Climate Change: Fighting for the Common Interest
By Bobby Righi

Our corporate controlled political system and ‘free trade’ economy is not only waging war on workers, on communities, on public services and social safety nets. They are also waging war on the very ecological systems that sustain life on our planet earth. Climate change forces us to realize that if we don’t stop destroying our eco-system, we literally threaten the future of life on our planet.

Workers have the most to gain from the fight around climate change. When its full economic and moral implications are understood, climate change is the most powerful weapon workers and their unions have in the fight for equality and social justice. The climate threat makes the need to fight austerity all the more pressing, since we need public services and public infrastructure to both bring down our emissions and prepare for the coming storms.

If we spend our money on a pipeline or a coal train we will get some

Continued on Page 8

Town Hall Meeting with Mayor McGinn

The Greenwood Senior Center and PSARA are sponsoring a Town Hall meeting with Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn on Monday, October 14, from noon to 1:30 p.m., at the Greenwood Senior Center. Mayor McGinn will be available to answer questions from the audience regarding his record during his first term and what he plans to accomplish in his second term. Susan Levy, Outreach Vice President for PSARA and a former instructor at Shoreline Community College, will be the moderator.

The Town Hall was originally planned as a meeting for both candidates. Sen. Ed Murray, the other candidate in the race, initially accepted the invitation to participate. His campaign made a request for a moderator that was uncommitted in the mayoral race, a request that Greenwood Senior Center and PSARA believed was very reasonable. Once we found a moderator acceptable to both candidates, each candidate agreed to participate.

Three weeks later, Sen. Murray’s campaign decided not to be part of the Town Hall. The reason given was that PSARA’s President is personally a strong supporter of Mayor McGinn and was unfairly critical of Sen. Murray’s legislative record. While both PSARA and the Greenwood Senior Center were disappointed in Murray’s decision, both organizations decided to proceed with the forum giving participants an opportunity to raise their concerns with the Mayor.

The Town Hall meeting will be an opportunity for audience members to address whatever questions they have for the Mayor. The only limitation will be that questions be no more than one minute in length so as many people as possible get the opportunity to address their questions to Mayor McGinn.

This is a hotly contested race. Mayor McGinn’s record as a first term Mayor and his leadership has been a subject of fierce criticism by Sen. Murray and his supporters. In turn, Mayor McGinn has both defended his record and raised questions about

Continued on Page 2

Over 100 members of the Social Security Works WA coalition, including many PSARA members, gather at a busy intersection near the site of the Labor Day picnic. They received a very friendly response from hundreds of passing cars and pedestrians. (Photos: Garet Munger)
Sen. Murray's legislative record and also his role as leader of the state Senate Democratic Caucus which lost its majority status in 2013 when two Democrats defected. The Seattle Times, which has been a strong critic of the Mayor since his election, has made clear his strong opposition to the reelection of the Mayor as has the majority of downtown business interests including the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and some very large developers. Sen. Murray has a very clear fundraising advantage and there is a well-funded independent expenditure campaign that will be supporting his candidacy.

Sen. Murray is receiving very strong support from many leaders of Seattle's gay and lesbian community. He has been endorsed by the building trades council and several building trades unions, the firefighters union, the transit workers union, the longshore union, the Seattle Police Guild and several other unions.

Mayor McGinn has been endorsed by the weekly newspaper, The Stranger, and appears to have a strong base of support among younger voters and environmentalists. He also has a much stronger base of support from leaders in Seattle's civil rights community, communities of color and immigrant communities. The primary results reflected significantly more support for Mayor McGinn in the south end of Seattle.

The Mayor has been endorsed by many of the unions representing lower wage workers including the grocery workers union, hotel and restaurant workers union and two of the service employee unions. He has also been endorsed by the Machinists union, the Office & Professional Employees Union, the postal workers union, a few building trade unions and several other unions.

