

The Newsletter of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee

June 2016 Volume 3, Issue 4

School Funding: No Easy Answers

by Michael Fruitman, Editor, The Democrat



The Panel Explains State, County, School Board Perspectives

Pictured Above (L to R): State Delegate David Bulova (37th District), School Board Chair Pat Hynes, Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, Supervisor Jeff McKay (Lee District)

It seems so simple, doesn't it? Why can't a county as rich as Fairfax fully and properly fund its nationally-ranked school system?

To find the answer, FCDC assembled a panel of experts to discuss the issues at its May 24 meeting. From the 37th House of Delegates District, Delegate David Bulova (House Education Committee); the Board of Supervisors, Chairman Sharon Bulova; Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay (Budget Committee Chair); and, from the School Board, Pat Hynes (Board Chair). Clearly, if these peo-

(continued on page 3)



Message from the FCDC Chairman Sue Langley

A sellout crowd of more than 300 gathered at the McLean Hilton Hotel May 1 for the annual Jefferson Jackson Dinner, the highlight social event of the season and our premier fundraising event of the year. We were treated to upbeat speeches by Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Julian Castro, Congressmen Connolly and Beyer, and former Secretary of the Commonwealth

Levar Stoney. We raised significant funds for the fall campaign through table sponsorships, ticket sales, and both live and silent auctions. Outstanding volunteers were recognized with awards.

Conventions were held in May for the Eighth, Tenth, and Eleventh Congressional District Democrats to choose their delegates to the National Convention beginning July 27 in Philadelph
(continued on page 2)

Deadlines for The Democrat

July 2016 Edition

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Message from the FCDC Chairman

Sue Langley

(continued from page 1)

ia. Both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders delegates were elected at these meetings, and a number of resolutions were passed for consideration at the state convention in Richmond on June 18. Each person who was seated as a CD convention delegate is eligible to attend the state convention.

Finally, nine field organizers hired by Virginia Victory 2016 (DPVA) arrived in Fairfax County to jump start this year's combined campaign. They will be assigned to the various magisterial districts to promote our Democratic candidates for president and congress. The field organizers will be spearheading efforts on the ground to retain our incumbents, Gerry Connolly and Don Beyer, and to pick up Barbara Comstock's seat with LuAnn Bennett. They will also work aggressively for the eventual presidential nominee of our party, Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders.

DPVA 2016 Field Organizers

Below are the names of the first wave of field organizers hired by the VaVictory2016 PAC who will head the grassroots ground game in Fairfax for this year's elections. The team will lead the combined campaign effort to elect a Democratic president as well as our two incumbent congressmen, Gerry Connolly and Don Beyer, and our challenger to Barbara Comstock in the 10th Congressional District, LuAnn Bennett. Additional staff will be added as the ground game increases throughout the summer. In the next wave, each organizer will be handling 10–12 unpaid interns to supplement paid staff effort.

The organizers have been assigned to the county magisterial districts, Fairfax City, and Falls Church City as follows:

Braddock District and Fairfax City: Ben Ernst

bernst@vavictory2016.org

Hunter Mill District: Richard Weiner rweiner@vavictory2016.org

Dranesville District: Dylan Igoe digoe@vavictory2016.org

Lee District: Veronica Ingham <u>vingham@vavictory2016.org</u>

Mason District: Sam Yi syi@vavictory2016.org

Mount Vernon District: Alexa Williams awilliams@vavictory2016.org

Providence District and Falls Church

Contact Benjy Mercer-Golden, Regional Field Director, Fairfax County bmercergolden@vavictory2016.org

Springfield District: Kirsten Schlegel <u>kschlegel@vavictory2016.org</u>

Sully District: Nick Parker nparker@vavictory2016.org

School Funding: No Easy Answers

(continued from page 1)

ple couldn't answer the question, no one could. While their answers were not simple, our representatives did not disappoint in their knowledge or desire to make improvements.

