Budget Deal Must Be Morally and Economically Sound

By Sen. Bernie Sanders, Reader Supported News

As a member of the U.S. Senate Budget Committee, I am more than aware that a $17 trillion dollar national debt and a $700 billion deficit are serious problems that must be addressed.

But I am also aware that real unemployment is close to 14 percent, that tens of millions of Americans are working for horrendously low wages, that more Americans are now living in poverty than ever before and that wealth and income inequality in the United States is now greater than in any other major country -- with the gap between the very rich and everyone else growing wider and wider. Further, when we talk about the national budget, it is vitally important that we remember how we got into this fiscal crisis in the first place and who was responsible for it. Let us never forget that when Bill Clinton left office in January of 2001, the U.S. had a budget surplus of $236 billion with projected budget surpluses as far as the eye could see. During that time, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office projected a 10-year budget surplus of $5.6 trillion, enough to erase the entire national debt by the end of 2011.

What happened? How did we, in a few short years, go from a large budget surplus into horrendous debt? The answer is not that complicated. Under President Bush we went to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq -- and didn't pay for them.

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Transgender Day of Remembrance

By Dylan Orr

November 20th, 2013 marks the commemoration of Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) around the world. In its 15th year, TDOR is a day dedicated to remembering the many lives of transgender, gender non-conforming, and genderqueer people who have been needlessly taken from us, and the many more who endure violence, hatred, and prejudice, due solely to misunderstanding and fear.

On this day, I will be thinking about the virtue of humanity – a set of strengths focused on tending and befriending others – and encouraging

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Annual Holiday Party & Membership Meeting

Let's say goodbye to 2013 and prepare to bring in 2014 with one of PSARA's favorite events. Our annual holiday party and membership meeting will be held at the Greenwood Senior Center, 525 N. 85th St., Seattle on Thursday, December 19 from 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Bring your favorite potluck dish! Participate in our annual membership meeting and elections. Learn from Pam Crone, PSARA's lobbyist, and from Tony Lee, Advocacy Director for Solid Ground, what to expect in the 2014 legislative session. There will also be lots of time to schmooze with the wonderful people that comprise our membership.

If you would like to run for one of the open officer positions (this year we elect a president and administrative vice president) or if you would like to be an Executive Board member, please contact Susan Levy, our Outreach Vice President, outreachvp@psara.org or call the PSARA office, (206) 448-9646. Susan is the chair person of the Election Committee. (Three PSARA members, whose terms do not expire until 2015, serve on the Election Committee and are charged with running our elections).

Please RSVP for the holiday party and general membership meeting to Maureen Bo, adminvp@psara.org or call the PSARA office, (206) 448-9646 and tell us what food item or drink you will bring, i.e. main dish, salad or dessert.

Join us and help launch PSARA as we take on the challenges of 2014 and beyond!
Working Older Americans, Younger Americans, and Social Security

During the summer months this year, an average of 35.9% of men 65 to 69 years had jobs as did 25.6% of women in that age group. Both figures are the highest for those months since those numbers became available in 1981. Additionally, the employment rate for women 70 to 74 was higher than any previous summer.

On the other hand, the percentage of people under 30 with jobs remained far less than it was before the recession. Older people are putting off retirement while younger people are having trouble getting jobs.

Experts are calling it the 401(K) effect. 401(K)s are not a substitute for defined benefit pensions.

Younger and older people have a genuine common interest in strengthening Social Security and increasing Social Security benefits!

Letter to the Editor:

As a Senior living in Burien, I hope to remain in my home as long as possible. This is not only good for me, but good for my community. Without keeping reliable, affordable public transportation available, not only will all those who still depend on public transportation to go to work and carry out other needs, but those in my situation will have to make costly, life limiting choices.

I join with others, who like me belong to the Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action. We see the real costs of a society who have lost touch with the most pressing challenges of our times; income disparity and environmental degradation. Having robust public transportation addresses both in real time.