We hope you will join us for this unique opportunity to question the Mayor. Please bring a brown bag lunch if you wish to eat during the Town Hall. Greenwood Senior Center and PSARA will provide coffee, tea and water and some light snacks.

While it is unfortunate that Sen. Murray has withdrawn from the Town Hall on Oct 14, the meeting will provide the opportunity to go into more depth with the Mayor, examine his record for the first term and learn what he hopes to accomplish should he win the election.
September Reflections

By Robby Stern

The Jewish High Holidays occurred in September. Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur and the Ten Days of Awe between the two holidays are a time of deep reflection and self assessment. At the same time as the High Holidays, I passed the half way mark for my 69th year and began to think about turning 70 and the likelihood that I am in the last two decades of my life if I am lucky. (My wife says I will live to 100 but I am not sure I want to put her through that!!)

One of the places my mind wandered during that time was to the role I want to play at this time in my life. I love PSARA. I feel so lucky to be surrounded by truly marvelous people who make me think, laugh and feel fortunate to be alive (along with my beloved family and friends, all of whom are PSARA members). I also believe PSARA is an amazing organization. Our activism is exemplary and that is because of the generous volunteers on our large Executive Board and the commitment of our wonderful members. (That means all of you who are taking the time to read this newsletter!)

As I worked my way through the ten days of the High Holidays, from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, I realized that with the time I have to be a political activist, I really really want to focus on what I believe are the two greatest challenges we face as human beings. The two intertwining transcendent threats to our country and the world, in my opinion, are income inequality and the climate crisis.

Income inequality and the growing gap between the top one or two percent and the rest of us undermines our ability to address the threat to our planet and to human survival posed by climate change. People who are struggling daily to make ends meet want decent jobs that allow them to provide for themselves and their families. If those jobs require fossil fuels, they will accept that reality.

Furthermore, income inequality is destructive to the democracy we need to make the necessary decisions to change how we interact economically and socially with our environment.

A fundamental way to address income inequality is to support workers who are organizing to wrest some of the income and wealth from the top tier and distribute it downward. Workers who have decent incomes with health care and retirement security are much more likely to have the intellectual space to think about and act on the changes necessary to save ourselves from the effects of the climate crisis.

I will judge, and will urge others to judge, those politicians who seek support politically by where they stand on the issues of climate change and income inequality. Words are not enough! What have they done that demonstrates their determination to address these two critical issues?

There are things we can do to address both of these issues. PSARA is participating in efforts to stop the coal trains and the XL Pipeline. We also can do all we are able to support the redevelopement of the Port of Bellingham which will create many good family wage jobs as an alternative to the development of the Gateway deep water coal terminal near Bellingham.

PSARA supports the initiative in SeaTac for a minimum wage at $15 an hour, the fight of low wage workers for better wages and benefits, and efforts to organize workers so they can act collectively. We will fight side by side with our union sisters and brothers to defend existing family wage jobs and to expand the numbers of workers who can live more economically secure lives. All of this work, as well as fighting to preserve and strengthen Social Security and Medicare, is essential to address the twin threats posed by income inequality and the climate crisis.

But, we will not be able to wait for a fairer distribution of income and wealth to address the impending disaster posed by climate change. We have to act now. Climate change requires that we think globally and act locally.

I thought about these issues during the High Holidays and I also thought about personal work I need to do. I want to learn how to eliminate unnecessary worry and anxiety that occupy my thoughts far too frequently. I want to put away my need for personal recognition and do the work I do with a sense of personal satisfaction not dependent on validation from others. I also want to be more kind and compassionate with everyone with whom I come in contact.

Obviously, this personal work is as challenging and long term as attacking income inequality and climate change. I decided that if I could work on these personal changes at the same time that I help organize around the issues of income inequality and climate change, I might actually become more effective.

