

Bloomington Rotary Club

Roundabout

April 27, 2021

Next Week's Program

Matt Stitsinger and members of our scholarship committee present the 2021 Bloomington Rotary scholarships to four Monroe County high school students. Each will receive \$1,500, thanks to support from the Bloomington Rotary Foundation and generous club members. This is one of the highlights of the year for many of us, as the students describe their accomplishments and their plans for the future. Don't miss it!

This Week's News



Rotary Toast 2021. **Ashley Wesley** and **Alain Barker** led members through a puzzle to reveal this year's Rotary Toast honoree. After several clues, **Byron Bangert** guessed: **Charlotte Zietlow!** She has chosen Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County as the charity to receive half the proceeds from the Toast. There was widespread virtual applause across Zoom for Charlotte's selection and an outpouring of Happy Dollars. Save the date: November 5!

District 6580 vs. 6560 Golf Outing. **Jim Sims**, **Jim Shea**, and **Loren Snyder** already have signed up for the Districts 6580 vs. 6560 Ryder Cup golf outing in Greenwood. Would you like to join them for the friendly competition between the two districts? The outing will take place Thursday, June 3, with registration and box lunch at 11 a.m., shotgun start at noon, and results and prizes at 5 p.m., at Hickory Stick Golf Club, 4422 Hickory Stick Parkway, Greenwood, IN 46143. Entry fee is \$100 per player, with \$25 discount if you obtain a \$100 sponsorship or free with a \$250 hole sponsorship. *All players must be Rotarians.* We must have 18 two-person teams (with two teams in reserve in case a team is forced to back out for some reason). For more information, including registration details, contact tournament director Bob Browning (bobbrowningcpa@gmail.com; 317-213-1119) of the Greenwood White River Rotary Club.

Solidarity Sleepout. **Von Welch** is participating in Beacon's Solidarity sleepout, with teams sleeping out on April 30 to raise funds to support A Friend's Place to provide overnight shelter for those without: <https://givebutter.com/sleepout2021>. You can go to the donation page <https://givebutter.com/sleepout2021> to support Von and Beacon.

Volunteer Spotlight: Beacon Winter Shelter is looking for more volunteers:

- shelter monitors to work under the guidance of two Beacon staff members in the morning (6-8 a.m.) and evening (8:30-11:30 p.m.). Sign up here if you're interested: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c4cabaa2aa3fcc43-winter>
- people to help with laundry or meals. Sign up here if you're interested: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c4cabaa2aa3fcc43-laundry>
- people to bring an evening meal for the winter shelter. Sign up here if you're interested: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c4cabaa2aa3fcc43-evening>

The shelter is located at the CrossFit Gym building on the B-Line Trail. Access Switchyard Park parking from W. Grimes Lane. The shelter is about 50 yards down on the right; the CrossFit sign is right above the door.

Volunteer Spotlight: My Sister's Closet is seeking regular store staff volunteers for now and through the summer. You could volunteer at any time during store hours (see below) as long as it's for a minimum of two hours at a time. You must be 18+, and it's helpful if you can operate a steamer. If you're interested, call the store (812-333-7710) to schedule a time to volunteer, Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m., or Saturday, 10 a.m.– 5 p.m.

Volunteer Spotlight: Community Kitchen of Monroe County. We have a new partnership with Community Kitchen! Every first Friday of the month starting May 7, we will need three volunteers for an 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. time slot. We will help with meal preparation, backpack preparation and meal service: a hands-on, front-line experience. Community Kitchen provides free nutritious meals, nutrition education, referrals to other agencies, and a clean, comfortable social environment for patrons, staff, and volunteers.

This Week's Program. Available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/sXkmC0vMJEM>



Standing in for **Judy Schroeder**, **Steve Moberly** introduced Marjorie Hershey, professor emerita of political science at IU and a frequently sought-after speaker and commentator.

Hershey began her remarks by saying the Biden agenda introduced so far has the potential to have a huge impact. It includes a bill to protect voting rights and a two-trillion-dollar infrastructure plan. All will be stopped by filibuster in the Senate. For the bills to pass, it would be necessary to modify or end the filibuster.

What is the filibuster? Under the rules, any single senator can stop a bill by “talking it to death” until the senator gives up and allows a vote or 60 senators agree to cloture. Often all that is needed is a threat of filibuster to force the Senate to move on to other business.

The filibuster is in keeping with the main theme of the U.S. Constitution, to prevent tyranny through a separation of powers. Our government is not a parliamentary system, with the leader chosen by the lower house. If it were, the speaker of the House would choose a prime minister, who would form a government. In the U.S., the president is elected by a different set of people and has a term of office different from senators and representatives. The three branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial – have separate powers, and many powers are left to state and local governments, each with the means to block others' actions. We elect more officials than any other democracy. This system has worked well for 230 years, but, in our very diverse electorate, it is inevitable we won't agree. It is easier in our system to block than to take action.