(This letter was sent by PSARA member Rachael Levine to the WA State Department of Transportation)

Donations in Honor of Will Parry

James & Diane Snell
Sharon Harris

PSARA sponsored a Día de los Muertos altar honoring Will Parry, Editor Emeritus of the Retiree Advocate, at Seattle’s Labor Temple on November 2. Pictured are some of the people who attended. (Photo: Garet Munger)
This month we witnessed a corporate crime. James McNerney, CEO and Board President of the Boeing Corporation, engaged in what can only be called extortion of the workers who created the more than $3.9 billion in company profits in 2012. McNerney received a 34% compensation increase in 2012 to the tune of $21.1 million. According to disclosures cited by Danny Westneat in the Seattle Times, if he were to retire today, McNerney would earn a pension of $265,575 per month. This same James McNerney is the chair of the national Business Round Table that is calling for cuts to the earned benefits of our Social Security social insurance system. This guy fiddles while workers, seniors, veterans, and the disabled get burned.

Okay, McNerney is less than an admirable human being. I am sure most of us knew that from the get go. What is much more difficult to swallow is the role of our Governor and some of our other elected officials in this sordid scam. Governor Inslee made the following statement after the vote of the embattled Machinists was announced. “This is a tough night for the state of Washington. We could have had a big win tonight. We could have grabbed the brass ring for this airplane.”

Exactly whose “big win” is Inslee talking about? He and other government officials have excellent defined benefit pensions. Evidently, Inslee wanted the Machinists to take one for the Gipper. Instead of coming to the defense of the workers who put him in office and using this opportunity to talk about the necessity of this generation and future generations to live their senior years with dignity and respect, Inslee and other elected officials on both sides of the aisle literally betrayed these workers, first by putting all the pressure on them to fold, and then by criticizing them for standing up for themselves, their families and future generations of workers.

I, for one, want to thank the Machinists for standing up for the vast majority of us who want to resist the arrogant assertion of corporate power reflected in the take it or leave it proposal from the Boeing corporation. If Boeing management wants to commit corporate suicide by making the same kind of stupid decisions they made with the 787 when they outsourced all over the world including the inexperienced work force in Charleston, so be it. It will be hard for the Washington economy but ultimately corporate management will be shown to be incompetent. Unfortunately, the individuals in the corporate hierarchy will walk away with millions of dollars.

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Rep. Jim McDermott (D-7), November 15, 2013

The Space Needle Falls

By Jasmine Marwaha, Community Organizer with UNITE HERE Local 8 and a member of PSARA

Fifty years ago, Howard S. Wright and his peers built the Space Needle to be a symbol of the future. While the Needle pointed to the skies and heralded Seattle’s destiny as a technology epicenter, it also contained living wage, union jobs for the service workers who welcomed guests and cooked the food. Generations of workers were able to support their families because of the good jobs at the Space Needle.

Unfortunately, the owners and CEO, Ron Sevart, are eroding this legacy, attacking their union workers who are asking for living wages, continued benefits, and job security. For the last two and a half years, the Space Needle has gone beyond trying to weaken their workers’ contract, and escalated to flat-out union-busting: firing and suspending union activists, encouraging workers to resign from the union and not pay their dues, interrogating workers about their union support, and failing to recall union supporters after seasonal layoffs. The National Labor Relations Board recently took the Space Needle to trial for many of these actions, and the verdict is expected in the next few weeks.

Despite these intimidation tactics, over 70% of the workers at the Space Needle have recently signed a petition declaring their support for their union and for a fair contract.

“I have worked at the Space Needle for over 23 years, and I have never seen management act this way in union negotiations,” says Lee Plaster, a banquet captain at the Space Needle. “They thought that this time they could bust the union and intimidate workers like me, but it has been almost three years and we are going to stay strong until we get justice, and a fair contract.”

Over the course of the years-long struggle, community organizations, including PSARA, have stood with workers on the picket line, written letters to the Space Needle owners, delegated management, and signed petitions asking the Space Needle to respect their workers. The Seattle LGBT Commission, the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission, as well as the Seattle City Council, have all written to the Space Needle to encourage them to settle a fair contract with their workers.

Not only has Mr. Sevart refused to respect the workers’ rights at the Needle, members of the Wright family also own Cedarbrook Lodge in SeaTac and are spearheading the fight against the $15 minimum wage initiative. The Wright family also owns the Chihuly Garden and Glass at the Seattle Center, which is currently under boycott due to the delayed and unfulfilled commitments they made to the City in their bid to build on public land.

