



# UnderCurrents

News from the Grassroots

Volume 1 Issue 1

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Plattsburgh, NY

**un·der·cur·rent** [*uh-n-der-kur-uh-nt*] *noun*  
 1. a tendency underlying or at variance with the obvious or superficial significance of words, actions, etc.  
 2. a current, as of air or water, that flows below the upper currents or surface.

**grass·roots** *pl.n.* (*used with a sing. or pl. verb*)  
 1. People or society at a local level rather than at the center of major political activity.  
 2. The groundwork or source of something.

**koi fish** /*k/ Show Spelled [koi]* *noun*  
 1. Any of various colorful cultivated forms of the common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*.  
 2. Koi fish can symbolize many different things. One may be that because they can swim upstream, against the current, that they symbolize non-conformism. Koi fish also symbolize persistence.

## Who Are We?

by Bill Cowan

**Clinton** County extends to the Canadian border, but you can't go much farther north of Plattsburgh and still remain in New York State. The nearest large city is Burlington, some twenty-plus miles southeast across Lake Champlain, or if you prefer the "foreign and exotic" Montreal, sixty miles north and across the Canadian border. Those coordinates tell you where we are: It's the North Country.

But they don't tell you much about who and what we are. For that, a good place to start is the data supplied every ten years and regularly updated by the U.S. Census. What follows is a composite picture of citizens of Clinton County and the City of Plattsburgh, drawn from recent census data.

With only 81,700 citizens, Clinton is one of the more thinly populated counties in New York State. And the population of Plattsburgh, its largest community, isn't even a quarter of that total—only 19,750 inhabitants.

Almost 30% of the total New York State population are minorities. Clinton County minorities, however, are only 7.2% of the total population. Minorities make up a slightly higher percent of the Plattsburgh population—11.8%. But the difference between these figures and the State figures begs the question: Why the large differences? Is the North Country not hospitable to minorities—or are there other factors at work?

As a whole the age characteristics of Clinton County and Plattsburgh are not radically different from New York State as a whole. Roughly the same percent—14%—of the total are over 65 years of age in both City and County.

Sharp differences appear, however, when we look at economic and disability numbers. The 2013 Federal Government poverty line was \$452.88 weekly take-home pay, or \$23,550 per year. An estimated one million Americans fell below that line last year. Of Clinton County's population, 14.3% were below that line, almost the same as the State's percentage—14.9%. The Plattsburgh population below the poverty line, however, is at 23.3%! That not only raises the question of "how" and "why," but also suggests a study is needed of related

matters, such as the availability of workforce housing and its costs.

Stepping away from the Census data, one local researcher has mined federal health department figures and tells us 16,000 disabled citizens live in Clinton County. That same researcher also states that more than 12,000 Clinton County citizens are blind, and 13,000 are deaf!

Finally, the same researcher states that 11% of the Clinton County population, or more than 9,000 citizens, are illiterate—they cannot read. Depending on the ages of those citizens, that number may or may not reflect on the educational facilities in the County.

Taken together, however, these figures paint a picture of a painful struggle for many of our fellow citizens, not to get ahead but just to survive. People for Positive Action (P4PA) intends to dig deeper for hard facts about these conditions, and then, as its mission statement says, work to improve "our [collective] civic, social, and environmental lives through research, education and action."

**Stay tuned! There will be more.**

- 1) Source: U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services (ASPE.hhs.gov)
- 2) Source: Debra Buell, adirondakdeb@gmail.com

## When Trade Turns Toxic

by Mary-Alice Shemo

**Is** it true that "what you don't know won't hurt you"? Definitely not in the case of a "free trade" agreement called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Have you heard of it? If not, you're in good company. The agreement has been negotiated in strictest secrecy for over four years.

Neither the public, nor environmental groups, nor labor unions, nor people concerned with food safety or any other issue, have been allowed to see the draft text, much less have any say in the terms or language. Even Congress, to which the Constitution assigns the right and responsibility to regulate trade, has been denied access. Rare exceptions have been allowed a glimpse at text, only under conditions that they not divulge any of it. However, 600 representatives of trade organizations and major corporations have had not only access, but input.

That secrecy alone is worrisome. It is neither appropriate in, nor healthy for, a democracy, especially considering the harm TPP is poised to do to people on the street (and on the farm).

