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**The Mountain Democrat
Newsletter Editor
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THE MOUNTAIN DEMOCRAT

April – May

2017

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The Mountain Democrat is published bimonthly by the Oakhurst Democratic Club and the Mariposa Democratic Club, and is distributed to all current members of those clubs. For a membership application see the inside back cover of this newsletter.

COMING EVENTS

April 2017

Apr. 1: Oakhurst Club Meeting
8:30AM Denny's

Apr. 8: Mariposa Club Meeting
9:00AM Miner's Inn

May 2017

May 6: Oakhurst Club Meeting
8:30AM Denny's

May 13: Mariposa Club Meeting
9:00AM Miner's Inn

For more information about our Democratic Clubs and Democratic happenings around the state and nation open your trusty web browser and visit our web pages at:

YosemiteDems.net or MariposaDemocraticClub.org

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The Mariposa Democratic Club would like to congratulate and thank Sally Uribe and Susan and Rick Leinheuser for becoming LIFETIME members.

See the Application Form on the last page of this newsletter to see how you can become a lifetime member of the Mariposa Democratic Club.

Paranoia Striking Deep

By Peter Cavanaugh

Enough!

I suggest Donald J. Trump's paranoid assertion that Barack Obama personally authorized electronic surveillance of Trump headquarters prior to the November election offers final proof of his mental imbalance, emotional instability and incapability to serve. Moreover, his continuation in office presents an immediate clear and present danger to our national security.

We need not wait four more years.

25th Amendment to the Constitution—Section Four

“Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.”

The Amendment goes on to provide further mechanics in the process of Presidential removal, concluding with finalization by a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and Senate. That would temporarily put “Poodle” Pence in the White House, but I’ll take inane over insane for starters as a solid step in the right direction.

We can only fantasize that enough of our Republican brethren in Congress will eventually place patriotism over party. Even the most recalcitrant right-winger must know by now that Donald J. Trump has proven himself time and time again utterly unworthy of trust.

Paranoia Striking Deep (continued)

Many raved about the trimmed tone of his February address to Congress, briefly thankful that the new occupant of the now Oaf-Filled Office had successfully completed what must have been an exhausting exercise holding back those taunting tweets. Even unfriendly fact checkers later admitted with reluctance that the Republican President only blatantly lied outright no more than several dozen times during his speech.

Alas, the new “Mr. Nice” lasted less than the life span of a Mayfly—approximately 24 hours.

Then we were treated to a world class Trifecta during the Chiseler-In-Chief's Saint Patrick's Day meeting with visiting Chancellor Angela Merkel when he managed to insult three major global powers all at once in the same Press Conference. Claiming Germany owes the U.S. money for NATO, hallucinating England wiretapped Trump for Obama, and castigating a trade-cheating China, presidential posturing hit a new milestone in disingenuous diplomacy.

FBI Director James Comey and NSA Director Mike Rogers have now testified under oath that no proof exists to support Trump's claim that he had been “wiretapped” in any way by President Obama. Comey has also publicly announced that the Bureau IS currently investigating the possibility of criminal connections between Russian operatives and members of the Trump team.

On the chronically crippled legislative front, “Trumpcare” proposes to work its worst on the elderly, sick and poor as an \$880 million dollar cut to Medicare over ten years produces a virtually equal tax reduction targeted to the super rich.

Budget Director Mick Mulvaney's initial proposals for the 2018 fiscal year are obscene with massive increases in military

Paranoia Striking Deep (continued)

expenditures, outrageous slashing of social spending, and nothing at all for climate change—an item Mulvaney has relegated to mythological status.

But Trump still has his troops.

“Lock her up!” yet rings from the rafters.

Our slowest learners have elected their fastest talkers.

It’s full greed ahead!

Healthcare—One Aspect of a Failing System

By Ben Leet

I had hip replacement surgery last September and received a new titanium hip. I’m 70 years old and the doctor tells me it will last for 20 years or more. I have Medicare and when the hospital sent me a bill for \$67,000, more or less, I was happy because I knew I was responsible for only \$3,000. Medicare saved me. If I had been under 65 years old, I would now be in debt or using a walker or a wheel chair. Or I could have flown to London or Paris where this surgery costs \$11,000 or \$12,000. In London, they do six surgeries for the cost of one in California. Or to India, Korea or Mexico. In Canada, the cost of an angiogram (an x-ray of arteries and veins) is \$35; the average cost in the U.S. is \$914. An MRI in France costs \$363; in the U.S. \$1,121. A one-day stay in a hospital bed in the Netherlands is \$731, compared to \$4,287 in the U.S. An appendectomy in England costs \$3,408, in the U.S. \$12,851. And so on from the International Federation of Health Plans’ 2012 Comparative Price Report.