There are many constraints on what can be done that the public at large is not aware of. For example, specific formulas drive how much funding we get from the state; the amount allocated to Fairfax County has decreased because of the county's high property values and income relative to the rest of the state. The state funding formula does not take the level of ESOL or free and reduced lunch into consideration, thus further disadvantaging Fairfax County. While the county strives for a level revenue stream, this is not always possible. The Board of Supervisors did recently vote for a 4cent increase per \$100 of assessed home valuation, but even this was contentious. The only other taxes that the county can levy are the car tax, the business and professional license tax, and the commercial and industrial properties tax. All of these taxes are capped by the state. Further the Commercial and Industrial Properties tax can only be used for transportation purposes. Chairman Bulova called the process a "balancing act."

School Board Chair Pat Hynes said that while school revenues have increased, they have not kept pace with the growing number of students in the system—which has grown by 23,000 in the past 10 years. She surprised many in the audience by saying that almost 30 percent of Fairfax school students live in poverty. 30%! Many students live in homes where English is not spoken. And expenses are also rising for the system's 30,000 employees with regard to health care and retirement. So recent funding increases have only allowed the system to play catch-up.

According to Delegate Bulova, While Virginia still has basically agrarian tax structure, counties are further disadvantaged as they have more restrictions on raising revenue than do cities. The Commonwealth funds education at the level of (minimum) state standards of quality; we have to make up the difference to ensure the excellence that we have come to expect.

"If you live north of Fredericksburg, you're wealthy is a common misconception in the House of Delegates."

Skewed perceptions come into play as well. Supervisor McKay spoke of the stigma that exists: "If you live north of Fredericksburg, you're wealthy." Well, a lot of people aren't! In fact, he pointed out that the fourth larg-

est school district in the Commonwealth is just the population of students in Fairfax County who receive free or reducedcost lunch.

Taxes make up 65 percent of Fairfax's total revenue. And there are taxes over which we have no control: for example, while Fairfax County has the lowest cigarette taxes in Northern Virginia, that level is capped by the state. In addition, Virginia law requires basic parity between residential and commercial property taxes, so we cannot use the business tax rate as an offset to the residential one. Both residential and commercial taxes must be assessed at 100 percent of market value. It is generally understood that it costs far more to provide residential services than commercial ones, thus counties with smaller commercial tax bases, such as Fairfax, are further disadvantaged by the state funding formulas.

"...many teachers . . . can earn more in neighboring counties than here in Fairfax—in some cases \$15,000 per year more.

Fairfax County Public Schools is now spending \$1,000 less per student in real dollars than in 2008, which is significant. And the result of freezing teacher salaries has been that many

(continued on page 6)

FCDC Adopts Resolution Opposing "Right to Work" Constitutional Amendment

by Virginia Diamond, Chair, FCDC Labor Committee

FCDC joined dozens of other local Democratic committees as well as all of the congressional district Democratic committees in adopting a resolution opposing an amendment to the Virginia Constitution that would add the so-called "right to work law." The amendment will be on the ballot in November.

Dan Duncan, president of the Northern Virginia Labor Federation, pointed out that this proposed amendment is actually a scheme by national right wing outsiders, including the Koch Brothers, to hijack Virginia's Constitution for their partisan aims. "So-called right to work has been the law in Virginia for more than 70 years. There is no reason to tarnish our sacred Constitution with this amendment," Duncan said.

Let's put our energy into working together to support policies that create good jobs, fund our schools, and support vital services, not on these sorts of divisive and polarizing tactics.

VOTE NO on the "right to work" Constitutional amendment.

Please note: Inadvertently Virginia Diamond's article from May appeared again in an earlier edition of the June issue. Our mistake and sincere apologies for any inconvenience this might have caused. The correct article is included in this later edition of the June Democrat.

Lawyers United!

A Fantasy by Jim McCarthy, Springfield District

Economist Milton Friedman [MF], icon of free marketers, libertarians, and most conservatives, contributed to headaches and cut classes during my undergraduate studies. While some of his ideas may seem peculiar, others stubbornly maintain relevance in our current political climate. MF was especially indignant concerning the licensure of professionals, particularly medical practitioners, stating: "Licensure . . . frequently establishes the medieval guild kind of regulation, . . . " reducing quantity and quality. Keep in mind, this is the opinion of a Nobel laureate who also opposed the military draft in favor of a volunteer army and criticized the Founding

Fathers for creating a monopoly of the U.S. Post Office.