The former U.S. Trade representative, Ron Kirk, defended the secrecy on the grounds that if people knew what was in it, they would object so much that it could never pass.

There have been leaks of portions of the text through Wikileaks revealing provisions which could cause some serious problems.

Now the Camp-Baucus bill, which hands over Congressional control of trade to the executive, is before Congress. This or any other form of Fast Track would disrupt the Constitutional balance of power.

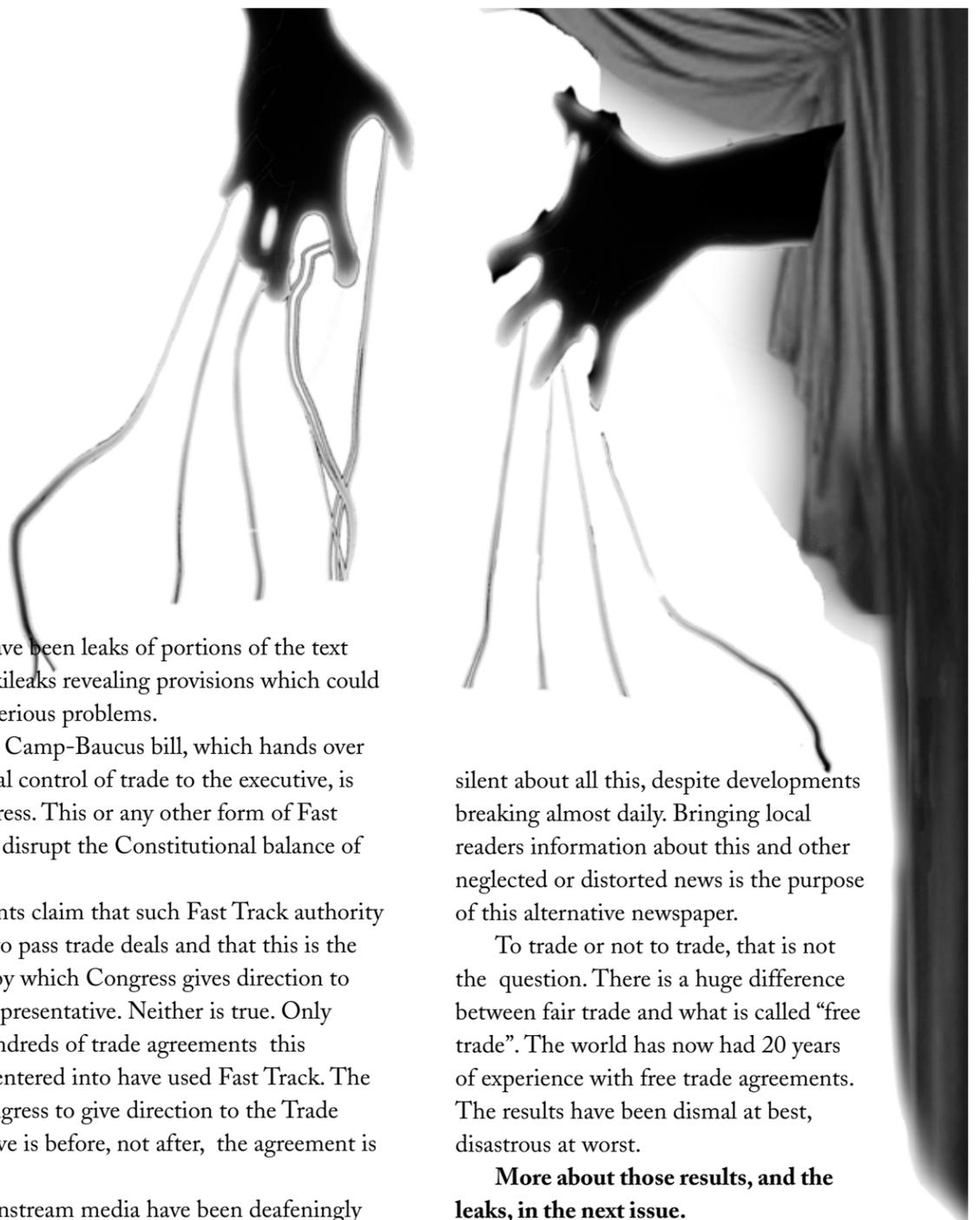
Proponents claim that such Fast Track authority is necessary to pass trade deals and that this is the mechanism by which Congress gives direction to the Trade Representative. Neither is true. Only 16 out of hundreds of trade agreements this country has entered into have used Fast Track. The time for Congress to give direction to the Trade Representative is before, not after, the agreement is negotiated.

