

# Siskiyou Democrats Grassroots News

Issue #12 – December 2019

## WE LOVE A PARADE!



Join Audrey Denney & Elizabeth Betancourt  
March in the Fort Jones Christmas Parade!  
Saturday, December 14, 2019  
1:00pm to 2:00pm  
Fort Jones Main Street *(details on page 5)*

## The Special Election for Assembly: How did we do?

Although Elizabeth Betancourt lost in the special election in November, she's running again for the same office in the March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 primary election. Continuing our support for this great candidate, we intend to use all we've learned from our efforts in the recent election, and to keep building on improvements from past elections for this office.

Let's look at the numbers. First, in November 2019, Elizabeth received 5,018 (46%) votes compared to Meghan Dahle at 5,982 (54%). Although we thought 5,000 votes might be enough to win in our county, the turnout was a bit better than we anticipated at 40%, so 6,000 would have been a better estimate for winning.

By contrast, the special election primary held on August 27 had a 35% turnout with Elizabeth receiving 3,763 votes (40% of the total). Elizabeth **increased her votes by 1,255** from the August election and went from 40% of the total vote to 46% - a 6% increase! And in the August primary, the Republican candidates received 5,651 of the votes (combined), and only **increased by 331 votes** in November - going from 60% of the total vote down to 54%.

**So all the phone calls and postcards made a big difference in getting out the vote!** We're moving in the right direction. It's also interesting to look at the trends in the Assembly races over the past five elections. The table below provides the percent of the vote received by the Democratic Assembly candidate in the past. The 2019 election had the highest percentage for a Democratic candidate in the last five elections – nice work everyone!

Percent of Vote Received by a Democratic Candidate for CA Assembly Seat – AD1					
Geographic Area	November 2012	November 2014	November 2016	November 2018	Nov. Special 2019
AD 1 Total	34%	30%	26%	37%	42%
Siskiyou County	36%	28%	28%	38%	46%

### What's Happening

#### SISKIYOU DEMOCRATIC GRASSROOTS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 3, 2019: Yreka YMCA or  
Tuesday, December 10, 2019: Mt. Shasta Library

Meetings begin at 6:00pm, and everyone is welcome! The same agenda is used for both meetings, so attend either one and get involved! It's fun!

#### SISKIYOU DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 11, 2019: Best Western, Mt. Shasta  
Meetings begin at 6pm, and all are welcome to attend.

### In This Issue

Still guided by the Denney campaign's informal poll, we're moving on to **campaign finance reform**. We link that seemingly impossible goal to the vital importance of the vote, of grassroots action, and of recent successes in the Assembly election (above).

Then we move to the malign influence of dark money, our Congressional candidates' positions, and the small but mighty weapons we can all bring to our fight against the daily corruption of our democracy.

# CORRUPTION, HELPLESSNESS, AND CITIZEN ACTION

By Abigail Van Alyn

*You know, now, you know, with the advantage of hindsight, you're going to think that I'm incredibly naive, but I couldn't imagine all of the things that have happened over the last six or seven months. I just couldn't imagine it. – From the deposition of Marie Yovanovitch, ousted US Ambassador to Ukraine*

*They say Trump is making Russia great. That's basically accurate. The chaos brought by Trump into the American system of government is weakening the United States. ... And that's why we love him... The more problems they have, the better it is for us. –Karen Shakhnazarov, CEO of Mosfilm Studio and a prominent fixture on Russian state television.*

*And I can tell you I have not found much hope in politicians and corporations. It is the people who are now our greatest source of hope. –Greta Thunberg, climate activist*

From geopolitical criminality (extortion, bribery, the giving and receiving of illegal foreign campaign contributions); to massive self-dealing, statehouse gerrymandering, abusing free speech to incite violence; to hometown shenanigans (like tax evasion, or breaking up a family farm in order to maximize federal subsidies), the army of corrupt actors we find on all sides can seem overwhelming. Combine that with Citizens United and engines of hate speech and propaganda like Facebook, Twitter, talk radio, and Primetime Fox, and you have a truly formidable adversary for any citizen trying to do the right thing.