The struggle of the Space Needle workers is bigger than one workplace; it is about taking a stand against a wealthy Seattle family that is undermining workers’ rights throughout the region. Time and again we have seen corporations try to squeeze all the profits they can on the backs of their workers. The Space Needle workers will continue their struggle for the symbol of Seattle to represent a better future.

On behalf of the Space Needle workers, thank you for your continued support, and stay tuned for more ways to support the workers!
Pay It Forward: A better – and much-needed – alternative to student loans

By Kelli Smith

Our state used to fund public higher education as a public good. We embraced higher education as one of the foundations of our democracy. It was accessible and affordable for the vast majority of residents. But that promise of public higher education has been steadily and incrementally defunded over the past 30 years.

Our legislature has to take responsibility and cover its fair share of the higher education bill. While there are a number of reasons our representatives have been unwilling or unable to restore adequate funding to public higher education, one stands out: Our state’s tax system is riddled with loopholes and special interest tax breaks, and lower-income residents pay much higher tax rates than the well-off. We must work to fix these problems so we can restore full funding to our state’s colleges and universities.

In the meantime, as the state pays an increasingly smaller share of higher education costs, students and their families are paying more in order to earn a degree. Tuition at our state’s four-year institutions has more than tripled since 1990. And that price tag takes up a significantly greater portion of family income. For example, at the University of Washington, a year’s tuition was equal to 5.6% of median family income in 1989. Today, nearing $13,000 a year, it represents over 22% of median family income.

By 2018, two out of every three job openings will require some college education, and one out of three will require a Bachelor’s degree or better. But the escalation of tuition has put higher education out of reach for many would-be students from middle- and low-income families.

The benefits of a Pay It Forward program are many: it will eliminate the number-one accelerator of student debt – tuition. It relieves students of the psychological barrier of high tuition and loan repayment, and the burden of crippling student debt. It also increases career choice by getting rid of minimum loan payments and replacing them with a manageable and predictable contribution.

We have to expand access to higher education. Students must be able to participate in higher education without assuming ever more debt in student loans. That is what Pay It Forward makes possible.

The Economic Opportunity Institute has been laying the policy groundwork and building constituent support for Pay It Forward. Our children and grandchildren can’t wait for the perfect solution. But we can ensure their participation in public higher education. That’s not too much to ask!

Pay It Forward is a policy proposal of the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI). Kelli Smith is a member of EOI and PSARA.

The Pay It Forward concept in a nutshell:

- Upfront tuition is abolished in favor of post-graduate contributions to a public trust fund.
- That trust fund enables future students to attend college debt-free, and those students also participate in Pay It Forward.
- Contributions to the trust fund by the student are set as a fixed percentage of adjusted gross income (from as low as .5% to 4%, depending on the institution and number of years a student attends), for a predetermined number of years (around 10-20, again depending on the institution attended).

PSARA Executive Board members Susan Levy, Imogene Williams, and Bonny Oborn created the altar honoring Will Parry at the November 2 Dia de los Muertos celebration. They stand with David Olivera, who organized the event, posing with Will’s famous guitar. (Photo: Garet Munger)
So how about that $8.7 billion tax give-away Boeing just received to build the 777X? We have been here before. In 2003, the Legislature excused Boeing from $4 billion in taxes, in order to build the 787 in our state. What happened to that $4 billion? Over $1 billion was used to construct a copycat 787 facility in South Carolina. The other $3 billion? Some went into outsourcing construction of 787 parts all over the world, which were then shipped back to Everett, there to be snapped together. Only the pieces did not snap together, and the Everett machinists and engineers had to re-jigger the pieces in order to make the 787 fly right.

The result of this brilliant outsourcing strategy is that the 787 is about $14 billion over budget. And several years late. And how about those batteries?

Is Boeing management inept enough to do this again with the 777X? Its own customers would not appreciate that. “All we said to [Boeing] was, ‘Please don’t do to 777X what you did to the [787]… Don’t do that to us.’” Those are the words of Emirates CEO Tim Clark, the 777X biggest customer. Or how about Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Akbar, the second largest 777X purchaser: “Frankly, we would rather everything was built in one place, and I think Boeing from the 787 experience have learnt a lesson.”

Boeing has given itself three months to decide on a 777X assembly location. When you put all the pieces on the table, there shouldn’t even be a competition. Everett machinists and engineers produce 100 jets per year. No other state has this experienced and dedicated workforce. No other state can match our aerospace training and transportation infrastructure. No other state has our network of aerospace contractors. And no other state has offered such a plum in tax giveaways, for better or worse!