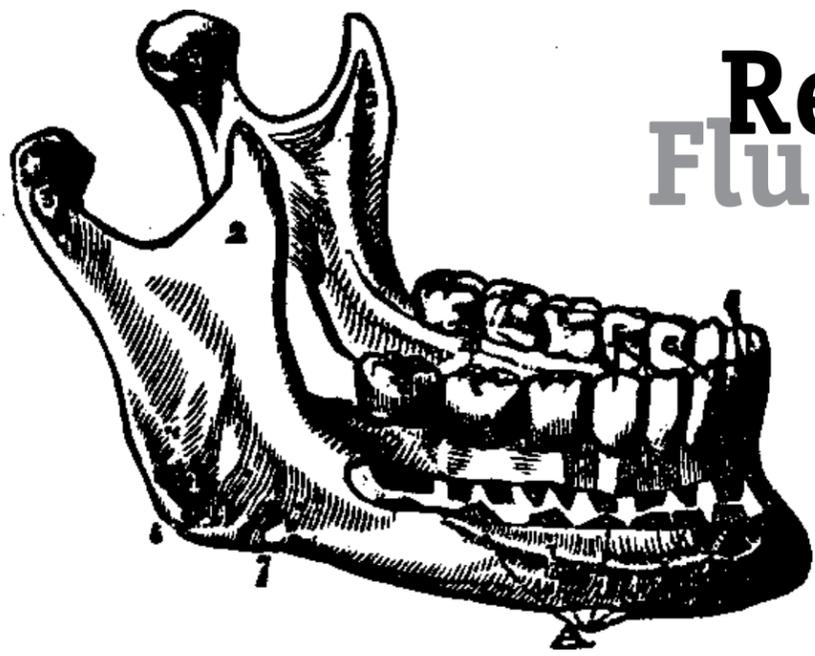
The mainstream media have been deafeningly

silent about all this, despite developments breaking almost daily. Bringing local readers information about this and other neglected or distorted news is the purpose of this alternative newspaper.

To trade or not to trade, that is not the question. There is a huge difference between fair trade and what is called "free trade". The world has now had 20 years of experience with free trade agreements. The results have been dismal at best, disastrous at worst.

**More about those results, and the leaks, in the next issue.**





# Rethinking Water

## Fluoridation

by Gerald Carpenter

**The** City of Plattsburgh fluoridates its water. Citizens do not have the option of drinking unfluoridated water unless they install a costly reverse-osmosis filter system. Bottled water may or may not be free of fluoride, since the bottler is not required to list it as an ingredient unless it is actually added by the bottler.

Thus, in Plattsburgh unfluoridated water is difficult to obtain.

Why would a person want his/her water unfluoridated? Fluoride is supposed to be safe and promote healthy tooth enamel...right? Unfortunately, the reality is much different from the fairy tales promulgated by the government.

The evidence for prevention of tooth decay is, frankly, weak, and contradictory studies are numerous.

However, even if claims of decay prevention were valid, the effect would be from topical exposure

of the teeth to fluoride, a brief contact as the water passes through the mouth. No study has claimed any benefit from systemic exposure, yet we swallow the stuff by the gallon!

Quite to the contrary, many studies have indicated that internal consumption of fluoride is seriously

dangerous to numerous bodily systems and organs. "The plain fact that fluoride is an insidious poison, harmful, toxic, and cumulative in its effects, even when ingested in minimal amounts, will remain unchanged no matter how many times it will be repeated in print that fluoridation of the water supply is 'safe.'"—Dr. Ludwig Grosse, Chief of Cancer Research, USVA.

Consider that this chemical added to our water is also a primary component of insecticides, rat poison, and even sarin gas. This info is easily "Googled" for verification (though before doing a search for "components of sarin gas", one might consider who may be "listening" to that search).

