

Tuscola County Democratic Party Newsletter

October, 2023

Volume 2, Issue 10

Our Goals

- Ensure honest and transparent government.
- Restore and protect our environment.
- Support strong economic growth and opportunity.
- Strengthen voter access and turnout.
- Promote affordable education and health care for all.

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Fall Fundraiser and October Meeting

Our Fall Fundraiser will begin at 5 p.m. on **Thursday, October 19, 2023**, at the Brentwood, 178 Park Drive, Caro, MI. Please join us for burritos, salad bar, drinks, and a chance to win a fabulous door prize, all of this for only 20 bucks. Please call Deb Parker at (989) 673-6569 before October 16 to let her know you're coming.

Our regular October meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Highlights of Our September Meeting

Chair Deb Parker called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 21. Fifteen members and four guests were in attendance. Sharene McCloy and Sharon Schwab told us about plans for Tuscola Dems' participation in the Pumpkin Festival on October 7 and 8. Joe Gutowski told us about the current activities of the Rural Caucus. Mark Putnam told us about the current activities of our Candidate Recruitment Committee. Deb Parker announced that the Tuscola Dems will be having a Fall Fundraiser on October 19 at the Brentwood. Mona DeQuis announced that in November the Michigan Democratic Party will be hosting a "Thumb Summit" for officers of Democratic county parties in Michigan's Thumb. The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.

Tuscola Dems Welcome Your Donations



To donate, simply aim the camera on your smart phone at the QR image shown here, and it will take you directly to ActBlue, where you can donate whatever amount you desire.

Tuscola Dems at the Pumpkin Festival

We were at the Pumpkin Festival on Saturday, October 7, and Sunday, October 8.



Here are Deb Parker, Lisa Bertsch, and the Democratic donkey at our booth on Saturday, offering items for sale to fund our community service projects, handing out bags of our Democratic popcorn, and telling folks about the wonderful things Democrats are doing for ordinary Americans.

We dedicated our work at this year's Pumpkin Festival to the memory of fellow Democrat, David Sierocki, who passed away in August. That's a picture of him on the table.



We had a float in the Pumpkin Festival Grand Parade on Sunday. The theme of this year's parade was "Rockin' Around the Pumpkin Patch," and we chose "Joe Biden's Greatest Hits" as the theme of our float to remind folks what our President has accomplished during his first two years in office.

Here we are getting ready to roll. Mark Putnam is already on board the float strumming his guitar and looking cool while Sharon Schwab tries to get the rest of us into position. That's a life-size cardboard cutout of President Biden (with guitar) and Vice-President Harris on the float.

What Lisa McClain Said vs. the Truth

In a recent message to constituents, our congresswoman, Lisa McClain, said the following:

She said: “I have fought tooth and nail against Biden's reckless student loan forgiveness scheme since he first announced it. Thankfully, the Supreme Court struck it down as unconstitutional. However, the Constitution doesn't seem to matter to President Biden, so he went ahead and issued another loan forgiveness order that flew in the face of the Supreme Court ruling.”

The truth is: Back in 1975, Michigan students could finance a college education without loans or help from their parents. A young adult working full time for twelve weeks in the summer at \$4 an hour (\$23 an hour in today's money) could earn about \$1,900 (\$10,600 in today's money) That was enough to pay for tuition, room and board, books, and beer at a Michigan public university for a year. Those days are long gone. Today it costs about \$25,000 a year to attend a public university in Michigan, and good-paying summer jobs, grants, and scholarships are scarce, so the only way most students without family support can come up with the money is to borrow it. Nowadays more than half of Michigan undergraduates borrow money to finance their education, and among those who have borrowed, the average debt is \$36,000. After graduation, many of these borrowers don't make enough money to pay even the accumulating interest on their debt, let alone make progress on the principal, which puts them in a tough spot. Many of them have to delay or forgo marriage and starting a family, buying a home, and saving for retirement and their own kids' education. Some of them have stopped paying off their student loans, which badly hurts their credit rating and may make them ineligible for additional aid and government benefits.