The Legislature stated that “the people of Washington have benefited enormously from the presence of the aerospace industry in Washington state…” The Legislature could have also stated that Boeing has benefited enormously thanks to thousands of engineers and mechanics in the aerospace industry, the transportation infrastructure, the state’s investment in engineering schools at the University of Washington and other universities and community colleges and our focus on workforce development specifically for Boeing.

But is Boeing profitable? Is the pope Catholic? $1 billion in 2003, $3 billion in 2006, $4 billion in 2010, $5.6 billion last year. So Boeing has the profits, they have the infrastructure, they have the intellectual and engineering know-how, they have the machinists’ expertise. And they just got a huge tax giveaway. So it is a green light for Washington state…except for those pesky Machinists. Should the Machinists just bow down to Boeing? Should they agree to break up their own labor force into two or three tiers? Should they agree to a 30% increase in health care costs? Should they abandon their pensions, which deliver decent, not extravagant, but dependable checks, in retirement?

Here is the thing - the Machinists don’t need to approve a new contract. They already have one that runs for another three years. It is a legally binding agreement between the Boeing Company and the Machinists. It was the Machinists, after all, who proposed a ten year contract a few years ago. It was Boeing that ran away from that proposal for labor peace and productivity. It was the Machinists who exposed Boeing’s breaking of federal labor law, when the company actually wrote that it was moving production to South Carolina to undercut the union. And it was the Machinists who agreed to drop this unfair labor practice charge in exchange for the current contract.

What Boeing needs to do is focus on building the best airplanes in the world, instead of taking away hard-won benefits, defunding the Boeing pension, and seeking out a “union-free” environment. We have helped Boeing enough. Now it is time for Boeing to get to work on the 777X, right here in Washington.

That would be a productive partnership.

(Photo: Garet Munger)
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2013

PSARA Annual Holiday Party & Membership Meeting

12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 North 85th Street, Seattle. On Bus Line #48. Parking at the center and in nearby neighborhood.

Bring your favorite potluck dish.

Hear Pam Crone, PSARA’s lobbyist and Tony Lee, Advocacy Director for Solid Ground discuss the 2014 legislative session

12:30 Potluck lunch and socializing: Please bring a main dish, salad, fruit, dessert or soft drink to share at the party. RSVP to office phone and let us know the food item you can bring: 206-448-9646 OR e-mail to Maureen at adminvp@psara.org. Also, if you can, please bring items of non perishable food for the Labor Agency Food Bank.

1:00 pm. Program & brief business meeting including election of PSARA officers and board members followed by more eating and socializing.

If you cannot drive or take public transit and need a ride, or if you can offer a ride to a member who cannot drive, please e-mail Maureen Bo at adminvp@psara.org or leave a message on the office phone 206-448-9646.
Transgender Day of Remembrance
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leadership, courage, and community-building in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities. By our very existence, transgender, genderqueer, and gender-nonconforming people transcend and challenge the societal comfort zone that is the gender binary, and occupy an unfamiliar space for many that can either create fear and distance or serve as an opportunity for an evolving understanding of gender. I vote for the latter. TDOR should serve as a reminder to us to move toward, rather than away; to be open, rather than closed; to include, rather than reject.

On November 4th, 2013, just over two weeks ago, 18-year-old Sasha fell asleep on the bus, heading home in Los Angeles. Sasha, who does not identify as either male or female, and uses gender-neutral pronouns, was wearing a skirt. Sasha likes wearing skirts. That is how Sasha feels comfortable dressing. A young person, a stranger to Sasha, set Sasha's skirt on fire while Sasha sat sleeping. Sasha's long recovery from this incident has just begun, and I imagine the scars will not only be on the surface.

On September 24th, 2013, less than two months ago, 26-year-old Eyricka, a transgender woman living in New Jersey, was stabbed to death by a neighbor living in her boarding house.

On August 23rd, 2013, 21-year-old Islan was out in New York with a group of transgender women friends when she was brutally attacked by a man on the street, allegedly once he realized she was transgender, and later died from the injuries she sustained.