So maybe it's not surprising that the hundreds of Democrats now engaged in Siskiyou County grassroots organizing have met many disaffected citizens who rarely use, or have given up, their most important small weapon: the vote. "The whole thing is a mess, I don't want to be involved." "I don't do politics." "I just want to get on with my life." These are the kinds of things volunteers hear, even from registered Democrats. And then there's: "I don't know who to believe, so I don't believe anybody." How are we supposed to respond to that? Here are some ideas:

We can deploy two other powerful weapons: information and resistance. As Bill Moyers recently put it, "Voting is easy, democracy is hard. Democracy is what happens between elections." He went on to say that what happens between elections is education of self and others, and resisting what he calls the three false muses: propaganda, sentimentality, and degradation. Resisting a cynical, dark view that we all take pleasure in hate, and want above all to be dominated. Resisting disinformation, and the spin that lies are "messaging," that politics is a violent game best played by strong men, and that criminal behavior and gangster-speak are just part of the "brand."

**But most of all, citizens can recognize and support candidates with integrity, like Audrey Denney.** In the short term Audrey has pledged to run a campaign free from corporate and PAC donations. But knowing that this puts a huge burden on the average citizen, she's thinking long-term as well. She supports efforts to overturn Citizens United, give tax credits to small donors, and to explore public campaign financing initiatives like Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program. She supports grassroots organizing across CA-D1, generously sharing her time and energy. And on the campaign trail, she models hard work, respectful resistance, and tireless truth-telling. She knows that every small vote makes us all stronger, and that only together can we restore our democracy. For a short Audrey video, and more from Moyers on campaign finance reform, see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ec8n3xD2DM>

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-open-mind-bill-moyers-on-the-conversation-of-democracy-part-i/>



Audrey's campaign focuses on connecting with voters – using a grassroots approach to identify their concerns.

# Grassroots Organizing: The Way to Win Elections

By Robin Richards



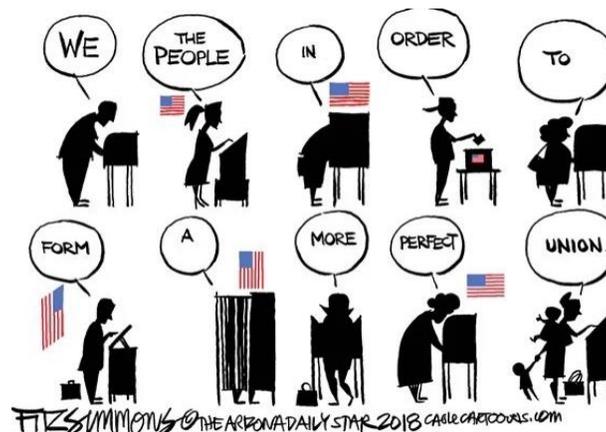
In Siskiyou County we are faced with the question: How do we, as Democrats, win elections? This is particularly difficult with low turnout (only 40% in the last special election) or apathy (“I don’t want to be involved” or “My vote doesn’t matter”). In *Groundbreakers: How Obama’s 2.2 Million Volunteers Transformed Campaigning in America*, we learn that the strength of Obama’s campaign “came from unpaid local citizens who took responsibility for organizing their own neighborhoods – months, even years, before the election.” And he won.

So what is grassroots organizing? Here’s one definition: “A **grassroots** movement is one which uses the people in a given district, region, or community as the basis for a political or economic movement. **Grassroots** movements and organizations use collective action from the local level to effect change at the local, regional, national, or international level.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grassroots>

In rural areas like Siskiyou County, where media (newspaper and television) play a very minor role in campaigning, it will be our own personal contacts that will make a difference. We’re developing a group of precinct leaders who are working with their neighbors, encouraging them to become involved in elections by helping with canvassing, postcard writing, phone calling and other activities to support our candidates. Winning elections will take all of us working within our local neighborhoods, talking to voters individually about their concerns, and encouraging them to vote.