Imagine MF today, driving [which he also criticized the licensing of] along Braddock Road to the National Right to Work [NRTW] building to interview an attorney [NRTWESQ] and plead his case for legal intervention in his quest to become a lawyer. Perhaps the conversation might have proceeded like this:

MF: I need a really good attorney to help me fight for my right to work as understood in the international sense, like in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Rerum Novarum. I have a right to be a lawyer, to practice law.

NRTWESQ: Oh, that right to work concept is claptrap from the far left and an errant pope who did not understand economics. A document from the U.N.? Puhleeze! In America, we know what freedom is, and NRTW defines it for workers every day. Workers do not have to pay union dues and may still enjoy the benefits of the union's work. MF: That's great and I want to be in that boat. Look, I want to practice law but Virginia and bar associations require payment of fees and an extensive and expensive education. Obama and his administration issued a report on how licensure restricts job growth by 2.85 million

Lawyers United!

(continued from page 4)

and costs the public \$203 billion. This is a tailor-made issue for NRTW. Help me create a job! NRTWESQ: By definition, the report trivance to raise prices. Isn't that suspect is propaganda from a socialist administration. Licensure is good NRTWESQ: Well, yes, and our orfor the public, it keeps out bad actors and ensures quality services. Socialists and communists don't believe in job creation. MF: Come on, most of the high profile criminal cases today involve lawyers cheating someone. Haven't you read my books and articles demonstrating that licensure establishes a medieval guild kind of regu-

lation where the guilders can

charge higher fees and inflate their

own wages? You must know Adam

Smith's caution: People of the same

trade seldom meet together, even

for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or some con-

ganization fights against unions that MF: Oh, for God's sake! Tell me force employees to pay dues or fees you're just an associate just like the to get or keep a job. That's freedom and the right to work. Yes, lawyers are organized like a guild.

MF: Guild, schmild! It's a labor organization with a funny name just like a union. I still can't practice law. What do I have to do? Be like Dr. Rand Paul and create my own licensing organization? Lawyers write assured we will discuss your claim the bar exam, run the law schools, and populate the state's bar admissions committee. It's anticompetitive to participate. Guilds

are a dictatorship of the proletariat, a Marxist principle.

NRTWESQ: Well, maybe you have a point. I can confer with my colleagues and officers of the organization.

journeymen in the guilds or law firm associates. Not yet a master ready to make a decision for a client. NRTW campaigns around the country promoting freedom for others but not for your own trade?! NRTWESQ: It would take far too much time to explain all this. Rest and get back to you.

MF: What is your fee?

Just sayin' it coulda happened!

Join FCDC's Sustainer Society!

FCDC Sustainers are the backbone of our organization by making monthly or annual commitments to support the operations of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee (FCDC). Sustainers' contributions pay the headquarters' office rent, utilities and office supplies so we can help get Democrats elected. They literally "keep the lights on" here at FCDC HQ. Please become an FCDC Sustainer today!

> To contribute at the annual rate, click here. To download the printable Sustainer form, click here.

School Funding: No Easy Answers

(continued from page 3)

teachers, especially in midcareer, can earn more in neighboring counties than here in Fairfax—in some cases \$15,000 per year more. Naturally, we are losing teachers to our neighboring localities. We had a 200teacher shortage at the beginning of this year.

Less than 25 percent of county residents have children in our schools, and about 53 percent of our general revenue fund goes to the schools. Why? Listen to Sharon Bulova: "The educational system goes right to the heart of the quality of life in Fairfax County."

When you have a well-educated community, you have industry that wants to locate there, where they can find a good workforce; young people stay here, find good jobs, earn a good Things are getting better. But

income." This is what Fairfax County has always been about.

Discussion then turned to a meals tax, which will be on the ballot this November—for the first time in 24 years (it was rejected in 1992). The proposed 4percent meals tax (we are the out one) would raise about \$100 million per year, and up to \$70 million could be dedicated to the not to be beholden to the real schools. This would help relieve the pressure on the real estate tax and the car tax, although it would not be a panacea.

The school system still has tremendous financial needs: \$50 million to raise teacher pay to a competitive level, \$25 million to reduce class size, \$30 million for maintenance that has been deferred . . . these are just a few.

