being on the fringes of the district? Lansing is a long way.

A: You have to win Webster to win this election. Seneca County population is 14,000 compared to 56,000 in Webster.

Q: But Webster voters are fairly conservative.

A: Our door knocking results are outstanding. Rainbow of donors. If my opponent runs voter registrations on donors, he will see a broad base of support. Every penny received since 17 May 2007 has been reported. Let me summarize this way: disagreements is what will get us out of this. What's critical is to find the activists who haven't given up... it would be a privilege to work with you. It's a tradition to bring stories from the road. You asked about the war in Iraq. When I was running for Congress, it came out that I was a poet. Left book of poetry speaking against the President dating back to when he asked for authority to invade Iraq.

Once the candidates left, PDA GV members deliberated and voted to endorse both candidates "in name only":

Garretson 8-0

Capanna 6-2

Motion to authorize George Pixley to work with Paloma campaign in any way he sees appropriate was carried, 8-0.

Progress Reports:

Voter Registration:

Met with RCSD on June 23 – they agreed to let us into the "Participation In Government" classes in the fall. Paul Lampe, social studies teacher, represented the District.

Concern in pushing into PIG classes exclusively because the classes represent only seniors who are not taking AP equivalent credit. To get access to all eligible voters, we'd have to take it outside a PIG class.

*Note: ask for ideas about Voter Registration – MetroJustice Project Pushback*

There are 19 facilities in the RCSD.

Dave Nevin will ask at the Rochester Public Market for space to do Voter Registration.

Obama campaign is doing registration at the Corn Hill Festival.

Robin is working with St. Paul's Episcopal Church to obtain space on their lawn for Voter Registration during Park Avenue Festival.

#### Candidate Chair Report:

##### Bush Legacy Tour

- Jim used the name PDA in conjunction with PIA.
- Nancy Braiman had contacted all the media twice.
- Jim got a call from Rochester Indy Media the night before – she showed up.
- Messenger Post showed up
- Channel 13 showed just after the speeches started
- Channel 10 showed up after it was virtually all over

##### Canandaigua Press Conference

- We met up with some veterans thanks to Ron Hikel
- Great press coverage was achieved, as well as the goal of not allowing Kuhl to misrepresent his voting record on veterans' issues unchallenged
- As a result of the success of the interaction, Jim was asked to coordinate with the Massa campaign on other efforts
  - Kuhl said in Morningstar Gazette that he voted 35 times against the Bush Administration– Massa campaign wants research on that
  - PDAGV House Party
  - Health Care Caravan featuring Donna Smith (with Rebecca Elgie from PDA Ithaca) – September 4-6

#### Treasurer Report

- 10 paid members
- Get your dues in
- You can pay online now
- Dave Marcus is the official treasurer
- Bill Benet is the Priorities Liaison
- Dave Nevin and Lori Fellows have volunteered to assist Bill technically as the Priorities Liaison

#### Miscellaneous:

Move we name all those people currently acting in the present positions to be formally named to their respective positions. Second offered. Vote unanimous

Next meeting: August 13, 2008 at AAUW, 494 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607, 7:00 – 9:00 PM (preceded by social from 6:30 to 7:00 PM)