The election in 2016 should represent a clear choice for the American people. They will have to choose between a right-wing agenda of tax cuts and breaks for the rich and corporations; unfettered free trade; a reversion to the abuses of health insurance companies that took place prior to passage of the Affordable Care Act; cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid; and virtually every program that sustains working families, seniors, and low-income people. This agenda will be supported by The United States Chamber of Commerce, The Wall Street Journal, Fox News, and right-wing radio talk-show hosts. Because this agenda is unpopular with many Americans, efforts will be made in every public forum to keep it as obscure as possible and hide it behind a series of manufactured scandals designed to tear down support for liberal candidates.

The only way that Democrats can counter this is to be loud and clear as to what they stand for—and not run away from a progressive agenda that most polls say reflects what the majority of American people want. Recently I read an article by U.S. Bernie Saunders of Vermont, where he clearly articulates the Progressive position. I would like to repeat his main points for you and add a few of my own. According to Saunders, the following is what Democrats should say they believe:

We believe that the greatest moral, economic, and political issue of our time is the growing level of inequality. The current situation, where the top one-tenth of one percent earns as much as the bottom 90 percent, is unsustainable and immoral. The current system of tax breaks and special privileges for large corporations and the very wealthy must be reversed. The too-big-to-fail banks must be regulated to prevent a repeat of the abuses that caused the 2008 recession and the financialization of our economy by Wall Street must be stopped. On the other hand, measures such as increasing the minimum wage and supporting labor unions must be taken to put money in the hands of the middle class so they can spend it in the economy.

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As a corollary to this, **we believe** that democracy means one person one vote. It does not mean that the Koch brothers and other billionaires can spend unlimited sums of money on campaigns. Citizens United must be reversed and real reform brought to campaign spending so that that big money does not have such a great influence on public elections and, ultimately, on public policy.

**We believe** that health care is a human right, not a privilege. The U.S. must join the rest of the industrialized world in providing health care to all its citizens, without exception. Obamacare may be improved, but it must not be eliminated leaving citizens vulnerable to the worst abuses of private insurers. Private insurance companies and drug companies should not be making huge profits, which result in the U.S. spending twice as much on health care than any other nation with outcomes that are often not as good.

**We believe** that a quality education should be available to all Americans regardless of their income. **We believe** that all children should be able to get the head start that pre-school provides. **We believe** that education budgets should be the last, not the first, to be cut when revenue is needed. **We believe** that higher education should be considered a public investment and hundreds of thousands of young people should not be in a position where they cannot afford it, or they have to go deeply in to debt to achieve their educational goals.

**We believe** that the scientific community is right, that climate change is real and caused by human activity. **We believe** that the U.S. and local governments should prepare for the effects of climate change and work to transition our energy system away from fossil fuels and toward sustainable energy.

**We believe** that we must rebuild our crumbling infrastructure. This is not wasteful spending but rather an essential investment that could create millions of well-paying jobs. What we do not need to do is maintain a bloated military that spends as much as the rest of the world’s military combined.

**We believe** that a comprehensive immigration policy is needed. Such a policy will have a positive effect on our economy. We cannot have millions of hard-working immigrants and their children living in constant fear of deportation.

By and large, polls show that the American people support such a progressive agenda, but that the Democratic Party has yet to make it clearly its own. As Democrats we must speak up and articulate our positions whenever and wherever possible. If we want to be in a position to enact all or even part of this agenda, our leaders must speak up and not let our voices be drowned out by the conservative media, which spouts half truths and engages in scandal mongering.

Best Wishes,

Jane

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**Upcoming Films and Book Club Selections**

**Peacock Hall, 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.**

- April 13 Film — *Wadjda*
- May 12 Film — *Pay to Play*

**Gateway MPR 2, 3 p.m.**

- April 6 Book Club — *Methland*, see page 5
- May 4 Book Club — *The Partisan Divide: Crisis in Congress*
Wonder when the Rossmoor Plaza upgrades will be done? Will the Safeway project ever get off the ground? And what about that promised Starbucks?

Any and all audience questions will be fair game on Thursday, March 26, when Walnut Creek Mayor Bob Simmons speaks at the Club’s monthly membership meeting. The town square, which as always features information on candidates and other political issues, begins at 6 p.m. when doors open at the Event Center. Mayor Simmons’ presentation begins at 7. There will be plenty of time for questions, and refreshments will be served.

Simmons was first elected to the Walnut Creek City Council in 2008. He served as mayor in 2012 and is serving again in 2015. He is a former member of the Walnut Creek Planning Commission and served on the Park, Recreation, and Open Space Commission from 1999 to 2004, including as chairman in 2003. He is widely known for his “Second Saturday Walks with the Mayor,” where residents are invited to join him on walks around Walnut Creek. The routes are mapped out in advance and anyone is welcome to join him. He explains on his website that the relaxed nature of the outings—he is known to dress in shorts and a golf shirt—allows for conversations with residents that might never arise in the council chamber.

