



# Donkey Talk

August 2010

Meyerland Area Democrats Club: [www.meydems.org](http://www.meydems.org)



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The Meyerland Area Democrats Club is primarily composed of residents of the Meyerland-area election precincts. We are dedicated to the election of Democratic candidates and the promotion of issues of concern to Democrats.

The Club meets the third Monday of every month at Fadi's Mediterranean Grill, 4738 Beechnut across from Meyerland Plaza. Members meet at 6:30 p.m. to eat. The meeting and formal program begin at 7 p.m.

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Find "Meyerland Democrats" on Facebook and "like" us to get regular FB updates.

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## Aug. 16, 2010 Campaign Kickoff: Birnberg, Cohen, Ryan and others to speak at Fadi's

Harris County Democratic Chairman **Gerry Birnberg**, State Rep. **Ellen Cohen**, County Attorney **Vince Ryan** and other **elected officials** will be the featured speakers at our 2010 Harris County Blue campaign kickoff.

The event will be at Fadi's Mediterranean Grill at 4738 Beechnut across from Meyerland Plaza. The program begins at 7 p.m. You are encouraged to get there early for dinner as seating may be limited.

2010 is the year we can *turn Harris County Blue* and Democrats have a wonderful lineup of candidates for state, local and federal races. The ballot is headed by former Houston Mayor and candidate for Texas Governor, **Bill White**. We are excited about his prospects for a victory!

The stakes could not be higher for the Nov. 2 election, with an \$18 billion budget shortfall and redistricting of state representative and congressional seats facing the upcoming legislative session.

**We need your help to elect our good Democrats** at every level of government so the discussion can include NOT JUST cutting services such as education and Medicare. Find out how **you** can do as much or as little toward that effort as your time permits.

We look forward to seeing you on Monday, Aug. 16, at 7 p.m. (dinner at 6:30) at Fadi's, 4738 Beechnut. Come and hear Gerry, Ellen and Vince and let's take the next step to *turn Meyerland BLUE!*

**President Alan Guttman**

## 5 Things You Can Do to Turn Meyerland BLUE!

**1 Talk to your friends and neighbors about the Harris County Democratic Party (HCDP).** Encourage them to become HCDP supporters. Wear an HCDP T-shirt when you go grocery shopping and put an HCDP magnet on your car.

**2 Make 35 phone calls per week – that's only 5 calls a day.** There are 7,900+ Democrats in the Meyerland area. It will take roughly 226 hours collectively to call them all to Get Out the Vote. Your 5 calls a day will greatly contribute to this goal.

**3 Host a house party or block party for HCDP candidates.** Personal contact is the most effective form of communication. Inviting your neighbors and friends to meet a Democratic candidate in person creates a personal connection, which means they are more likely to vote in November.

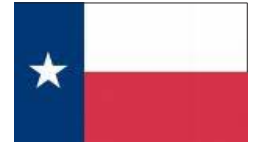
**4 Schedule 2 hours per week in the campaign office.** We could use your help at the main HCDP office, or at the field offices when they open in August. If you have free time, contact Sarah Hirsch at (713) 802-0085 to schedule some time to help.

**5 Get active online.** About 75 percent of the American public is now online, up from 68 percent in 2005. Social networking sites are used by 41 percent of Americans, up from 5 percent in 2005. The party has ramped up its social media efforts, bringing new faces to events and growing our e-mail list. Sharing HCDP content on Facebook and Twitter will establish the local Democratic presence online and will bring in new Dem voters. Facebook: [www.facebook.com/HCDP#!/HarrisCountyDemocraticParty](http://www.facebook.com/HCDP#!/HarrisCountyDemocraticParty) Twitter: @HarrisCoDems



# Filibusted: Texas Senators Exposed!

Editorial by Art Pronin



The House has passed more than 300 bills, including the public option, funding to prevent the layoffs of 900,000 local and state employees, jobs programs for inner-city youths and much more. The Senate however has been turned into a place where most legislation has gone to die.

Our **Texas GOP Senators Cornyn and Hutchinson** have assisted every time in turning the Senate into a fully dysfunctional body. How? GOP senators, a sum of 41 out of 100, have gone nihilistic.

The gamble is to stymie the slowly recovering economy, to further frustrate citizens by killing further job-creation bills, and worse, delaying unemployment insurance checks to those without work. The GOP is betting citizens won't catch on to their game: enrage citizens as teachers and others are cut and thus angry voters will vote out the incumbent party – the Democrats.

However, Americans are starting to figure out the game. The GOP is using a complicated set of Senate rules to slow down or slay hundreds of bills and nominees.

What rules? Well a major one is the filibuster. The filibuster isn't the one you recall with Jimmy Stewart standing on the Senate floor for hours fighting for his bill in the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

These days the GOP Minority Leader informs Majority Leader Sen. Reid a filibuster is on – meaning it will take 60 votes to break it and get the bill a vote on the floor. At this point, 41 senators are engaged in a permanent filibuster now of almost anything in need of a vote. In times past usually a bill was given the dignity of a vote on the floor. Now we face a radical break with history with filibuster invoked 112 times in 2 years.

