



# The Spokesman

WYOMING'S DEMOCRATIC VOICE

FALL 2007



## *From the desk of Nancy Freudenthal*

November 2007

Dear Democratic Friend,

The 2008 election is less than a year away, and we must begin now to focus on electing Democrats who will work for real progress for Wyoming's working families.

We have seen what Democrats in the Legislature and in the Governor's Office can do. Placing the interests of Wyoming's people ahead of divisive partisanship, Democrats have recorded some remarkable successes. In just the last few years, we have:

- Worked to create the Hathaway Scholarship Program, which will help make college affordable for all hard-working high school students.
- Worked to create the Wildlife Trust Fund, to preserve wildlife habitat for future generations.
- Provided essential money to improve and build important infrastructure for our communities.
- Eliminated the sales tax on groceries.

Still, we have much work to do. Families all over the state suffer from a lack of affordable quality child care in their communities. We must continue managing the current energy boom while protecting our environment. We need to work to ensure that our citizens have access to health care.

We know people in Wyoming will elect Democrats who will campaign hard and govern well. We won three seats in the state House in 2006, and voters did not turn down a single Democrat seeking re-election to the Legislature. And, after four years of showing Wyoming what kind of leadership he can provide as governor, my husband was re-elected with 70 percent of the vote.

But these successes cannot happen without the important support of people like you. We need your help in providing our candidates the resources they need to launch strong campaigns. **Please make a contribution today to the state party of \$200, \$100, or whatever you can afford.**

The money you contribute will go directly to the 2008 Wyoming Coordinated Campaign. It will be used to train candidates for the Legislature, to train volunteers to help get out the vote, and to tell voters about our positive agenda for the state. By contributing today, you will provide the critical support needed at this early stage of the 2008 campaign.

Thank you very much for your support. It makes a big difference.

Sincerely,

Nancy Freudenthal

*Chairman's Corner*

# Organizing for 2008 begins now

## State party plans to hire regional organizers across the state, hopes to fill every ballot slot for next year's election

When I was elected chairman six months ago, I announced my goal of making the Democratic Party competitive in every single corner of the state. Now, a year before Election Day 2008, I remain committed to this goal. I am asking for your help to continue strengthening all 23 of our county parties and to field candidates for every seat on the ballot in your county.

One of my first acts as chairman was to open a dialogue with party leaders in every county to offer support from the state party to strengthen their organizations. This is one part of our 23-county strategy for Wyoming.

I am pleased to announce that we are in the process of hiring regional field organizers across the state. These new staffers will be able to work more closely with county leaders and better deliver the services of the state party.

I have visited many Wyoming communities in the past six months. So have the other members of our Executive Committee and our three staff members. We will continue our travels around the state, primarily to find out what your county party needs to become more viable and to let you know what resources we can make available for you.

We are also trying to collect the names and e-mail addresses of

activists and anyone else interested in being on our contact list, as part of our effort to improve our grassroots organization.

If you know anyone who would like to be on our list, please forward their names to us. (Our contact information is on page 8.)

But all of our organizing will only pay dividends if we find quality candidates to run for office. Last year, for example, there were 60 state House seats up for election, and we fielded candidates for only 27 of those slots. We conceded a majority in the House before the election was even held. The situation is similar at the county and local levels in many parts of Wyoming.

The good news is that we won 17 of those 27 House races, and several of our wins came in parts of the state where Republicans far outnumber Democrats. What that tells me is that when Democrats compete, we can win, in any part of the state. The formula is to find candidates who will be good leaders and who will work hard to win the election. But we can't win if we don't compete!

This is where you come in. You know better than I do who the people are in your community who would make good candidates and good leaders. Talk to these people. Urge them to run. Tell us who they are. And keep in mind that you may very well



**John Millin, Chairman**

be a good candidate for elected office.

Please feel free to contact me or our headquarters if you would like some tips on recruiting candidates. Some of our county chairs have already developed aggressive recruitment strategies, and they could also offer ideas to improve recruitment in your county. The state party plans to provide an unprecedented level of training for our candidates, but we need your help in finding good people to run.

To recap, I ask you for your help in two areas. First, join us in talking to your neighbors, working with state party officials, and getting organized *now* to prepare for the 2008 election. And second, help us find Democrats in your part of the state who would make strong candidates for legislative, county or local seats.