I get a chance to evaluate how I am doing next year during the High Holidays when I am 70!
PSARA Statement to Grocery Workers

This statement was delivered to grocery workers by Robby Stern at one of the many meetings happening throughout the region, where grocery workers are learning the content of their employers contract proposal. The proposal cuts wages, health care and working conditions. It is a shocking proposal that will very negatively impact the economic condition and lives of grocery workers. Workers will be voting on the proposal and a "No" vote authorizes a strike. (A strike will not happen immediately.) The results of the vote will be known after the Retiree Advocate goes to print.

I am Robby Stern and I am President of Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action. I want you to know one thing, grocery workers: My community, your community, OUR COMMUNITY stands beside you!

Your fight for a fair contract is our fight; it's a fight we all share.

When large national corporations threaten to take away the health care of thousands of people in our communities, when these corporations, who pay their CEOs millions, want to cut the pay for even their lowest paid workers, when these CEOs want to deny you paid sick days so you can stay at home when sick without losing a day's pay, it impacts all of us, all of our communities.

When these corporations attack you, we are all threatened. You are our neighbors. You take care of us when we come to your stores to buy food and other things we need.

Working in a grocery store used to be a job around which grocery workers built their families, and around which we built our communities. Together we can reclaim these jobs and turn them into family-building, community-building jobs again.

For now, I just want you to know that I stand with you and our organization stands with you. And, many organizations in the broader community, with tens of thousands of members, will stand with you.

If there is a dispute, we will be taking our shopping dollars somewhere else. We have already started to let your managers know this, and we will be in the stores to tell more managers in the coming weeks. We will keep standing with you as long as it takes for you to have a fair contract. Thank you for the work you do every day to feed our community. We have your back as you have had ours!

Seattle hotel workers say "Boycott Hyatt!

Seattle Hyatt hotel workers and supporters have launched a boycott of the Hyatt at Olive 8 and the Grand Hyatt Seattle, denouncing difficult working conditions, unaffordable healthcare, and use of subcontracted workers. Seattle Hyatt workers also say the hotels' local owner, Richard Hedreen, has refused to agree to a fair process for workers to form a union free from management intimidation—a process backed by Hyatt Hotels in a recent national agreement. In response, workers are calling on customers to not eat, meet or sleep at the two local hotels until the matter is resolved.

"The boycott may cost workers like me money, but the cost of doing nothing is much greater," says Yuan Ping Tang, a houseman at the Hyatt at Olive 8. Yuan Ping and his coworkers report difficulty in affording Hyatt health insurance, which can cost as much as $400 a month for a family of four.

They also say more work is being done by subcontracted workers, who are typically paid less with even fewer benefits. In addition, hotel housekeeping work is difficult work that can lead to debilitating pain and injuries from years lifting heavy mattresses and scrubbing floors.

In response, workers have called for a fair process to form a union. In July, UNITE HERE and Hyatt Hotels at the corporate level reached a national agreement on such a process, which has gone forward at other Hyatts in the U.S. To date, local owner Richard Hedreen has refused to implement the agreed elections process in Seattle. But workers are not discouraged, having experienced recent organizing victories: three months after workers began organizing last year, Hyatt agreed to give many workers raises of $1 to $3 per hour.

"Richard Hedreen has done the right thing for his workers in the past, and Hyatt has removed any roadblocks for him to do so in this instance," says King County Council Chair Larry Gossett. "We are asking him to step up and give workers a truly sustainable and secure future in Seattle." King County Councilmembers Larry Gossett, Joe McDermott, Julia Patterson, and Larry Phillips have endorsed the boycott.

You can stand with Hyatt workers by endorsing their boycott by signing a pledge on Local 8's website, www.unitehere8.org

PSARA members stand with Hyatt workers and other community allies in a rally in front of the Hyatt at Olive 8.

Photo courtesy of UNITE HERE Local 8.
SeaTac Proposition 1: Yes! for a living wage
By Jonathan Rosebloom, Working Washington Campaign Director and PSARA member

The CEO of Alaska Airlines made $5.7 million last year. He's paying out $325 million in shareholder dividends. SeaTac's hotels are on pace for record revenues in 2013. A record 33 million passengers at Sea-Tac International Airport spent a record amount of money – $180 million – eating and shopping at the airport last year. What was once a small regional airport is now the 15th busiest in the country with plans to invest millions in expanding the international terminal.

