

Redwood ACLU Celebrates 2008 Patriot Award, Elects New Board For 2009

The Redwood Chapter, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), representing over 870 members across the North Coast, elected its new Board of Directors at their annual meeting Tuesday night at the Red Lion Hotel in Eureka.

The Board welcomes new Directors to its ranks, with Steve Bridenbaugh and Kelley Fleming to take their seats at the next Board meeting on Feb. 17. Incumbent boardmembers Peter Martin, Jack Munsee, Roger Herick, Bill Henneberry, Christina Allbright, and Stephen Davies were re-elected to new two-year terms. Along with three returning boardmembers, the group will hold elections for their officers when they next meet.

The celebration of the ongoing efforts to expand civil liberties in Humboldt, Del Norte, Western Trinity and Northern Mendocino also included the acceptance of the fifth annual Redwood ACLU Patriot Award by former Arcata councilmember Dave Meserve. He was credited for his work to oppose the unconstitutional Patriot Act, to advocate for independent civilian review of the Arcata Police Department, and to author Measures F and J, which provide for community protections against military recruiters targeting children in Arcata and Eureka. (The resolution in his honor is attached below.) Meserve's remarks focused on the need for community consensus on workable campaign finance reforms, as well as the latest news on Arcata and Eureka's defense of Measures F and J.

“I grew up in this, my mother was actually executive secretary of the Philadelphia ACLU...I’ve been associated for a long time, and probably learned a lot of this very early,” Meserve told the audience. “When you look at the Patriot Act and the ordinance that we wrote and that we passed in 2003, I think what you saw was an obvious assault on the Constitution. We had within the Patriot Act violations of the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th and 14th amendments, so it was a pretty broad attack on the Bill of Rights, and I’m very proud of our role in bringing attention...”

Redwood ACLU members put theory into practice when this year’s board election was the first which used choice voting, which allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference, avoiding the “spoiler effect” and producing majority winners while preserving minority representation. Keynote speaker Steve Chessin, president of Californians for Electoral Reform, paid a special visit to Eureka to explain choice voting and other forms of proportional representation and how they might be implemented in local elections.

Chessin then joined local election reform leaders on a panel to further explore how local elections might be improved. The panelists included Humboldt County clerk-recorder Carolyn Crnich, Eureka Chamber of Commerce boardmember Chris Crawford, Eureka Civic Association founder Dave Ogden, Redwood ACLU vice chair Greg Allen and Larry Hourany, who stepped in for Pat Higgins on behalf of the California Clean Money campaign. The Redwood ACLU is producing a documentary of this forum for distribution on Access Humboldt Channel 12 and on YouTube and Google Video.

For more information, call the Redwood ACLU at (707) 442-4419 or visit redwoodaclu.blogspot.com.

2008 Patriot Award

Whereas, since the inception of the Redwood Patriot Award in 2004, Dave Meserve has been nominated every year as a deserving recipient for his past and current work; and

Whereas, after the passage of the Patriot Act, as a councilman for the City of Arcata, Dave Meserve was instrumental in the passage of a groundbreaking ordinance to prevent Arcata city officials from implementing the unconstitutional elements of the USA Patriot Act , which acted as an inspiration to all of us working to restore the Bill of Rights; and

Whereas, while on the Arcata City Council and since, Dave Meserve has supported police review and the concepts of accountability and transparency within our governmental agencies; and

Whereas, Dave Meserve has been a leading proponent and spokesperson for Measures F and J in Arcata and Eureka, adopted by 73% and 57% of voters last November, which limits the invasive tactics of military recruiters who target minors. Therefore be it

Resolved, The Board of Directors of the Redwood Chapter, American Civil Liberties Union awards the Fifth Annual Patriot Award to Dave Meserve for his continued commitment and action to protect the constitutional rights and civil liberties of the people of Humboldt County in accordance with the Bill of Rights.

Dated: December 16, 2008

Christina Allbright
Chair, Redwood ACLU