

COMMON SENSE

"I say to you quite frankly that the time for racial discrimination is over."—Jimmy Carter

FROM THE CLUB PRESIDENT

We did it again—and aren't we proud—we re-elected President Barack Obama.

How many of us as Americans, and as Democrats were able to witness a truly amazing day in history? Witnessing the inauguration of President Barack Obama not once, but twice, and to make it even more special, the second inauguration was on the day we celebrate a civil rights movement—Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The scenes that flashed across the television took my breath away, to see so many people standing and waving their flags, cheering and chanting "Fired up and ready to go"—it made me proud to be a Democrat.

The next four years will bring about change, which will not come easily, all of us have to fight for every issue because President Obama cannot do it alone, we have to be prepared with numbers and addresses of our representatives so that our voices will be heard. We must be committed to helping President Obama, while holding other elected officials accountable for their votes on the issues we hold dear.

We as Americans and as Democrats need to come together on our vision and our ideas. What we stand for can either alienate our neighbors or it can encourage them to become more informed. We need to be educated on where our party stands to carry on an informed conversation, and not be afraid, but instead hold our heads high and say, "Yes, I am a Democrat, this is what I stand for...times are changing, our time is now."

It's time to be united, to build our party, to be noticed and to take a stand.

Let's take the President's words to heart and make a difference, "You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course ... have the obligation to shape the debates of our time—not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals."

—JoAnn Martinez

Our Constitution and what it means

by Ben Quiet

We hear about it all the time. Because of what we hear we inherently know that it is important to us as citizens of the nation, but have you read it? This area of *Common Sense* is going to be dedicated to revealing the Constitution and some of what it contains. It will not be exhaustive nor will it cover the contract in detail, but it will, hopefully, be interesting and informative.

Let us start with why it exists. It took a while, but it became evident that the colonies needed a comprehensive government and a contract between the people and their government would have to be devised. That contract is the Constitution. It starts with the Preamble which, while it is not a governing part, does set out what the whole document is designed to do. It tells us what our government is set up to do and is a guide of sorts when questions of purpose and intent arise. Also, note that the contract assumes that all power of government comes from the people and the people are granting to the governing power certain rights and powers. This is what made it unique at its inception. Power came *from* the people. The governing power was not granting certain rights to the people as was the norm in the

world at that time. Even so, the first 10 amendments were soon adopted to make this distinction clear and to clearly establish certain important rights in the people.

Preamble: "We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Now with this purpose in mind, consider a portion of the 14th Amendment.

Amendment 14(4): *The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing of insurrection or rebellion, against the United States, shall not be questioned.* But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

Common Sense # 13: Since last I had the floor we have averted a fiscal cliff without knowing if it really existed. To do that the line in the sand that represented a small tax increase for those earning \$250,000 or more per year was erased and a new one representing the same deal for those earning over \$400,000 per year was agreed on. I don't know how many people had their taxes raised, I suspect not many.

Now we are talking about raising the debt limit again. This exercise has as its sole purpose an assurance to our nation's creditors that we won't default on those documents of debt. As a snippet from the Constitution makes clear, the debt limit is really an empty gesture. Article 14 (4) already prevents that default. Saying it again by a mere statute is legally meaningless; just repetitious or a reassurance. There is no reason for the administration to make any more concessions. We do need to get busy on some meaningful gun regulations because the executive orders currently being announced don't do anything about the sale of assault rifles or handguns that can fire five shots per second.

Why I'm A Democrat

7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 4, 2013
San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts

Three of our members, Nicholas Arteaga, Floyd Crider and April VerMerris will talk about their lives as they relate to the development of their political philosophies and why they are Democrats.

Arteaga, a native of Colorado City, is a retired supervisor of personnel at San Angelo's Terrill Manufacturing Company.

Crider, retired Army sergeant and teacher as well as a graduate of Northwestern and Angelo State universities, currently

spends his time as a community activist.

VerMerris is new to San Angelo, having come here from Michigan to take a job with the state of Texas. She has worked in parts of Africa and Nicaragua and has studied at the University of Michigan and the Sorbonne in Paris.

Don't miss this meeting! You'll leave with some answers to that question you receive all the time from our fellow West Texans, "Why are you a Democrat?"

announcements

■ The NAACP Annual Freedom Fund Banquet

"We are the Change that We Seek" will be held Saturday, Feb. 16, 2013, 7 p.m. at the McNease Convention Center. Interested Tom Green County Democrats can still purchase tickets for \$20 from Jo Ann Martinez. Please call 325-212-3081 for more information.

■ Executive Committee Meeting

7 p.m. Feb. 11 at Los Panchitos at the Paseo de Santa Angela.

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Do you want to do something for the Club?

Do you have good communication skills? Do you like to meet people? Then you have a job!

Don Dunagan, club secretary, is looking for someone who wants to spend about 30 minutes each week contacting closet Democrats and other potential members. He has ideas about how to contact,

discuss with, and recruit folks who may be overlooked for membership and participation. You would be the third member of the committee. Linda Shoemaker will be helping with the project. Contact Don at 325-617-7130 or e-mail him at brigadoonranch@yahoo.com.