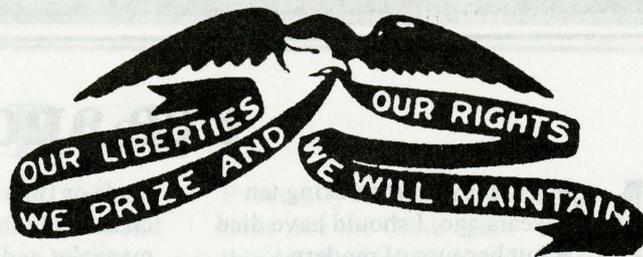


# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



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Winter 2003

*A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT*

## Prairie Dog's Honor Roll for 2002

2003.... Will this century never end? Fortunately, a few shining stars lit the darkness, as they do in even the worst of years.

**David Baugh**, a former Coe College student who takes cases for the American Civil Liberties Union, sounded an early warning on the looming constitutional crisis in the U.S. An African-American who once defended a Ku Klux Klansman charged with cross-burning, Baugh opposed trying Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters in military tribunals; failure to give our enemies the same constitutional protections we afford our citizens will erode 'the moral high ground we reserve around the world.'

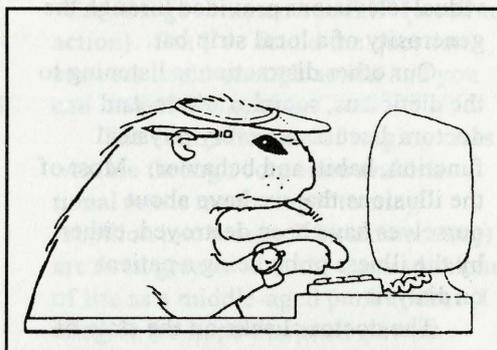
**Joe Bolkcom** drew a bead on payday loan companies that milk workers for as much as 360% in interest on cash advances for personal checks. The Iowa City state senator introduced a bill to require the 150 companies in Iowa to reduce rates, limit fees, and fully disclose their business practices.

As the Iowa legislature was passing an 'English Only' bill aimed at Latino immigrants, **the city of Perry** bought computer software to translate city documents into Spanish.

**Richard Sturgeon** has dedicated his life to helping workers. He draws no salary for publishing the monthly 'Workers Have Rights Too' newsletter out of Sioux City. Thank him by contributing money so that he can

continue to bring justice to the workplace. [Dicksturg@pionet.net](mailto:Dicksturg@pionet.net) or 877-882-4555 toll-free.

**Jill June** and Planned Parenthood refused to allow the Buena Vista County Attorney access to the medical records of its patients. Holding her ground in an emotional



maelstrom, June helped to preserve the right to medical privacy in law-enforcement investigations.

**Rich Eychaner** is a Republican businessman. He's also the sponsor of the Matthew Shepard Scholarship covering tuition, fees, and books for openly gay and lesbian Iowa high school seniors who have reduced homophobia and raised awareness of gay and lesbian issues. [www.ffbciowa.org](http://www.ffbciowa.org) or 515-288-2500.

**The Des Moines Register** repeatedly called readers' attention to Iowa's binge spending on incarceration, leading to a 70% increase in prison costs in the past five years. Huge

hikes in imprisonment and construction of new prisons are senseless in a state with stagnant population growth and a low crime rate. Will this be the year that Iowa learns from our neighboring states by emphasizing community corrections, sentencing reform, and an end 'tough on crime' posturing?

**Jill Kromminga**, program director of Big Brothers Big Sisters in Iowa City, shrugged off criticism that the organization gives openly gay and lesbian volunteers an equal chance to serve as one-on-one mentors to children: 'For us, it's completely a non-issue.'

**Sisters on Target**, founded by Evelyn Davis to inspire African-American women to run for office, brought U.S. Congressman John Lewis to Des Moines for its annual banquet. Lewis also spoke at Tom Harkin's steak fry, where he endured a bear hug from soul brother Leonard Boswell.

**Peg Mullen** was a farm wife from La Porte City when she lost a son in Viet Nam. Now 85, she has lost no passion since writing 'Unfriendly Fire' 25 years ago. Mullen was recently seen at an anti-preemptive strike rally in Davenport carrying a sign that said 'Bush & Cheney - Your War, You Go.'

