

Culver City Democratic Club

Active Democrat



www.CulverCityDemocraticClub.com

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Post Office Box 4254 • 6695 Green Valley Circle Culver City, CA 90230

General Meeting on Zoom — 7p.m. Wednesday, August 9, 2023

Program: The WGA and SAG-AFTRA strike

President's Message by Jeff Schwartz

Property and Privilege

Dear Readers,

Something extraordinary happened at the [July 10 City Council meeting](#) and I do not want it to be missed, misunderstood, or forgotten.

The Council was considering Action Item A-1, to delay the deadline for landlords to submit information on residential properties to the [City's rental registry](#) and to consider limiting public access. This item was put on the agenda by Mayor Albert Vera Jr. and Council Members Göran Eriksson and Dan O'Brien in response to complaints from landlords and their organizations about [CCRentals.org](#), a portal Stephen Jones created to facilitate access to rental registry data.

Their objections were baseless, since Jones did not publish any information the City had not; he just constructed a more accessible and useful search form for the same file. Nevertheless, landlords and their lobbyists used his work as a pretext to subvert the renter protections passed in 2020. The rental registry is necessary for the City to enforce rent control. Making it public reduces the power imbalance between landlords and renters and enables activists and social scientists to better understand the housing market. It also creates greater accountability for landlords. Shelter is a basic human need, but landlords are not required to have any special training or licensing.

Vera and Eriksson opposed the City establishing rent control and tenant protections in the first place and supported [Measure B](#), which would have repealed rent control. Both of their campaigns were backed by the [California Apartment](#)

[Association](#) and [the Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles \(the people who brought us Proposition 13\)](#). Now that they had a Council majority, they seemed poised to start undermining the progress many of us had fought hard for.

However, preparing for the meeting, I checked the rental properties Mayor Vera listed on his [Form 700 financial disclosure](#) against the listings on CCRentals.org and found that he had never registered them. Stephen Jones raised this issue in public comment at the July 10 meeting, and Vera explained that he was discussing with the City Attorney how to address the problem. I followed up that he should not be participating in a meeting revising a law which he was not complying with and asked why he was receiving special treatment from the City Attorney. The City Attorney denied that he was getting special treatment, but suggested he could recuse himself and leave the room to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest. He did, and the vote was tied, which meant the item failed.

Vera was right to leave the room, but this item should not have been on the agenda in the first place. A majority of the Council needs to agree to hear an item, and he was one of the "three nodding heads" for this one. It was not ethical for him to participate in that discussion or vote either.

I do not know when Vera realized he was violating the rental registry law. It has been in effect for several years, and every landlord has received multiple print and electronic notices to register. However, it is clear that, once Vera understood he was breaking the law, instead of registering his properties as required he

contacted the City Attorney to ask to be excused. She did not tell him that he was subject to the law like anyone else but allowed him to remain in violation, as if some sort of exception might be possible, and gave him personal legal advice, as if what is good for the Mayor is good for the City. If that is not special treatment, I don't know what is. This was a man born into wealth and power using his privilege to seek an exemption from a clear legal requirement and a modest fee and to have this request taken far more seriously than it deserved.

On July 10th, Albert Vera Jr. attempted to preside over and participate in a discussion and vote to weaken a law that he knew he was breaking and was attempting to be allowed to evade. That is a remarkable transgression which should haunt the remainder of his career in public life, if it does not end it.

I don't think it's enough that he eventually yielded to criticism and left the Mayor's desk or that he has subsequently registered his properties. His time in office has been saturated with conflicts of interest. We have seen him vote for the contract governing his daughter's employment with the City, her department's funding, and the hiring of her department head, on regulations directly affecting his businesses, and on the City's relationships with organizations on whose boards he has served. [He has also used his elected office to promote his private business](#). The habits acquired from the privileges accompanying inherited wealth are not compatible with the ethical requirements of public service.

The strike issues explained

by *Anouar H. Smaine*

(striking SAG-AFTRA member)

The Screen Actors Guild is in its second week of striking, joining the Writers Guild of America whose members have been picketing for nearly 3 months now. Talks with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) broke down as a direct result of the complete rejection of all of SAG-AFTRA's proposals by the AMPTP, which represents about 350 of Hollywood's most powerful Producers—many of whom are actors themselves. There follows a comparative presentation of SAG-AFTRA's Proposals, and the counter proposals of the AMPTP. The source is www.sagaftra.org/were-fighting-survival-our-profession. It highlights the substantial divide between the performers' legitimate demands for a fair deal, and the dismissive countering of the AMPTP on behalf of Producers.