The scientific issue of fluoridation has become politicized because it is promoted by government policy.

Actually it's a simple matter of a biological risk/benefit equation, a matter for science. The question is whether ingested fluoride provides enough benefit

to justify the risks of consuming it. A review of widely available information clearly indicates a weak case for a limited benefit but a relatively strong case for significant risk of destructive effects in one's body.

Let's consider a few remarks by qualified professionals: "Fluorides are general protoplasmic poisons, probably because of their capacity to modify the metabolism of cells by changing the permeability of the cell membrane and by inhibiting certain enzyme systems."—Journal of the AMA. "It is now clear that fluoride is a potentially harmful substance when present in the drinking water in any amount."—Dr. Simon Beisler, Chief of Urology, Roosevelt Hospital and Past President of the American Urological Association. "I am appalled at the prospect of using water as a vehicle for drugs. Fluoride is a corrosive poison that will produce serious effects on a long range basis. Any attempt to use water this way is deplorable!"—Dr. Charles Gordon Heyd, Past President of the American Medical Association.

The story of fluoridation is long and convoluted. Perhaps, in a later issue of UnderCurrents, we can explore other facets of the saga, including how this ill-considered and hazardous situation arose and developed.

## Local News

by Mary Dufort

### Thursday

, March 27, the city of Plattsburgh passed ground breaking legislation, joining over 200 New York State municipalities standing against the dangers to public health and the environment of the industry of hydro-fracking for oil and natural gas.

Communities are being put in a position of having to think far in advance to protect their water and land resources and secure the safety of their public, whose health depends on ample healthy soil and clean water resources for habitation and agriculture. Exemptions from meeting the standards of Federal environmental laws have been granted to help reduce the costs for oil and gas production and stimulate its expansion. The phenomenal expansion rate of this industry today demonstrates the effectiveness of these exemptions, or loopholes in the laws, to which other industries must be accountable.

Explosive accidents of trains that were carrying oil mixes to refineries, large oil spills from pipelines, contaminated ground water supplies, the buildup of heavy metals and radiation in aquatic animals and sediment downstream from treatment plants processing fracking waste water are all significant issues to be considered in deciding if you wish your community to participate in the process.

The Common Council of the City of Plattsburgh has passed this resolution, which

was drafted by Mike Kelly:

**RESOLVED:** It is the policy of the Common Council of the City of Plattsburgh to prohibit activities associated with hydraulic fracturing such as, but not limited to:

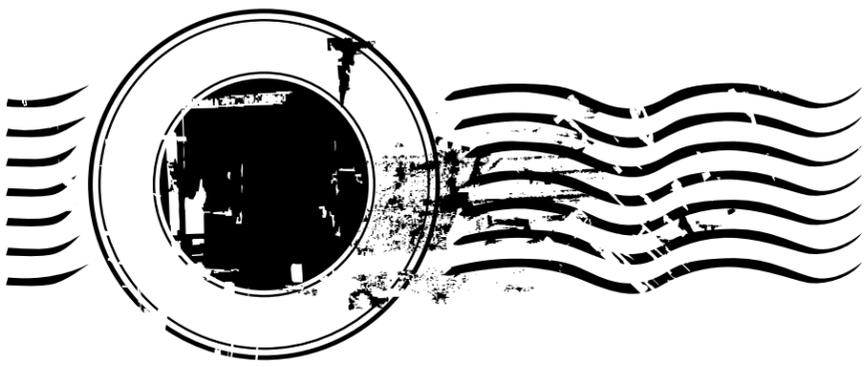
- The use of the City of Plattsburgh's waste water collection system for the disposal of waste water from hydraulic fracturing;
- Construction of pipelines whose primary purpose is to transport natural gas from hydraulic fracturing operations;
- Construction of any storage facilities whose primary purpose is storage of natural gas produced by hydraulic fracturing;
- Mining or otherwise extracting sand and other solid materials used in the hydraulic fracturing process;
- Use of the City of Plattsburgh's water supply for hydraulic fracturing purposes.

**RESOLVED:** The City Council and Mayor to prepare and sign a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo thanking him for prohibiting hydraulic fracturing in the state of New York to date and encouraging him to permanently ban the practice in the state, as have over 200 other municipalities in the State of New York.

