

The Champaign County Democrat

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007



"Now it is our responsibility to carry forth that vision of a new America...A new America with a vibrant and strengthened middle class for whom college is affordable, health care accessible, and retirement secure. A new America that declares our energy independence, promotes domestic sources of renewable energy, and combats climate change. A new America that is strong, secure, and a respected leader among the community of nations."

— Speaker of the U.S. House, Nancy Pelosi, at the opening session of the 110th Congress, January 4, 2007

County Board Democrats Elect Pius Weibel Chairman

A nearly-unanimous vote by Champaign County Board Democrats at the December 4 board organizational meeting elected District 7 Democrat Pius Weibel to the leadership post of board chairman. Weibel won the post with 14 out of 15 Democratic votes after five roll call votes were taken on a succession of ballots that began with four county board members vying for the job.

Democrats Weibel, Barbara Wysocki (District 9) and Tony Fabri (District 6), and Republican John Jay were nominated on

the first ballot. With 26 of 27 board members present, the first vote was Jay: 11, Fabri: 9, Wysocki: 4 and Weibel: 2. At the end of the third ballot, the vote was Jay: 11, Fabri: 7, Wysocki: 4 and Weibel: 4.

Despite having the majority of Democratic votes, Fabri withdrew his name from nomination in an effort to move the process forward, asking Democrats to unite in support of Weibel. Republicans remained united in their votes for Jay. On the fifth roll call vote, Wysocki and supporters

Brendan McGinty (District 9) and Carrie Mellin (District 7) voted for Weibel, to give him the 14 vote majority needed. Steve Beckett (District 9) voted for Wysocki, who had served as board chair since 2004, when she was elected to the leadership post with 12 Republican votes and just three Democratic votes.

Also at the December 4 meeting, Democrat Tom Betz (District 8) was unanimously elected with 26 votes to serve as county board vice-chair.



Democratic State Senator Mike Frerichs and wife Laura visit the newly renovated Senate Chambers at the State Capitol in Springfield.

A Front Row Senate Seat for Frerichs

On January 10, Gifford Democrat Mike Frerichs was inaugurated in the Senate Chambers of the State Capitol in Springfield with four other new Democratic State Senators in Illinois. Senator Frerichs has a front row seat on the right side of the aisle in the Senate chamber, where Democrats now hold a 37 to 22 majority. Frerich's seat assignment is on the right side of the aisle because there are now too many Democrats to fit them all on the left side of the chamber.

Senator Emil Jones was elected again as the Senate President and Debbie Halvorson was appointed again to serve as Senate Majority Leader.

Mike was assigned a new office on the first floor of the State Capitol, next to the north entrance. Mike has opened his new district office, conveniently located in downtown Champaign at the Illinois Terminal Building, where it is accessible from buses across Champaign-Urbana. His office is located on the south end of the second floor.

"I am grateful for all the help from volunteers that helped elect me State Senator. I look forward to representing the citizens of our area and taking on this enormous new challenge," said Frerichs.

Tony Fabri Appointed County Auditor

Democratic Party Chair Tony Fabri, a six-year veteran county board member, has been appointed to replace Mike Frerichs as Champaign County Auditor for the remainder of the term that runs through November 2008. The Champaign County Board approved the appointment in a 19 to 7 vote at a January 10 meeting.

Because Frerichs is a Democrat, the Democratic Party was allowed to nominate a successor. Fabri was nominated for the

appointment by the Champaign County Democratic Central Committee at a special meeting held on January 4. Royal resident Kevin Sandefur, a longtime Democrat and labor activist, was also under consideration for the office. With weighted voting based on the number of Democratic primary election ballots cast in their precincts, committee members cast 2,777 votes for Fabri and 506 for Sandefur. Nearly all committee members were present to vote.

INSIDE

Tony Fabri on the Champaign County Auditor's Office

Meet the New County Board Chairman, Democrat Pius Weibel

February 27 Primary Election—Candidates for At-Large Seats on Champaign City Council

Democrats Can Be Proud of Our Tough, Independent Auditors



CHAIR'S CORNER BY TONY FABRI

My sincerest thanks to everyone who supported me in my recent selection as Champaign County Auditor. The overwhelming votes of confidence from both the Democratic Central Committee and the Champaign County Board were encouraging and appreciated.

Until recently, only three people since 1976 had held the office of Champaign County Auditor: Laurel Prussing, Gerrie Parr, and Mike Frerichs. All three were Democrats, and all three left behind a tradition of integrity and fiscal responsibility of which we all can be proud. While preparing to become only the fourth Champaign County Auditor in three decades, I met with each of the three previous officeholders, seeking advice and perspective. All three were very helpful, and each reminded me of how important the independent Auditor's Office is to county government.

Long before becoming Mayor of Urbana, Laurel Prussing was elected County Auditor in 1976. While not an accountant herself, Laurel hired the County's first accountant and rapidly increased the professionalism both of her office and of county government in general. Laurel was an aggressive watchdog of tax dollars, who often confronted county officials about wasteful or improper spending.