On August 4, 2022, President Biden announced a debt relief plan for student loans to individuals who earn less than \$125,000 a year or couples filing jointly who earn less than \$250,000 a year. On June 30, 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Biden administration overstepped its authority when it offered this plan, saying it needed the endorsement of Congress before undertaking so costly a program. On August 22, 2023, President Biden rolled out Plan B — a more modest debt-relief plan that he calls the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) program. This plan isn't new. It replaces the existing REPAYE (Revised Pay As You Earn) plan and offers more generous terms. The SAVE program calculates loan payments based on the borrower's income and family size — not their loan balance — and forgives remaining balances after a certain number of years. The Biden administration says that the SAVE program will cut the monthly payments of some low-income borrowers to zero, will save many middle-income borrowers around \$1,000 per year, will prevent balances from growing larger because of unpaid interest, and will get more borrowers closer to loan forgiveness faster.

Republicans, predictably, have gone nuts over the SAVE plan and quickly introduced legislation to block it. We'll see what happens.

She said: “On Thursday, I held a hearing about President Biden's so-called Inflation Reduction Act and how it was one massive lie sold to the American people. Since Biden and Congressional Democrats rammed this bill through both chambers and into law, we have seen prices skyrocket and inflation remain high. Americans are spending \$709 MORE per month on everyday goods than they were before this bill was passed. And instead of using it to unlock American energy, Biden double-downed on an expensive and wasteful Green New Deal agenda, which only adds more costs every single time we fill up our tanks at the pump.”

The truth is: On August 16, 2022, President Joe Biden signed the so-called Inflation Reduction Act into law. Since then, the annual inflation rate has fallen from nine percent to about three percent, but economists say the Inflation Reduction Act wasn't responsible for the decline. They say it happened largely because (1) the supply chain kinks that caused shortages coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic got unsnarled, (2) the price of oil has fallen since it spiked in 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine and sparked international sanctions, and (3) the Fed slowed demand by raising its benchmark interest rate.

While it seems to have had no effect on inflation, the Inflation Reduction Act does provide enormous benefits to ordinary Americans, including:

- Prescription drug price reform: The Inflation Reduction Act will allow Medicare to negotiate the price of certain prescription drugs, bringing down the price that seniors pay for their medications. Medicare recipients will have a \$2,000 cap on annual out-of-pocket prescription drug costs, starting in 2025.
- Affordable Care Act subsidy extension: Currently, medical insurance premiums under the Affordable Care Act are subsidized by the federal government to lower premiums. These subsidies, which were scheduled to expire at the end of this year, will be extended through 2025. Approximately 3 million Americans could lose their health insurance if these subsidies weren't extended.
- Energy security and climate change investments: The bill includes numerous investments in climate protection, including tax credits for households to offset energy costs, investments in clean energy production and tax credits aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the Inflation Reduction Act will raise \$737 billion in revenue, pay \$437 billion in expenditures, and result in a deficit reduction of more than \$300 billion over the next decade. Not a single Republican in either the House or Senate voted for this legislation, mostly because they didn't like the way the bill will raise revenue:

- It creates of a 15 percent corporate minimum tax rate. Corporations with at least \$1 billion in income will have a new tax rate of 15%. Stock buybacks by corporations will face a 1 percent excise tax. Taxes on individuals and households won't be increased.
- It increases IRS funding by \$80 billion over the next 10 years, enabling them to properly audit the tax returns of wealthy Americans who tend to file complicated tax returns.

She said: “In a secretive deal, President Biden negotiated with Iran and unlocked over \$6 billion in frozen assets for the regime. Make no mistake about it, this was a negotiation with terrorists, and it cannot go unnoticed. I am incredibly angry that Biden gave billions to Iran, which will undoubtedly go towards state-sponsored terrorism perpetrated by the Iranian regime that often targets U.S. soldiers overseas.”

The truth is: This wasn't a secretive deal. Soon after President Biden took office, Secretary of State Blinken started negotiations with the Iranians and other foreign governments over the release of Americans being detained overseas, and he has kept Congress informed about the process every step of the way.

