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## Off the Couch Journal Sentinel staff

In a quiet way, the thousands of people who run, bike, hike, ski and paddle make a lot of noise in Wisconsin

### Dems out-spin GOP, at least on bikes

By Tom Held

Friday, Sep 5 2008, 01:56 PM

The [Democrats in Denver](#) out-pedaled their Republican counterparts in the Twin Cities by a wide margin, based on the final tally of rides taken on the free bikes dispensed by Humana and the [Bikes Belong](#) coalition at the political conventions.

Four-day totals for the [Freewheelin project](#) broke down [like this](#):

The DNC in Denver: 5,552 rides totaling 26,493 miles, 821,304 calories burned and 9.3 metric tons of carbon off set.

The RNC in the Twin Cities: 1,971 rides totaling 15,141 miles, 469,282 calories burned and 5.3 metric tons of carbon off set.

In this all-partisan atmosphere, there must be some sort of political importance to that disparity. Just what political message can we glean from those numbers?

Nothing, says Tim Blumenthal, executive director of Bikes Belong, the Colorado-based cycling advocacy organization.

The Republicans simply got off to a slow start based on the Labor Day opening for their convention, which limited the first-day turnout.

Add in the heavy rains that fell in St. Paul and Minneapolis on Tuesday, and the shortened program caused by Hurricane Gustav, and the delegates to the GOP simply didn't have the opportunities to avail themselves of the 1,000 bikes available at seven distribution stations.

One other factor: the disjointed lay out that had events centered roughly 12 miles apart, in the Minneapolis Convention Center and the Excel Energy Center.

From the very start, Bikes Belong organizers recognized the lay out in Denver made it more convenient and practical for the delegates, the press, the elected officials and the every day folks to check out a bike and ride.

But doesn't it make sense that the Democrats are inherently more environmentally conscious and more likely to ride a bike?

"I don't buy into that," Blumenthal said, embracing his version of "bikepartisanship." "Twenty years ago, I would have agreed support for bicycling politically came mostly from Democrats. That's changed.

"It's too simplistic and old thinking to label support for bicycling as a Democratic thing, and that Republicans aren't interested."

Blumenthal said that both parties are equally represented on the Congressional Bike Caucus, both in the House and the Senate, if not on the streets of their conventions.



Even with the lower numbers in the Twin Cities, the Freewheelin effort was a huge success for Bikes Belong, which had set its goals at 10,000 rides and 20,000 miles total for the two conventions.

"We wanted to show bicycling is a great way to get around crowded cities," Blumenthal said.

My guess is the GOP likely could have matched the DNC numbers if they had allowed their leader and avid mountain biker out of Washington, D.C.

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### alwaysrocking

yawn. This has nothing to do with anything.

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### Dontchathink?

Oh great. Now, even my hobbies are being turned into an opportunity for an argument about politics. Thanks for nothing, Tom.

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