This is shaping up to be a banner year for Democrats. It is imperative that we do all we can to take advantage of this opportunity and provide a better future for Wyoming's working families.

**“I need your help to continue strengthening all 23 of our county parties and to field candidates for every seat on the 2008 ballot in your county.”**

## STATE LEGISLATURE



# Leaders hope for more Democrats in statehouse

Democratic legislative leaders are proud of what our party accomplishes with such a small minority representation, but they would love to see more Democratic faces in the House and Senate chambers.

“We definitely want to increase those numbers, there’s no doubt,” said House Minority Leader Marty Martin of Rock Springs. “Truly good legislation is crafted and debated and should be debated by different groups of people with different ideas.”

Senate Minority Leader Ken Decaria of Evanston agrees. He said the seven Democrats in the 30-member Senate are highly effective, but they would have better chances of success with more members.

“The more votes we have on our side, that makes us more powerful, because just on general floor votes, it gets you closer to 16,” Decaria said, referring to the majority figure

required to pass legislation.

Even without a majority, more Democrats would mean better representation on committees.

“When we had 10 senators, that gave us a 3-2 split on every committee - three Republicans and two Democrats,” Decaria said. “That makes a huge difference, because then you’re talking about having to swing one vote to get an issue out of committee.”

An increase of four members in either chamber would give Democrats better than one-third of the representation, making Gov. Freudenthal’s vetoes more powerful.

Both leaders encourage Democrats across the state seriously consider running for the Legislature.

“If we’re going to affect change and continue to have a strong voice, those numbers have to increase,” Martin said.

## If you run ...

Here are a few things to keep in mind if you are thinking about running for the Legislature (or any office) for the first time:

- ✓ Make sure you have your family’s support. Running for office and serving is a serious commitment.
- ✓ Know you’re eligible. Make sure you meet the age and residency requirements for the office.
- ✓ File your paperwork. The filing period for state and county offices is May 15-30.
- ✓ Notify the media.
- ✓ Raise money. If you can chip in, great. But you will need to raise campaign funds.
- ✓ Develop campaign literature. This is one of the best ways for voters to get to know you. Tell them who you are, why you are running, and what issues are important to you.
- ✓ Be ready to go door-to-door. This is essential campaign work. It means everything to voters if you visit them in person and ask for their vote, or at least leave literature at their door. Most candidates enjoy the experience!

# New faces take charge at party central

## Owens assumes executive director position after decade in Alabama

Prior to taking over in June as executive director of the Wyoming Democratic Party, Brandon Owens worked for more than 10 years for Democratic candidates and causes



**Brandon Owens**  
Executive Director

in the Southeast. Yet, his political experience goes back considerably further than that.

“My grandfather was a polling inspector ever since I can remember, and I used to just hang out at the polling places with him,” Owens said. “The first campaign I can remember was George Wallace running after asking forgiveness from Alabama’s African-American community, and I just got

interested after that.”

Owens’ political background includes handling legislative matters for the Speaker of the Alabama State House and the chamber’s Ways and Means Committee. He also worked with the Alabama Restaurant Association and founded the Alabama Beverage Licensees Association to lobby the state legislature and municipalities.

He has extensive experience in rural politics, having served as the campaign coordinator for the Alabama Democratic Party during the 2006 election cycle, where he helped organize logistics for several of the party’s candidates. Owens attended Auburn University as an undergraduate and taught courses on state and local government at the University of Alabama while completing graduate coursework.

**BRANDON OWENS**  
Executive Director  
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## Nix comes from Texas to oversee implementation of state field plan

Tarin Nix first got involved in politics as a volunteer for the Kerry/Edwards presidential ticket in 2004 while attending the University of Alabama. However, her interest in politics began before that.

“I started to fall in love with politics because of my experience with debate,” said Nix, who debated throughout high school and college. “I started off as a Republican, and after doing the research and forming a debate strategy, I realized Democrat was the way to be.”

Nix earned her undergraduate degree in political science in just three years from the University of Alabama, where she was also involved with the Young College Democrats. Next, she got her master’s degree in social work from the University of Texas with specializations in public policy and nonprofit management.

During that period, she spent considerable time successfully lobbying for the passage of sexual assault and domestic violence prevention legislation - an experience she said was highly rewarding.