We all have stories about the delivery of healthcare services. A friend, age 52, went in for an appendectomy, and his wife’s insurance paid the \$40,000 charge, otherwise he might have died. Another had a pig valve inserted into his heart 20 years ago—he was on MediCal, and he has been a productive adult supporting his wife and daughter since then. Another, a PhD in psychology, diagnosed with breast cancer died because she could only get treatment by participating in an experimental procedure. We all have stories.

Healthcare U.S.A. seems to be an irrational mess. We pay double per person what other advanced nations spend, and our outcome is worse. We spend \$9,500 per human, our yearly expense, about 18% of total annual GDP, a huge amount, while others average around \$4,500 yearly, about 10% of GDP, with better outcomes.

Healthcare—One Aspect of a Failing System (continued)

Author James Kwak states, “Of the 34 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, the United States ranks between 20th and 29th on primary health status metrics, ranks in the bottom third for access to coverage, and has among the fewest doctors and hospital beds per capita.” Kwak concludes, “It seems quite possible that our high costs relative to the rest of the world are the result not of over consumption but of a decentralized system organized around private profits, rather than strong government spending controls.”

Healthcare is just a part of a dysfunctional economy. The Federal Reserve’s “Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households, 2015” shows that 44% of households cannot pay an emergency \$400 expense within a 30-day period. Even though the average household net worth is \$721,000, and the average yearly household income is over \$100,000, almost half of Americans live in “liquid asset” poverty. Thirty percent of Americans “may be characterized as not able to meet their basic needs and achieve a safe and decent standard of living” states the author of the U.S. Census Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM.) America has extreme inequality.

The Federal Reserve Board report further shows that 22% of respondents in the past year had an emergency medical expense, and 45% of Americans carry an “unpaid balance” resulting from medical expenses. The initial median cost was \$1,200 while the average cost was \$2,383, and “Among those whose family income is under \$40,000, 39 percent have gone without some form of medical treatment in the preceding 12 months.” The SPM states that the poverty rate would decrease from 14.3% to 10.8% if “medical out-of-pocket” expenses were excluded.

A report from The Center for American Progress shows that

Healthcare—One Aspect of a Failing System (continued)

medical expenses doubled between 2000 and 2012, increasing from 5.5% of the family budget for the median four-person household to 10.1%. So, medical expenses drive low-income families into poverty and affect the entire population.

I’m afraid I’ve used too many numbers, and it is numbing, but the general message is pretty clear. We need some reform, healthcare-wise and economy-wise. If the U.S. economy had performed as well as the economy of France between 1980 and 2014, the U.S. minimum wage would be \$18.22, not \$7.25. Average yearly income for a year-round minimum wage worker would be \$36,400 not \$14,500. In 2014, 31% of U.S. workers earned less than \$15,000 a year, and 57% earned less than \$35,000.

Here are a few facts from the Congressional Budget Office report on the Affordable Care Act: The annual federal cost in 2016 was \$110 billion. The average subsidy for those receiving a subsidy through a marketplace or Basic Health Program was \$4,240. Through the ACA in 2016, 22 million Americans were insured, 11 million were made eligible for Medicaid, 10 million purchased subsidized insurance through marketplaces (often called exchanges), and 2 million purchased individual policies unsubsidized through marketplaces. In 2016, the ACA increased the share of the U.S. population with healthcare insurance from 83% to 90% by insuring 22 million people.

All this data is overwhelming, maybe incomprehensible. The gist is that the ACA made a big improvement on a healthcare system miserably failing in an already dysfunctional economy.

I will soon post a fuller essay about healthcare on my blog, Economics Without Greed.

Recordings of Democratic Club Meetings

Name of author withheld by request

Being a lifelong (independent) Democrat, but a new member in the Mariposa Democratic Club, I just attended my second meeting on February 11, 2017. There was a large crowd of at least 100 people or more! It was a great meeting, but with one exception.

One gentleman, a County Supervisor and obviously a Republican with no apparent intention of joining our Democratic club, admitted he was recording our meeting with both video and sound. I objected but, without further debate, did not press the issue.

Ours might be a public gathering with no unreasonable restrictions, but I strongly believe that we all have the right to our privacy and freedom of speech!