In 2010, Simmons became a Master Gardener through the Contra Costa Master Gardener Program, a program where volunteers gain knowledge and gardening skills then pass it on to other volunteers.

Mayor Simmons was born and raised in Wisconsin, where he earned his BA in Economics in 1970 and his law degree in 1973. He worked as general counsel for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and moved with his wife to Walnut Creek in 1987. When he retired in 2004 he was the regional attorney for the Department’s Pacific Region, and supervised 25 attorneys in three states.

After retiring from the agency he became a mediator for the Congress of Neutrals, with a special focus on civil harassment mediation. He has two grown sons, both of whom still live and work in the area. Bring your questions and concerns about Rossmoor’s host city to the mayor’s presentation. Everyone is welcome, and there is no charge. If you have questions, please call Elaine McGrath at 944-9767.

2010 United States Census Results for Walnut Creek

Walnut Creek had a population of 64,173. The median age was 47.9 years. The racial makeup of Walnut Creek was:
- 78.7% White
- 12.5% Asian
- 8.6% Hispanic or Latino of any race
- 4.2% from two or more races
- 4.5% from other races, African American, Native American, or Pacific Islander

The population was spread out, with:
- 16.7% under the age of 18
- 5.6% aged 18 to 24
- 23.6% aged 25 to 44
- 27.5% aged 45 to 64
- 26.6% 65 years of age or older

The average household size was 2.08. 21.1% of households had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older.
Beloved Sommeliers Retire

As Rossmoorians most of us are quite familiar with both the bittersweet moments of retirement and the subtle notes of vanilla, oak, and pear in a great glass of Chardonnay—none more so than the Club’s very own sommeliers Andy Okumoto and Eldon Rowe, who are hanging up their bottle opener and ice scoops after more than 14 years on the job. In all that time neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night kept them from faithfully toting cases of wine, water, and sodas to DoR events. “Lifting the 16-pound cases of wine got to be too much,” said Eldon, regretfully.

Both Andy and Eldon say they have enjoyed their DoR bartending days immensely, with nary a down side. “I enjoyed the interaction with people,” said Andy. “And we never had to play bouncer, never once had a belligerent drunk.”

Tastes have inevitably changed over the years, of course, as palates have become more educated and refined. “We’ve gone from 2-Buck Chuck to 3-Buck Chilean,” said Eldon, adding that, overall, members drink more white than red. “Sometimes they ask for red, sometimes for white, sometimes for Blue Nun,” he laughed.

Another upnote: “The surprise on people’s faces when they find out they don’t have to pay,” said Andy. He added that everyone has been very appreciative of their service and that they will miss it.

Fittingly, during their tenure they kept up with the techy Bay Area’s latest technological advances. “About five years ago we got an electric bottle opener,” Eldon said. Seriously!

Thank you, Andy and Eldon! And, members remember to thank them for their many years of service when you see them at DoR events.

What’s Up With the DoR Budget?

The pie charts below show DoR’s income for 2014 and projected income for 2015. As you can see, the great bulk of what we bring in comes from annual membership dues and revenue from our dinners.

The bulk of our budget is 63% for meetings and dinners and 22% for speaker fees. It is critical that we meet our membership goals since these funds allow us to continue obtaining the outstanding speakers our membership has come to expect.

If you haven’t re-upped and paid your dues for this year, please send in your check with the form on page 7. Our programs depend on it! Thanks,

Nancy Meredith, DoR Treasurer
If you are looking for a book that will challenge any preconceived notions you may have about race and the United States justice system, this is your book. Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, traces the history of African Americans and the U.S. legal system from slavery, through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Drugs, and right through to the present. She cites U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have legally allowed the decimation of fair treatment of, primarily, Black and Latino men in the criminal justice system.

In a book dense with statistics and court cases, Alexander argues that the negative identities of minority men have been consciously defined by a racially prejudiced society. While all the while publicly supporting the concept of “colorblindness,” the criminal justice system has been complicit with opportunistic politicians to create, in Alexander’s words, “a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status…”

Anyone seeking to understand that having an African American President and numerous successful Black business people—not to mention hundreds of Black star athletes and movie personalities—is not “the rest of the story” must read this book. Among many other positive reviews, *The New York Review of Books* wrote that this author has the “ability to distill and lay out as mighty human drama a complete argument and history.”

This book would make an excellent focus for a book group, and could easily cover a month’s worth of discussion. It also comes with a study guide and call to action.

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DoR’s March book club selection, *Methland: The Life and Death of an American Small Town*, by Nick Redding, is much more than just another book on the growing methamphetamine problem in America. It chronicles, in rare, polished prose, the descent of Oelwein, Iowa, into poverty as corporate mega-food producers buy out local food production facilities, in some cases cutting wages from $18 an hour (plus benefits), to $8 an hour (without benefits). The necessity to work many more hours for less money at more than one job created a perfect breeding ground for the local production of methamphetamine, which both provides additional income and enables its users to remain alert and working with little rest or sleep—at least in the early stages of addiction.