Believe it: YOU can make a difference! We’ve made a great start. We’ve significantly increased the votes for Democratic candidates in the past few elections with our grassroots efforts, and we’ve only just begun! So when you have even a little time, help in a campaign. It’s fun, and you’ll meet all sorts of wonderful people. Attend one of our Grassroots Committee meetings (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays of each month) to find out more. Everyone welcome!

**Meantime, why not start here? Join in the Fort Jones Christmas Parade with Audrey Denney and Elizabeth Betancourt.** Bring your friends, march with these great candidates, and show what Democrats can do when we stick together. There’ll be cider and snacks at City Hall, hosted by the Democratic Central Committee. Big Fun!





## Resources

**Winter is coming. Time to grab some hot cider, pull the chair in front of the fire, and dig into that stack of books and list of podcasts that's waited all summer.**

### **RESOURCES OF THE MONTH**

#### ***Groundbreakers: How Obama's 2.2 Million Volunteers Transformed Campaigning in America***

by Elizabeth McKenna and Hahrie Han, Oxford University Press, 2014

The Obama campaign, as never before, engaged citizens in the work of practicing democracy. The multi-year, multi-billion dollar operation elected the nation's first black president, raised and spent more money than any other election effort in history, and built the most sophisticated voter targeting technology ever. This book describes how.

#### ***Blowout*** by Rachel Maddow, Crown Publishing, 2019

The legendary TV news host takes on the international corruption resulting from global dominance by the petro-chemical industry. The subtitle says it all: *Corrupted Democracy, Rogue State Russia, and the Richest, Most Destructive Industry on Earth.*

#### **Brennan Center for Justice**

<https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/reform-money-politics/public-campaign-financing>

The Brennan Center is a nonpartisan law and policy institute, “striving to uphold the values of democracy.” Founded in 1995 by law clerks of Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., it combines in-depth policy development and legal advocacy aimed at crafting and advancing a “transformative reform agenda — solutions that aim to make American democracy work for all.”

#### ***Dark Money*** by Jane Mayer, Doubleday, 2016

Focused heavily on Koch brothers Charles and David, this is *the* book on how undisclosed and hidden, even illegal, money moves through our politics. The goal of the political “investors” profiled here is to undermine democracy, in order to establish a system of governance even arch-conservative William F. Buckley dubbed “Anarcho-Totalitarianism.” A must read.

#### ***21 Lessons for the 21st Century*** by Yuval Noah Harari, Spiegel and Grau, 2018

A probing and visionary investigation into today's most urgent issues, as we move into the uncharted territory of the future. How do computers and robots change the meaning of being human? How do we deal with the epidemic of fake news? Are nations and religions still relevant? What should we teach our children? Harari addresses the challenge of navigating life in the face of constant and disorienting change, and raises the important questions we need to ask ourselves in order to survive.

### **MARCH IN THE FORT JONES PARADE! Audrey Denney and Elizabeth Betancourt will be there!**

**Meet at the Fort Jones Elementary School at 12:30pm to line up for the parade. Join us after the parade for coffee, hot chocolate and treats at the Fort Jones Community Center, 11960 East St. Everyone is welcome to the parade and reception - bring your friends and family!**

#### **Your Democratic Central Committee of Siskiyou County (DCCSC):**

Officers: Carolyn Miller - Chair, Alice Rogers – Vice Chair, Katherine Shelton – Secretary, Robin Richards – Treasurer; Members: Neldena Anderson, Kate Coggin, Rick Green, Ann Herfindahl, Al Lugo, Larry Marks, Bill McKillop, Karina Pollard, Maggie Robeson, Steve Robeson, Daniel Soltis, Abigail Van Alyn Booraem, Dolly Verrue, and Karen Zeigler. For more information, visit our website: [siskiyoudemocrats.org](http://siskiyoudemocrats.org) or Facebook page: [SiskiyouCountyDemocrats](https://www.facebook.com/SiskiyouCountyDemocrats). Send mail and donations to: DCCSC, Post Office Box 4, Mt. Shasta, CA 96067.