

Plymouth Area Democrats Meeting

Wednesday April 16, 2014

Joyce Weston, chair, began the meeting at 6:15. The meeting was unusual because the speaker spoke first. The business meeting commenced after the speaker. Joyce introduced Deb Reynolds. Deb Reynolds introduced our speaker Senator Sylvia Larson. She is Senate Democratic leader. She is 10th term. She represents District 15. For 2006–2010 she served as senate president. She has championed for reproductive rights for women, environmental laws, and marriage equality, and is currently championing the minimum wage increase, as well as many other causes. Lately she has worked very hard to get Medicaid expansion.

Guest Speaker– Senator Sylvia Larson

She applauded us on our amazing attendance, organization, and enthusiasm. She explained that we make a great difference in our community. She thanked Joyce, the officers, and Bob Lamb for their work. She explained that people often ask how it is down there in Concord. She said that being the minority has caused many issues and has limited their ability to pass bills. They are working hard to heal the damage caused by Senate Republicans. They did manage to pass a bipartisan budget. She spoke on the Medicaid expansion, which was a hard battle to fight. They have lost 6 months because of the roadblocks the Republicans put up, which has caused a loss of millions of dollars. Some other roadblocks have been against raising the minimum wage, repealing the education voucher program, and finally reproductive rights. She says that although Maggie Hassan and a Democratic House have helped them to fix the damage, it is not enough. We lost the last two seats in the house by 609 votes. We need to work hard to get the majority in the next election. She asked for our help. Tomorrow (4/20/14) is the vote on the repeal of the death penalty. They thought it was really close to passing, but now it is not looking good. They brought in some amendments to clarify the bill, but it doesn't have the votes. The repeal may be tabled, which would give some time to find some common ground, although they may just kill the bill outright. Also, they are voting on cell phone usage on the highway. It looks like this bill will pass.

Questions to Senator Larsen:

Isn't it costly to put some one to death – we don't have the facilities, correct?

Answer: We don't have a process and it costs us 1.7 million. It would cost us more to process the death penalty, then to house the criminal for life. One Republican was going to vote to repeal (Sam Cataldo), but jumped ship, and then other republican followed suit. Kelly Ayotte and John Sununu began making calls to stop republicans from voting to repeal.

What about the stand your ground law?

Answer: It is not a good law, and we would like to repeal it. The state needs to be blue, so we can repeal laws like this.

Gambling bill: where are you on this and what do you think will happen?

Answer: Larsen has moved her position over the years. She doesn't really like them, but over time she has come to the decision that the State can use the revenue. It is not pretty how we raise a lot of our money. We have had gambling in the history of our state. We could have one or two gambling venues where they have been in the past, but highly regulated. Because of the need for revenue, the choice has to be made. While sitting on the revenue board, she has seen many things cut because of lack of revenue. There is language in the bill for gambling addiction.

Question: I am worried that the money from the gambling will go into the pockets for campaign funds and outside interests.

Answer: it would be only about a 10% impact on the budget, and the influence will be limited. She isn't sure that we would be so reliant on gambling revenue it that it would make much of a difference.

What do you think university students can do to help to motivate and push the Democrat platform?

Answer: Getting feedback on what motivates kids to vote. Allowing out of state students to vote. Unless you elect the right people in the Senate, tuition will go up. Find an issue and rally them around that.

How to rally Democrats to go vote? Example of low turn-out for Cryans.

Answer: Constitutional amendments sometimes motivate them. Republicans use this a lot. Running a good strong Senate campaign.

What about the fate of the efforts to reverse "Citizens United," which one town did. Is there the possibility that this could go to the state?

Answer: There was a bill that would give an indication on a national level that the decision should be overturned, but the bill was killed.

Has NH accepted the Affordable Care Act?

Answer: We are working on the portion that the state had to approve. By July 1st it should be in place. It is 6 months late because the Republicans have dragged their feet.

Business Meeting:

Joyce recognized the elected officials that were attending the meeting, as well as the former officials.

March minutes: Approved

There was an addition to the February minutes: approved

Treasures Report: 2579.70 balance in the checking account.

Bylaw Changes: approved

Discussion on how to raise money for PAD

Bedrock Democrats of Grafton County sends out letter appealing for donations. Barely any of our emails were on the list. We are planning to use our own mailing list to reach the full membership. This will help to raise money for the office.

The garden tour is another way we are looking to raise money for PAD. We have 9 gardens so far. We need 45 volunteers that day! Speak to Barbara Fahey if you would like to volunteer.

Bill Bolton presented Bob Lamb with a plaque for his service to the Plymouth Area Democrats.

Martha Richards announced that the County Summit will be May 17, from 10am to 1pm in Canaan Meetinghouse.

May 21st is our next meeting. We are working on some other ideas for speakers.

Any other business?

PSU Democrats are hosting a panel discussion and film – “Refugees of Shangri La”– in Boyd on April 29, 7pm.

Ended– 7:42 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Therriault