



VIKING HALL 349-1613
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How Do Norwegians Do It? National Elections in Norway

Have you ever wondered how Norwegians do it? I mean, how Norwegians run their national elections? This fall we just completed our national elections in the United States. The campaigning seemed to go on forever and now we are finally done, at least for the moment. But for Norwegians the national elections are still ahead; they are scheduled for September of 2017. How do they conduct their national elections? I had heard Norwegian Ambassador to the United States Kåre Aas speak briefly about them in a question and answer session in Anchorage, Alaska, at the end of his speech to members of the World Affairs Council. Ambassador Aas’ brief answers provoked my curiosity to learn more and share what I found out with you. To insure that I did not mislead or misinform you I had the full draft of this article vetted by Norwegian Royal Consul General Hilde Skorpen and her staff, and I thank her for her kind assistance.



STORTINGET

In Norway the national and local elections (county and municipal) are held every four years, but never in the same year. The local and national elections are purposely staggered so they are separated by an interval of two years. On September 11, 2017 Norway will hold its next national election; the last local election was held in September of 2015. At this upcoming national election, Norwegians will be voting for their representatives who will sit in the Norwegian parliament, called the “Storting”, which roughly translates to “the Great Council or Assembly. “Ting” (council/ assembly) is a term that goes way back the Viking Age if not even earlier, and underscores the fact that democratic government has deep roots in Norway.

Norway’s parliament or Storting is a unicameral parliament, meaning that it meets as single, unified legislative body. Its members number 169 representatives called “Stortingrepresentanter” in Norwegian. Parliamentary seats are proportionally allocated among Norway’s 19 counties or “fylkes” (Oslo is included as a “fylke” on its own, even though it is a city). This allocation of parliamentary representatives is based on both the population of each individual county and its geographical size. Of the 169 seats a total of 19 are set aside as at-large seats. These seats are called “leveling seats” and are used by the election authorities to adjust for potential discrepancies in the allocation of parliamentary seats. For example, if a particular political party has won fewer seats than would be indicated by their percentage share of the national vote they may be entitled to receive a leveling or compensation seat. However, to be eligible for these seats the party in question must have received at least 4% of the total popular vote.

It is important to understand, as Hilde Janne Skorpen, Norwegian Consul General in San Francisco, advised me, that “Norwegian elections are not based on personalities, but on political parties”. So when one votes it is not for individual candidates but lists of candidates that have been selected by the various parties. These voting lists (“Valglistene”) are drawn up by each of the parties in the various counties and are ranked and numbered so that the top candidates of each party appear at the top of the list and the less important candidates toward the bottom of the list. According to Laila Owren, a life-long citizen of Kristiansand, Norway, those below the number three are often disregarded by the voters and called “listefyll”, a term which means unimportant clutter for they have little chance of being elected.

At present there are eight major political parties contending for seats in the Storting. Included in this number are the Socialist Left Party, the Labor Party, the Center Party, the Green Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, and the Progress Party.

The Socialist Left Party is furthest to the left and the Progress Party is furthest to the right in terms of the Norwegians political spectrum. There are also a host of minor parties like the Society Party (Anarchist) or the Christian Unity Party (ultra conservative) but these rarely win enough votes to win a seat in the Storting and have a say in government, though the Rødt Party (socialist/ communist) has on occasion come close to having a winning candidate.

President’s Message continues on Page 2

The Storting - Elections in Norway



President's Message continues from Page 1

So how do these parties get their messages to potential voters? They hold meetings, they pass out fliers, and they send out mass mailings outlining their respective platforms. Jens Stoltenberg, who was once leader of the Labor Party and Prime Minister, even took to the stunt of driving a taxi around Oslo and picking up and dropping off passengers in order to get attention. According to Rune Bjornsen of Stavanger, public television and radio do a good job informing the public through debates and news programs. He says that NRK, Norway's public broadcasting network, and TV 2, partly funded by the government, both are required to provide non-partisan programs to inform the public on party platforms and positions. In addition, in light of the importance of social media today's world, the parties frequently employ Facebook and Instagram to get their messages across to the public. But according to Consul General Hilde Janne Skorpen most Norwegians learn about the different party platforms through the newspapers. Norwegians are voracious readers of newspapers.

However, in Norway you will not hear or see any commercial ads for the political parties on television or radio. It is against the law to purchase advertising time for political messages on either public or private television or radio. Norway does not set any limits on political spending, but it does set limits on where you can spend your money. The political parties can receive donations from private citizens, labor unions, employers' associations, and corporations but the majority of their funding comes from public funds and these funds are allocated proportionately on the basis of each party's representation in parliament.

