



Tuesday, September 28, 2004





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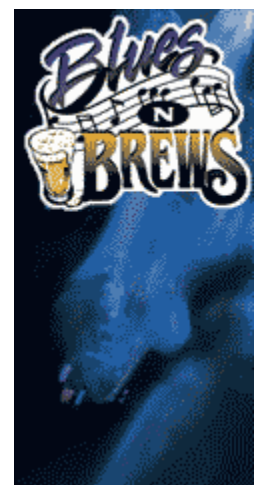
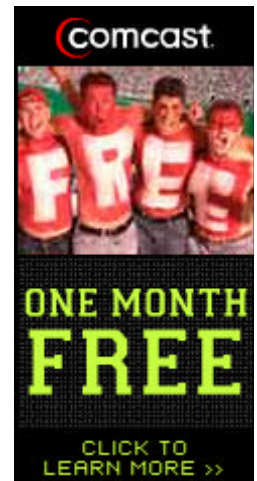
**KEEPING SCORE**

Dems versus their platform  
BY KRISTEN LOMBARDI

When Marty Martinez first pored over the platform of the Massachusetts Democratic Party last year, the Somerville resident and progressive activist couldn't believe what he was reading. He was surprised by how liberal the party's statement of values sounds. Democrats, he discovered, officially champion such left-leaning principles as "taxes should be fair for all," "health care is a right, not a privilege," and "equal treatment" for gay and lesbian families.

"I looked at that platform," recalls Martinez, now the spokesperson for the Progressive Democrats of Somerville, "and I wondered why activists like myself would ever feel unrepresented" by Democrats on Beacon Hill. How often did elected Democrats, he and like-minded Progressive Dems wondered, fail to live up to their own party's principles?

Last Wednesday, on September 1, Progressive Dems from Somerville and Cambridge set out to answer that question by



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launching the "Mass Scorecard," a status report comparing the actions of sitting Democrats — specifically, their votes — to corresponding portions of the party's platform. Progressive Dems picked roughly 20 votes from the current legislative session that they say speak to the values of the Democratic Party. There was, for instance, the vote on a constitutional amendment defining marriage as a heterosexual institution. (The Democratic position according to the platform: No.) The vote to amend the state constitution to provide for universal health care. (Platform: Yes.) The vote to raise the state's income tax to 5.95 percent to offset the budget deficit. (Platform: Yes.) The list goes on and on.

The idea for the Mass Scorecard emerged in June 2003, when delegates gathered at the Democratic State Convention, in Lowell, to amend the platform. At the time, some 40 Progressive Dems from Somerville and Cambridge drafted a "platform accountability amendment" calling for the creation of such a report. They collected 1000 signatures to bring the amendment to the floor, where it passed.

But the project soon met resistance. "The party leadership stalled, and wouldn't take up the project," Martinez says. When deadlines for publishing the report passed without action, Progressive Dems released it instead. The state's Democratic Party, as Martinez sees it, "is worried we're putting this out there to hurt Democrats. As long as someone says he's a Democrat that's all that matters."

Jane Lane, the spokesperson of the state's Democratic Party, insists that party officials are "not at all opposed to this concept" of indicating whether Democratic legislators voted in accordance with their party's platform. Their only concern, she explains, "was to ensure that the project be equitable and fair to all legislators." To this end, the party set down various guidelines. The Progressive Dems, she adds, "were unhappy with the protocol, and that's how it ended."

Controversy aside, the Mass Scorecard nevertheless makes for an intriguing read. On the one hand, there are Democratic legislators like State Senator Charles Shannon of Somerville, who cast his ballot with the party line 21 out of 21 times. Contrast this with the voting record of the most powerful Democrat in the state — House Speaker Tom Finneran. According to the Mass Scorecard, the Speaker has gone against his purported beliefs one-third of the time, on everything from gay marriage and universal health care to providing corporate tax relief.

All in all, Martinez notes, "Just because a politician calls himself a Democrat does not mean that he's voting for the party's beliefs."



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**PLAYLIST**

**BEASTIE BOYS** -  
OH-CHECK IT OUT

**THE KILLERS** -  
SOMEBODY TOLD ME

**VELVET REVOLVER**  
SLITHER

**FRANZ FERDINAND**  
TAKE ME OUT

**THE CURE** - THE END  
OF THE WORLD

**INCUBUS** - TALK  
SHOW ON MUTE

**BLINK 182** - DOWN

**MODEST MOUSE** -  
FLOAT ON

**DASHBOARD CON-  
FESSIONAL** - WINDI-  
CATED

**THE HIVES** - WALK  
IDIOT WALK

**STORY OF THE  
YEAR** - ANTHEM OF  
OUR DYING DAY

**YEAH YEAH  
YEAH'S** - MAPS

**THE STREETS** - FIT  
BUT YOU KNOW IT

**NEW FOUND GLORY**  
IT'S ALL DOWNHILL  
FROM HERE

**MORRISSEY** - IRISH  
BLOOD, ENGLISH HEART

**THE VON BONDIES**  
O'MON O'MON

**JET** - ROLLOVER DJ

**PRESIDENTS OF  
THE UNITED STATES**  
SOME POSTMAN

**ELEFANT** - MISFIT

**BEASTIE BOYS** -  
TRIPLE TROUBLE

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