



From the President's Desk

By Rich Piper

I've had the privilege to meet and hear both President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama in person during the past few weeks, and I've come away from those experiences more convinced than ever that the President and First Lady are truly dedicated to the best interests of our country and are working diligently to promote jobs, education, health care and a rational foreign policy.

The same can certainly not be said for the Republican presidential contenders. The more I see and hear them in their debates and in other public gatherings, the more I'm convinced that any one of them would bring disastrous consequences for our country and the world. Let's look at the four who seem to be the leading candidates for the G.O.P. nomination.

Mitt Romney still seems to me most likely to end up as the Republican nominee for President. Though he looks presidential, he is a deeply flawed candidate. His record of flip-flopping makes John Kerry look like a model of consistency. In three days in late October, for example, Romney endorsed the war on the middle class being waged by the Ohio Republican Party as it struggled to sustain its flagging campaign to deny public employees collective bargaining rights. Then when he visited a phone bank promoting the anti-employee rights position in the Ohio referendum, he indicated that he was neutral on the issue. When this outraged the right-wing nuts and Romney's greedy big-business backers, he the next day announced that he really did endorse the attack on public servants' rights. On abortion, health care, Social Security and a number of other issues, Romney has taken sharply opposing positions over the years. Romney could stage an interesting debate with himself, given the contradictory positions that he has taken again and again. He is clearly not a man worthy of trust. His only consistency has been his deep attachment to shifting the wealth of the middle class into the hands of his rich supporters, a trait that he shares with Rick Perry and Herman Cain. On that point, Romney has shown consistency over years, not just days or months. Though most of the electorate remain lukewarm toward Romney, I still think that he'll be the Republican nominee. Why? Because most of the Wall Street crowd and most of the greediest elements in big business favor him, and they hold the Republican party in their iron grip.

Rick Perry, Herman Cain and Newt Gingrich appear to be the only other G.O.P. contenders with any realistic chance of winning the presidential

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REMINDER

NEXT MEETING of the Largo-Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club.

Bring your donation of canned goods for the local food pantries.

DATE: Nov 21, 2011

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE:

Thirsty Marlin

351 West Bay Dr # 1, Largo,
(727) 586-3474 or email
Rich at
President@largodemocrats.com



Visit our website at:

www.largodemocrats.com

nomination. Perry shot into the lead in polls shortly after he announced his candidacy. However, he has fizzled thanks to his pitifully inept performance in the debates and interviews, his sleazy ties to the worst elements in the Texas business community, his uninformed crackpot ideas on a wide variety of topics (the latest being his completely incoherent tax and budget proposals) and his really bizarre presentation in New Hampshire at the end of October. I'll bet that Jeff Brandes and other local Republicans who rushed to jump on the Perry bandwagon are regretting their actions now! Then, again, perhaps not! Brandes is not one of the brightest bulbs in the closet.

As Perry's fortunes have declined, Herman Cain's have risen. However, his lack of campaign infrastructure, his own uninformed crackpot ideas (9,9,9 for example, which would dramatically raise taxes on most Americans while giving the rich a bonanza) and his total lack of knowledge about foreign policy seem likely to undermine his campaign at some point. The recent revelations about his alleged sexual harassment and settlement payments may hasten his decline, though his poll standings have so far weakened only slightly.

As Perry and Cain have stumbled, Newt Gingrich's once nearly dead campaign has begun to revive. Yet Gingrich's long record of hypocrisy (condemning Bill Clinton's extramarital affairs while pursuing his own), extremism (shutting down the federal government) and ethical violations (a \$300,000 fine for ethics offenses as House Speaker) raise obvious questions about the viability of his candidacy.

We'll see how the campaign evolves. Since there are almost always some surprising twists and turns in politics, there likely will be some of those between now and November 2012. Nevertheless, the multiple strengths of our President and the manifest weaknesses of his most likely Republican opponents give me hope for the 2012 election outcome.