Biden didn't give Iran anything. On September 8, Secretary Blinken issued a waiver that allows the transfer of \$6 billion of Iranian money that has been sitting in restricted South Korean accounts to restricted accounts in Qatar without worry of invoking U.S. sanctions. This is money South Korea owed Iran — but had not yet paid — for oil purchased before the Trump administration imposed sanctions on such transactions in 2019. Even though this is Iran's money, the Iranian government cannot touch any of it. All they can do is submit purchase orders to the Qatar National Bank for food and medicine, which are in short supply in Iran and not under U. S. sanctions. The bank would pay for the goods and Qatari companies would deliver them to aid agencies in Iran. Each transaction would be subject to approval by the officials of the U.S. Treasury Department.

As a part of the deal, the U.S. also dropped charges against five Iranians, several of whom are permanent residents of the United States. Two of the Iranians decided to return to Iran, two decided to remain in the U.S., and one decided to go to a third country where he has family.

In exchange, Iran released three individuals being held in Tehran's infamous Evin Prison — (1) Siamak Namazi, an Iranian-American businessman convicted of collaborating with a foreign government and imprisoned since 2015, (2) Emad Sharghi, a Iranian-American businessman convicted of espionage without a trial and imprisoned since 2020, and (3) Morad Tahbaz, an Iranian-American businessman convicted of "contacts with the U.S. enemy government" and imprisoned since 2018. The Iranians also released Mr. Namaze's mother and Mr. Tahbaz's wife, who were not in prison, but blocked from leaving Iran. They also released two other detainees who remain unnamed at the request of their families. One is a businessman from California, detained nearly a year ago. The other is a retired woman from California who worked for humanitarian aid groups in Afghanistan and was arrested by the Iranians in June of this year.

On September 18, these seven individuals boarded a plane to Qatar and then flew on to Washington to reunite with families.

Trump's Plans If Elected to Another Term

Trump is planning a sweeping expansion of presidential power if voters return him to the White House in 2025.

He intends to bring independent agencies — like the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission — under direct presidential control. He's planning to draft an executive order requiring these agencies to submit any new regulations or guidelines to the White House for approval before issuing them. Congress originally created these specialized agencies inside the executive branch and delegated to them some of its power to make rules for society. But it did so on the condition that it was not simply handing off that power to presidents to wield like kings. They put commissioners atop them whom presidents could appoint but couldn't fire before their terms were up and maintained control of their budgets to keep them accountable to lawmakers.

He also intends to strip employment protections from tens of thousands of career civil servants — government employees who are supposed to be nonpartisan professionals with protections against being fired for political reasons. While Trump was president, his aides drafted an executive order that stripped Civil Service protections from about fifty thousand career federal employees and reclassified them as employees who serve at the pleasure of the president, which means he could fire them at will. Shortly before the end of his term, Trump signed the order, which became known as Schedule F, but President Biden rescinded it soon after he took office. Trump has vowed to reinstitute Schedule F if elected to another term.

He has also vowed to impound funds, or refuse to spend money appropriated by Congress for programs he doesn't like. Congress banned this tactic back in 1974 because they felt Nixon was abusing his authority when he took upon himself to impound funds that Congress had appropriated, but Trump has declared that presidents have a constitutional right to impound appropriated funds and said he will start doing so again if elected to another term.

Trump and his allies are making no secret of their intentions. They have discussed them openly, proclaimed them on Trump's campaign website and at his rallies, and described them in white papers. The two driving forces behind Trump's plan to expand presidential power are his own campaign organization and Project 2025, a \$22 million presidential transition operation that is currently preparing policies, personnel lists, and transition plans to recommend to any Republican who wins the 2024 election. Project 2025 was cooked up by the Heritage Foundation, a think tank that has shaped Republican policy since the Reagan presidency.

Project 2025 is based on so-called "unitary executive theory," which rejects the idea that the federal government is composed of three separate branches with overlapping powers to check and balance each other. Its adherents argue that Article 2 of the Constitution gives the president absolute control of the executive branch, so Congress cannot empower agency heads to make decisions or restrict the president's ability to fire them.

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to live.



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