Let it also be understood that this resolution does not prohibit activities, such as delivering fossil fuels for personal or business use, geothermal heating and cooling projects, dredging, excavation for construction, land improvements or other such activities where new fossil fuel production, or facilitation of said production is not the primary purpose.

### *UnderCurrents'* PEOPLE AND POLICIES

- There is always more to every story. Our mission at UnderCurrents is to look below the surface, to find and report the rest of the story.
- UnderCurrents is a community newspaper. Our staff and writers are all unpaid volunteers. Our only expense is the printing of the newspaper.
- UnderCurrents does not accept traditional advertising dollars.
- UnderCurrents gladly accepts sponsorship donations from corporations, businesses, organizations and individuals.
- Each sponsor is entitled to a three-line listing in UnderCurrents to promote his/her business, to honor a good cause, to quote a hero, or to remember someone who has passed away.
- Suggested sponsorship donation is \$10 per issue.
- All questions, letters, and stories for consideration for publication in UnderCurrents should be directed to the editor via email at this address: [editorundercurrents@primelink1.net](mailto:editorundercurrents@primelink1.net)
- Tell us your story. You may be surprised to see it in the next issue of UnderCurrents!



## To The Editor

I live at Lake Forest Senior Community and am located about four to five hundred feet from the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks.

Every week, I observe trains that consist solely of more than one-hundred tanker cars. With other trains, the tankers are often mixed in with regular box cars. And these are only the ones I see during the daytime—many trains run at night also.

We have been informed that the tanker cargo is a light crude oil out of the Dakotas that has a much higher combustion rate than heavier crude oil. These trains run on the border of Lake Champlain, passing by and through many towns, especially Plattsburgh. They pose a terrifying risk to the inhabitants of our towns, as well as to the water and aquatic life of Lake Champlain.

I urge readers of this publication to become aware of the danger that we are exposed to at any hour of the day and add their voices to protest this “accident waiting to happen”.

*Elizabeth Gregory*

## Notes from Our Sponsors

“ Margaret Mead said, ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’  
**Congratulations *UnderCurrents* on your first issue!** ~ *A Friend* ”

“ I’m saying to *UnderCurrents* what I say to my gardening friends, ‘**May you grow and prosper!**’  
*from Mary-Alice* ”



**According** to the website PatriotsQuestion911.com, hundreds of professors have publicly questioned the official story of September 11, 2001. (Disclosure: I’m on that list.) Also, two thousand architects and engineers have signed a petition calling for a new investigation into the destruction of the Twin Towers and Building 7. Further, David Ray Griffin, a very accomplished scholar, has written ten books challenging the official 9/11 account. His books, full of extensive and rigorous argumentation and clear presentation of evidence, have been endorsed by a long list of significant people, including Howard Zinn. In addition, Peter Dale Scott’s *Road to 9/11*, published by the University of California Press, is a meticulously documented analysis of the “deep state” aspect of 9/11. And, technical scientific papers challenging key elements of the

## September 11th and the Academy

*by Kurtis Hagen*

official story have appeared in peer-reviewed scientific journals. (For a list of select academic articles see: <http://911inacademia.com/journal-papers/>.)

Nevertheless, on campus, it is as if none of this has happened. Textbooks that address issues of war, torture, international relations, or any other subject to which the events of 9/11 are relevant, treat the official story as an unquestioned fact. And the great majority of academics, likewise, simply assume the standard account is true, and reason on that basis. They make no effort to deal with critiques of the official story in any serious way. This is not because they are armed with robust evidence against such critiques. On the contrary, they are largely ignorant of the pertinent details. And they don’t seem at all troubled by that.

It’s strange. After all, academics seem to enjoy engaging with other subjects, even when they are of relatively little practical significance. But, when it comes to the defining event of this century, the justification for war abroad and the continuing degradation of rights at home, there is no curiosity.

Perhaps academics think there is no need for them to discuss 9/11, or to think too hard about it. Presumably they trust that others have already objectively and exhaustively considered these issues, and have judiciously concluded that the evidence overwhelmingly supports the official story.