In September, Nix became the new field director for the Wyoming Democratic Party. Her duties now include developing and executing the state party’s field program, recruiting and training volunteers, mobilizing the young Democrats, and helping implement the party’s get-out-the-vote and voter registration programs.



**Tarin Nix**  
Field Director

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## *They put the 'party' in Democratic Party*



**A group of party activists view a strategy video Nov. 3 in Casper in preparation for a neighborhood canvass, the Democratic Party's first nationwide organizing event of the 2008 election season. More than a dozen activists representing Natrona, Converse and Fremont counties attended the Casper house party, hosted by Field Director Tarin Nix, and participated in the canvass.**

# Wyo volunteers join Democrats across the nation in house parties, canvasses

Brandee Jarrell had never done any community activism before Nov. 3, when she joined about 15 other people at a Casper house for a little fun and a little politics.

But after a day of neighborhood canvassing with other like-minded activists, Jarrell was hooked, and she now looks forward to her next political event.

"I had a great time," she said. "I'd love to do anything I can for the Democratic Party in our community."

Similar scenes unfolded that same Saturday afternoon at nearly 800 other locations all over the country, as volunteers nationwide took part in the Democratic National Committee's first organizing event of the 2008 election cycle. The events were set for exactly one year to the day before the 2008 general election takes place.

Tarin Nix, the Democratic Party's field director for Wyoming, hosted the party in Casper, which included a video briefing from DNC leaders on our party's election strategy for the coming year.

After the video presentation, activists marched throughout their neighborhoods in every corner of the nation, going door-to-door to contact voters and establish a rapport that will be essential to success on Election Day.

Brandon Owens, the Wyoming Democratic Party's executive director, dubbed the Casper event "a roaring success." Nix echoed that assessment.

Five new people signed up at Nix's house party to be neighborhood leaders, she said, and her guests were exhilarated by the day's events.

"They actually really liked the canvassing," she said. "Brandee liked it so much she told me, 'I'm going to go out tomorrow and finish up the ones I didn't get.' Everyone seemed really excited about it."

In fact, Jarrell said she learned something from the experience.

"It ended up teaching me more about the whole process, not just on a national level but on a community level," she said.

When Greg Zsidis arrived at the party, he announced that he had never gone door-to-door in his life, but he believes this election is so important, he is willing to do whatever he needs to do to help Democrats succeed. As it turned out, he had a marvelous time.

"He was really enthusiastic and signed up to do more," Nix said.

Nix organized the house parties in Wyoming as part of her work for the DNC's State Partnership Project.

The program places Democratic Party workers in every state in the Union, a plan the DNC calls its 50-State Strategy.

A cornerstone of that strategy is to help Democrats organize in parts of the country where they have never been organized before, or at least not in anyone's recent memory.

Wyoming Democrats will join those across America in future organizing events as the year goes on in hopes that their hard work will pay off with electoral success when voters head to the polls on Nov. 3, 2008.

## 2008 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTIONS



# Jackson to host state convention

Teton County's breathtaking scenery will serve as the backdrop for the 2008 Democratic State Convention on May 23 and 24 at the Snow King Resort in Jackson.

Highlights will include electing Wyoming's delegates to the Democratic National Convention and adopting our party's state platform for 2008. The state party Central Committee will also meet. Those who attend the convention will be treated to several exciting speakers, including those who will headline our party's slate of candidates on the ballot next year.

People interested in volunteering to help with the multitude of tasks necessary to carry out the convention should contact Teton County Volunteer Coordinator Carol Wauters by phone at 307-734-2536 or by e-mail at [cwauters@bresnan.net](mailto:cwauters@bresnan.net).

More information on the 2008 Wyoming State Democratic Convention will be forthcoming in the next issue of *The Spokesman* (scheduled for early 2008).

# DNC to select next president in Denver

In 2008, for the first time in exactly 100 years, Denver will be site of the Democratic National Convention, where the party formally selects its presidential nominee.

Many Democrats in Wyoming are excited that the convention is being held in heart of the Rocky Mountain West. It will give our party an opportunity to build on the momentum we have seen in this region in the past several years.

Whether you're a delegate or not, there are several ways for you to get involved with the national convention. The host committee will need thousands of volunteers from across the West to make this event happen, and you can be one of them.

There are at least two ways you can volunteer:

■ Contact the Colorado Democratic Party at 303-623-4762 or visit [www.coloradodems.org](http://www.coloradodems.org).