It's a less upbeat story for the hard-working people making these companies successful: More than 6,000 Sea-Tac workers who handle baggage, fuel and clean planes, assist passengers in wheelchairs, serve hotel customers, clean rental cars, and operate parking facilities are locked into poverty wage jobs. They are paid an average of just $1,472 a month, below the federal poverty threshold and far below a monthly family budget required to make ends meet in King County ($4,136).

This fall, PSARA and our allies have an opportunity to do something about the yawning income gap between greedy multinational corporations and the people who make our airport one of the best in the country.

City of SeaTac Proposition 1 would raise these employees' wages to a minimum of $15 an hour – close to what these jobs used to pay before airlines and others began contracting out and slashing wages. Proposition 1 also ensures that employees would get paid sick leave and have greater access to full-time work. It would stop the theft of tips and service charges that hotel managements routinely take from servers and other staff. And it would ensure greater job security for contracted workers. Proposition 1 covers the big profitable corporations operating in and around our airport; small businesses inside and outside the airport are specifically exempt but will reap the benefits of customers with more cash in their wallets.

We're proud that PSARA and dozens of other community organizations, political leaders and unions have endorsed SeaTac Proposition 1.

Proposition 1 is on the ballot this fall in the City of SeaTac – in spite of strenuous (and ultimately unsuccessful) legal appeals by Alaska Airlines and the Washington Restaurant Association to prevent citizens from being able to vote on it.

PSARA's support is critical to the success of Proposition 1. Senior citizens constitute about 20% of the electorate. Alaska Airlines, the Restaurant Association, and other major airport corporations are running an aggressive campaign to try to scare SeaTac citizens into voting "No." PSARA is joining in special phone banks to SeaTac's senior citizens, to educate them about Proposition 1 and to encourage their "Yes" vote. To find out more about the phone banking and how you can get involved, contact Sera Day at 206-321-2747 or sera@workingwa.org.

"I have lived there for 27 years, and SeaTac is a great place to raise a family. However, many of our families are struggling in poverty and this affects our kids and the quality of our schools because the hungry kids with overworked parents don't get the support they need to be at their best in school. I believe the $15 hour wage will raise the standard of living in SeaTac, improve the performance of our schools, and make SeaTac a more attractive place to live. It is a win-win for everyone."

-- Alan Paulson, SeaTac voter and PSARA member

Labor Day demonstrators heard words of support from the two Seattle mayoral candidates and then marched, chanting, into the grounds of the picnic, where they received a warm greeting. The demonstrators gathered and thanked Rep. Jim McDermott for being one of the original co-sponsors of the Strengthen Social Security Act. They publicly requested Rep. DelBene, who was also in attendance, to co-sponsor the bill. (Photo: Garet Munger)
Just how insecure is the American retirement situation?

Aaron Keating, Director, Economic Opportunity Institute & a PSARA member

It’s been five years since the 2008 economic collapse. While the focus of economists and politicians is still on the recovery, the next crisis is looming and potentially more devastating. Unfortunately for most Americans, this crisis is fast approaching and will hit them hard.

Nari Rhee, the Manager of Research for the National Institute on Retirement Security, recently outlined the impending retirement crisis in her aptly named June 2013 report, “The Retirement Savings Crisis: Is It Worse Than We Think?”

While Rhee doesn’t conclude that all hope is lost, she details the dire prospects facing a substantial part of the U.S. population – particularly those in the low-to-middle income brackets. According to Rhee, the estimated savings gap between what Americans have saved and what they need to save for a secure retirement is between $6.8 and $14 trillion dollars.

Many contributing factors have led to a decrease in retirement investments. One of the biggest contributors, Rhee writes, is the country’s historical shift from defined benefit (DB) plans to defined contribution (DC) plans. While DC plans provide more portability, employees are often required to invest more of their own income into retirement. Traditional pensions (DB plans) tend to provide higher retirement income, are managed by the company, and offer a secure, stable monthly income to retired workers.