**Iowa Protection and Advocacy Services** has a federal mandate to

2002 Honor Roll,  
Continued on Page 6

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# Pee and Sympathy

**M**y kidneys quit working ten years ago. I should have died but because of modern medicine I am alive.

I survive because of a process of cleaning the blood called hemodialysis. I go to a center where a team of technicians, nurses, doctors, social workers, and dieticians following the guidelines set down by Medicare keep me alive. They strain my blood through a machine to remove all toxins and excess fluid. In other words, the machine urinates for me. The team also provides all the support services the government thinks I will need. According to the center's handbook, I am also part of the team.

The kidney center I attend is the only one in the city. The richest person in town comes here as well as the mentally ill, the indigent and the criminal population. The center also reflects Anchorage's diverse population. There are many Asians, Pacific Islanders, Native Alaskans, Whites, Hispanics, and African-Americans.

I sit in my chair at the dialysis center trying to get comfortable. I casually glance at the person in the next chair. He must be some sort of petty criminal because he is in leg irons. That part is not unusual. What has gotten my attention is the fact that he is wearing pink socks, with a pair of innocent-looking black and white tennis shoes. A ring of metal loosely encircling his ankles seems somehow incongruent with his pastel socks. I wonder why he chose them.

I have always wanted to ask one of the criminals how they have the energy to go out and commit crimes while they are dialysis patients. Most kidney patients complain of a lack of energy and find it hard to hold a job. This guy is obviously industrious if not sensible.

A murderer used to be on my shift. He killed his wife before he became a kidney patient. Now the state brings him over with a guard who sits and

reads or flirts with the female technicians while the murderer sits in manacles and has his treatment.

In the United States everyone who needs it gets dialysis. This is probably good because America has such a problem deciding who is worthy of anything, particularly medical treatment.

Dialysis takes at least three hours, three times a week (according to the Medicare guideline). We sit in chairs that are three to five feet apart. We are attached to the machine by two needles inserted into a subcutaneous plastic or natural super vein in our arm sometime the vein is in the leg or even in the jugular. We have to lie still. We lie there listening to the various gurgles and beeps of the machine, with few distractions. We do have little individual televisions provided through the generosity of a local strip bar.

Our other distraction is listening to the dieticians, social workers, and doctors discuss our every physical function, habit, and behavior. Most of the illusions that we have about ourselves have been destroyed, either by the illness or by being a patient on dialysis

The doctor checks on the state of our bowel movements (something I didn't use to discuss in crowds), the amount of fluid we have been drinking, any little fever or sore that may have appeared. They are also not very discreet about mentioning a person's weight.

One dietician likes to remind us of the really terrible things that can happen if we continue our poor eating habits or continue our pre-dialysis diet. She has lab reports so she knows when we've been naughty or nice.

Kidney patients can't eat a lot of the food most people think of as healthy. Dialysis machines are not as efficient as kidneys and can't do all the regulating, metabolizing and other mysterious functions of these tiny

organs. We have to watch our intake of potassium. That means beans, leafy green vegetables, oranges, bananas, etc. We have to limit phosphates, all dairy products, nuts, and chocolate. Too much potassium — your heart will stop. Too many phosphates — calcium crystals can form in your heart or brain. They sometimes come out of your skin in little hard bumps that itch. You will be sorry. You will be really sorry if your heart stops. People have been rushed to the hospital or even died from eating too many oranges.

The diet is really upsetting. Trying to figure out what you can eat so that you don't accidentally kill yourself is stressful. I ate a pink grapefruit one day. It tasted so good that I thought if I die, I die.

Most of us isolate ourselves during our treatment through sleep. The center used to turn down the lights. Now they discourage sleeping, but most people feel lucky if they can disappear into their dreams.

One of the few policies the center has regarding our privacy is if we go into the hospital or die. I'm not sure I understand this, since I know who is constipated and who cannot follow the diet. When a patient disappears, there is a noticeable ripple of anxiety through the other patients. Did they die? Why did they die? Of course there is the question that may not be asked aloud — could that happen to me? We are not all close to each other or talk everyday but there is a bond between us. Death is always there at the edge of things.

Most of the time I come and I am grateful that I live in this century, in a country that thinks there is some reason to keep me alive. Some days the impact of having kidneys that cannot perform a simple biological function that would set me free from the center, the diet, and "the team" weighs on me. I even

*Pee and Sympathy,*  
*Continued on Page 5*

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# State Election 2004 Begins

**H**aving spent time — but not enough — in the Iowa Senate, I thought you might find it handy to have a citizens' guide to the new statehouse leadership.