Unfortunately, in fact, there has never been a rigorous, independent academic validation of the official story. As mentioned above, there have been substantial

academic critiques. But where are the authoritative academic responses to these critiques? One book that is often cited is *Debunking 9/11 Myths*, produced by Popular Mechanics. But is that it? It hardly even counts. (See David Ray Griffin’s *Debunking 9/11 Debunking* for a rebuttal to Popular Mechanics.)

Perhaps the reason academics shun critical study of 9/11 is that they fear, no matter how reasonably they conduct themselves, they will be stigmatized as a “conspiracy theorist”. If so, that is unfortunate, because all serious attempts to justify a dismissive attitude toward conspiracy theories have failed. (See the work of David Coady, Charles Pigden, and Lance DeHaven-Smith.)

Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule’s article, “Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures”, provides a good example of a failed attempt to justify marginalizing so-called “conspiracy theorists”. The work was so shoddy that when Sunstein was asked if he stood by it, he simply claimed not to remember it very well. (My review of David Ray Griffin’s book-length refutation of the article in question can be found at: [http://philosophy.cah.ucf.edu/fpr/files/11\\_1/hagen.pdf](http://philosophy.cah.ucf.edu/fpr/files/11_1/hagen.pdf).)

For more on the relevant academic climate, see the following documentaries: *Hypothesis*, by Brett Smith, and *9/11 in the Academic Community*, by Adnan Zuberi. For the best evidence against the official story, see *The Toronto Hearings*, available in book form and as a 5-hour set of video presentations (accessible online).

# Reclaiming Our Democracy

By Adrian Arrivillaga

**We** stand with the vast majority of the Americans who believe that money is not speech, corporations are not people, and our democracy should not be for sale to the highest bidder. We stand with you, because no matter what political issues you might find important—whether its raising minimum wage, protecting the environment, expanding healthcare, eliminating student loan debt or labeling genetically modified food—the government will change nothing while the economic elite are allowed to influence elections and control lawmakers.

Despite the overwhelming power money has on our politicians there are several initiatives at the city, state and national level to restore a democracy by the people for the people. Plus, an overwhelming majority of 89% of Americans (of all political affiliations) agree that there is too much corporate money in politics.

“Our government is supposed to be a democracy of the many, not the money.”

## A Brief History of Corruption

The problem escalated four years ago with the Supreme Court’s decision for “Citizens United vs. FEC”. This gave corporations personhood status, allowing them to spend unlimited amounts to support or defeat political candidates that fit their agenda.

This year is a historical moment, as the Supreme Court will make a decision for McCutcheon vs. FEC, considered the sequel to Citizens United. This decision could extend the spending from its current \$123,200 limit to \$3.5 million (more than 70 times the median annual family income in America). This poses an extremely serious concern when you look at how money is already corrupting our democracy:

The 2012 elections made history with the record-

breaking \$1.3 billion lobbyists spent influencing politicians. Lobbyists spent \$6.5 million per elected representative in Congress. Of this massive election spending two-thirds came from a minority of 0.26% of the total population; an extremely small minority that managed to drown out the voice of the majority, by having a bigger wallet.

Elected officials too often become beholden to their wealthiest contributors, allowing all major industries to buy a slice of our democracy. Big oil has cost the American people \$4 billion in tax subsidies. Likewise, Lehman Brothers and other big banks were never held accountable for the financial crisis they created in 2008; yet it took huge taxpayer-financed bail-outs to rescue the industry. Furthermore, members of Congress now spend between 30-70% of their time fundraising for future elections, instead of focusing on current problems.

## Where Does New York Stand?

New York is on the verge of passing the one reform capable of fighting back against the nonstop flood of big money contributions. This year Governor Cuomo took the unprecedented step of introducing a proposal for public financing of campaigns in his state budget.

The Fair Elections plan would match small donors’ contributions with public funds, amplifying the voices of everyday working class people. Fair Elections will cost only about \$2 per New Yorker per year and could save billions in the long run. This is especially important in a state where just in the last decade, 15 state-level elected officials have been convicted of corruption-related crimes.

New York has a chance to lead the nation in the fight against unlimited campaign contributions from corporations and wealthy individuals. Simultaneously, there’s a bill in the House of Representatives called

The Government By the People Act that would help stop the power of money on our politics at the national level.

Both the Fair Election and Government by the People initiatives would give small donors a greater voice in the political process and allow politicians to focus on listening to constituents, not just big money campaign donors.