In 1989, 73.4% of households in which either the individual or one of the spouses had a workplace retirement plan were enrolled in a defined benefit plan of some sort, with only 26.6% solely enrolled in a DC plan. Just two decades later, those numbers had shifted dramatically; in 2010, 58.3% of the households with workplace retirement plans were covered by a DC plan only, with just 41.7% being covered in part by a DB plan. While employers reduce their financial liability by shifting the risk of retirement savings to the employees themselves, the prospects for sufficient income in retirement have plummeted.

So just how little is the typical American household saving? Very little.

The average American household with a head of household between 25-64 years old has only $3,000 saved. Just as importantly, four out of five households have retirement savings less than one times their annual income, with 40% not saving anything at all. This could be due to the fact that nearly 45 percent of working-age households, according to Rhee’s analysis, do not own assets in a retirement account.

Even more problematic is the savings of those approaching traditional retirement age. For those aged 55-64, the average household retirement savings is a mere $12,000, and only 59.8% of those households have assets in a retirement account, Rhee writes. This will necessarily lead to one of two outcomes: either these individuals will stave off retirement and continue working if possible, or they’ll find other options to make ends meet.

So with a multi-trillion dollar collective retirement savings gap, the problems individuals will soon face in retirement becomes magnified at the national level. Increased reliance on government support due to low savings will deplete public resources, an aging (and not retiring) workforce will push younger workers out of jobs, and low savings will result in less discretionary spending.

The retirement crisis is real, and Rhee’s report helps us understand the consequences at the national level. But the problem stems from an inability for many individual Americans to save for retirement through their workplace. Policy solutions such as Saving Toward A Retirement Today (START) or expanded Social Security benefits could successfully stave off another economic crisis and ensure a dignified retirement for all.

This article will also serve as the first in a series of EOI blogs on retirement security. In the next post of the series we’ll address the structural issues, explaining why so many everyday Americans have struggled to put away money for retirement. You’ll find the blog at http://www.eoionline.org/eoiblog/
Join Us at Seattle Mayoral Town Hall Meeting

Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn has agreed to answer questions about his first term as Mayor and what he hopes to accomplish if elected to a second term.

Sen. Ed Murray was invited and had initially agreed to participate but subsequently decided not to participate.

Monday, October 14, 2013
Noon to 1:30 PM

Greenwood Senior Center
525 N. 85th Street
Seattle, 98103

Bring your Questions (no more than a 1 minute question)
Listen to the Answers (2 minutes per candidate)
Then Vote Your Convictions

Bring a Bag Lunch (no lunch provided)
We will provide coffee, tea & water

Sponsored by:
Greenwood Senior Center, a Program of Phinney Neighborhood Association and Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)
Climate Change: Fighting for the Common Interest

Continued from Page 1

construction jobs, but we will also add to the growing profits of big corporations at the heavy public cost of environmental damage. Spend that money on public transit, building retrofits and renewable energy, and you get many more jobs and a healthier future for all communities.

Today the deposits of easy to get fossil fuels are running out so the coal, oil, and gas industry is engaging in new forms of energy extraction: mountain top removal for coal, tar sands mining for oil, deep-sea drilling, and fracking for oil and gas captured in horizontal layers of deep bedrock.

All of these methods release more toxic chemicals into the air and water than before, and are injuring the health of our children and grand-children because children are more vulnerable to toxins. These methods of extraction also burn more carbon fuels to get to and transport the deposits and they release carbon and methane gas into the atmosphere, all of which accelerates climate change.

In California, oil companies are planning to use fracking to get the large reserves of oil in the Monterey Shale formation. This will require large amounts of water, a resource we are running out of and in short supply in California. There is evidence from Pennsylvania, Wyoming and Texas where fracking for gas has been going on for a while that the drinking water is contaminated with toxic chemicals and radioactive metals. In California environmental organizations and state regulators are fighting the plans for fracking and trying to place strict regulations on the process.