Gerrie Parr worked in Prussing's office before winning election to the position of Auditor herself in 1992. Gerrie, too, had the courage to stand up to County officials and often criticized the County Board for its wasteful spending. At one point, Republicans on the Board got so fed up with her independent financial reports that they tried to silence her by cutting her budget. Eventually, the Republicans backed down, and Gerrie's independent financial analysis continued.

Mike Frerichs became Auditor when Gerrie Parr retired in 2003. Like Prussing before him, Frerichs came to the office after serving on the Champaign County Board. Frerichs continued the tradition of professionalism and of being a watchdog for County tax dollars – he was one of the first to raise the alarm about financial troubles at the County Nursing Home. Republicans criticized him for doing so, but time has proved Frerichs right and his critics wrong.

With only about a week's experience on the job myself, I still have much to learn about my new position. However, the more I learn about the daily functions of the Auditor's Office, the more I'm convinced of its value to Champaign County government and taxpayers. The Auditor makes sure your tax dollars are spent appropriately – in accordance with county policy, state law, and generally accepted accounting principles. Because the Auditor is elected directly by the people, the official is directly accountable to the people, not to the County Board or County Administrators who would otherwise appoint or hire the Auditor.

Not just Democrats, but everyone can be proud of the tradition of integrity and fiscal responsibility in the Champaign County Auditor's Office over the years. I will continue in that tradition, and I will work tirelessly to make sure we all can continue to be proud of our elected County Auditor.

Introducing Our New Democratic Champaign County Board Chairman

A LETTER FROM PIUS WEIBEL

First, I want to sincerely thank everyone who has supported me as a county board member and most recently in my short tenure as the County Board Chair. For those of you who do not know me, I came to Champaign-Urbana in the Fall of 1978 as a graduate student in the UI Department of Geology.

After graduate school I accepted employment at the Illinois State Geological Survey, where I have studied the geology of many areas of the state. A couple of notable studies that I have participated in include the site study of the village of New Valmayer, which moved after being destroyed after the 1993 Mississippi River flood, and study of the "Giant City" structures in Giant City State Park in the Shawnee Hills.

In the early 1990's, my spouse, Susan Feldman, and I were actively involved as members of the Board of Directors of the McKinley Foundation. Sometime in the middle 1990's, while standing in line to vote, I had a conversation with one of the election judges, who suggested that I consider becoming an election judge. I consider this event to be the beginning of my political career because, as an election judge, I became more interested in local politics. The election judge, incidentally, was Vashti McCollum.

When District 7 county board representative Steve Shoemaker, (who I had met through the McKinley Foundation), was planning to move to another district, I was asked to run for his seat in the 2004 election in a joint campaign with District 7 board member Jan Anderson. Since my election to the board, I have served on the Highway and Transportation and the County Facilities Committees. In the summer of 2006, I became vice-chair of the Facilities Committee, and most recently was elected as County Board Chair.

As Chair, the initial important issue has been to complete and open the County Nursing Home. To date, I am pleased that there has been steady progress towards that goal. We have received a renewal of our permit and are in the process of going through final inspections by the Illinois State Board of Health. During the last few weeks, staff have been working at the new Nursing Home thoroughly cleaning and preparing the facility for the anticipated move in the next month or so.

There is, however, still more to the Nursing Home issue. The County Board has to determine what to do with the old Nursing Home, how to decrease the operating deficit of the Nursing Home operation, to deal with a possibility of a non-compliance fine from the Illinois Health Facilities Planning Board (as a result of the mold and HVAC incidents that occurred during construction), and finally, to recoup monies that the County spent as a consequence of the mold and HVAC incidents.



Pius Weibel and spouse, Susan Feldman

February 27 Primary Election Contest for Champaign City Council Seats

Because there are nine candidates who are vying for three at-large seats on the non-partisan Champaign City Council, there will be a Consolidated Primary Election in the City of Champaign on Tuesday, February 27. Voters will be asked to vote for up to three of the nine candidates on the primary ballot. The top six vote-getters will go on the ballot in the April 17 Consolidated Election as nominees for the three at-large seats, which have four year terms.

For Champaign City Council



GIRALDO ROSALES

618 W. Hill Street Champaign, IL 61821

Incumbent Champaign City Council member Giraldo Rosales was elected in 2003 and is the first Latino to serve on the council. Prior to joining the council, he served as Vice-Chair of the Human Relations Committee of Champaign.

Just seven years old when his family came to the U.S. to escape Castro's government, Rosales grew up in Chicago. He attended the University of Illinois, majoring in Spanish Education. He taught in Chicago schools for 11 years and returned to UI for graduate study. He is employed as Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Illinois.

Rosales is a member of Rotary and does volunteer teaching in their program for bilingual children at Champaign's Booker T. Washington Elementary School. He serves on the boards for United Way of Champaign County and the Champaign County Arts, Culture and Entertainment Council.

"I will always have a keen interest in assisting the underclass, the working person, the elderly, the "mom and pop" industry. These are the people who have no 'special interest groups' to keep them secure," said Rosales.