On 11/23/02, the Des Moines Register reported that “a shakeup in leadership of the Iowa House of Representatives has resulted in 15 new chairmen for the body’s 23 committees.....the reorganization follows the redrawing of political districts, which caused some committee chairmen to retire and others to move over to the Iowa Senate.”

New committee chairmen are as follows (all are Republicans, who hold a 54-46 majority in the Iowa House and control of what’s debated in the 2003 session):

- Agriculture: Jack Drake of Lewis.
- Appropriations: Bill Dix of Shell Rock.
- Commerce Regulations and Labor: Brad Hansen of Carter Lake.
- Economic Growth: Clarence Hoffman of Charter Oak.
- Education: Jodi Tymeson of Winterset.
- Environmental Protection: Sandy Greiner of Keota.
- Human Resources: Dan Boddicker of Tipton.
- Judiciary: Gene Maddox of Clive.
- Local Government: Jim Van Engelenhoven of Pella.
- Natural Resources: Mary Lou Freeman of Alta.
- Public Safety: Clel Baudler of Greenfield.
- State Government: Jeff Elgin of Cedar Rapids.
- Transportation: Rich Arnold of Russell.
- Ways and Means: Jamie Van Fossen of Davenport.

Aside from personnel changes, one subcommittee was dissolved, while two other committees were combined. The Judiciary Committee was split; public safety will handle crime and homeland

security issues, while judiciary will take care of legislation that deals with the courts.

Where do I start? Bill Dix at Appropriations is a kill or be killed guy. If he doesn’t like your program, it won’t get trimmed 4-5%, it will be eliminated. Iowa City better be prepared.

Clarence Hoffman at Economic Growth sells insurance. That’s his idea of economic growth. But don’t make any claims, and better not sue your HMO or nursing home for letting your mother die — that is anti-growth!

Sandy Greiner at Environmental Protection? Her husband and sons sell Pioneer Seed and DuPont Chemicals. She floor-managed the “Bio-Terrorism” Bill in 2001, which gutted protections for organic farmers and concerned citizens (the Governor signed it). Sandy thinks environmental protection is letting mega-farmers spread anything DuPont can make a profit on. She is the biggest pack mule for chemical companies in the entire Iowa Legislature.

Dan Boddicker stays at Human Resources, where it’s his opinion that it’s okay to beat your kids as long as you don’t break any bones. Get ready for more covenant marriage drivel too.

Clel Baudler at Public Safety is a retired trooper who seems never to have heard of the Bill of Rights. Loves the death penalty. All of the power of the Judiciary has been moved to Public Safety. Join, rejoin, or make a contribution to the Iowa Civil Liberties Union — it needs all the money it can lay its hands on to hire more lawyers to undo the damage to the Constitution. God help us!

Finally, Jamie Van Fossen stays at Ways and Means. His goal is to continue to cut taxes until state government has to shut down. Then he’ll have more time to fraternize with legislative and former legislative employees.

I hope the Democrats who must serve with these “Chairmen” have:

- A prescription for an effective anti-depressant
- A full-body condom for protection from politically transmitted diseases
- A REAL plan to replace these guys in 2004.

We need to identify legislative candidates for 2004 in January 2003, not the summer of 2004. Help me find people who are community activists who want to become state activists. Then let’s talk about personal voter contacts by our candidates over 700 days, not just over two months through glossy attack mail. Finally, let’s be ready for the TOTAL LIES that the Republicans throw at us in the last week of every campaign since Steve Grubbs started Victory Enterprises to run Republican races.

If I cannot take every reasonable Iowan to Des Moines to see these jerks in action, then I want to take the jerks to Iowans. I suggest the Democratic Party or the Truman Fund buy cassette tape recorders or digital camcorders for every Democratic ranking member of every committee. Let Iowans hear the REAL Republican agenda from their own mouths under the Golden Dome, not the pollster-scripted message they spread at election time.

Let me know what you can do to help me sack these guys in 2004!! ✨

—Tom Fiegen can be reached at 319-362-6063 or [tlf4tlf@aol.com](mailto:tlf4tlf@aol.com)

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for construction of major projects to attract tourists and improve our quality of life. Cities will use the cash to build large arenas, water parks and such, which are fine and necessary attractions for entertainment, but do they address Iowa's deeply rooted economic and social ills? Of course not.