## What Can I Do?

Overall, the most important part is staying informed and raising awareness about this crucial issue. Try to get the word out by sharing and discussing this topic with friends and other people you know.

Also, in response to the upcoming McCutcheon vs. FEC Supreme Court Decision there are 130 events in 38 states happening around the country, including one here in Plattsburgh. These rallies will respond to the court decision, either celebrating or protesting the decision, but overall bringing attention to the coercing power money has on our politics. If you’d like to participate you can go to <http://www.moneyout-votersin.org/>

## To learn more you can go to:

**New York State Level** – <http://fairelectionsny.org/>

**National Level** – <http://www.demos.org/publication/government-people-act>

**“Alone, we are powerful. Together, we are unstoppable.”**

*Sources:* Citizens Actually United The Overwhelming, Bi-Partisan Opposition to Corporate Political Spending And Support for Achievable Reforms.

1. Citizens Actually United The Overwhelming, Bi-Partisan Opposition to Corporate Political Spending And Support for Achievable Reforms
2. <http://www.commoncause.org>
3. <http://unitedrepublic.org/fast-facts/>
4. <http://www.demos.org/publication/government-people-act>
5. <http://fairelectionsny.org/about/>

# Politics, North Country Style

by Bill Cowan

**In** the several weeks before the November 5th, 2013, General Election, several enrollees in the North Country Democratic and Working Families (WFP) parties met and decided to encourage unregistered citizens to register to vote. They also decided to encourage new voters, and those who had not voted often, to do so in November, 2013, and if they qualified, to do so using an absentee ballot.

The Democratic and WFP activists secured the voter enrollment and absentee ballot forms from the Board of Elections (BOE) and proceeded to canvas strategically important areas at the south end of Plattsburgh City. Many of the citizens approached in this effort lived in public housing—locally called “the Projects.” It was determined from the enrollment forms supplied by the BOE that many enrollees had not voted recently, or had only voted once in recent years. A few of them were WFP enrollees; most however were Democratic Party enrollees.

Altogether the group of Democratic and WFP activists secured about 20 voter registration forms, and about 90 absentee ballot applications. When citizens were not registered, they were given a voter registration form to complete and return to the Board of Elections (BOE) before completing an application for absentee ballot.

The first question on the Absentee Ballot Application requires the applicant to answer that he/she is “requesting in good faith an absentee

ballot due to—” and it then lists 6 reasons that are acceptable, three of them relating to personal disability, or the disability of someone being cared for. A fourth relates to being a patient in a Veterans’ Administration Hospital; and a fifth relates to being detained in prison pending judicial action. The sixth reason allowable for an absentee ballot is: “absence from county or New York City on election day”.

Local Republican Party officials challenged this effort even before the November 5th Election. The Republican Election Commissioner, Gregory Campbell, published an article on the editorial page of the Saturday, November 2nd Press-Republican; its title was: “Concerns raised about absentee ballots”.

Though denying that he was making accusations of wrongdoing, Campbell proceeded in effect to do just that, aiming most of his accusations at the Working Families Party. The WFP was, in effect, accused of falsifying, or assisting with the falsification of absentee ballot applications and the ballots themselves.

This statement, and the number of absentee ballots returned, appears to have galvanized the local Republican Party into action. The Democratic and Working Families party activists were responsible for fewer than 100 absentee ballots. The Republicans seem to have believed there were close to 1,000—a flattering observation, but not true. Within days after the Election, however, one of

the Republican County Legislature candidates, Mark Dame, and the Press-Republican political editor went to the homes of people in “the Projects” to try to uncover criminal behavior. Though it is not clear exactly when, Election Commissioner Campbell, by his own admission in his Press-Republican article, apparently also telephoned or visited “Projects” residents. Some voters appear to have been intimidated, and refused to vote; others report having been told by the Republicans that if they were in the County on election day, they would have to vote in person.

**To be continued in the next issue ...**



## In a Nutshell ...

*pithy poems, prose, politics and prayers*

## “Cooperation Forward! Domination Backward!”

Submitted by your correspondent,

**Anne N. Mousse,**

*(ask her what the “n” stands for)*

reporting live from the front lines of the Global Paradigm Shift.