Performers need minimum earnings to simply keep up with inflation.

- SAG-AFTRA: We need an 11 percent general wage increase in year one, so our members can recover from record inflation during the previous contract term.
- AMPTP: The most we will give you is 5 percent, even though that means your 2023 earnings will effectively be a significant pay cut, due to inflation, and it is likely you will still be working for less than your 2020 wages in 2026.

Performers need the protection of our images and performances to prevent replacement of human performances by artificial intelligence technology.

- SAG-AFTRA: Here's a comprehensive set of provisions to grant informed consent and fair compensation when a "digital replica" made of our performance is changed using AI.
- AMPTP: We want to be able to scan a background performer's image, pay them for a half a day's labor, and then use an individual's likeness for any purpose forever without their consent. We also want to be able to make changes to principal performers' dialogue, and even create new scenes, without informed consent. And we want to be able to use someone's images, likenesses, and performances to

train new generative AI systems without consent or compensation.

Performers need qualified hair and makeup professionals as well as equipment to safely and effectively style a variety of hair textures/styles and skin tones.

- SAG-AFTRA: How about consultations with qualified hair and makeup professionals for all performers on set to ensure equity for performers of color, and a requirement to have the proper tools and equipment?
- AMPTP: Begrudgingly, we will do this for principal performers, but background actors are on their own.

Performers need compensation to reflect the value we bring to the streamers who

profit from our labor.

- SAG-AFTRA: Consider this comprehensive plan for actors to participate in streaming revenue, since the current business model has eroded our residuals income.
- AMPTP: No.

All performers need support from our employers to keep our health and retirement funds sustainable.

- SAG-AFTRA: Contribution caps haven't been raised in 40 years, imperiling our pension and health plans. Would you consider raising the caps to adjust for inflation and ensure that all performers, re-

See STRIKE on page 3

My opinion on the strike and putting it in a more general context

by *Anouar Smaine*



Yes, WGA & SAG-AFTRA members are on the street and in front of studios demanding fair wages and real protections against being replaced by AI (Artificial Intelligence) among other things. But there's one theme that's recurrent in every conversation these days: Greed. It's a theme that's as old as the world itself and that's been at the heart of what has dominated this industry for the longest time, and at so many levels. We all know it and have experienced the devastating effects of it at some point.

Those who hold the keys to the kingdom know that things have to change eventually, so they'll do it in a way that looks like they're saving all of us from the abyss by asking a few CEOs to leave, then giving us the bare minimum to qualify for health insurance and some protections against AI. It would be so naive on our part to take the bait and be satisfied with that. If we want change, I say let's ask for a big change, let's flip the tables and revolutionize the entire studio system: a minimum of 30 percent increase in wages to reflect the huge inflation that the U.S. and world economies have experienced for a number of years now a 50 percent increase in residuals, no AI, and, **universal** health insurance for all performers and writers. That's fifty percent subsidized by the Studios. Seems exaggerated? The wages of four Studio CEOs go above the billion dollar per year mark. That's four people who simply collect what **we** create and build from scratch throughout the year. Think about it.

Our fight as members of SAG-AFTRA and the WGA goes beyond the fairness of a contract, it's a fight that workers anywhere and everywhere recognize themselves in. It's a fight for our children and families. It's a fight for human dignity.

from STRIKE on page 2

ardless of age or location, receive equal contributions?

- AMPTP: Here are some nominal increases nowhere near the level of inflation that won't adequately fund your health plan. Also, background child performers under 14 years of age living in the N.Y. zone don't deserve pension contributions, which is why we haven't paid them since 1992.

Principal performers need to be able to work during hiatus and not be held captive by employers.

- SAG-AFTRA: These timelines we've proposed help series regulars by limiting the increasingly long breaks between seasons and giving them some certainty as to when they'll start work again or will be released.

- AMPTP: Take these select few improve-



SAG-AFTRA member Pete Rockwell picketing Culver Studios in his Culver City Democratic Club t-shirt

ments that will only help a select few.

Principal performers need to be reimbursed for relocation expenses when

they're employed away from home.

- SAG-AFTRA: Drop the ruse that series regulars are becoming residents of a new state or country when they go on location and adequately pay them for all of their relocation costs.

- AMPTP: Here's some stipends which don't realistically reflect the cost of relocating to an out-of-state or out-of-country production.