Please join our local Obama for America efforts to prepare effectively for 2012. Check our club website at www.largodemocrats.com for frequent updates on what's happening in our neighborhood. Come to our phone banks, make virtual phone bank calls from home, get certified to register voters and attend rallies that boost our cause. Just give me a call at 727-588-0891 or 813-210-7457 or send me an email message at rpiper3404@aol.com if you'd like to get more involved.

Is It Already Three Years?

Here's what the President said on election night 2008:

"Even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime. ... The road ahead will be long; our climb will be steep; we may not get there in one year or even in one term. But, America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you, we as a people will get there. ... but there's so much more to do."

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FLORIDA'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

- **Sen. Bill Nelson** - 813 225-7040 or (202) 224-5274 Email: <http://billnelson.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm>
- **Sen. Marco Rubio** - 813 977-6450 or (202) 224-3041 email: http://rubio.senate.gov/contact_form.cfm
- **Rep. Bill Young** - 727 893-3191 or (202)225-5961

Everyone should be proud of what we've accomplished since then, but as the President said, there's so much more to do. What happens on Nov. 6, 2012, is up to us.

You can commit to volunteer here:

<http://my.barackobama.com/Commit-to-Volunteer-for-2012>

Calendar of Events

November Meeting Reminder

Michael Smith, the newly elected member of the Largo City Commission, will speak at the meeting of the Largo/ Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club at 7 p.m. Nov. 21 at the Thirsty Marlin, 351 West Bay, Largo. There will also be a report on the recent State Democratic Convention and information on how to get involved in Pinellas County's Democratic activities.

Instead of a December meeting, there will be a holiday covered dish party at Wanda Schwerer's house, 517 Belle Isle Avenue, Belleair Beach. Last year's was a lot of fun, so plan to attend. More details to come.

The club is still collecting non-perishables for local food banks.

Date	Time	Event	Location
THURSDAY, NOV 17	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Meet Sheriff Candidate Scott Swope	<p>Event Location: Carrabba's Italian Grill, 19919 U.S. Highway 19 N. Clearwater, Florida 33764</p> <p>¶Event Description: Making a difference in the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office – What you haven't read anywhere, with statistics. Meet Sheriff Candidate Scott Swope. Learn, relax, enjoy – the political system offers great opportunities to honest, hard-working people who want to make a difference.</p> <p>Complimentary Wine and Hors D'Oeuvres Sponsored by Alan and Marcia Gassman If you're unable to attend, please send contributions to: Scott Swope Campaign P.O. Box 1021 Palm Harbor, FL 34682-</p>
THURSDAY, NOV 17	6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Hispanic Caucus-- Organizational Meeting	<p>Event Location: LaTeresita Restaurant--3426 West Columbus Drive, Tampa</p> <p>Event Description: The Pinellas Hispanic Caucus will be officially organizing this event with election of officers. Papers will be signed to officially re-form the Caucus. The meeting will be held jointly with the Hillsborough Hispanic Caucus. For more info: Contact Elaine Granata 727-455-7400 or egranaluff@tampabay.rr.com We are excited about our newest caucus as the Hispanic community is the fastest growing potential voting bloc in America. They are the future of the Democratic Party and we need a strong, viable caucus to get out the vote within the Hispanic community. We need your participation and interest so please consider joining. We need 10 members to form the caucus. Dues are \$25.00</p>