Vision Iowa board members have packed up and gone home, but Iowa legislators recently returned to Des Moines and will soon debate whether to appropriate more funds for Vision Iowa grants.

Since the state is struggling with fiscal woes, it's unreasonable to expect legislators to earmark another \$225 million. Still, if they want to truly change the face of Iowa, they need to send just a little more scratch in our direction. Call it the Vision Iowa Clean-Up Fund, and funnel a few million to the following projects:

- \$10,000 to the University of Iowa Law School, to enlighten administrators and coaches that allowing an athlete to keep their scholarship, continue practicing, and return to the team after a redshirt season—without being suspended for even one game—does not qualify as justice for a sexual assault plea. Des Moines lawyers Conlin, Moss, and Crawford are especially in need of continuing education, and a couple of nontraditional students named Bowsby and Alford will also need specialized tutoring.
- \$723 to buy a six-pack of beer for every volunteer fire station in the state, as an act of solidarity with our firefighting brethren in Elgin, who were required to empty the Bud out of their firehouse fridge. How can we expect to attract educated, hard-working people to rural Iowa when we don't even

- \$500,000 to build a 2,000-head hog confinement building directly across the street from the State Capitol, instead of that parking garage currently on the drawing board. Manure disposal? No problem, just spread it along the banks of the Des Moines River next to the new Events Center.
- \$66.72 for red, white, and blue "Peace is Patriotic" bumperstickers to be placed on all Iowa National Guard equipment used to enforce the No Fly Zone over Iraq. If Guard members are truly representing our state, shouldn't they also be representing the hundreds of thousands of Iowans who (according to polls) oppose the use of military force in Iraq?
- \$500,000 each for the Green and Libertarian Parties, to set up their own TV networks and broadcast their platforms to Iowans. This appears to be their only option, since the mainstream media won't allow them to sit on the same debate stage as Dems and Repubs, even though they enjoy the same legal standing on our election ballots.
- \$938 for Speedo swimsuits for all Environmental Protection Committee members, House and Senate Ag Committee members, and oh yes, Jeff Vonk, Iowa's Dept. of Natural Resources director. They'll need the suits this summer when they take a dip in the sewage-infested lakes at Backbone and George Wyth State Parks in northeast Iowa. C'mon, I dare you.
- \$1.5 million for installation of artificial steel spines in the six Board of Education members who refuse to strengthen Iowa's pathetic academic standards for

books? Don't worry, he can get a combination of Fs and D minuses in all his classes and still make All-Conference! Educational excellence? There may not be enough steel in all of Iowa.

- \$750,000 to erect a wind turbine on the State Capitol grounds. Not only will it provide power for the entire Capitol complex, pollute less, and serve as an example of how school districts and utilities can stimulate our economy and reduce our dependence on foreign oil, it will come in handy as legislators search frantically for a way to blow those hog confinement fumes toward East Side neighborhoods.
- \$175,000 to hire a really, really good lobbyist who can convince NCAA honchos to reduce the number of football scholarships and recruiting visits at all Division I-A and I-AA institutions of higher learning. Maybe, just maybe, we could keep tuition increases at Iowa, Iowa State, and UNI under 30 percent the next two years.

These nine appropriations will finish the job and take care of all of our educational, environmental, and economic development problems — for less than \$4 million! Sometimes the fiscal conservatives are right: it's not how much you spend, it's where you spend it. ✂

—Dennis Harbaugh lives in Waterloo.

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# Combat Rock

The music world lost an obscure giant in the final days of 2002 with the death of Joe Strummer, co-founder and political soul of punk rock heroes the Clash, at age 50.

One of the things that's godawful about Joe Strummer's death: when the inevitable bombing of Iraq begins we're going to hear his ragged voice singing the one American Clash hit, "Rock The Casbah," over and over and over again as a rah-rah war soundtrack. He didn't even write it, the drummer did. And "bombs between the minarets" notwithstanding, it's really about the ban on Western music in Iran. Lastly, that sort of jingoism is the complete opposite of a man who had the guts to release an album called *Sandinista!* the very month Ronald Reagan took office. Somehow I don't think "The Call Up," a 1981 club hit from *Sandinista!* urging draft resistance, will get equal time.

