

Sonoma Valley Democrats General Meeting Minutes
Pueblo Serena Club House, 6:30pm, March 24, 2025

1. **Beth Hadley**, SV Dems President: announcements
 - a. Welcome, Introduce Elected Officials & Board members
 - b. Check out our website, <https://www.svdems.org/> for current actions
 - c. Raffle to benefit our Gerald Hill Memorial Scholarship for two local High School students. \$5 per ticket or 3 tickets for \$10
 - d. Please pay annual dues of \$30 per person. Treasurer Bob Baeyan can take cash or check payments tonight to renew/join or go to website: <https://www.svdems.org/>

2. **Sandra Lowe**: Sonoma City Council Member: Sandra distributed maps of the proposed voting districts. California had passed a law recommending equal representation. She explained that the City had decided to follow this course to avoid a costly lawsuit forcing the city to switch from city-wide elections to district elections to ensure proportionate representation in our elected representatives. Some cities have been hit with a \$1million fine for not having district voting and even if Sonoma won the lawsuit it would cost \$30,000 just to respond to the lawsuit. Each map had the statistics on population and ethnic breakdown. She noted that the current members of the City Council live in all of the districts delineated in the plan. Sonoma has hired a redistricting expert to get all the statistics correct. She recommended going to the city website to see the details of the maps. The maps were generated by requests for resident input and this map was initially submitted by a resident. City residents running for election must live in the district they are running in. She gave some examples of how local representation means that local issues are addressed

3. **Josette Brose Eichar**: Vice President and Secretary of Wake-Up Sonoma. Josette explained that the Sonoma Valley Democrats (SVD) is partnering with Wake-Up Sonoma to sponsor the screening of a movie, *Democracy Noir*, to be shown at the Sebastiani Theatre on April 7th at 5:30 PM. Go to the Wake Up Sonoma website for more information. Tickets available at the Sebastiani Theatre website. Proceeds will be split between Wake Up Sonoma and SVD.

The movie is about how Hungary under Viktor Orban went from democracy to authoritarianism in 15 yrs. We are moving in that direction much faster. She stated that we need to push the national Democratic Party to act.

4. **Bill Steck**, chairman of the Political Organizing Committee for the Sonoma County Democratic Party. He discussed how unjust the tax code is and how it favors large corporations and the wealthy at the expense of the rest of us. Bill explained that the corporate and individual tax rates have dropped significantly over time, but that the wealthy don't pay taxes because they live on money they borrow against their assets and that is not considered income. He also discussed how federal workers are being attacked. This last week there were rallies in Santa Rosa supporting Federal Workers and Postal Workers. An April 15th action being organized is a caravan converging on Santa Rosa from North, South, East and West protesting the unjust tax code. In Sonoma the caravan will start at the post office at 617 Broadway at 12:30pm, proceed to Boyes Hot Springs' Post Office at 18092 Sonoma Hwy arriving at 2:00pm, going next

to the Kenwood post office at 8930 Sonoma Hwy arriving at 3:30pm and finishing at 5pm at the Santa Rosa post office at 730 2nd Street. The caravans are expected to rally at each stop and pick up more participants as they go. If you wish to volunteer with the caravan or in general at with Sonoma County Democratic Party go to their website sonomadems.org. He discussed the need for media coverage, and streaming. He explained that we need to get the 20-30 and 30-40 year olds engaged. The IRS workforce is being slashed. It is anticipated that there will be \$200 billion dollars in uncollected taxes this year. In the discussion that followed people recommended that Democrats need a catchy slogan, and slogans for signs. Bill said there are lots of good slogans seen on signs at recent rallies. It was explained that if 3.5% of the populace protest it would make an impact. Postcarding and phone banking are ways we already protest.

5. Hearing from YOU: Joanne Brown then led a public forum on suggestions for what we can do. What is listed below are suggestions made by attendees.

a) Ask for tax extensions, but it was explained that you have to pay your taxes when due anyway even with an extension.

b) Boycott billionaire businesses like Amazon and Tesla.

c) Put a stamp on all your paper money that says Democracy not Authoritarianism. It was noted that that might be illegal defacement of our currency

d) Support Amnesty International in their effort to support the people deported to Nicaraguan prisons.

e) Support Class Actions to protect federal employees personal data from being accessed by Elon Musk. So far winning.

f) Contact the national ACLU to support their actions.

g) Two elections in Florida on April 1 and one later in Upstate New York. They are in Red districts, but if Democrats win we can regain the House.

There are 8 Republican districts in CA, some of which might be winnable in the Central Valley, as they have been hit by repercussions of the tariffs.

h) April 5th - attend the "Hands Off" rallies. One in Sonoma Plaza at 10 AM

i) How do we connect to younger people? Who has grandchildren or younger children who would like to be in front of a camera making clips to pass on messages to the younger generation? Flood social media.

j) There were 350 - 400 attendees at the actions mentioned supporting federal workers and postal service workers The power of mass action when 3% or more show up on the streets ended the Vietnam war. On May 1 or May 3 there will be Peace and Justice rallies supporting immigrants, LGBTQ and workers.

k) We need to bring in people not already participating through strengthening our community. Interact, talk, share.

l) The Democrats are in a circular firing squad. Killing each other. When people that bought Tesla's bought them they thought they were doing the right thing by owning an electric car. Things have changed.

m) Tesla charging stations should be converted to being accessible to all electric cars.

n) There is a rally at 11am every Friday at the VA clinic in Santa Rosa. 2281 Challenger Way, SR

o) There is a rally every Friday at the Sonoma Plaza at noon

p) If you attend local school board meetings you can see the right wing at work: banning books, getting rid of diversity, stifling imagination and critical thinking. We must stand up and say we support labor, education, etc.

q) The current administration is destroying years of work to protect the environment with executive orders that attack parks' management, allow all the trees in parks to be cut, putting endangered species in danger of extinction, and stopping all efforts at combating climate change.

r) Indivisible Sonoma County has a good calendar where you can see what is happening. We need to bring in our youth and our communities. We need to build as broad a coalition as we can. It can be built on a broad range of issues: Seniors concerned about Medicaid/Medicare, retirees concerned about Social Security, residents concerned about the environment, immigrants concerned about their status and rights, and more. We should all engage in our communities: faith based, or groups like Wake-Up Sonoma. We need to listen to others' concerns.

s) We need more Community Gatherings/Town Halls like the one Wake-Up Sonoma held.

6. Meeting adjourned 8:15 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nancy Kirwan

Next meetings –

SVD Board meeting – Tuesday, April 7, 9:30am, via Zoom

April Virtual General Meeting – Monday, April 28, 6:30 PM via Zoom