It is not clear how long this standoff will last, but according to deadline.com and a source close to top-tier Producers (see deadline.com article by Dominic Patten titled "Hollywood Studios' WGA Strike Endgame Is To Let Writers Go Broke Before Resuming Talks In Fall") the plan is to stall negotiations until at least late October, 2023, to drain the strikers financially, and therefore force them to get back to work with virtually none of their demands met.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Club website: www.culvercitydemocraticclub.com

Club email address: CulverCityDemClub@gmail.com

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and Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CulverCityDems>

Actors and writers strike

[how to help click here](#)



August 9 - 7PM

CCDC General Meeting via Zoom



August 14 - 7 PM

[Culver City Council Meeting](#)

August 18 - 20

CADEM Executive Board Meeting
Visalia CA

August 22

[CCUSD School Board Meeting](#)

August 25 - 27

Fiesta La Ballona • Veteran's Park, Culver City
Club members are asked to volunteer for our Club booth
RSVP to CulverCityDemClub@gmail.com

August 28 - 7 PM

[Culver City Council Meeting](#)

Di's Corner:

by Diane Rosenberg

Update on club member Charlotte Gunter: She is still in rehab. Still healing and looking forward to when she can go home. Her spirits are high and she's extremely positive. She misses everyone.

On Sunday afternoon, July 2, the club held its Independence Day picnic at Blanco Park in Culver City. Among the attendees were Club President Jeff Schwartz, Legislative Committee Chair Leah Pressman, First V.P. Jeanna Harris, Second V.P. Will Herrera, School Board President Paula Amezola, Newsletter Editor Pete Rockwell, Corresponding Secretary Cynthia Hart, Membership Secretary Diane Rosenberg, former First V.P. Andrew Rosenberg, Culver City Council Member Freddy Puza, and West Basin Municipal Water District Director Scott Houston. Also present were two staff members from Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager's office.

Comments expressed in the newsletter are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Culver City Democratic Club

Three candidates—three memoirs

by Cynthia Hart

When I was in 6th grade and my big brother Ken was already old enough to vote, I tried to explain to him how to choose a candidate. An 11-year-old me told him that he should listen to all their speeches and carefully examine each candidate's policy positions. He said "No, that's not the way. You need to look at their values. You can't predict what policy decisions they may have to make in the future. What you need to know is what values they will rely on to decide."

This Fall, our club will be faced with a choice of endorsing only one of the three outstanding Democrats running for the U.S. Senate. We have the Prosecutor, the Law Professor, and the Social Worker. Each of them has written a memoir that can give us a glimpse into the values that guide their public service. Here are the books listed in the order in which I read them.

Midnight in Washington: How We Almost Lost Our Democracy and Still Could—by Adam Schiff

Representative Schiff's *Midnight in Washington* opens with the words "Please grab a mask!" spoken by a Capitol Police Officer. It goes on to a riveting insider account of January 6th. Schiff's concern for the safety of his colleagues and staff made me feel that he was just exactly the kind of person I would want standing next to me if I were under attack.

No review of Schiff's career can fail to address his vote to authorize the American Invasion of Iraq which he calls the greatest mistake of his public life. He explains that he was not on the Intelligence

Committee at the time (neither was I), that he relied on flawed intelligence, and perhaps, I think, a misplaced faith in the Republicans ("we weren't friends, but we were friendly") to act in the interests of our country.

Schiff now says, "Power does not necessarily corrupt, it reveals."



Other chapters of the book tell of his family's story of immigration from places that later became sites of Holocaust and pogrom. That and his youthful experiences traveling in an authoritarian country where government surveillance is ubiquitous, have made him especially vigilant to the threat of autocracy. It is noteworthy that brave heroes of the First Trump Impeachment such as Alexan-

der Vindman and Fiona Hill are themselves immigrants. Their courage was contagious—bringing other witnesses forward. This seems to have hardened Schiff's resolve to keep America a place where someone like Vindman can truly say "Here, right matters."

I commend to you these stirring words of Schiff's epilogue: "Our present circumstances are desperate, but we do not have the luxury of despair...For all its imperfections, America remains the best hope of freedom-loving people around the world."

I highly recommend the book even if you are not considering a vote for Schiff for Senate. If you don't have time to read all 483 pages, at least check out [Carlos Lozada's terrific review of it in the Washington Post](#). Also, you can hear Schiff [discuss his book with Al Franken here](#).