The Constitution clearly invokes majority rule. And it specifies when a 2/3 majority is needed in Congress, such as to pass an override to a presidential veto. The Vice President is the tie-breaker vote if needed. But now with 60 votes needed for anything, the Vice President's key constitutional role is demolished.

We need filibuster reform. Sen. Reid has said reform is a must, that the Senate cannot survive as functional without it. When the Senate reconvenes for the next Congress the majority can create a package of rules to govern the body for the session. That is the best time to push for changes.

A nation cannot be governed if it needs 60 out of 100 senators to pass anything. Here are important items obstructed usually with some success by

41 GOP Senators:

- Unemployment benefits
- Wall Street reform
- 5-year extension of national flood insurance
- Comprehensive Energy and Climate Bill
- Funding to prevent layoffs of 900,000 state and local government employees
- Funding to prevent massive cuts to Medicaid and education
- DISCLOSE Act to force CEOs to tell what they pay for a candidate's ad (forces transparency in wake of Citizens United ruling by the Supreme Court)

Read more here: [http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/senate\\_fix/](http://www.credoaction.com/campaign/senate_fix/)  
<http://www.congressmatters.com/>

## State Democratic Convention, Corpus Christi June 25-26, 2010



(Above, left) A young man is inspired by the iconic image of Barack Obama.



(Above, right) On stage with the entire Texas Democratic Congressional delegation, Houston Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee gives a fiery address to 5,000+ delegates.

(Right) Texas Attorney General candidate Barbara Ann Radnofsky was a popular speaker at the Senate District 17 caucus, talking about her [www.suewallstreet.com](http://www.suewallstreet.com) campaign.



(Photos by Norma Eiman, President, Braeswood Area Democrats)



# Harris County Cronyism

by Diane Trautman, Ed.D., Democratic Nominee for Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector, [www.dianetrautman.com](http://www.dianetrautman.com)

In 2008 I was proud to be the Democratic nominee for Tax Assessor-Collector, proud to receive over half a million votes, and proud to receive the *Houston Chronicle* endorsement twice ... once for the general election and once for the appointment since my opponent quit three weeks after he was elected.

How many of you voted in 2008? How many of you think your vote counted?

It didn't count if you voted for Tax Assessor. Paul Bettencourt received 580,000 votes, I received 520,000 votes, Leo Vasquez received 0 votes, and Vasquez is now in office. Bettencourt effectively took away your right to choose your elected official.

Here are the facts about the "good ol' boy" cronyism that has been going on in the Voter Registration Division of the Harris County Tax Office before, during and since the 2008 election:

**Fact #1.** In 2008, thousands of voter applications were not processed in the 7 days allowed by law, causing many to be unable to vote in the historic election. Also, thousands of provisional ballots containing white-out and correction tape were not counted.

**Fact #2.** Bettencourt resigned three weeks after he was elected,

making a backroom deal with the Republican Party to handpick his successor, Leo Vasquez, a coffee company executive whom Commissioners Court appointed as Tax Assessor.

**Fact #3.** Two lawsuits were filed against Bettencourt/Vasquez for failure to process applications in a timely manner and irregularities in counting provisional votes.

**Fact #4.** During sworn testimony, it was discovered staffing was cut in the voter registration department from 30 to 5 right before the 2008 election. In addition, applications were rejected

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### *The Ed Johnson, Dwayne Bohac, Leo Vasquez and Paul Bettencourt Connection*

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on hyper-technicalities and outdated voter applications were given to deputy voter registrars. Most importantly, Ed Johnson, head of voter registration in the Tax Office, was found to have a second job, selling voter registration information to the Republican Party along with State Rep. Dwayne Bohac, owner of Campaign Data Systems.

**Fact #5.** Vasquez defended Johnson's moonlighting in a June 2009 *Chronicle* op-ed piece.

**Fact #6.** The lawsuits were settled. Vasquez admitted there were problems and agreed to remedy them.

There were some 20 items he agreed to address; then before the ink was dry, he said the lawsuit was frivolous and he had no intention of changing the way the Tax Office was run.

**Fact #7.** By February 2010, Vasquez had done nothing to address the 20 items in the lawsuit. After criticism from myself and others, he finally addressed one item by explaining online why certain voters were rejected. On March 2, Vasquez was defeated in the Republican primary by Don Summers, so he will have no incentive to implement the rest of the lawsuit terms.

Here's what we're up against: Vasquez will continue to disenfranchise voters until his term is up in November. There is nothing stopping Johnson from gaining access to our voter registration information, and Summers says he's going to "follow in Bettencourt's footsteps."

As long as Vasquez, Johnson, and the "ghost" of Bettencourt are in the Tax Office, our county electoral system and our right to vote is held hostage. The good news is when I'm elected, all this will change. We will have a service organization instead of a political organization in the Tax Office.

This time, make sure your vote counts. Vote Diane Trautman for Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector.