Date	Time	Event	Location
THURSDAY, NOV 17	5:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Stonewall Democrats	Pinellas County Democratic Party Office - 2250 - 1st Avenue N., St. Petersburg Join the Stonewall Democrats for their regular monthly meeting at DEC Headquarters, 2250 1st Ave. N. in St. Pete. Social at 6:30, meeting starts at 7. Questions? Contact Rick Boylan at RQBoylan@gmail.com.
MONDAY, NOV 21	7:00 PM - TBD	Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club	Thirsty Marlin Grill, 351 W. Bay Drive, Largo 33770 Come early to eat, drink and socialize before the meeting. Contact Rich Piper, rpiper3404@aol.com or 813-210-7457 for further information
THURSDAY, NOV 24		Happy Thanksgiving	Your DEC Officers and Executive Board wish you a Happy Thanksgiving! We will not be meeting so you can spend the day with your family and loved ones. We will meet again on Jan. 26. Be prepared to attend our first meeting to kick off this exciting election year.
SUNDAY, NOV 25	12:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Mike Fox Phone Bank	Event Location: Dem HQ, 2250 1st Ave N, St. Pete Event Description: Come for a couple of hours or the whole time. We'll be making calls to make sure Pinellas County becomes even more Democratic! Bring your cell phone (if you have anytime minutes) and wireless networkable lap top. Call Mike @ 727-320-4502 or email tampabaydemocracy@yahoo.com to RSVP so we're sure to have enough phone lines.
MONDAY, NOV 28	11:30 AM - 2:00 PM	Democratic Women's Club of Upper Pinellas	Event Location: Golden Corral--10050 Ulmerton Rd, Largo Event Description: Guest speaker for the November 28 meeting of the Democratic Women's Club of Upper Pinellas will be Victoria Kirby West Central Florida Regional Field Director for Organizing for America, President Obama's 2012 election campaign. Senior Lunch is \$7.79 and Non-Senior Lunch \$8.29
MONDAY, NOV 28	4:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Mike Fox Phone Bank	Event Location: Dem HQ, 2250 1st Ave N, St. Pete Event Description: We'll be making calls to make sure Pinellas County becomes even more Democratic! Bring your cell phone (if you have anytime minutes) and wireless networkable lap top. Call Mike @ 727-320-4502 or email tampabaydemocracy@yahoo.com to RSVP so we're sure to have enough phone lines.
Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011	7:30 PM- 11:30 PM	Pinellas Co. Democratic Party Holiday Party	VFW Post 6827 4145 34 th St. N. St. Petersburg Special Guests: Alex Sink and Bill McBride Tickets \$25 each.

More Information available at: <http://www.pinellasdemocrats.com/calendar.asp?nDate=10%2F1%2F2011>

Pinellas Democratic Party NEWS

Club Member Michael Smith Wins Largo Commission Seat

Club member Michael Smith won a decisive 54% to 46% victory over incumbent Mary Gray Black on November 8 to gain a seat on the Largo City Commission. Congratulations to Michael on a well-deserved triumph!



Rich Piper, Largo Commissioner-elect Michael Smith and Firefighter Macho Liberti Photo by Rich Piper

Many club members donated to his campaign - both financial contributions and volunteer efforts. We made walk sheets and maps and walked precincts on Michael's behalf, waved signs at intersections and made hundreds of phone calls. It was great to savor victory in a hard-fought campaign.

Michael will be the featured speaker at our next club meeting, on November 21 at 7:00 p.m., in the Thirsty Marlin, 351 West Bay Drive. Come and hear how he ran his campaign and won this seat and what he plans to accomplish once he is on the Largo Commission. Hopefully, other club members will feel motivated by his example to run for office in the future.



Commissioner-elect Michael Smith celebrates Election Night with Mary Lou Ambrose and Belleair Bluffs Commissioner Joe Barkley. Photo by Rich Piper

First Lady Rallies Tampa Bay Supporters

When First Lady Michelle Obama made her first campaign trip to Tampa Bay on Oct. 26, Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club Rich Piper was in the crowd of more than 200 at a fundraising reception at the Davis Island home of developer Joel Cantor. For those who care about such things - and apparently many media outlets do - she was in a favorite floral frock that she also wore on the Jay Leno Show in 2009.

