

## Iowa Democratic Veterans Caucus by John Smola, Lt.Col. USMC (Ret)

The Iowa Democratic Veterans Caucus (IDVC) is an officially sanctioned caucus of the Iowa Democratic Party. The first meeting was held in Des Moines on March 31, 2007. At that time, a steering committee of approximately 12 people was formed. Robert Krause, of Fairfield, IA, was established as the chairperson.

The immediate goal of this Caucus is to establish a network of county veterans' caucuses and a veterans' liaison in every Iowa County as a function of their Democratic Central Committee. These county veterans' groups and their County Liaisons will work with the Congressional District Liaisons and the state leadership cadre to elevate veterans

and veterans' issues during the build-up to Iowa's first-in-the-nation Presidential precinct caucuses. As the first in the nation, what we do here in Iowa will set the stage for veterans all over the country.

The IDVC will also be working with Governor Culver and the Iowa General Assembly to elevate veterans' issues at the Statehouse as well.

Veterans who join are encourage to, "Consider this a second call to duty!"

Learn more about the IDVC by visiting their web site <http://www.vets.meetup.com/39>.

Look for the IDVC platform elsewhere in this newsletter.

## Do We Make A Difference? By Tom Hill

Although the Allamakee County Democrats engage in a variety of useful activities, ranging from highway clean-up to collecting donations for food pantries, the major reason most of us participate is to have an impact on the policies of our local, state, and national governments. The central way we do that is through involvement in elections. Because so many factors affect election results (e.g., the state of the economy, the public's mood, the attractiveness of the candidates, the amount of money spent on advertising), it is difficult to assess our impact on elections.

However, during the 2006 election our group's efforts seemed to have made a difference. Of the registered voters in Allamakee County, only 20% are Democrats, while 40% are Republicans and 40% are Independents. To win elections, not only do we need to turnout out the base, but we must also appeal to a large percentage of Independents (and hopefully, a few Republicans). When we compare the percentage of voters that went for Culver/Judge in 2006 versus the percentage who went for Kerry/Edwards in 2004, in every precinct in Allamakee County we saw an increase (ranging from a low of 2% to a high of 11%). The total increase was 5% (54% for Culver/Judge versus 49% for Kerry/Edwards). In addition, for every Democratic candidate running for state office in 2006, Allamakee County's support surpassed the state's average.

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Another measure of effectiveness is how we do with absentee ballots. Culver/Judge won 59% of the absentee vote in 2006, while Kerry/Edwards only captured 54% of the absentee vote in 2004. Although in an off-year election like 2006 we expect a lower turnout across the board, the amount of drop-off can still be compared. When we compare the percentage of absentee votes Culver/Judge got of the Kerry/Edwards absentee vote (68%) to the percentage of absentee votes Nussle/Vander Plaats got of the Bush/Cheney absentee vote (57%), we can see the Republicans lost 11% more relative to the Democrats.

Even in losing races, we can see the impact of our efforts. Dr. Seldon Spencer ran a thoughtful and enthusiastic campaign in 2006 against a well-financed incumbent in District 4. Although Dr. Spencer only won one of the 28 counties composing District 4 (Story County with 51.7% of the vote), Allamakee was able to capture the fifth best spot for him with 46.2% of the vote. Not bad for a supposedly Red County.

So, however fed-up we sometimes get with the political process—and heaven knows there is plenty to be concerned about—it appears that our time, money and hard work can make a significant difference in the outcome of our elections. That is one of the rewards Democracy promises us. Come join us for the next election.

## Voter Owned Iowa Clean Elections (VOICE)

By Karen Pratte

“People in politics will tell you they spend too much time seeking funds when they would rather be getting things done”

Our current elections system needs to change where people matter more and money matters less. Politicians should be spending their time focusing on voters’ concerns instead of courting big money contributors to fill their election and re-election bank accounts. We need Voter Owned Iowa Clean Elections (VOICE), the bill championed by Iowa Representative Pam Jochum and Iowa Senator Mike Connolly in the Iowa Legislature. VOICE would implement a system of public financing for legislative and statewide campaigns.

Modeled after similar successful public financed systems in North Carolina, Maine, and Arizona, the VOICE Act would provide public funds sufficient to run a competitive campaign to candidates who qualify. Qualifying candidates are those who collect a set amount of signatures and \$5 donations from within their district, which demonstrates broad-based community support. The candidate would then receive

a set amount of money from a public source but must agree to adhere to strict spending limits and forgo all private fundraising.

People in politics will tell you they spend too much time seeking funds when they would rather be getting things done. Voters will tell you powerful groups hoping to wield their influence by donating to campaigns drown their voice out.

VOICE would solve voters’ concerns and politicians’ money problems. It is already working in other states and can work in Iowa too.

Call or email Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal and Speaker of the House Pat Murphy and tell them it is time for VOICE to be passed.

**Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal**

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## Iowa Democratic Veterans Caucus Resolution for Nation’s Veterans

By John Smola

The Iowa Democratic Veterans Caucus is taking advantage of it’s “First in the Nation” presidential caucus status to shape the agenda for the nation’s veterans. A policy statement released at a press conference on the State Capital steps on November 10, 2007 is called ‘Four Points of Honor’. It establishes a proposed veterans agenda for Congress, the President, the Pentagon, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**The Four Points are as follows:**

**1 Veterans health care costs and budgets.**

The Iowa Democratic Veterans Caucus supports mandatory federal funding for veterans’ health care for all veterans.

**2 Veterans eligibility requirements.** Financial means testing, co pay and any or all other devices utilized to exclude veterans or limit veterans health care benefits must be rescinded.

**3 Equity for reserve and guard veterans.** All

reserve and guard educational benefits need to be brought to parity with the educational benefits of regular armed services veterans.

**4 Veterans special medical needs.** Increased emphasis needs to be placed on provision of treatment for the following physiological and psychological service related injuries and disabilities:

**a.** Mental disorders {with particular emphasis placed upon and directed toward post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)},

**b.** Medical and mental health services specific to women veterans,

**c.** Traumatic brain injury, and

**d.** Orthopedic injuries and amputation services.

We are working to include the Four Points of Honor in precinct, county, and district platform statements. For a complete study of the ‘Four Points of Honor’, visit <http://www.vets.meetup.com/39/>.