As President Obama went through New York and Pennsylvania, he was met by groups of people who were protesting fracking in their communities. More than 100 municipalities in the country have passed bans on fracking, putting them in the cross-hairs of the powerful and arrogant energy industry.

Fracking is exempted from regulations such as the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and other legislation that governs other industrial activities. Fracking operations do not report their air and water emissions under the Toxics Release Inventory. A special amendment to the 2005 Energy Policy Act specifically exempts fracking from the Safe Drinking Water Act, which authorizes the EPA to regulate all injection of toxic chemicals into the ground.

If all of this isn’t bad enough, there is the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement looming over us. It will make it easier for corporations to challenge any laws that interfere with their profit. An example: the province of Quebec has put a time-out on fracking near the St. Lawrence River to study the impacts on its watershed, however under NAFTA, it is being challenged by Lone Pine Resources, an Alberta based company using its subsidiary in the US to sue its own country. This is the first time that a company has sued its own country using a trade agreement.

Many groups here in Washington and around the country have been waging an active battle against the XL Pipeline, hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for gas and oil, and coal industry plans to ship mile-long trainloads of coal through west coast states to new ports that will ship the coal to China.

Environmental groups, along with unions and community organizations have succeeded in delaying the XL pipeline pending more research. Many organizations in Washington, including PSARA, are calling on the WA State Department of Ecology to further study the impact of coal trains through Washington. And the state of New York is currently banning fracking.

All of this hard work can be threatened by NAFTA and the supersized version of NAFTA we are facing in the TPP. Corporations could claim these are ‘barriers to trade’ and sue for potential profits and make tax payers shoulder the expense and force communities to change their laws.

Currently, the US Trade Representative (USTR) is calling on the US Congress to give up its Constitutional obligation to regulate foreign commerce. USTR appointed negotiators, many from large corporations, want the power to negotiate the TPP with limited input from Congress. This is called Fast-Track and it gave us NAFTA and CAFTA and our planet can not afford more.

Call your Congressional Representatives to demand they oppose fast-track and the TPP. Urge state officials to take into account the environmental costs of corporate-backed policies and programs. We need to uphold our values in WA State; healthy jobs and healthy communities.

Bobby Righi is a PSARA member, on the PSARA Environmental Committee, & a retired member of AFT-WA. Some parts of this article reference a speech by Naomi Kline, author of the The Shock Doctrine. The speech was delivered on September 1, 2013 at the founding convention of UNIFOR, a new mega union created by the Canadian Autoworkers and the Canadian Energy and Paper Workers Union.
All the drama surrounding Obamacare – the Affordable Care Act (ACA) – is centered on futile Republican attempts to defund it.

But the real battle may be to prevent employers from using the ACA as an excuse to change the basic relationship between employers and employees defined in collective bargaining agreements.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said implementing the ACA raises the question whether “low- and moderate-income union members and their collectively bargained health care plans will be able to benefit from the same premium support that big insurance companies will receive and if they will have to pay fees to subsidize big insurance companies…”

“There also are concerns that smaller employers will be able to get away with taking health care away from workers while paying no penalty.”

The concern is that the ACA will increase costs for health plans that are co-administered by unions and groups of smaller employers. Such plans are typical in the construction, retail, and transportation industries.

These multiemployer insurance plans are good for workers because they provide consumer choice, portability, stability, and flexibility.

They’re also good for employers because they provide predictable, consistent, and cost-effective long-term health coverage for workers.

But if the cost of these plans goes up, employers might hire fewer union workers or abandon the health plans altogether, forcing workers to buy more expensive individual insurance policies from exchanges.

The fix is simple. A resolution passed in September by the AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles said that “multiemployer plans should have access to the ACA’s premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions on behalf of working families, just as for-profit insurance companies will…”

A second problem with the ACA is that employer penalties for not providing insurance to full-time workers encourages employers to limit their employees’ hours to less than 30 per week.

