

## FIGHTING BOB FEST V

SEPTEMBER 9, 2006

### CONGRESSWOMAN TAMMY BALDWIN

Thank you, John.

Thank you, all. It's wonderful to be here. It's wonderful to see all of you here.

I got a call the other day from a reporter from the local paper who wanted to know why, with all of the invitations I get and all the commitments I have, why is it that I always, always, put Fighting Bob Fest on my calendar.

Well, that's easy. I told her I come because this is a family reunion! Like a family, we come together each year to see familiar faces, to eat, to drink, to argue, to agree, to revel in each others' company and in our family bond. And, as the political descendents of Fighting Bob and Belle Case La Follette, we come together as a family to renew the strong Wisconsin traditions of progressivism, populism, equal opportunity, and the citizen action they fostered.

(We are here to gear up for a primary and a general election that together hold the keys to our future. The differences are stark and our votes are critical.

We are here to prepare for an arduous battle ahead...to defeat a hateful amendment to our state Constitution...to stand firm against the death penalty,,and to elect and re-elect candidates who believe, as we do, in "the common good"

And this year, Fighting Bob and Belle would be pleased to know we're here to "hold those media and those politicians and all those who have 'been aggressive for what is wrong' accountable!"

We hold them accountable for lying to the American public and taking us into a war that was unwarranted.

And we hold them accountable for choosing death and destruction over diplomacy.

We hold them accountable for lining the pockets of the big oil companies, for increasing our dependence on foreign oil, and not investing enough in renewable energy sources.

We hold them accountable for not paying any heed to the environmental, economic, or social consequences of such decisions.

We hold them accountable for allowing the number of uninsured in this country to grow, allowing health care costs to rise irrationally, and ignoring the plight of American families sinking into bankruptcy and despair over medical bills.

We hold them accountable for holding back potentially life-saving stem cell research and not fully supporting and encouraging the researchers and institutions that do that research.

And we hold them accountable for putting politics above science and not upholding time-honored peer review standards and practices.

We hold them accountable for not doing enough to keep our water clean, our air pure, and our planet healthy.

We hold them accountable for putting the interests of a select few above those of the many...of rewarding friends...and then rewarding them again, with tax cuts, no bid contracts, and legislative favors.

We hold them accountable for not raising the minimum wage and smugly allowing hard-working families to live in poverty.

We hold them accountable for failing to make our children's education a top priority and not recognizing that education is the key to a healthy economy and a healthy society.

We hold them accountable for their attempts to dismantle Social Security and benefit the drug companies more than the seniors who need their drugs.

We hold them accountable for nurturing a corporate environment that has led to corruption and staggering pay differentials between front line workers and CEOs.

We hold them accountable for their self-serving piety and their prejudices against all those who don't pray as they pray, think as they think, live as they live, and love as they love.

We hold them accountable for invading our constitutionally-protected privacy and undermining the law of the land.

We hold many politicians accountable for not telling the truth, many news media accountable for not reporting the truth, and many Americans accountable for not demanding the truth!

America is better than that. America is both a country and an idea. It is the product of dreamers and visionaries.

Being an American means embracing our democracy, protecting it, and working to make it operate even better on behalf of the people. Being an American means being accountable.

Our duty as Americans and as Progressives is to make all of "them" and all of "us" accountable! Democracy can't flourish on a shelf or in a museum, it is ever-changing and needs to be constantly pushed, prodded and tested.

Make our democracy better! Make America better! Make them...and us...accountable!