The makeup of the Senate, with two seats for each state, is designed to give the minority party more clout, since it over-represents small states, which tend to vote Republican. Currently, the 50 Democratic senators represent 41 million more voters than Republican senators. In this design, too, the value of protecting individual rights against a powerful majority is striking. The Constitution though, did not provide for a super-majority, although the framers discussed requiring it for adoption of treaties.

The filibuster wasn't often invoked until the 1950s and 1960s, when it was used to bottle up pending civil rights legislation. As the country grew more polarized in the 1980s, the use of the filibuster started to grow. Parties gave more power to their leaders, and individual members resorted to the filibuster to slow or stop legislation. In order to continue business, the Senate developed a two-track system, where it conducted other legislative business while the filibuster continued. Soon, just the threat of a filibuster would cause Senate leaders to pull a bill.

In the late 1990s, senators threatened to use the filibuster to stop a budget bill. As a compromise, the rules were changed to allow budget bills to pass with a simple majority. The exception could be used three times per two-year session. Democrats added additional “carve-outs” so federal nominees could be approved, and Republicans carved out an exception so that Supreme Court justices could be approved with simple majorities. The other exceptions to the filibuster are matters of procedure not deemed to be substantive, including rules of the Senate.

Why don’t Democrats change the filibuster rules now, since they have a 51-50 majority? Two Democratic Senators are not in favor – Sens. Jeff Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema. Manchin believes the filibuster is the best vehicle for encouraging bipartisan cooperation. He and others argue that it is designed to protect the minority party and understand that each party will find itself in the minority in the future.

What reforms to the filibuster are currently being discussed? The first is to require a “talking filibuster,” where the senator cannot just threaten but must actually stay on the floor and continue to talk. The second is to expand the instances where the filibuster cannot be used and a simple majority vote is sufficient: for example, in voting rights legislation. In the current polarized environment, it’s unlikely this option will be adopted. Although Hershey said there is not much evidence that this actually is the case, Republicans assume that higher voter turnout leads to Democratic wins.

Club members asked great questions:

Q: Is our country the most polarized you’ve seen? Yes, and Hershey said it can be quantified. The reasons are complicated. In the 1940s and 1950s, Republicans took the lead in talking about race. Over time the Democrats embraced civil rights legislation. Republicans, on the other hand, followed Barry Goldwater’s philosophy that the federal government should not be involved in matters of civil rights. The Democratic Party coalition of that time included both liberals and conservative white Southerners, and the Republican Party included Western conservatives and Northeastern liberals. Now, the parties are more clearly defined as liberal and conservative.

Q: Isn’t that what President Lyndon Johnson predicted when he said that the Civil Rights Act lost the South for Democrats for a generation? Yes, and it turned out to be for more than one generation. Compromise now is really tough, and symbolic issues are hard to discuss.

Q: What is the role of labor unions in current politics? “Increasingly small,” said Hershey. Only 10 percent of voters are unionized, and half of these are government workers. It is harder to organize due to policy changes. Labor unions have been core supporters of Democrats for many years.

Q: To what degree do Americans see the debate over the filibuster as important? When they don’t know much about politics in general, they couldn’t care less. But the late U.S. Rep. John Dingell once said, “Give me the chance to make the rules and I’ll blow up policy every time.”

Q: Is the filibuster a legacy of Jim Crow? The filibuster has been part of Senate rules since 1817, but it was used more frequently from the late 1940s through the 1960s to stop civil rights legislation.

Q: Is the current polarization the result of social media, image campaigns, and personality-based politics? Hershey urged caution in blaming polarization on these things alone. “Marketing has always been there. Remember ‘Honest Abe,’” she said. Americans are much more attuned to “spin” and constructed messaging now. She believes Americans may not know much about policy details but can articulate, in a rudimentary way, the key differences. She noted that the Democrats have a bold issue agenda and the Republicans have had a hard time attacking it because many of the proposals are favored by large majorities of the public, so they have increasingly turned toward an image orientation.

Hershey ended her talk with a plea for help with finding a location for a new local nonprofit, the Monroe County Foster Closet, which provides clothes, bedding, and other goods to foster families. If anyone knows about an affordable, available location, please contact her at hershey@indiana.edu.

Our Weekly Gathering, April 20

President **Ashley Wesley** welcomed members and guests to Bloomington Rotary Club's weekly Celebration of Service. She thanked producers **Natalie Blais, Sally Gaskill, Michael Shermis, and Earon Davis**.

Guests this week included Ruth Boshkoff and Dan and Sharon Wiseman.

Birthdays include:

John VanderZee, April 28

Art Lotz, May 3

Two members celebrated membership anniversaries:

Joyce Poling, 32 years

Glenda Murray, 30 years

End Polio Now Update

President Ashley reported just two new cases of wild polio virus this year, as of April 20, compared with 140 for all of 2020. Circulating vaccine-derived polio cases this year totaled 63, compared with 1,081 in 2020. We are so close!

Reporter: **Sara Laughlin**