## Democratic 2010 Campaign Information

Harris County Democratic Party:  
1445 North Loop East #110, 713-802-0085, [www.hcdp.org](http://www.hcdp.org)

Fact Sheet: Differences between the Texas Democratic and Republican Party of Texas Platforms: <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2010/6/30/11324/7085>

Great December 2009 *Texas Monthly* article on Bill White: [www.texasmonthly.com/2009-12-01/feature2.php](http://www.texasmonthly.com/2009-12-01/feature2.php)

The Texas Democratic party has an excellent slate of candidates who are running on November 2. They need your help! There are links to each campaign at [www.hcdp.org](http://www.hcdp.org)

**Governor** - Bill White  
**Lieutenant Governor** - Linda Chavez-Thompson  
**Attorney General** - Barbara Ann Radnofsky

**Commissioner of the General Land Office** - Hector Uribe  
**Commissioner of Agriculture** - Hank Gilbert  
**Railroad Commissioner** - Jeff Weems  
**Supreme Court Justices**  
**Place 3** - Jim Sharp  
**Place 5** - Bill Moody  
**Place 9** - Blake Bailey  
**Court of Criminal Appeals**  
**Place 6** - Keith Hampton



Texas Tribune photo by Bob Daemrich

# Democrats “Fired Up” by Bill White’s Race for Governor

“We need Bill, we need Bill,” chanted the crowd at the American Bank Center as former Houston mayor and 2010 gubernatorial candidate Bill White rallied his party faithful to their feet.

The Corpus Christi *Caller Times* had a great spread on the Texas Democratic Convention, describing White’s attack on Gov. Rick Perry for his mansion spending, acceptance of federal stimulus funds and work ethic.

For the Texas Democratic Party’s YouTube channel including videos of White’s speech and others at the convention, go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/TXDemocrats>

White launched a series of attacks on his Republican opponent, who has been in office for 10 long years, ending

each point with the refrain, “Part-time Perry is in it for himself.”

White accused Perry of working on state business only seven hours a week, spending \$10,000 a month on a rented mansion as the state faces an \$18 billion budget crisis, and accepting federal stimulus money and using it as a source of state funding.

A *Houston Chronicle* article covered Perry’s speech to the Texas Farm Bureau, where he gave “short shrift” to the property rights issue causing a split between him and one of the state’s largest agricultural organizations.

Remember Perry served as Texas Agriculture Commissioner, 1990-1998. However, the Trans Texas Corridor Perry tried to cram down the throats of thousands of Central Texas landowners is a huge issue for the Republican-leaning group.

“Rick Perry gave a very patriotic speech. He didn’t address our issues, and we have issues with him,” said Mike Thompson, a Mount Pleasant

poultry producer. “I’ll tell you what I like about Bill White. He shot straight.”

As Meyerland Dems President Alan Guttman said, “That’s right – Texans are seeing Bill White as a straight shooter and Rick Perry ... well, he just shoots.”

## MeyDems phone bank nights at Bill White Headquarters

**When:** 2nd Tuesdays (Aug. 10, Sept. 14 and Oct. 12, at the White headquarters, anytime between 6:30 and 9:00 p.m.

**Where:** The White for Governor campaign office is located at 2100 West Loop South, suite 700. Go north on the 610 feeder, exit San Felipe Rd/Post Oak Blvd. Do a U-turn at the light, Bill White’s headquarters will come up on the right. Park in the visitor section of the parking garage. Go up to the 7th floor and follow the volunteer sign. Tell the front desk you’re here for the MeyDems Phone Bank Night!

Perry’s in it for himself. You can be in it for Bill White and Texas. Come join other Meyerland Democrats dialing to make a difference!

## HISD’s Grier Shoots Straight at MeyDems July 19 Meeting

Houston Independent School District (HISD) Superintendent **Terry B. Grier**, Ed.D., confirmed his reputation for straight talking in his speech to Meyerland Area Dems on July 19.

Grier arrived in Houston from San Diego just last fall. His speech touched on several things HISD is doing well, but moved quickly to a litany of challenges it must face. One daunting statistic: out of the district’s 200,000 students, 70,000 do not read on their grade level.

And while Grier said only 7 percent of HISD’s African-American or special education students will graduate from

college, he also said we “can’t afford to leave the brightest kids behind,” either. “We need to cover the top, middle and bottom,” said Grier.

The biggest challenge – and the one especially applicable to Meyerland-area residents – is that four HISD high schools and five middle schools are failing and at risk of being taken over by the state. Nearby Fondren Middle School is on that list.

His Apollo 20 school turnaround project is in direct response to that issue. To help make Apollo 20 a success, Grier emphasized the need for the community to become involved,

volunteering at an HISD school for tutoring or other service.

Grier said having a school taken over by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) would be very damaging to property values in the surrounding area.

For information on volunteering, go to [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org) and under “Community” on the home page, click “More...” That will take you to a page showing “Get Involved,” where you can click to see a list of opportunities.