I Swear Politics Is Messier Than My Minivan—by Katie Porter

I highly recommend Katie Porter's book, if you want to know what it's really like to be a member of Congress. This is no dreary civics lesson (one reviewer called it "tangy"), but it tells you what it's like



for real. For one thing, she makes it clear why most Congress members are millionaires. "Congress is full of multimillionaires for the same reason that the NBA is full of tall people." (For details, see her Chapter 13—*Personal Funds*. Adam Schiff addresses that question in his book's Chapter 3—*Take Out Your Rolodex*.)

She explains why she is the only single mom of school-age children in Congress. The unpredictable congressional work schedule that fails to accommodate family life and the cost of childcare (1/4 of her after-tax salary) are factors. Her kids call her "Congressmom."

In Adam Schiff's book, he also regrets the family sacrifices. He missed so much of his kid's growing up time. He tells of the Thanksgiving dinner shared with his family and his security detail which was made necessary by the post-January-6 death threats. Schiff credits his partner, Eve, with making it possible for him to serve in

the Congress without worrying about the kids. Congressmom has no partner.

Representative Porter's formative years were spent on an Iowa farm during the farm crisis. (That's where she gets the accent.) Young Katie saw banks closing and families losing everything after a lifetime of hard work growing food for a hungry nation. The banks took their homes, their farms, and even their cars. It was natural, then, that as a law professor working under the mentorship of Professor Elizabeth Warren, she made a scholarly study of bankruptcy that drew the attention of the New York Times. In time, this led her to politics, as she came to understand that policies need to change and "Professors did studies, not make policies."

Katie Porter's memoir leaves me with a sense of the importance of representation. Hers is a rare voice in the Congress of a single parent who watches her checking account balance—not her stock portfolio—just like most of her constituents do. Hers is also the voice of a woman in the halls of power who is frequently mistaken for "the help" or for a staffer. (A male congressional colleague once handed her his valet parking ticket by mistake and asked her to go get his Tesla.)

See MINIVAN on page 5

**Comments expressed
in the newsletter
are the opinions
of the authors and
do not necessarily
represent the position
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from MINIVAN on page 4

And like Representative Barbara Lee, she has domestic violence in her past. Representative Porter knows what it is to call for help and find that law enforcement is ill-equipped to handle such situations. She knows what it is to hear them say “Don’t call us again or we’ll take your children.”

Representative Porter perseveres through it all while keeping a sense of humor and a whiteboard. (See Page 63 for instructions on “How to Whiteboard Anyone About Anything.”) “I Swear” is a fun and informative read even if she is not your first choice for the U.S. Senate. [To hear her discuss her book with Al Franken click here.](#)

Renegade For Peace And Justice—by Barbara Lee

In her book, published in 2008, Representative Lee makes it abundantly clear that her values come from her Christian faith. The opening chapter reads like a travelogue of her spiritual journey from her conversion to Catholicism at the age of 10 and on through a series of other churches. The book is liberally sprinkled with quotes from the New Testament, and she even reprints, in full, the Beatitudes. But hers is not the Christianity of MAGA. Her Jesus is a revolutionary, and after the revolution “The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth.” If Barbara Lee has any faults as a candidate, it may be that (at least as of 2008) she was a little overly fond of the idea of giving tax money to fund “faith-based initiatives.”

It was these values that attracted her to political activity as a social service worker with the Black Panther Party. [The Panther’s Ten Point Program](#) that called for equity, inclusiveness, peace, and justice reminded her of those Beatitudes. The Black Panther’s “survival rallies” offered food distribution and voter registration. Their slogan “All power to all the people” recognized the value of intersectionality decades before that word came into common usage.

Representative Lee’s most famous vote, of course, was against the blank check Authorization for the Use of Military

Force (AUMF) that allowed the younger President Bush to invade Iraq. She foresaw the disaster that no other Congressional Representative did. It is not possible to overstate the amount of courage this took at a time when the trauma of September 11 was still so fresh. But her pursuit of peace was not just a one-day event. She continued to work quietly for repeal of that AUMF, to prevent young Bush from invading Iran, and to develop a cabinet-level Department of Peace which would work against all types of violence.

There have only been eleven Black U.S. Senators. Only two of them have been women. When the first of them, Carol Moseley Braun, was sworn in she said, “...my presence in and of itself will change the U.S. Senate.” So the “r” word (representation) comes to mind. What does it change when there is a voice in the Senate that has climbed over what Lee calls “the twin hurdles of race and gender”?