The stories of Sasha, Eyricka, and Islan are three illustrations of violence against transgender, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming individuals that have occurred just over the last few months. Many others are known, and far too many remain untold. Sasha experienced an act of violence; Eyricka and Islan lost their lives. Sasha's experience highlights the particular vulnerability of transgender, genderqueer, and gender-non-conforming youth to bullying and violence, while Eyricka and Islan's murders highlight the particular vulnerability of transgender women and specifically transgender women of color. Of the hundreds of murders of trans people in the United States every year, a highly disproportionate number of them are people who are also marginalized in other aspects of their identities.

Issues of racism, classism, homophobia, and ableism intersect with the violence against the trans community. The fear of “otherness” and “difference” that is at the root of violence against the trans community is the same fear that historically and still today results in violence against and exclusion of people with disabilities, people of color, and sexual minorities. This presents yet another opportunity for our communities to come together.

I am openly transgender, and I consider it a gift. I care less that people fully understand how or why I came to identify that way – that part is complex and personal, as all identity is, though I am more than happy to share it. It is more important to me that people simply reach an understanding that being transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming in either identity or expression is as valid and real a human experience as any other. And it is absolutely not a threat to anyone. Perhaps even the opposite. No one, absolutely no one, should have to live in fear to be the human being that they are.

I hope that one day we can all share in a world where we not only respect, but truly celebrate the beauty that is the wide variation of the human form, condition, and experience. On Transgender Day of Remembrance we should recommit ourselves, in each our own way, to help us get there.

Dylan Orr from Seattle, is the son of devoted PSARA member Minnie Caruso. Dylan now lives in Washington D.C., where he serves as Chief of Staff to Assistant Secretary Kathy Martinez in the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor. He contributes to the development of national disability employment related regulations and policy. Dylan is a member of the steering committee of Trans Legal Advocates of Washington. Dylan was awarded the Julie Johnson Founders Award by the National Center for Transgender Equality for his continued leadership and visibility. Dylan has the honor of being the first openly transgender person appointed to a U.S. presidential administration.

Dylan Orr

Sasha Fleischman

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I n the past two years, I have had the honor and opportunity to talk with thousands of people who are deeply concerned about the future for their families, their communities and our world.

Here is one story.

Earlier this week, I was flying home after speaking to the Machinists Union national retiree convention. I sat next to a middle-aged woman who is an independent contractor for a large drug company in the South-west. She is very angry about how they exploit her and her constant insecurity about steady work and a secure future.

I steered the conversation toward unjust corporate domination and their drive to create a “social insecurity system” in which none of us feel secure.

“Tell me more,” she said.

She began asking me what she and people like her could do to help build a brighter future. After I shared some ideas, she was warming up to getting involved politically. A first for her. Then a light bulb came on in her head.

Let me paraphrase: “You know what really makes me mad. All these Mexicans who don’t want to learn English. They keep to themselves. They don’t want to work hard. They are getting all this help from the government. I almost lost my house to foreclosure and I didn’t get any help. Why does the government help them and not me?”

I gently responded: “When I was a kid, our family almost lost our house to foreclosure. I am still haunted by that trauma. But do you really think all Mexicans are lazy?”

“Of course not. I know hard-working Mexicans. What really bothers me is lazy people who won’t work.”

“So your big concern is lazy people, not Mexicans?”

“YES.”

“May I share some thoughts with you?”

“YES.”

“How many of the Wall Street executives who wrecked the economy in 2008 and almost caused you to lose your home do you think were undocumented workers from Mexico?”

She laughed. “Well none of them.”

“Is it possible that you might be focusing your legitimate frustration and anger on another group of struggling working people and not on corporate CEOs that are threatening all of us?”

“I see your point.”

“May I share another idea with you?”

“YES.”

“I had a dream last night that every lazy person in America permanently got over being lazy. It was wonderful. They all got up the next day. Showered, ironed their clothes, got their resumes together, and hit the streets at 8 AM looking for a full-time job. Thank goodness laziness was gone forever. At the end of the day, 23 million of them came home without a full-time job.”

Her response: “23 MILLION?”

“Yes.”

I explained the employment statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor. Her response: “Oh my God!”

“May I continue?”

“YES.”