"...we have to diversify if we are not to be beholden to the real estate tax. The meals tax would help—a lot."

there is still much to do.

only jurisdiction in the area with- The meals tax would help—a lot. According to Chairman Bulova, we have to diversify if we are estate tax. Some 30 percent of the meals purchased in Fairfax. County are from people who do not live in the county. This is a way to raise revenue from nonresidents. So, what is the answer? As with most everything in modern life, it's complicated. There are things we cannot do, but there is much we can do. Thinking broadly. Working together.

FCDC Summer Interns Begin Work

With educational back- the interns' resumes grounds in Fairfax high schools or college credits toward bachelors' degrees, the FCDC 2016 summer intern program has begun, with about 30 young adults working parttime at our headquarters. FCDC began its intern class in 2008 with eight students. Several important projects will be tackled this summer, building

for ultimate employment offers when they begin their professional careers. They will mine data collected from member forms, internet outreach, and sign-up sheets from events. They will research political topics, contact voters, attend political events, and work to recruit volunteers for our grassroots campaign. The

group will get an upclose impression of partisan political activity at the operating level, which may teach

them whether politics is a profession they will want to pursue.

Pictured Below (L to R): Green Yun, Claire Roberts, Adam Benmhend, Sajal Rohatgi



Voter Registration and Education Committee Report Helping Seniors Vote by Janice Yohai, Vice Chair

Voter registration drives are not common in senior living facilities yet they can be a productive way for seniors who have recently moved to such facilities to update their new addresses and make sure their voices are heard.

Our SOS squad is on the move to register such seniors at their new addresses. The SOS Squad—Saving our Seniors' Votes—is a collaboration of the Voter Registration, Education, and Seniors Committees. FCDC

our work.

There may be obstacles for some registered seniors that prevent them from getting to their voting locations. While retirement communities may provide transportation, health issues may limit the ability to get to the polling location. Bad weather on election day can also be a factor in low voting rates. Also, because some retirement communities may not understand the option for early voting, if provided transportation is

members are invited to join us in slow or unavailable on election day, seniors may not vote. The SOS Squad can provide retirement communities with information about early voting and help with getting to the polls.

> Additionally, SOS Squad members can help seniors request absentee ballots online and provide assistance in understanding the form.

It takes a village. Please join the SOS Squad so we can bring in the Democratic vote. You can reach me at jayohai@cox.net.

Virginia State Democratic Party Convention Information

On Saturday, June 18 over 2,000 Democrats from across Virginia will attend the Democratic Party of Virginia's 2016 State Democratic Convention at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. They'll be making important decisions for our party including selecting additional delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia this summer, electing the VA DNC members, and hearing from statewide elected leaders. Advertised start time is 9:30 am.

Delegates and alternates to the State Convention are strongly encouraged to arrive at the **Greater Richmond Convention** Center early. Credentialing will begin at 7:30 am and will end promptly at 9:45 am. Lines for

credentials may be long, so the best approach is to give yourself the maximum amount of time possible to park, check in, get your credential, and find your seat in the convention hall.

Guests should plan to arrive between 7:30 am and 9:45 am. It will not be possible to receive a guest credential after 9:45 am.

All attendees of the 2016 State Convention must be properly registered and receive an official credential. There are two options for becoming registered and receiving your credential:

On Friday, June 17 you can use the Credentialing and Registration Window located in the Richmond Marriott lobby. Hours of operation will be 5:30 pm to 10:00 pm.

On Saturday, June 18 you can use the Credentialing and Registration desks located in the Atrium of the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Hours of operation will be 7:30 am to 9:45 am.

When attending the convention, there are several parking options available. A map of the area parking options is available through the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Virginia State Democratic Party recommends using the Third Street parking deck.

Click here for a full schedule of weekend events.

Information provided by the Virginia State Democratic Party.

National Affairs Standing Committee (NAC) Report

Sandra J. Klassen, Chair

Co-Author of *America's War Machine: Vested Interests, Endless Conflicts* Addresses National Affairs Committee

James McCartney, a WWII combat veteran and Washington reporter, died in 2011 with the book America's War Machine only partially completed. At the urging of his friends, his wife Molly, herself a reporter, completed it last year. She told the committee that several readers had declared that until the book, they had been unaware of the forces pushing the country toward armed conflict. Molly McCartney visited the Fairfax Democrats' National Affairs Committee (NAC) this spring to discuss their book.