If elected to the Senate, Representative Lee would most likely be the first U.S. Senator to have ever been on welfare.

She says that “Being on welfare was a humiliating experience, but it was also enlightening.” She came to understand that the people on welfare weren’t broken, the system was broken. What does it change when there is a voice in the Senate of one who has actually been poor? Lee’s legislative goal is nothing short of the elimination of poverty.

I highly recommend the book, even if Barbara Lee is not your first-choice candidate, for its powerful living history of what it was really like to go to school in segregated America before the Brown decision and when there were “coloreds only” water fountains. What was it like to try to keep your head up when there are daily assaults on your human dignity?

Conclusion

So that’s what the candidates have to say about themselves. Aren’t they great? I only wish we could blend the best qualities of each into one candidate and run that candidate for President in 2028. But for now, let’s all do our homework and make the best possible decision when we make our Club’s endorsing vote this Fall.



Senate Candidates Make Their Case

It isn’t often we have an election to fill an open U.S. Senate seat, and it isn’t often we have three attractive candidates to choose from. So we all have a lot of homework to do to get ready to vote on our Club’s endorsement. Here is a place to start. Recently, Representatives Adam Schiff, Katie Porter, and Barbara Lee visited our neighbors to the West, the Santa Monica Democratic Club, to discuss their campaigns and take questions. The SMDC very thoughtfully placed the videos on their YouTube channel. Click on the candidate’s name to go to the video.



[Adam Schiff](#)



[Katie Porter](#)



[Barbara Lee](#)

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Independence Day picnic photos by club member Karim Sahli



New CCDC t-shirts are here!



We are now accepting orders for Club t-shirts in a new design, refreshed for our 70th anniversary.

Shirts are 100% cotton, union made in Boyle Heights.

They come in small, medium, large, and extra-large and, for the first time, we have Men's (boxy) and Women's (fitted) cuts.

Place your order by donating \$20 (or more!) via [Act Blue](#) and emailing us at CulverCityDemClub@gmail.com your desired size and cut. We will deliver in Culver City and nearby; other orders will be mailed.

We also have a few shirts remaining with the previous design (now known as "heritage" or "throwback") shown below.



Yesterday I was appointed by Speaker Rivas to serve as The Majority Leader of The California State Assembly.

I'm humbled. I'm grateful.

My colleagues mean the world to me.

We have a lot of good to do together.

Wishing you all a blessed 4th.

Tomorrow we get back to the work.

[\[click here to read an article about Isaac Bryan's new job\]](#)

Join or Renew Your Culver City Democratic Club Membership!

[To Join the Culver City Democratic Club](#)
[CLICK HERE for the Club's ActBlue page](#)

Join the Culver City Democratic Club for a \$30 donation!

**In the second half of the year
you can join the club or renew
your membership for the
remainder of this year and all of
next year for a \$45 donation**

**For more information on becoming a member of the Culver
City Democratic Club, call Diane Rosenberg at
(310) 398-5328.**



It's Almost Fiesta Time in Culver City!

The Culver City Democratic Club will have a booth at Fiesta La Ballona the weekend of August 25 - 27



Please mark your calendar for Aug. 25-27. This is a great chance to spend some time together in person and to connect with community members who might not know about us or have let their memberships lapse. There will be fun things to give away and VIP guests.



I hope you'll drop by for a few minutes, but it'll be even better if you can volunteer to help out in the booth for an hour or two (or more). We will be there 3-10PM Friday, 10AM-10PM Saturday, and 9AM-7PM Sunday, including setting up and breaking down. There's plenty of work to share, but it will be fun and easy. Don't forget your sunscreen and Club t-shirt!



PS. If you didn't renew your membership for 2023, we are now offering a midyear sale: you can get the rest of 2023 and all of 2024 for only \$45. Additional contributions are also welcome.

by Dr. Suzanne De Benedittis

With escalating climate disruption and ongoing catastrophic disasters, is there more you would like our County Supervisors to do with respect to this nonconforming land use and its ongoing operations at our local oil field? If yes, write your comments NOW, and send them in as soon as possible.

or contact Edgar De La Torre
Senior Planner, Zoning Enforcement Special Projects
by email at edelatorre@planning.lacounty.gov
or by phone at (213) 974-6411.
For more info from our colleagues at STAND-LA
& PSR-LA Communications: Info@psr-la.org