During a 20 minute talk, Mrs. Obama invoked the 2012 campaign's rallying cry: "Are you in?" which was answered with cheers from supporters. "I mean are you really ready to make this happen? Because this is going to require each of you to grab somebody by the shoulders and make them understand what's at stake; how their self-interest is directly tied to how our country develops. It's up to each of you to work like you've never worked before." (The question is all too familiar to Rich and club member and newsletter photographer Heidi Sanchez, who have been coordinating Largo campaign activities for several months, including setting up phone banks to find out if

past supporters "are still in.") She reminded the contributors of the President's accomplishments, including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to help women get equal pay to men; health care reform; finally tracking down and eliminating Osama bin Laden; raising education standards and ending "Don't ask, don't tell." She also made a pitch for the American Jobs Act, calling it a "common sense."



Michelle Obama Greets Her Supporters in Tampa, Oct. 26
Photo by Heidi Sanchez

The First Lady, who also made stops in Jacksonville and Fort Lauderdale on her whirlwind swing through Florida, was greeted at Tampa International Airport by 10 boys and 10 girls from St. Petersburg's John Sexton Elementary School which received an award from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation for its efforts to provide healthier snacks in school, replace food-based school fundraisers with healthy alternatives, and improve their physical activity offerings with longer recess times and a running club.

Don't Let Repubs Decide Who Will Represent Us

Florida's Republicans showed up to vote in 2010 – and Democrats did not. Now, we are living with the results: Gov. Rick Scott, Senator Marco Rubio, Rep. Jeff Brandes, etc.

Over the Nov. 5-6 weekend, Pinellas County Democrats' One Year Until the Election kickoff turned out the hard core campaigners to prove that we are ready, willing and able to claw our way back in 2012. There was phone banking in Largo, a Young Americans for Obama phone bank, voter registration training in St. Petersburg, an Evening Stroll in Downtown St. Pete to Get People "In," and a voter registration and vote by mail drive in Largo. Our club members were highly active in most of these, taking the lead roles on both activities in Largo.

If you weren't able to participate, there are plenty of opportunities ahead. Contact Rich Piper at 727-588-0891 to volunteer.

Please don't let Senator Jack Latvala and the Republican elite decide who will represent us

Florida Democrats Launch Rickpublicans.com

The Florida Democratic Party has launched www.Rickpublicans.com to highlight how Rick Scott and the Republicans are moving our state in the wrong direction.

"After over a decade in charge, what has the Republican Party done for the people of Florida," asked Scott Arceneaux, Florida Democratic Party Executive Director. "If you ask Floridians whether they are better off today than they were 12 years ago the overwhelming response is no. Republicans have been at the helm of the governorship for 12 years and the Legislature even longer, and all the while the state has slid further behind on the issues that matter to Florida's families and small businesses. It's time for a new direction."

After more than a decade of a one party Republican rule fueled by corruption and greed, the state has fallen behind in the critical areas of education, job creation, and the quality of life. Today, Rick Scott Republicans – Rickpublicans – continue to run amuck in government putting corporate special interests ahead of Florida's families.

To learn more about Rickpublicans visit www.Rickpublicans.com.

Club News

Sen. Bill Nelson Calls for Investigation of Voter Suppression Laws

Sen. Bill Nelson has written a letter to the Justice Department to investigate whether new voting laws passed in Florida and more than a dozen other states are part of a coordinated effort to suppress voter turnout among millions of people in next year's presidential election.



At the October meeting, Sen. Nelson's regional director Shahra Anderson gave club members an update on the senator's position on current issues and campaign strategies

Photo by Heidi Sanchez

Nelson, a Democrat who will be on the ballot himself in Florida next year, asked U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to investigate "whether new state voting laws resulted from collusion or an orchestrated effort to limit voter turnout."

Most of the potentially disenfranchised belong to the Democratic Party's core constituencies — minority, elderly, young and low-income voters.

"The Department needs to determine whether or not there was broad-based motivation to suppress the vote — and, if so, whether any laws were violated," Nelson wrote.

(Editor's Note: Just a reminder that our local legislators, Jeff Brandes and Jim Frishe, voted

for this voter suppression law, which was designed to suppress voting by minorities, young people and the elderly. That should inspire us to work even harder to get Democrats elected.)