The *Champaign County Democrat* newsletter invited candidates who are affiliated with the Democratic party to submit personal profiles for publication. Three candidates provided profiles and are seeking Democratic support: incumbent City Council member Giraldo Rosales, former Democratic County Board Chairwoman Patricia Avery, and community member Annette Williams.



PATRICIA AVERY

1308 W. Clark Street Champaign, IL 61821

Patricia Avery brings eight years of County Board experience to her bid for City Council. First elected to the County Board in 1998, she was re-elected in 2000 and 2004. In 2000 she was elected by the County Board to serve as Chairwoman and was the first African American, first woman and first Democrat to lead the board, serving for two terms.

Avery's experience on the county's Policy Committee, Finance Committee and Facilities Committee and her service in the roles of county liquor commissioner, township appeals hearing officer and labor negotiator make her well-qualified for a city council seat. She has also served as Chair of the Regional Planning Commission and Chair of the Champaign Consortium Policy Board.

Avery is employed as the Executive Director of Champaign-Urbana Area Project, a community-based organization that seeks to reduce/eliminate juvenile delinquency. She has been a strong advocate for social justice and women's and children's issues. "The Champaign City Council needs new ideas, new leadership and a friend to all people regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation or economic status," said Avery.

save the date!

Spring Democratic Dinner
Sunday, April 1
 (No Foolin!)
Laborer's Hall, Urbana
 Social 5:00 pm, Dinner 6:00 pm
 \$35 per person prepaid,
 \$40 per person at the door
 For reservations call Mary Klein,
 384-5371



ANNETTE WILLIAMS

505 Louisiana Ave. Champaign, IL 61820

Born at Burnham Hospital, Annette Williams was raised on a farm in rural Champaign. She has a B.A. degree in Elementary Education and taught in Chicago's inner city schools. Returning to CU, she worked in area schools as a teacher's aide and substitute teacher for 20 years while raising her family. In the 1960's, Williams was involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements and to this day, she renders her time and loyalty to these causes. She is active in her church and volunteer work in the community.

"We are all connected and all want to be valued and heard," said Williams. "Here in Champaign we have a great deal for which I am thankful. We have dedicated people, fine institutions, advanced systems providing most of us 'the good life'. Our people are our most important resource and we need to reflect that as we grapple with issues such as balancing our business incentives with providing basic assistance to the most vulnerable among us. I am eager to participate with other council members in resolving issues and creating policies that achieve the common good of all our citizens."

The Champaign County Democrat

Champaign County Democratic Central Committee
P.O. Box 1455 Champaign, IL 61824

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All Democrats Are Invited!

Last Friday Democratic Socials

5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

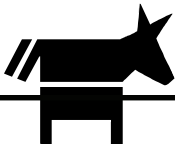
January Social: Friday, January 26

Democratic Headquarters
14 E. Washington St. Champaign

February Social: Friday, February 23

at the home of Tony Fabri
308 N. Edwin St. Champaign

\$8.00 per person suggested donation



Democratic Meet Up!

Thursday, February 15

7:00 pm

**Democratic Headquarters
14 E. Washington St.
Champaign**

**Issue Discussion on
SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM
The "tax swap"**

All Democrats welcome, come join the discussion. State Senator Mike Frerichs and representatives from Champaign and Urbana schools have been invited to attend. Beverages provided, snacks to share are welcome. For more information, call Peggy Kovacic, 359-3760.

CALENDAR

DEMOCRATIC OFFICE HOURS

14 East Washington Street, Champaign
Phone: 359-3760
Office Open Thursdays: 11:00 am-1:00pm

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

7:00 p.m. at Democratic Headquarters
14 East Washington Street, Champaign

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26 LAST FRIDAY DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 pm at Democratic Headquarters
14 East Washington Street, Champaign
All Democrats welcome. Please bring a snack to share if you can. Suggested donation \$8.00.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27 MARCH ON WASHINGTON

Action to end the Iraq war, sponsored by United For Peace and Justice. For information see www.unitedforpeace.org or call 212-868-5545.

JANUARY 29 – FEBRUARY 5, 2007 FILING PERIOD FOR PETITIONS FOR APRIL 17 CONSOLIDATED ELECTION

Filing period for candidates for school board, library districts, park districts and community college board

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15

DEMOCRATIC MEET UP

7:00 pm at Democratic Headquarters
14 East Washington Street, Champaign

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23 LAST FRIDAY DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL

5:30 – 7:30 pm at the home of Tony Fabri
308 N. Edwin St. Champaign
All Democrats welcome. Please bring a snack to share if you can. Suggested donation \$8.00.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 CONSOLIDATED PRIMARY ELECTION FOR CHAMPAIGN CITY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

7:00 p.m. at Democratic Headquarters
14 East Washington Street, Champaign

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14 DEMOCRATIC MEET UP (tentative date)

7:00 pm at Democratic Headquarters
14 East Washington Street, Champaign

SAVE THE DATE: SUNDAY, APRIL 1 DEMOCRATIC SPRING DINNER