We’ve already seen that the big three grocery chains – Albertson’s, Safeway, and Kroger, which owns Fred Meyer and QFC – are cutting back employee hours to avoid paying insurance premiums, potentially leading to a “Walmartization” of the grocery industry.

Erosion of the 40-hour work week and the benefits plans predicated on full-time work is not good for working families, either as employees or as taxpayers, since uninsured part-time workers will have to participate in taxpayer-subsidized healthcare plans.

Again, the fix is simple. The AFL-CIO resolution on the ACA called for “applying a full employer penalty for failing to provide affordable comprehensive coverage to workers who average 20 or more hours per week and adding an employer penalty on a pro rata basis for employees who work fewer than 20 hours per week.”

While the ACA has been a “clear gain for working families” as the AFL-CIO resolution states, it still falls short of the ideal, and that’s why the resolution reaffirmed the labor movement’s “commitment to pursue health care for all ultimately through a single-payer system…”

In the meantime, the ACA needs to be revised to protect the health and prosperity of working families.

“It needs to be changed and fixed now,” LIUNA General President Terry O’Sullivan told the AFL-CIO convention.

“We will work with the president to do everything we can to fix the Affordable Care Act … We want it fixed, fixed, fixed.”

AFL-CIO Resolution 54: “On the Affordable Care Act” can be read online at www.aflcio.org/about/exec-council/conventions/2013/resolutions-and-amendments
You asked for it: Excerpts from PSARA candidate questionnaires

This year the PSARA Government Relations Committee decided to try something new. PSARA does not have an endorsement process but we wanted to help inform our members about candidates in local races and their political positions. We developed four questions and asked the candidates to answer them so we could share their responses with our members. The offices we were concerned about this year were: King County Executive, King County Council, Seattle Mayor, and Seattle City Council.

The four questions we asked were:

1) Transit
   A) What are the three most important steps you would take to provide a safe, efficient, affordable and environmentally friendly transportation system for all our residents?

   B) PSARA is a member of the Seattle Transit Riders Union. Do you support the goal of a low income transit fare comparable to the existing senior fare and how would you fund such a fare?

   Please provide a ONE SENTENCE explanation of your answer.

2) Low Income Housing
   What do you see as the most important step the City of Seattle (King County) should take in the next two years to assure more low income housing for Seattle residents and Seattle seniors?

3) Police accountability
   What do you see as the most important next step the City of Seattle (King County) should take to ensure that our police force is accountable to the public and uses fair and equitable policing practices?

4) Campaign Finance
   Do you support public funding of campaigns for city (county) offices (yes or no)? Please provide a one sentence statement of your support or opposition that you would be proud to use in advocating your position.

Only eight candidates chose to respond to our questionnaire, possibly because it would not lead to an endorsement. We thank the eight who did respond for understanding that our members are very interested in their answers and we do vote.

The eight who responded are:

Alan E. Lobdell, King County Executive candidate

Shari Song, King County Council District 9 candidate

Ed Murray and Mike McGinn, Seattle Mayoral candidates

Richard Conlin, Seattle Council position 2 candidate

Sally Bagshaw, Seattle Council Position 4 candidate

Nick Licata, Seattle Council Position 6 candidate

Albert Shen, Seattle Council Position 8 candidate

Richard Conlin, Seattle Council Position 2 candidate

Sally Bagshaw, Seattle Council Position 4 candidate

Ed Murray, Seattle Mayoral candidate

Shari Song, King County Council District 9 candidate

Nick Licata, Seattle Council Position 6 candidate

Mike McGinn, Seattle Mayoral candidate

High capacity transit planning has been a major priority for my administration. Even as City Council was adopting the Transit Master Plan in 2012, we were moving forward on planning efforts for a downtown to Ballard rail route with Sound Transit, seeking (and receiving) funding...