Help Undo the Damage of Citizens United

To restore the ability of Congress and the states to regulate corporate influence in elections, Democratic Senators Tom Udall (NM) and Michael Bennet (CO), along with Senators Mark Begich (AK), Dick Durbin (IL), Tom Harkin (IA), Chuck Schumer (NY), Jeff Merkley (OR), Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) have introduced S.J. Res. 29, a constitutional amendment that would reverse the effects of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*. The ruling, which granted corporations the same Free Speech rights as people to spend money in support of or against candidates for office, has led to an unprecedented flood of corporate money in elections across the United States, often under the cover of anonymity.

Last month, Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-MD) and Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers (D-MI) introduced a similar constitutional amendment in the House -- H.J. Res. 78 -- that would restore to Congress and the states the authority to regulate corporate spending on political activity, including contributions in support of or in opposition to a candidate for public office.

Please contact Sen. Bill Nelson and Rep. Bill Young and urge them to support legislation to stop the unlimited corporate spending that is undermining our democracy.

And a Good Time Was Had By All

The club's 2nd annual Old-Fashioned Democratic Picnic was a huge success, with 150 party stalwarts gathering at Taylor Lake Park in Largo on Oct. 15 to meet and greet candidates Michael Smith, Bill Nobles, Scott Swope and Jonathan Snow; hear a few speeches; eat hot dogs grilled by Doug

Hickman's son Michael; toss the sponge at Rick Scott; and shake a little booty (or at least tap some toes) to really great live music by Kayla Hill and Chris Brudy. Not to mention adding almost \$900 to the war chest!

Fedorczyk and her spread sheets; her hard-working committee; and emcee Rich Piper, who did a good job keeping speeches brief as promised.

Kudos to Party Planner Extraordinaire Theresa

Photos by Heidi Sanchez



Victoria Kirby, Regional Field Director, OFA, and Rich Piper, Club President



Victoria Kirby and Ashley Pinedo of OFA set up voter registration training on a picnic table before our club picnic



Pinellas Co. Commissioner Ken Welch



Florida Legislative Candidate Bill Nobles



Pinellas Co. Democratic Chair Mark Hanisee



Club Treasurer Elizabeth Snedeker keeps tabs on the picnic money flow.



Club Picnic Planning Chair, Theresa Fedorczyk with "President Obama"

Voter Registration Restrictions Won't Stop Florida Democrats

Under the false pretext of reducing fraud, Florida Republican legislators rushed through a law that attempts to shut down efforts by third-party groups to help citizens get registered, particularly college students and minorities. The new restrictions require groups to register with the state before beginning registering and to turn in forms within 48 hours. Just one unaccounted for form can result in stiff fines. "

We'll be very careful to meet the letter of the law, but we won't allow the Republicans to discourage us from registering new voters," Rich Piper said. "We were very successful in 2008 and we'll be working even harder this election cycle. Getting Democrats elected and President Obama reelected depends on increasing our numbers before Election Day and getting voters out on Election Day. Anyone willing to help can contact me at 727 588-0891 or rpiper314@aol.com."



Getting ready to canvass for Voter Registration: Cathy Ewing, Angela Watkins, Deborah Anderson and Sharon Crane

Photo by Heidi Sanchez

According to recent report from the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School, voter registration drives have become an increasingly important registration method in the past decade, especially for low-income citizens, students, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and people with

disabilities. For example, in the 2004 general election, large-scale voter registration drives report assisting almost 10 million citizens to register to vote, contributing to a surge in new registrations and increased turnout in that election. In one county in Florida alone, voter registration organizations were responsible for registering 62.7% of all newly registered voters. Nationally, Census data show that Hispanic and African-American voters are approximately twice as likely to register to vote through a voter registration drive as white voters.

Voting rights advocates point to increased voter registration rates, especially among minority, low-income, and younger citizens, as a positive effect of voter registration drives and a reason to expand them.