■ Contact the Denver 2008 Convention Host Committee at 303-534-6200 or visit [www.denverconvention2008.com](http://www.denverconvention2008.com).



# Upcoming party events and important dates

**Dec. 1** - Gov. Freudenthal's state budget for the 2009-10 biennium released

**Dec. 10** - Joint Appropriations Committee budget hearings begin (one week)

**2008**

**Jan. 7** - JAC budget hearings resume (three weeks)

**Feb. 11** - Legislature's budget session begins (four-week session)

**Feb. 22** - Deadline to register as a Democrat in your county to participate in the presidential caucuses

**March 1** - Nellie Tayloe Ross Banquet in Cheyenne

**March 8** - Democratic county caucuses and conventions

**May 15** - First day for candidates for state or federal offices to file paperwork with the Secretary of State's Office. Candidates for county offices file with their county clerks.

**May 23-24** - Democratic State Convention at the Snow King Resort in Jackson

**May 30** - Last day to file paperwork to appear on the primary election ballot for federal, state and county offices

**Aug. 19** - Primary election

**Aug. 25-28** - Democratic National Convention in Denver

**Nov. 4** - General election

# Jefferson-Jackson speakers share insights

Our annual Jefferson-Jackson banquet Sept. 29 and 30 drew about 175 people to the Rock Springs Holiday Inn, where Chairman John Millin honored AFL-CIO Executive Secretary Kim Floyd with the Party Builder of the Year award. We were fortunate to have some phenomenal speakers as well, and here is some of what they had to say:

“ The common thread for us is our interaction with the outdoors. Whether that interaction is premised on just recreating and picnicking and taking the kids out, or it’s hunting. It is amazing to me the commonality that exists in the center of the state, not on the fringes. ... They’re phenomenally centrist in that they’re family-oriented, they’re values-oriented, they’re outdoor-oriented, and they want to make a good living. ... They want to take care of their families, and they want a Wyoming that they can enjoy that has the fundamental values in it that we’ve all had a chance to enjoy before.”

- Gov. Dave Freudenthal

“ The point of taking political power after all is not to keep it or to grow it. It’s to use it to improve the lives of the citizens that you serve. ... We are united as Democrats, but more importantly as Americans, by the simple and unshakable conviction that we can do better, that we can leave the world a better place than we found it.”

- Andrew Romanoff, Colorado House Speaker



Gary Trauner speaks at Jefferson-Jackson 2007.

“ I am a Democrat because we tolerate and encourage diversity. Whether it’s different lifestyles or different opinions, historically, we are the party that views this as a virtue, not a litmus test.

I am a Democrat because we believe working with others with whom we disagree, be it lawmakers on the other side of the aisle or countries around the world, is a sign of strength, not weakness.

I am a Democrat because we are problem-solvers, not political opportunists. We’re practical, and we value solutions over ideological preference. ... Free market, regulation, public-private partnerships – we don’t care. We’ll simply search for the right answer.”

- Gary Trauner, U.S. House candidate

## Nellie Tayloe Ross banquet set for March 1

We are currently in the planning stages for our annual Nellie Tayloe Ross dinner and banquet, which is scheduled for March 1, 2008, at the Plains Hotel in downtown Cheyenne.

During the banquet, Chairman John Millin will announce the winner of the Nellie Tayloe Ross Award, which is given every year to an outstanding volunteer who has shown a commitment to

strengthening our party and our state.

The banquet will follow an afternoon meeting of the Wyoming Democratic Party State Central Committee, also at the Plains.

Further details, such as pricing information and the identity of our keynote speaker, will be released as we get closer to the event.

Notably, the 2008 Nellie Tayloe Ross banquet is scheduled for the end of week three of the Wyoming

Legislature’s four-week budget session. The banquet also takes place one week before Democrats across the state participate in their county presidential preference caucuses.

Wyoming Democrats meet every year to honor Ross, the Democrat who became the nation’s first female governor. She was elected to fill the remainder of her husband’s term upon his death in 1924.



***The Spokesman***  
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**Questions? Comments? Contact Communications Director Bill Lockett at Wyoming Democratic Party headquarters at 307-473-1457 (Casper area) or 1-800-729-3367 (toll free); by mail at PO Box 1963, Casper, WY 82602; or by e-mail to [lockett@wyomingdemocrats.com](mailto:lockett@wyomingdemocrats.com).**

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