“The next day 8 of the 23 million no-longer-lazy people decided they needed more education and training to get a job. When the 8 million showed up at their local community colleges, the lines were 15 blocks long and tuition costs were skyrocketing. At the end of the second day, most of the 23 million were struggling. So what do we do if everyone quits being lazy and we are more than 20 million full-time jobs short and millions can’t get needed education and training?”

She looked at me and said: “We need to make the corporations create more jobs. They are filthy rich. While we are at it, the government should create more jobs.”

“Great idea.”

She then blew my mind. “A few years ago, I complained to my manager that I felt they were violating my rights as an independent contractor. He gave me a hard look and said, ‘If you don’t like it here you can leave. You can be replaced pretty quickly’.”

“How did that feel?”

“I was scared to death. I am single and was fighting off foreclosure. I dropped my complaints.”

“What was done to you was probably illegal. Do you want to live in a country where employers can threaten to destroy hard-working people like you?”

“NO!”

Five minutes later, we deplaned.

I will never see her again, but I hope she got a better insight into how people like her are encouraged to turn their justifiable anger against other people who are also being victimized.

I gave her my business card and said email or call me sometime. “I have some ideas about how you can take your frustration and put it to good use.”

There are tens of millions of frustrated, angry and confused members of our communities who want hope. How do we individually and collectively expand our ability to reach out to them?
Budget Deal Must be Morally and Economically Sound

Continued from Page 1

We just put them on the credit card. The cost of those wars is estimated to be between $4 trillion and $6 trillion. Further, Bush and Congress passed an expensive prescription drug program that was unpaid for. They also reduced revenue by giving huge tax breaks to the wealthy and large corporations. On top of all that, the Wall Street collapse and ensuing recession significantly reduced tax receipts and increased spending for unemployment compensation and food stamps, further exacerbating the deficit situation.

Interestingly, the so-called congressional "deficit hawks" -- Congressman Paul Ryan, Senator Jeff Sessions and other conservative Republicans -- all voted for those measures that increased the deficit. These are the same folks who now want to dismantle virtually every social program designed to protect working families, the elderly, the children, the sick and the poor. In other words, it’s okay to spend trillions on a war we should never have waged and large defense budgets, and provide huge tax breaks for billionaires and multi-national corporations. It’s just not okay when, in very difficult economic times, we try to protect the most vulnerable people in our country.

Where do we go from here? How do we now draft a federal budget which creates jobs, makes our country more productive, protects working families and lowers the deficit?

For a start, we have to understand that, from both a moral and economic perspective, we cannot impose more austerity on the people of our country who are already suffering. The time is now for the wealthy and multi-national corporations who are doing phenomenally well to help us rebuild America and lower our deficit.

At a time when the richest 1 percent own 38 percent of the financial wealth of America, while the bottom 60 percent own a mere 2.3 percent -- we cannot balance the budget on the backs of people who have virtually nothing.

When 95 percent of all new income during 2009 through 2012 went to the top 1 percent, while tens of millions of working Americans saw a decline in their income, we cannot cut programs that these workers depend upon.

Instead of talking about cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, we must end the absurdity of one out of four corporations in America not paying a nickel in federal income taxes. At a time when multi-national corporations and the wealthy are avoiding more than $100 billion a year in taxes by stashing money in tax havens like the Cayman Islands and Bermuda, we need to make them pay taxes just like middle-class Americans. The truth of the matter is that according to the most recent information available, profitable corporations are only paying 13 percent of their income in federal taxes, which is near a 40-year low.

While in January 2013, we successfully ended Bush’s tax breaks for the richest 1 percent, the truth is that they continue to exist for the top 2 percent, those households earning between $250,000 and $450,000 a year. That must end.

At a time when we now spend almost as much as the rest of the world combined on defense, we can afford to make judicious cuts in our military without compromising our military capabilities.

Frankly, it is time that Congress started listening to the ordinary people. Recently, the Republican Party learned a hard lesson when the American people stated loudly and clearly that it was wrong to shut down the government and not pay our bills because some extreme right-wing members of Congress do not like the Affordable Care Act.

Well, there’s another lesson that my Republican colleagues are going to have to absorb. Poll after poll make it very clear that the American people overwhelmingly do not want to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. In fact, according to a recent National Journal poll, 81 percent of the American people do not want to cut Medicare at all; 76 percent of the American people do not want to cut Social Security at all; and 60 percent of the American people do not want to cut Medicaid at all. Meanwhile, other polls have made it very clear that at a time of growing income and wealth inequality, Americans believe that the wealthiest among us and large corporations must pay their fair share in taxes.