Eat for Progress Picnic

Nice weather and a good cause brought the party faithful to club member Jack Killingsworth's Largo home on Sunday, Nov. 6 to "Eat for Progress" and help raise the Democratic headquarters roof. The PCDEC building committee - spearheaded by Jack and Doug Hickman (also a member of our club), - lured a good-sized crowd with Doug's famous grilled flank steak. Proceeds from the \$25 tickets - more than \$1,000 - will be used for pressing maintenance issues. Club members in attendance included Deb. Anderson, Joe Barkley, Chris Brudy (who also provided his usual great music) Bill Bucolo, Theresa Fedorczyk, and Rich Piper.



Political Discussions at the Pinellas Dems Picnic: Doug Hickman, Theresa Fedorczyk, Del Fields, Bill Bucolo, Patricia Plantamura, Melissa Newton, Newt Newton, Jack Killingsworth

Photo by Heidi Sanchez

According to Hal Alterman, some forward thinking county party leaders, including Ken Steinke, Glenn Moon and Betty and Harvey Morgenstein, took the challenge to invest in and construct the building in 1986. To date, Pinellas is the only county to own its HQ. The good news is that the mortgage has been paid. The not-so-good news in this economy is that it is now necessary to make an investment in maintaining the building. This includes a new roof, which, like the rest of the building, is 23 years old. A large oak is dying and needs to be taken down. The bathroom needs to be remodeled. Planned kitchen facilities were never built. Hal says this is important for general election campaigns when volunteers practically live at the headquarters and for the many clubs and committees which meet there throughout the year.

LETTERS and OPINIONS

Cain's 9-9-9 Plan is Declaration of Class Warfare

By Ryan Waal, University of Michigan sophomore

Herman Cain, former Godfather's Pizza CEO and Republican presidential candidate, has seen an enormous and inexplicable surge in the polls recently. Speaking in a booming Georgia drawl and delivering his conservative

talking points like advertising slogans, Cain has focused his campaign around his 9-9-9 plan for economic growth. The plan proposes a complete repeal of the current U.S. tax system, replacing all forms of taxation with three flat taxes: a 9 percent personal income tax, a 9 percent corporate income tax and a 9 percent national sales tax.

And that's it. No capital gains tax, no payroll tax, no estate tax—just three taxes to pay for

the entire federal government. On Cain's campaign website, the 9-9-9 plan is described as "fair, simple, efficient, neutral and transparent." These adjectives, frequently used by fair-tax or flat-tax advocates to justify imposing a single tax on all Americans, are all misplaced. The 9-9-9 plan is nothing less than a blatant declaration of class warfare.

First of all, Cain's plan is clearly not "fair." A 9 percent income tax applied to all citizens would mean that billionaires and janitors would pay the exact same proportion of their earnings. Cain's website states that the plan would eliminate "nearly all deductions." This implies that the countless low-income families in America, comprising 47 percent of the population, who receive only marginal relief by not paying income taxes currently would be forced to pay more taxes. The morality of this plan is absurd; the 9 percent income tax is an obvious giveaway to the richest in this country. After finally reaching a point where billionaires like Warren Buffett publicly state their willingness to pay more in taxes, it's depressing that Cain would try to reverse the tax conversation to such an extreme.

More importantly, Cain's sales tax establishes a dangerously regressive burden on low-income Americans. A 9 percent sales tax on basic items like bread and milk means much more to someone making \$30,000 a year than someone making \$30 million a year. It especially means more when you consider that Cain's 9 percent sales tax would be added to existing state sales taxes. In New Hampshire, a state with no sales tax, this would be tolerable. In Alabama, sales tax is 10 percent in some places, and adding Cain's national sales tax will result in a 19 percent tax on groceries, clothing and medicine. Cain's argument that the complete reign of the free market will resolve these potentially excruciating prices is unfounded.