Being a former president of a union with 1300 members, and having experience with matters such as this, I'd like to put forward to the Democratic membership that we issue and post a printed rule at all public and committee meetings as follows:

THERE WILL BE NO SOUND
RECORDINGS OR
PHOTOGRAPHY AT ANY
GENERAL, BOARD OR
COMMITTEE MEETINGS
WITHOUT UNANIMOUS
CONSENT BY ALL PRESENT.

Freedom of speech, privacy, press and assembly are constitutional rights! Why would a member of the opposition party want to attend virtually every one of our Democratic meetings and record virtually all that was said, except to keep track of who spoke and what they said.

Recordings of Democratic Club Meetings (continued)

There are those who may feel intimidated, spied upon, and even physically threatened, as it appears that automobiles at some public meetings have been damaged.

I know that Mariposa County is largely Republican in registration, but is intimidation their only method to get their way? And I believe that coming into our group and recording the exercise of our constitutional right of freedom of assembly and speech is intimidation!

By posting the rule on audio recordings and videos, I believe the situation of privacy and freedom of speech will be protected and understood. At many public meetings and performances, members of the audience are asked to turn off their cell phones and other recording devices, so this should not be an unusual restriction. Ask before you record or photograph—it is the right thing to do.

Remember, if there is ONE objection, the answer is NO! The Republicans in the Senate have their rules, let us have ours likewise!

The Art of Lying

By Lucille Apcar

Don't let anybody kid you, lying is a form of art all by itself. There are the fibbers, the little white liars, the straight-faced tall tellers, and those who lie under oath. That last one is called Perjury and is a violation of the law.

My sister is a glib fibber, so much so that today I take everything she says with the proverbial grain of salt. I was never able to emulate her art, my face would give me away every time I tried to cover up a misdeed, and I finally gave up and simply told the truth and faced the music. As a result, I ended up with more than my fair share of punishments, while she got away scot free. My youngest brother was also a liar, the problem was he easily fooled my mother but could not fool my dad, the end result being that the altercation invariably switched to argument between spouses, his prevarications forgotten in the process.

Hillary Clinton was accused of lying and maybe she did indeed tell a few fibs in trying to protect her privacy, but as someone once said, nothing that was Earth shattering, nothing that caused harm to our country, and certainly nothing in the way of classified information with which she was entrusted. It appears certain she and Bill Clinton entered into some real estate deals, but in most cases, they lost money rather than profiting by them. Yes, she received some large honorariums, but as she said herself, they were offered to her and she accepted them. Was she lying or simply stating the facts? When in a position of authority, on certain subjects should that person refuse to speak unless a substantial reward were offered? I don't think so.

But something really strange has happened in recent times. Lying is being presented under a completely different guise—"alternative facts" being just one of them. And when wonder of wonders

The Art of Lying (continued)

someone really does tell the truth, they find themselves shown the door or called liars, or even worse, smeared as "incompetent."

There is one fact that we all must face: Donald Trump and his cronies quite probably manipulated an outdated procedure known as the "Electoral College" by some pretty nauseating attempts at enticing officials of an unfriendly government into stealing internet information from his opposing candidate, thus causing last-minute disruption of the election process. No question the result affected the outcome.

Since January 20, 2017 when Trump raised his right hand and swore to defend the U.S. Constitution, we have seen his multiple violations of that same document, yet nothing thus far has resulted in the laws of perjury being invoked, our Liar-in-Chief as of this date still reigns supreme out of the White House. Let us hope the persons appointed to our judicial system will come to their senses and take the appropriate measures before too much time has passed.

Tempus Fugit!

**Want to
SAVE A TREE?**

Well OK! Maybe a Branch??



“Two Old Ones”

Photo by Ferdinand Reus from Arnhem, Holland
Wikipedia CC BY-SA 2.0

You can receive your Mountain Democrat by electronic media. Read at your leisure on your computer, tablet, or even your cell phone.

Call 209-742-1010 for the Mariposa club
or
559-658-2342 for the Oakhurst club.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Today's Date: _____

___ Mariposa: Annual Dues are \$10.00 per person
(Jan. 1 – Dec. 31) \$15.00 family
Lifetime membership \$150.00

or

___ Oakhurst: Annual Dues are \$5.00 per person
(Jul. 1 - Jun. 30)

___ New Member or ___ Renewal:

How did you find out about us? _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Physical Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

E-Mail: _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$_____

Please mail form and check payable to:

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