The lethal combination of few opportunities for employment and big agribusiness’s aggressive recruiting of undocumented immigrants—who are understandably reluctant to complain about their low wages and working conditions—feeds the drug production, which in turn becomes its own problem as the town spirals into poverty, eventually losing its public services and even its schools.

The book club will meet on Monday, April 6, at 3:00 p.m. in Gateway, MPR #2.
State Transportation Guru Speaks at April 23 Meeting

California Transportation Commission Executive Director Will Kempton will speak at the Democrats of Rossmoor’s monthly membership meeting on Thursday, April 3, at the Fireside Room. The Town Square begins at 6 p.m., followed by Mr. Kempton’s presentation at 7. Refreshments will be served, everyone is welcome, and there will be ample time for audience questions.

Mr. Kempton was appointed to his position in January of this year. He brings more than 40 years of transportation, public service, and governmental affairs experience to his new position, including as executive director of the Orange County Transportation Authority, director of the California Department of Transportation, and executive director of the Santa Clara County Traffic Authority.

Former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Kempton in 2004, where, according to the AllGov website, he spent five difficult years as director of Caltrans, years marked by employee furloughs and threats to employee compensation. At the time he was quoted in an employee newsletter as saying, “Five percent you can live with; 10 percent, ouch; 15 percent, that’s really hard to live with.” When Schwarzenegger left office Kempton was hired as executive director of the Orange County Transportation Authority, stepping from the frying pan into the fire in what the publication Mass Transit called “the worst economic period in the agency’s history.”

Kempton reports to the 11-member commission, which is responsible for providing programming and funding of several billion dollars annually for highway and rail transportation projects, in partnership with regional transportation agencies and Caltrans. The commission also advises the secretary of the California State Transportation Agency and the Legislature on key transportation policy matters.

Joan Buchanan Loses State Senate Race

Former Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan lost her bid for the 7th Senate District in a special election held on St. Patrick’s Day. Buchanan came in third among the top three contenders, all Democrats.

With 20% of eligible voters voting, former Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer received 32.8%, Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla 24.9%, and Buchanan 22.6%. Since no candidate received more than 50%, there will be a runoff election May 19th between Glazer and Bonilla, the top two vote getters.

Buchanan’s defeat is a big disappointment for DoR; many members worked hard on her campaign, hand writing nearly 1,500 postcards urging voters to vote for her. DoR endorsed Buchanan, a popular Assemblywoman among Rossmoor Democrats.

Buchanan thanked her campaign volunteers at her campaign headquarters in San Ramon on election night. Volunteers kept track of votes as they became available, gathered to show their support, and presented Buchanan with a drawing of her likeness.
Democrats of Rossmoor 2015 Membership Dues

Membership runs January through December and costs $20 per person.

Check One: [ ] New member [ ] Returning member

Name(s) ___________________________________________________________ Date __________ 
Please print.
Address ____________________________________________________________________________

Phone ___________________ Email ________________________________________________

Are you a registered voter? _______ Are you a registered Democrat? _______
(We need this information for the Democratic Party, Region Two)

Can you occasionally volunteer for any of the following?
_____ Voter Registration _____ Phoning on behalf of Democratic Party candidates
_____ Putting together mailings _____ Event set-up

Place your check (made out to Democrats of Rossmoor) and this form in an envelope and:
• Leave it in the Democrats’ mailbox at Gateway during office hours,
• Mail it to Patsy Sharaf, 3441 Golden Rain Rd. #4, Walnut Creek, CA 94595, 
• Or bring the form/check to the Membership Table at any meeting.

Thank you for joining the Democrats of Rossmoor.
Save the Date

DEMOCRATS OF ROSSMOOR BUFFET DINNER
Thursday, May 28, 2015, at the Event Center
5 p.m. Social Hour — 6 p.m. Dinner — 7 p.m. Program

Your social chairpersons are happy to announce that the Hamilton Catering Company—which received great reviews from you at our last dinner—will also cater the May 28 dinner. We promise to put together a similarly scrumptious meal, complete with hors d’oeuvres and dessert (remember that great lemon meringue pie?). …Stay tuned for more details…

Member Name(s) _____________________________________________________________

Guest Name(s) ______________________________________________________________

Phone #_____________________________________________________________________

Email Address_________________________________________________________________

Reserve by May 22. $30 per person. Total amount submitted ________________________

Please make your check out to Democrats of Rossmoor.

Put this form and your check in an envelope, and either:
• Mail to Jane Williams, 2200 Golden Rain Rd. #6, Walnut Creek 94595
• Or leave in the Democrats of Rossmoor mailbox at Gateway.

Many thanks from Rose, Jane, and Elaine