The draft was extremely real to me that year, my last year of high school. I heard the music of Joe Strummer and the Clash at just the right moment in my life and it played a very big part in sending me in the direction I've taken.

Punk rock was in part a British working class reaction to Labour's dole-queue apathy and the open hostility of the Thatcher Tories. Joe

Strummer, son of a diplomat, was not "genuinely" working class. Yet he and his bandmates took the punk banner from the Sex Pistols' wanna-destroy nihilism and gave the frustration *direction*.

Lyrics on a page don't do the Clash justice. You have to hear it coming at you at a thousand miles an hour. But Joe deserves a few lines from "Clampdown:"

*Kick over the wall  
cause government's to fall  
How can you refuse it?  
Let fury have the hour,  
anger can be power  
D'you know that you can use it?*

That first line — I never have figured out whether it's "(be)cause government's to fall" (a prophecy) or "CAUSE governments to fall" (a call to action). But I've found the question answers itself: enough action and you can make it come true.

The contradictions of waging class warfare through corporate multinational music marketing ("turning rebellion into money," Strummer sang) are even greater than the contradictions of life as a middle-aged punk rocker (I cling to the hope that male pattern baldness is just a backwards Mohawk).

Eventually these sorts of contradictions tore the Clash apart. Yet to this day their music remains relevant, topical yet timeless. Joe Strummer was to other rock musicians as Paul Wellstone was to other politicians: rough around the edges, brutally honest, forever torn by the compromises of success, and right on target.

In the spirit of a band who low-balled their album prices by taking next to no royalties so their fans could afford it, you should go and download some Clash music. Do it now before the Homeland Security Department catches you! ✂

—John Deeth lives in Iowa City.

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## *Pee and Sympathy, Continued from Page 1*

begin to resent those super-size drinks and bathroom breaks most people take for granted.

When I attended a conference last year, one of the presenters talked about getting a kidney transplant and peeing for the first time in years. This would normally be a private topic, but to a kidney patient it is a dream.

There was also a time at the conference when a speaker asked how many people had been on dialysis for more than 5, 10, 15, and then 20 years and over. People applauded and rejoiced. We do survive.

Without dialysis I would live maybe 7 to 10 days. Some people choose to leave dialysis. Some choose not to go on. It is a personal choice. I choose to stay and to live. ✂

—Toni Pounds is a former Iowan who lives in Alaska.

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**2003 Honor Roll**  
*Continued from Page 1*

investigate abuse and neglect of people with mental disabilities. When the state of Iowa refused to turn over records about a death at Woodward Resource Center, P&A successfully sued for the records and court costs. **U.S. District Judge Robert Pratt** ruled that the state could not 'cloak discussions about potential abuse at will by simply declaring such discussions off the record.'

**Sioux City** one-upped the cows of Chicago and the American Gothic couples of Cedar Rapids by placing thirty prairie dog sculptures throughout the city last summer. Overcome by the magnificence of this public art project, someone stole 'Prairie Dog Blues,' a five-foot sculpture brightly painted with musical notes and

instruments. The city's art director secured the remaining sculptures to the sidewalk.

Cedar County activist **Clara Oleson** compiled a list of over 200 questions for workers and unions to ask about a proposed drug testing policy. For a fact sheet, 'Asking the Right Questions,' contact [charles\\_richardson@uml.edu](mailto:charles_richardson@uml.edu)

**Jim Tomkovicz**, University of Iowa law professor and member of the Iowa Board in Control of Athletics, turned down a \$5000 trip to the Orange Bowl paid by the athletic department: 'I don't think there is any way I can justify taking something from the department when it is my job to help supervise athletics.'

**CSPS** is an art gallery and theatre housed in an old Czech and Slovak social hall in Cedar Rapids. Owners **John Herbert and Mel Andringa**

use it to provide eastern Iowans with an eclectic melange of culture and politics, from alt-country music to multimedia performance art to panel discussions, often in partnership with community centers and schools. Come on down to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street! ✂

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**THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE**

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**"In the days ahead, we must not consider it unpatriotic to raise certain basic questions about our national character.**

**We must begin to ask, why are there forty million poor people in a nation overflowing with such unbelievable affluence? Why has our nation placed itself in the position of being God's military agent on earth? Why have we substituted the arrogant undertaking of policing the whole world for the high task of putting our own house in order?"**

**—Martin Luther King, Jr.**