Although Cain asserts that his plan would be revenue neutral, several studies have shown this is not the case. Bloomberg News calculated that Cain's tax plan would generate only \$2 trillion per year in revenue, \$200

billion less than what the United States actually needs to raise. Other estimates have pegged the potential revenue as low as \$1.3 trillion. It's important to note that Cain's website implies his support for the complete elimination of entitlement programs, arguing that "state, cities, churches, charities and businesses," should provide aid to the poor instead of the federal government. Admittedly, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security do comprise a large portion of the U.S. budget, and it's possible that eliminating them would make the lower revenue generated by 9-9-9 a feasible way to fund the federal government.

But who wants to live in that version of America? How can a presidential candidate seriously advocate a tax system that allows corporations to keep 100 percent of their international profits while forcing the poor to pay for all of their medicine and food? And how can anyone who isn't wealthy actually support this candidate?

Herman Cain's reign atop the polls will probably vanish soon, as Republicans finally accept the fact that Mitt Romney is the only candidate with a serious chance at beating President Barack Obama. But if Cain becomes the "anti-Romney" in the primaries like some pundits are predicting, keep one thing in mind: Unless you're rich, Herman Cain's America will cripple you.

Regarding the Congressional Super Committee

By Hal Alterman, Largo Club member and St. Pete Democratic Club newsletter editor

The Joint Congressional Committee on deficit reduction heard from four co-chairs of two groups yesterday; Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles of President Obama's Deficit Commission, and Alice Rivlin and Pete Domenici of the private study group formed by the Bipartisan Policy Center. These well respected public servants are two Republicans and two Democrats, who, together with their staffs, have researched how best to reduce our annual deficit and national debt. All four urged the joint congressional committee to take a balanced approach of cuts and revenues over the long term, as doing only one or the other

would not work. Ms. Rivlin added that stimulus now to create jobs in the short term would speed up our recovery from the 2008 recession. This balanced approach is and has been the position of President Obama and Congressional Democrats. So, the dysfunction in Congress is not a result of Democrats and Republicans not compromising, but of the Republicans refusing to consider any revenues as part of a balanced approach to reduce the deficit, or even to fund the American Jobs Act. The four distinguished and dedicated co-chairs who testified agreed unanimously that cuts AND revenues are required to solve the problem. Since Republican Congressional members will not consider any additional revenues, even from millionaires and billionaires, it is clear that their obstructionism is causing the dysfunction in Congress.

The Answer Is Blowing in the Wind

By Hal Alterman, Largo Club member and St. Pete Democratic Club newsletter editor

As James Madison warned, "the day will come when our Republic will be impossibility. It will be impossibility because wealth will be concentrated in the hands of the few." The danger Madison warned of may be upon us, given the arrogant actions and reckless behavior of the 112th Congress' Republican leaders, who have consistently voted to protect the interests of the wealthiest 1% in the nation, while cutting crucial programs and services designed to benefit the remaining 99%.

In response to the Republican opposition that is stalling his much-needed \$447 billion jobs proposal, President Obama said: "Members of Congress will have to take a stand on whether they believe we should put teachers, construction workers, police officers and firefighters back on the job. They'll get a vote on whether they believe we should cut taxes for small business and middle-class Americans, or whether we should protect tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires. With each vote, members of Congress can either explain to

their constituents why they're against common-sense, bipartisan proposals to create jobs, or they can listen to the overwhelming majority of American people who are crying out for action."

The belief that "the overwhelming majority of Americans are crying out for action" is not empty rhetoric by the President. It is confirmed by a recent NBC News/Wall St Journal Survey, which found two out of every three Americans favor the Democratic position when the specifics of President Obama's proposed Jobs Bill are explained to them. Sixty-three percent favored increasing taxes on the wealthy and closing some corporate tax loopholes in order to cut the payroll tax rate, fund new road construction, extend unemployment benefits and give tax credits to companies who hire and train long-term unemployed workers. Only 32 percent of those polled were opposed.