The national election campaigns ("Valgkampen") generally begin in August about a year before the actual election. In 2016, the national campaign began with a televised debate among the various party leaders in Arendal, Norway, on August 14th. Consul General Skorpen told me that the campaign activity tends to ramp up about two months prior to the election with increasing television debates as well as informational programs on the elections. Laila Owren of Kristiansand, observed that in the heat of the campaign politicians handing out fliers, chatting with passers-by, and trolling for votes seem to vastly outnumber the many Gypsy street beggars who flock to her town in the summer.

On the day of the election, this will be September 11th in 2017, every Norwegian citizen 18 years and over can exercise his or her right to vote. Each will choose a party list to their liking and place a check by the candidates he or she favors. The voter can choose all the candidates on the list or mark only two or three on the party list. Norwegian voters can also cross out names on the list they do not like or change the ranking of the candidates on the list. Furthermore there is even a special space on the voting card where you can write in a candidate from another party. Each vote is a direct vote for a particular party list and there is no intermediary system such as the Electoral College as in the United States. Early voting is also possible in Norway. Voting booths in small temporary buildings are purposefully set up for this purpose about a month before the actual election day. These temporary early-voting structures are often conveniently placed in central places that are highly trafficked by the public.

After the election authorities have tallied the vote and determined the number of seats won by the various parties, the newly elected Storting representatives begin negotiations in order to form an executive government. Because no current political parties have been capable of winning a majority of the seats (85) they must necessarily nurture alliances with other parties in order to form a standing government. For instance, in 2013, the Conservative Party with 48 seats sought a coalition with the Progress Party (29 seats), the Christian Democratic Party (10 seats), and the Liberal Party (9 seats). Even though the Labor Party had won the largest number of seats (55) it could not counter this conservative coalition which now controlled a total of 96 seats in the Storting. As is usual. There was considerable give and take among the parties and it took the Conservative Party and the Progress Party nearly three weeks to win over the smaller Christian Democrats and Liberals to their cause. As the leader of the powerful Conservative Party and the leader of the overall coalition of conservative parties, Erna Solberg gained the post of Prime Minister ("Statsminister") and Siv Jensen, as head of the Progress Party, got the reward of serving as Finance Minister. It is important to note that the Liberal Party and the Christian Democrats did not seek posts with the current government and thus have no representation in the ruling cabinet. Despite being willing allies of the Conservative and Progress parties, they did not feel comfortable participating in outright governance in close partnership with the more right-wing, libertarian Progress Party

Not only do women occupy seven top posts in the current Norwegian cabinet, they also make up a significant number of the members of the Storting. In 2013 67 women were elected to the Storting and thus they now control over 39.6% of Norway's parliament. This trend of increasing female representation in the national government is only expected to increase in the future.

Hopefully, this primer of Norwegian elections will help you follow and understand Norway's upcoming election in 2017. As you can see, their electoral process is very different from ours in the United States.

*Fraternally yours,
Terje "Ted" Birkedal, Anchorage, Alaska*

BECOME A HOST FAMILY FOR AN EXCHANGE STUDENT THIS FALL!

OPEN YOUR HOME TO THE WORLD BY WELCOMING...

Benedicte!

Country: Norway

Benedicte is a positive and friendly 16 year old girl. She likes to cook and play handball and watch just about every sport that includes a ball. She is optimistic about coming to America and looks forward to the opportunity!

Joel!

Country: Sweden

Joel is a 17 year old from Sweden that loves to play soccer and floorball. He's very friendly and easy-going. Joel likes to go to the movies, play video games, and hang out with his friends. He also likes to ski, both downhill and x-country.

For more information, visit our web page WWW.STSFOUNDATION.ORG, or call Anna Kohler at 907-602-2790



Facebook.com/STSTFoundationUSA



@STSTFoundation



@STSTFoundationHQ

BERNT BALCHEN LODGE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR 2017



Pictured:

Back Row, Left to Right:

Marit Kristiansen, Beverly Griffin, Amanda Saxton, Ted Birkedal, Tom Falskow, Merlin Hamre, Martin Hansen.

Front Row, Left to Right:

Ruth Kvernplassen, Christie Ericson, Cindy McDowell, Linda Bustamante.



Meet the World!

Saturday, February 25, 2017 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center 600 West 7th Avenue Anchorage, AK,

Please join Bridge Builders of Anchorage for the annual Meet The World celebration, where you can visit with members of our diverse community as they share information about their cultures and heritage.

This event, perfect for the whole family, allows you to collect stamps in your "passport" from each cultural table as you learn more about friends and neighbors and the uniqueness of Anchorage's multicultural population.

This event will feature music and dance performances, art, crafts and games from the many cultural groups that call Anchorage home.

Meet the World is a flagship event of the Bridge Builders of Anchorage campaign to build a community of friends from all cultures and to create the first city without prejudice.

Our Lodge has always had a fun and informative display. Stop by and say hello!

If you are interested in volunteering or helping out in any way, contact the Lodge at 349-1613

This event is FREE.