It is time to develop a federal budget which is moral and which makes good economic sense. It is time to develop a budget which invests in our future by creating jobs, rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, and improving and expanding educational opportunities. It is time for those who have so much to help us with deficit reduction. It is time that we listen to what the American people want, and not just respond to the billionaire class and major campaign contributors.
The CEO, the Governor, and the Machinists

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We can only hope that perhaps, despite the venomous attitude that exists in Boeing's top management toward unions, better thinking will prevail. Boeing should negotiate a genuine collective bargaining agreement with the workers that made them profitable and successful.

Meanwhile, the politicians who are kissing the ring of the Boeing corporation need to be reminded whom it is they are supposed to represent. Encouraging further income inequality by undermining the wages and pensions of Boeing workers is contrary to the interests of the vast majority of Washington residents. There is no question that conceding to the blackmail of the Boeing corporation will have a domino effect. On the other hand, the “no” by the Boeing Machinists might have a different, and more productive, domino effect!

“Just Scrap the Cap” Goes Viral

If you have not yet viewed the YouTube video, “Just Scrap the Cap,” take a look! Produced by Social Security Works WA and the Economic Opportunity Institute, the video has gone “viral”! The video was a collaborative effort including a number of PSARA members and brilliant creative work from younger staff at the Economic Opportunity Institute. My daughter, Rivka, after viewing the video, suggested that we post it on a website called Upworthy. Alex Stone, director of the video, a younger PSARA member and a former employee with the Economic Opportunity Institute (he left to attend grad school at the UW) was successful in getting Upworthy to post “Just Scrap the Cap” and within the first 8 hours, it was viewed by 46,000 people. The number has grown to over 152,000.

Some more good news

We are in the process of creating and producing a second Social Security video with a working theme of “Work Til I Die.” It will have a country and western motif and will appeal especially to people who think Social Security won’t be there for them. Our goal is that after watching the video, viewers will become strong advocates for protecting and enhancing Social Security benefits.

Work on the video has begun. We have selected an experienced video production team and our creative team is at work developing the story board for the production. With a big assist from Ron McGaha (one of the “co-stars of “Just Scrap the Cap”), we are in the process of raising the $15,000 we need to fund the production. We hope to have it ready by early spring.

2014

PSARA’s Board, under the excellent leadership of PSARA member, Alice Ito, is in the process of developing a long term strategic plan. Our goal is to become more effective, to grow and to be an even stronger voice throughout the region. We hope to present the plan to our membership the summer of 2014 and if we cannot meet that deadline, by December 2014.

In the meanwhile, I want to thank all of you for your support for PSARA and wish you a healthy and productive 2014.

Why PSARA Matters


Every month we ask you, our readers, to help keep us going by renewing your subscriptions to the Retiree Advocate. And we know from your response that PSARA matters to you as much as it does to us.

For some of us, PSARA is important because we keep fighting for a better, healthier, more just, and more humane world. For others, because it’s an opportunity to meet like-minded people who care about the future. Still others might gravitate to PSARA because of a particular issue we’ve taken up – standing with Boeing Machinists or Space Needle servers, advocating for clean energy or scrapping the cap on Social Security.

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Meetings and Events

PSARA General Membership Meeting & Holiday Party: 12:30 – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, December 19, Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 N. 85th Street, Seattle. Come join the fun and add to the potluck!! More information in centerfold of newsletter.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8, 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, Jan. 9, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. All PSARA members welcome.

Expand Social Security!

"I believe fundamentally we are a people who believe that anyone should be able to retire with dignity, and that's what Social Security is about. People who work all their lives and pay into it should have a minimum level that they don't fall beneath."

"This is partly about math, but it's partly about our values. [Expanding Social Security is] about what kind of a people we are, what kind of a country we are trying to build."

"It's about fighting for the minimum wage. It's about fighting for dignity when people retire. It's about fighting for a world that we built together because we believe that when we do, that we've all got a better chance, we've all got a fighting chance to make something, and that's what we'll do."

*Sen. Elizabeth Warren, speaking to Rachel Maddow, November 20, 2013*