

Democrats Debate Don's demand for de-escalation

BY JOHN MAYBURY
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Last Saturday, competing with Earth Day beach cleanups, the Pacifica-Coastside Democrats sponsored a sparsely attended breakfast program at Sharp Park Golf Course restaurant. Tom Edminster and Chris Ranken debated the relative merits of State Sen. Don Perata's Iraq pullout bill.

Both Edminster and Ranken are antiwar progressives, so their polite argument was mainly about the shortcomings of Perata's proposal.

Edminster's point was that while politicians dither, and Perata's advisory bill churns through the legislature in Sacramento, "how many more U.S.

troops and Iraqi civilians will die between now and then?" He said the Bush administration has run out of excuses and needs to start planning to end the war and bring home the troops sooner rather than later.

Edminster also said the so-called surge is built on "false assumptions" that throwing more troops into Iraq can solve that country's many serious problems.

"Like throwing gasoline on a fire," muttered a cynic on the sidelines. Edminster ended his remarks with a call for all Pacificans to join the monthly peace vigil in front of Denny's on the third Wednesday of every month.

Ranken's main argument was that

"Bush doesn't listen to the voters anyway, so an 'advisory' measure has no effect." In fact, he said, "the November 2006 vote was an 'advisory' measure against the war but was used by Bush as an opportunity to re-evaluate his strategy and escalate the war."

Further, Ranken said, "advisory measures are a waste of energy of talented, progressive-minded people, who should be working to elect candidates who can actually vote to cut off war funding."

For example, he continued, "think of all the Ralph Nader volunteers in Florida in 2000 who put so much energy into getting votes for Nader. If they had applied those energies to something that really mattered, like a

vote for Al Gore, we would have avoided the entire Bush nightmare. But noooooo—they were busy pontificating in the clouds about 'sending a message' or some such nonsense."

"The same theory applies to this 'advisory' measure of Perata's. Liberals in this country are fighting a powerful and evil machine. We can't afford to squander our energies in irrelevant places," Ranken said.

Privately, Ranken told this reporter, "The truth is, I'll certainly vote 'yes' on the measure, if it makes it to the ballot."

For more information about Perata's advisory measure for the Feb. 5, 2008 presidential primary election ballot, see voteusout.org.