Strategically, this massive 2-1 margin indicates that fighting for economic security and opportunity for middle- and working-class families is the path to victory in 2012!

District 54 member Frank Lupo of St. Pete submitted the following three letters to the St. Pete Times, soon to be the Tampa Bay Times. (That will take some getting used to, won't it?)

More Demand Means More Jobs

Vice President Joe Biden is right to advocate the passage of the American Jobs Act because more jobs equals more people making and spending money, which increases demand, resulting in businesses hiring more employees. Also, extending unemployment benefits increases demand even more, as all of that money is usually spent.

The mindless mantra of the Republicans that jobs are not being created because of too much regulation is bogus. It was inadequate regulation of Wall Street and the banks that created this economic meltdown in the first place. Anyone who took Economics 101 knows a free market economy is dictated by supply and demand. More Americans getting jobs results in more people spending money and increasing demand, causing employers to hire more workers to meet that demand."

Florida's Sinking Feeling

Your editorial wrongly groups President Obama and Governor Scott as not addressing the housing problem in Florida. Scott has done nothing and Obama has done everything possible under law to help home owners stay in their homes. -Obama has started the Home Affordable Refinance Program which lowers monthly mortgage payments. -Obama has launched a refinancing program for borrowers who are in negative equity that your editorial mentions. -Obama has started the Principal Reduction Alternative to refinance loans. - Obama has initiated the Hardest Hit Fund where Florida is one of 18 states that reduces mortgages to 97.5% of current market value. All of these programs and many others are funded and intended to help home owners avoid foreclosure. Unfortunately, banks are not always helpful or willing players in some of these programs to help homeowners . Unless

and until Congress changes the law, Obama can't force banks to act in the interest of homeowners. In addition, Obama's Justice Department has filed lawsuits to prevent foreclosures where banks have forged documents and signatures to establish ownership of mortgages that have been previously sliced and diced as securities. Unfortunately, President Bush's TARP 700 billion dollar bailout of the banks and Wall Street included absolutely no conditions that the funds be lent out or used to assist homeowners w/ mortgage difficulties. The odds of the current law changing to force banks to renegotiate mortgages to keep families in their homes are slim to none. As Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois once said on the floor of the U.S. Senate: "The banks run this place."

For Your Information

Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club Board of Directors

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Additional contact information is available on www.largodemocrats.com –

What Do We Include in the Newsletter?

It's clear that we Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club members are an interested, involved, informed - and opinionated - bunch. And providing a forum for all that "good stuff" is an important function of our newsletter. The Board encourages articles and letters to the editor.

This newsletter is created by volunteers who make every attempt to publish factual information, and who encourage the free exchange of information and opinions. It should include input from all of us. However, the opinions and viewpoints expressed by contributors may not necessarily reflect those of the club.

Please send submissions to newsletter editor, Kathleen Jamison, at Editor@largodemocrats.com

If you don't wish to receive this newsletter, let Editor Kathleen Jamison know. She will also be happy to add more folks to our newsletter email list. (Please forward to anyone you know who may be interested in what we do and how to join.) Her address is Editor@largodemocrats.com.

Why Join the Largo-Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club

The club provides a variety of ways to stay informed and involved in local, county, state and national political discussions. But we're not just about talk. We will be part of the action in finding the best candidates and getting them elected, as well as supporting the most important causes. We will write letters, make phone calls, knock on doors, register voters, and whatever else it takes to bring change to our communities, our county and our state. But, just as important, we also want to make time to enjoy each other's company and celebrate each other's efforts at social events throughout the year. Grassroots politics is effective and fun!

As a member of the Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club you can:

- Meet other active Democrats
- Meet and get to know your elected officials and potential candidates
- Raise funds and work for candidates
- Participate in community service projects
- Hear speakers and discuss issues of local, state and national importance
- Attend special events and monthly meetings.
- For membership information, email administrator@largodemocrats.com

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ANNUAL DUES ARE JUST \$10

CHANGE, YES WE CAN!