The book argues that President Dwight Eisenhower's 1961 warning about the undue influence of the "military industrial complex" has gone largely unheeded. McCartney attributes the large number of American foreign military interventions since World War II to a variety of influences, which she concludes are difficult even for antiwar presidents to resist. Specifically, she describes

 the sway over Congress from defense contractor campaign donations;

- the influence of pro-war think tanks in Washington policy circles;
- intelligence agencies that produce exaggerated estimates of foreign threats;
- overseas interests, which she terms "the American Empire," including oil interests in the Middle East;
- an unnecessary surplus of nuclear weapons;
- political incentives that encourage spending on military programs that even the Pentagon does not want;
- the secrecy of a drone antiterrorist campaign; and
- a media that is all too often pro-war and uncritical of justifications used by previous presidents for military action.

McCartney concludes the book by acknowledging that any changes will be hard-fought. She offers a dozen suggestions for curbing America's "worship of war." Her suggestions include recognizing the cost of war, especially in light of the high and continuing costs of caring for wounded veterans. She also argues that the country should consider reinstating the draft, because the all-volunteer force places all of the burden of military conflicts on an extremely small percentage of the population, and therefore is largely unfelt by most Americans. McCartney's other suggestions include closing the revolving door between industry and the military and ending the secrecy of drone warfare.

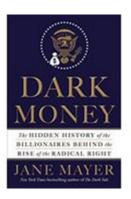
When asked for her best sources of information about foreign policy and the military-industrial complex, McCartney recommended David Sanger, Nicholas Kristof, David Ignatius, the New York Review of Books, New York Times, Daily New Yorker Newsletter, Google News, PBS nightly news, WTS News, Democracy Now, and The Nation magazine. Specific articles she recommended included The Atlantic's The Obama Doctrine, and Harpers' various articles on drones.

National Affairs Standing Committee (NAC) Book Recommendation

Dark Money:

The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right by Jane Mayer (NY: Doubleday, 2016)

Reviewed by NAC Member Dave Kuebrich, Braddock District



We must make our choice. We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both.

Charles and David Koch tie for the rank of fifth richest individual on the planet, each worth about \$54.3 billion, acquiring about \$2.3 billion of that since January 1 of this year. Jane Mayer makes them the principal antagonists in her compelling, carefully researched account of the new forms of hidden plutocratic influence that threaten to upend our democracy.

The Kochs are major players, in part, simply because of their fat wallets. But the political clout that attends stupendous wealth only partly explains the Kochs' power and the peril it poses to government as we have known it. Two other factors are key their lifelong commitment to a libertarian vision of low taxes and few regulations, and their *skillful and stealthy* pursuit of their dream. Their ideal government would be limited to providing personal security and protection of private property.

In describing the Kochs' strategy, Mayer points to the leadership of the politically savvy Richard Fink, a former assistant professor of economics at George Mason University who rather quickly became the Kochs' top political strategist. Fink proposes ties; secretly funding angry votthree interrelated measures for taking control of U.S. politics: supporting intellectuals who articulate the needed libertarian ideas; investing in think tanks that translate the ideas into workable policies; and subsidizing a movement that fuses special economic interests with citizen groups.

But don't do this openly.

Charles Koch has always believed it best to double-down on secrecy. As early as 1976, Mayer points out, he advised that to "avoid undesirable criticism," the control and direction of one's political efforts "should not be widely advertised." This has resulted in, among other

tactics, supporting like-minded organizations that cloak their political agendas inside neutral names and statements of mission; channeling monies through organizations such as Donors Trust that hide the givers' identiers such as the Tea Party; and hosting biannual summits, closed to reporters, where Republican candidates and strategists meet with the Kochs and their well-heeled allies.

The Kochs have announced that their political network will raise \$889 million for the 2016 election. This doesn't guarantee success, but it raises the stakes considerably. Democrats must forge a progressive agenda that mobilizes the 99% to show the Kochs "This is what democracy looks like!"