CARVING SEMINAR



Woodcarving will be offered again on March 18th at the Viking Hall. The Last Frontier Woodcarvers are busy getting some new projects ready for you to carve. You may register at the "Artistry in Wood" event at the Northway Mall from February 22nd - March 5th. Class size is limited so you must get your name on the list to guarantee a spot in the class of your choice. Price is \$25.00 per person which includes wood, tools to use, carving instructions, choice of project and a great lunch. This is a Sons of Norway event. For more information just call Cindy at 862-1143.

Cultural & Heritage Night at the Movies *The Last King (Birkebeinerne)*



Bernt Balchen Lodge president, Ted Birkedal, gave a brief Norwegian history lesson before the showing of the film, *The Last King*.

Everyone really enjoyed the film, with its spectacular scenery and skiing sequences.

The DVD can be borrowed from the Lodge, or you can also watch the film on Netflix.



SUNSHINE REPORT

Greetings are sent to the following members celebrating a birthday who are at least 75 years young.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Anton Meyer

If you know someone who needs a little sunshine,

Please call

696-0725 (cell - 862-1143)

or email

Cindy McDowell:

ccmcd38@hotmail.com

“Gratulerer med dagen!”



Cooking Class!

Fastelavnsboller

February 19th

5:00 - 6:30 pm

Viking Hall



Join Lillian Anderson's cooking class and learn how to make these traditional Norwegian foods.

\$20/members

\$30/non-members

To sign up, contact Christie Ericson at (907) 602-0673 one week prior to the event.

Please note: This date has changed from the original one set, so remember to update your calendars!

DITT og DATT!

Free Cross Country Ski Lessons

February 4 or 18 (diagonal) 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

Kincaid Park for all lessons -

specific location TBD

If you're interested in x-country ski lessons please RSVP to Martin

Hansen, Sports Director.

Text to (907) 980-5333 or

Email: bikeskifish@gmail.com

Classes are subject to change depending on RSVP's.



Did you know.....

February 12th is morsdagen (Mother's Day) in Norway. A famous poem about mothers in Norway is "Den fyrste song eg høyra fekk" (the first song I heard). It is written in nynorsk.

Here is the first verse:

Den fyrste song eg høyra fekk,
(the first song I heard)

var mor sin song ved vogga,
(was my mom's song by my cradle)

dei mjuke ord til hjarta gjekk,
(the soft words went to the heart)

dei kunne gråten stogga.
(they were able to stop the crying)

Tekst: Per Sivle



Watch us grow!

Our lodge just did something remarkable – we increased our membership for the third year in a row! This year we were up 3.5% and now stand at 325 adult members, not to mention the 100 heritage members (those under the age of 16). This is quite the accomplishment and thanks to all of you that helped recruit a new member or two. Now, we should see if we can find the other 10,862 Norwegians out there and get them to join. Yes, according to the US Census, over 11,187 people in Anchorage claim Norwegian ancestry on their census data, so we've got a huge market to serve with only 3% of them currently being on our lodge membership roll. And if we want to ask a few fellow Scandinavians to join us (like myself, I'm Danish,

but I'll go anywhere if there is going to be herring and aquavit on the menu!) then we have at least another 8,000 potential folks of Swedish and Danish ancestry in Anchorage. Past polling has told us that people do not become members of an organization unless they are asked and feel wanted, so get the word out and ask some of your friends, family and others to consider joining us. Membership is easy to gain – just visit the www.sofn.com website and you can sign-up right there – just look for Bernt Balchen lodge in Anchorage, Alaska. Contact our membership secretary Tom Falskow for more info at 222-5320 or at lise@gci.net

Calling all Cooks!

Viking Hall Kitchen is still featuring cooking classes, and you get to take your creation home! Watch for reminders on the webpage and in the newsletter!



Nordic Language Fair

Please join us on Saturday, February 18th!
This is a fun and informative event!



Velkommen New Members!

Kristina Kvernplassen
Kristin Raeesi

Hey there.

Do you have any news of interest to the lodge?

Perhaps a question on Norway, or our lodge, that we can answer?

Are you looking for a traditional recipe, or do you have one to share?

Maybe you want to tell us your best Lena and Ole joke?

Ditt og Datt (this and that) is the column for you.

To submit items to Ditt og Datt send an email to:

sonancak@gmail.com

Subject Line: The Flyer/DittDatt



Camp and Scholarship Deadlines Approach!

The Carl M. Saltveit Scholarship awards assistance to an applicant to attend the International Summer School (ISS) at the University of Oslo next summer, June 24th-August 4th. To be eligible, the applicant must have completed a year of college, be a member of a District 2 lodge or child or grandchild of one, and admitted by the ISS. You do not have to be currently enrolled in school. Additional information about the scholarship and an application form are enclosed. *The completed application must be postmarked no later than February 15th, 2017.* For information about the ISS or to apply, please go to www.uio.no/english/studies/summerschool. THIS SCHOLARSHIP COVERS ROOM, BOARD AND TUITION!