Richard Conlin, Seattle Council Position 2 candidate

Transit

While it is a laudable goal, administering such a fare (low income transit fare) would be difficult at best. It could work if a number of cities came to the table to support this action. The current system of providing ride tickets through human services agencies works well, and expanding that option may be a better direction to go.

Sally Bagshaw, Seattle Council Position 4 candidate

Transit

...Metro needs our help in implementing a more reliable and effective revenue system that isn't so reliant on sales tax dollars funding our bus service. I have been working closely with King County officials to lobby the Legislature to allow King County the option to raise more revenue. If we don't get a local option to raise revenues dedicated to transit, Metro will have to cut another 600,000 hours of service beginning in 2015. This is absolutely unacceptable....

Nick Licata, Seattle Council Position 6 candidate

Transit

...The goal of public transit is to provide safe and accessible transportation to everyone; the creation of a reduced fare for low income individuals supports and furthers this goal.

Albert Shen, Seattle Council Position 8 candidate

Transit

Advocate for a real grade separated mass transit system that moves all people quickly and efficiently. We have a broken transportation plan that is composed of many different modes of transportation but not an overall integrated plan that layers our transportation from mass transit to buses and other options such as taxis/application based car services....
The organizers of the OUR WalMart demonstration in Renton asked me if I would be willing to participate in “civil disobedience” at the demonstration on September 5. I was told that civil disobedience could lead to arrest and they needed to do a background check on me to assure that this would not produce other legal problems.

Since I have been attending rallies and protests in support of the WalMart workers for about three years, I was honored to be asked to be included in this small group of civic supporters. On the day of the action, organizers and two attorneys provided by UFCW 21 briefed thirteen of us, current and former WalMart employees and community supporters on what would occur.

At the appointed time, we led the rest of the attendees in a decreasing spiral to the center of Rainier Avenue in front of the WalMart store. When the spiral reached a small core, the thirteen of us sat down in the street, surrounded by approximately 300 other supporters.

After the crowd chanted support, the police, in full riot gear, ordered them to disperse, which they did, leaving the thirteen of us sitting, back to back, in a circle. Three times we were also ordered to disperse, after which we were told individually that we were under arrest for civil disobedience and taken to a mobile processing station in an adjacent parking lot. Upon being issued a citation, we were escorted back across the “police line” to the demonstration.

When I told my mother about being arrested, her response was that through my teen years she always worried about me getting in trouble with the law and now 50 years later it actually happened. I think that she is proud that I believe so strongly in a cause to be arrested for it. Several members of PSARA were in attendance at this action, including Kristen Beifus, who acted as MC. I wore my PSARA t-shirt to show the support of PSARA for the WalMart employees.

Tim Burns is a PSARA Executive Board member and the Chair of the 30th Democratic legislative district.

not everyone is able to get arrested for justice like Tim did, but everyone can take the same stand. Now’s your chance. Just use the coupon below to join PSARA and you can be part of the fight for a better world. Already a member? Good for you! How about giving a membership to a friend, neighbor, or fellow worker? We’re stronger when we stand together.

To subscribe or renew visit http://psara.org/become-a-member-ofpsara
Meetings and Events

Mayoral Town Hall: 12 – 1:30 p.m., Monday, October 14, Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 N. 85th ST., Seattle. Both candidates had agreed to appear but subsequently Sen. Murray decided not to appear. There will be an opportunity to ask Mayor McGinn your questions in a Town Hall setting.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, October 17, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

Green Lake Discussion Group: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 24, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. PSARA Outreach Committee led discussion group. Topic TBD.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. The Committee will be making further plans for the 2014 legislative session.

PSARA Environment Committee: 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Thursday, November 7, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. All PSARA members welcome.

“The cupboard is bare! There’s no more cuts to make....

“We all want to reduce the deficit. Put everything on the table, review it, but you cannot have any more cuts just for the sake of cuts. Right now you’re taking trophies.”

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, on CNN "State of the Union," September 22.