In My Opinion... Rebuild America, Rebuild the Middle Class

by Todd Smyth, Lee District

Democrats invest in the middle class because it creates a stronger, more stable economy that works better for everyone. Republicans crash our economy with trickle-down policies that hand our taxes over to the wealthy. They privatize government services to make it easy for the rich to rip off the poor. And they deregulate banks and corporations until they run our economy off a cliff. The results are always the same: The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Every time Republicans wreck our economy, Democrats pull us out of the wreckage by investing in the middle class, which creates a stronger, more stable economy that works better for everyone.

The trick to bringing wages back up for everyone and rebuilding our middle class is to not let Republicans Reaganomics, which handed over crash our economy in the first place. It takes a long time to recover from Republican policies. We need to replace Republicans in Congress with Democrats who will invest in the middle class to rebuild our infrastructure; pay women the same as men; reform our broken immigration system; invest in clean, renewable energy; remove loopholes and exemptions for highly profitable corporations; reform our financial system; provide paid family and medical leave; enact a higher minimum wage; improve pre-K and K-12 education; lower the cost of college; lower the cost of health care; and lower the cost of day care. These are all investments in the middle class that grow our economy from the middle out, creating jobs, spending, and stimulus that in turn

create a long-term, stable economy that works better for everyone, rich and poor. Let's stop making the same mistakes. The choice is simple, vote Democratic.

Republicans are running on the same trickle-down policies that crashed our economy in 2007 and the same ideas that destabilized the Middle East in 2003. Democrats are running on policies that created the most productive economies in our history and the same ideas that create peace and prosperity. The last two Republican presidents wrecked our economy and left us with recessions. The last two Democrats have fostered record job growth and booming economies.

In 1989, George H.W. Bush (senior) continued 8 years of trickle-down middle class taxes to the rich and helped large corporations rip us off by slashing regulations, which eventually crashed our economy and ended in a recession.

In the 1990s, Bill Clinton cut taxes for low-income and middle class working families, balanced the budget, pushed through the Family and Medical Leave Act, created 22 million new jobs, maintained peace and prosperity, and left a huge surplus and the most productive economy in our history.

In 2000, George W. Bush turned back to trickle-down policies with a vengeance and handed our taxes over to the wealthy, who used them to move millions of our jobs overseas. Bush gutted financial regulations and enforcement, which

helped banks, Wall Street, and corporations rip off the American people. He burned through our surplus and "borrowed" \$1.37 trillion from Social Security to pay for the worst strategic mistake in U.S. history, the Iraq War. He crashed our economy, which lost 8 million jobs and nearly burned down the entire world economy.

In 2008, Barack Obama saved us from a depression by investing in the middle class. He rescued the U.S. auto industry, improved and expanded access to affordable health care, cut our deficits by twothirds, and oversaw the highest corporate profits and stock market performance and longest period of continuous job growth in U.S. history.

Our recovery has been lopsided because for the past 40 years, Republicans have been trying to cripple labor unions by shipping millions of our jobs overseas and by opening the border with Mexico to help their corporate donors make billions using cheaper, nonunion labor. By crippling labor unions, Republicans weakened the Democratic Party, which helped them maintain control over the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. They have also provided billions in profits to their donors. The result has lowered the wages of everyone who works in America. Let's stop making the same mistakes. The choice is simple, vote Democratic.

Campaign Update: LuAnn Bennett



LuAnn Bennett's campaign to unseat Con-

gresswoman Barbara Comstock is off to a great start. Since Lu-Ann announced her candidacy in December, the DCCC named VA-10 one of its first "Red-to-Blue" races in the country. LuAnn also has the support of EMILY's List,

and the 10th District race was recently upgraded by the Cook Political Report and Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball.

Her campaign team is also growing. They recently opened a headquarters office in McLean and a field office in eastern Loudoun County. The campaign is already signing up volunteers for phone banks and will be beginning to knock on doors. If

you're interested in signing up to volunteer for LuAnn Bennett, please contact Meredith Nakayama at mnakayama@vademocrats.org.

The official office opening for LuAnn's McLean office will be held on Thursday, June 23, at 6:00 pm. The office is located at 6888 Elm Street, Suite 1C, McLean.