The Sofie/Olson Scholarship is available for children who attend our District Two Youth camps. One scholarship is awarded to an attendee at each of our camps: Nidaros, Normanna, and Trollhaugen. Eligibility is restricted to the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, and nephews of current District Two members of Sons of Norway and been accepted to the camp of their choice. A scholarship application with guidelines will be mailed to each camper. *The complicated application must be postmarked no later than April 15th, 2017.*

The Draxten Memorial Scholarship is awarded to many of our children attending the District Two youth camps. To be eligible, campers must have applied and been accepted to the camp of their choice AND they must have been awarded a camp scholarship from their local lodge. The lodge awarding the initial scholarship must notify the Youth Director of the recipient's name and the amount given by April 30th, 2017, which means that lodges must select scholarships no later than early April, Please let the District 2 Youth Director know if you have not awarded them yet and when you will do so.

February 14 Youth camp registration forms must not be postmarked prior to this date.

February 15 Deadline for mailing applications for the Carl Saltveit Scholarship for study at the ISS.

Upon receipt Youth Camp Registrars mail campers confirmations and scholarship applications.

April 15 Deadline for campers to mail applications for the Sofie/Olson Scholarship.

April 30 Deadline for lodges to notify Youth Director of the names of recipients of lodge camp scholarships, the camps they will attend and amounts awarded to be eligible for funds from the Draxten.

May 15 Deadline for local lodge scholarship checks to be received by Youth Camp Registrars – Please do not mail checks to campers!

May 31 Youth Camp Registrars mail final camper packets with statements reflecting balance due after all scholarships are received.

June 10 Deadline for Youth Camp Registrars to receive full balance of fees

Please contact the Youth Director at 971-284-4175 or norseherodotus@hotmail.com if you have any questions.

Fraternally yours, David Champion, Youth Director & Scholarship Committee Chair, District 2 Sons of Norway

Field Trip Destination: Alaska!

August 12th - 19th, 2017, a group of Unge Venner and youth from lodges all over District 2 will participate in an educational field trip to Petersburg, Alaska. There they will learn about how Petersburg became "Little Norway," the history of Norwegian-Americans in Petersburg and Alaska, explore the wildlife and natural areas of Mitkof Island and the surrounding waters, participate in cultural workshops, and get to know fellow members of the Sons of Norway in Petersburg. They will fly to Petersburg on Saturday, August 12th via Alaska Airlines, stay at the homes of Fedrelandet Lodge #23 members, learn about the area, perform an important community service project on Wednesday, August 16th, and return home on Saturday, August 19th with memories and new friends that will last a lifetime.

Application deadline with a \$100 deposit is March 1st. Please make check payable to "District 2" and write "Alaska trip" on the reference line. If there are more applicants than space available then a committee designated by the District 2 president will decide. The total cost of the trip will be \$1,000 per participant, including travel by Alaska Airlines, but could ultimately prove lower when we know how much of a trip discount we will receive. (The final discount will be determined when we have informed Alaska Airlines knows exactly how many participants will travel from which airport.) Participants need to be from ages 13-23, members of a District 2 lodge or children, grandchildren, stepchildren, nieces or nephews of one. There will be one chaperone for every four trip participants. Chaperones and host home providers will undergo background checks if they have not already had one recently through District 2. Participants are welcome to seek help from their lodges.



Sons of Norway
8141 Briarwood St.
Anchorage, AK 99518
907-349-1613

Non-Profit Organization
 US Postage
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 PERMIT 505

EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY!

5
Sunday
 2:00 pm
 Super Bowl Party

7
Tuesday
 10:00 am
 Needle Crafts &
 Rosemaling Class

9
Thursday
 7:00 pm
 Board/Membership Meeting

18
Saturday
 7:00 pm
 Nordic Language & Culture Fair

19
Sunday
 5:00 - 6:30 pm
 Nordic Cooking Class

21
Tuesday
 10:00 am
 Needle Crafts &
 Rosemaling Class

25
Saturday
 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
 Bridge Builders,
 Meet the World
 at Denaina Center

FOOD BANK DONATIONS

Our lodge continues to donate canned goods, non-perishable foods and money to the local food bank.



Please bring your food or monetary donation in to Viking Hall.

Please consider helping those who are less fortunate.

WHAT'S HAPPENING? LOTS!

Here's how to find out

Our Website: <http://www.sofnalaska.com>
 (You can also see our Flyer in "living color" by clicking on the Newsletter page)

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/BerntBalchen

All events take place at Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood St., unless otherwise noted.

Please send articles or event information for the next Newsletter by February 20th to: sonancak@gmail.com Attention - **Ruth** Subject Line - **The Flyer**