June 4, Walmart National Day of Action

June is a national day of action to express support for Walmart workers and opposition to Walmart’s business practices. This is an opportunity to express our solidarity with Walmart “associates” who will be striking that day.

Walmart’s annual shareholder’s meeting will be two days later on June 6th. The national strikes and solidarity actions will send a message to Walmart that their “associates” have raised serious health and safety concerns as well as their need for consistent hours and better wages.

There will be rallies in Washington:

7:00 a.m.-8:00 a.m. – Mt. Vernon Walmart, 2301 Freeway Dr, Mt Vernon, WA 98273

11:00 a.m.-Noon – Lynwood Walmart, 1400 164th St. S.W. Lynnwood, Washington 98037

June 19, Summer Potluck & General Membership Meeting

Seattle City Council member, Kshama Sawant, is our guest speaker at the PSARA annual summer potluck and general membership meeting. The event begins at noon with a potluck and socializing. Councilmember Sawant will speak around 12:45 with time for Q & A. Following the presentation, we will hold a brief general membership meeting.

A former software engineer from India, Sawant became a socialist activist and part-time economics professor in Seattle after immigrating to the United States. She held part-time teaching positions at Seattle Central Community College and Seattle University and was a visiting assistant professor at Washington and Lee University. Sawant ran unsuccessfully for the Washington State House of Representatives before winning a seat on the Seattle City Council, making her the first socialist to win a city-wide election in Seattle since the radical progressive Anna Louise Strong was elected to the School Board in 1916.

Kshama’s victorious campaign received national attention and provided fuel for a national debate. Her articulate advocacy for working people, including the call for a $15 minimum wage for all workers in Seattle, has added a new edge to the fight to address the perilous income equality that has become the shame of our community and nation.

Please bring a main dish, salad, fruit, dessert or soft drink to share at the party. RSVP by calling 206-448-9646 and let us know the food item you can bring. You can also RSVP by emailing Maureen Bo at adminvp@psara.org. It is very helpful to know what you will be bringing to the potluck.

If possible, please also bring items of non perishable food for the Labor Agency Food Bank.

(There is a flyer in the mid-fold of this newsletter with more details about public transportation and parking.)

We hope you will join us at the annual summer event!
For up-to-date information about PSARA and issues important to all of us, go to the PSARA web site: www.psara.org
Read the Advocate on line, or visit PSARA on Facebook.

Need to reach us?
Here’s a directory of Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action email addresses:
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If necessary, leave a message and your phone number. We’ll call you back.

The Retiree ADVOCATE
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Forums on Strengthening Social Security

Continued from Page 1

Reps. McDermott, Larsen and Smith, have agreed to co-sponsor the “Strengthening Social Security Act.” In the House, the bill number is H.R. 3118. In the Senate, it is S.B. 567. We are working to get support for this legislation from our entire congressional delegation. It is time for our elected officials to face the realistic needs of a 21st century Social Security program. The election season provides a unique opportunity to seek their co-sponsorship when the elected Representative are among us seeking our support.

Social Security is becoming an increasingly critical program to assure seniors and other qualified recipients that they can lead lives with a modest level of economic security. The failure of voluntary retirement savings programs and the precipitous decline in defined benefit pensions has elevated the importance of Social Security benefits. The demographics of Social Security recipients now, and even more so in the years to come, points to the particular importance of Social Security to provide an economic foundation for women and people of color.

The two forums will provide up-to-date information on the present status of the Social Security Trust Fund and the efforts at the national level to pass the “Strengthening Social Security Act.” We will express appreciation to the elected representatives who have already agreed to co-sponsor, and we will be asking attendees to take action to make sure that those who have not yet signed in favor of the Act hear from us.

We ask PSARA members to help turn out as many people as possible to the two forums. The more people are educated on the realities of our Social Security system, the more effective we can be in our efforts to preserve and strengthen Social Security. Please attend and bring a neighbor or friend who would benefit from learning more.

On May 17, PSARA sponsored a Labor-Community workshop led by Education Committee Chair Mark McDermott and hosted by Asian Counseling and Referral Services. More than 30 organizations participated in a discussion of our common values and vision of a just and humane society.

A second workshop, June 21, will focus on tightening our shared values and vision and how we can continue dialogue and common long-term work.

(Photos: Garet Munger)
Low Wage Workers Deserve More: Senator Rubio Doesn’t

By Robby Stern

I think of our foster daughter as the debate over the $15 minimum wage rages. Hodaviah lives with my wife, Dina, my 89 year old father-in-law, Mordy, and me. She is almost 24. She is an asylum immigrant from the Democratic Republic of Congo who has known great hardship in her young life. She speaks three languages: Lingala, French and English. She is hard working, spirited and very determined. She received a B.A. degree from Seattle University as part of the Foster Scholars program. She is a Certified Nurses Assistant and has taken the prerequisites to become an R.N.

Working full time at an assisted living facility, she earns more than the state minimum wage, but quite a bit less than $15 per hour. Despite working hard, she does not have sufficient income to live on her own and also pay for her looming educational expenses. The $15 minimum wage would help her enormously.

Hodaviah is one of the reasons I feel so ambivalent about the proposal from the Mayor’s Income Inequality Advisory Committee. After listening to the debate, I decided to support the proposal because I believe it would be an advance for minimum wage workers, although not of much immediate assistance to Hodaviah, as she hopes to enter nursing school in the fall of 2014 or early in 2015. I am clear that Hodaviah deserves $15 per hour. She delivers compassionate and very competent care. (She volunteered to assist Imogene Williams in caring for Will Parry and also cared for my father-in-law when he had heart surgery).

A majority of people in our community and country do not get the compensation they deserve. (And some people get way more than they deserve!!) We sometimes need to embrace advances, even if they are not as much as we hoped.

However, Mayor Murray delivered what seemed like a gut punch. It was reported in an article in the Seattle Times that the Mayor would support a “training wage” as part of the minimum wage proposal, despite the “training wage” not being a part of the final negotiated proposal from the Advisory Committee. Perhaps most difficult to swallow, the article reported that the city would assist Seattle employers in their petitions to L & I to pay a training wage. In a subsequent statement by the Mayor on his blog, he stated that “no ‘training wage’ is included in my proposal.” He went on to say, “A training wage is not something I endorse and is not part of this deal!”

What was going on? Evidently, the Mayor was referring to a provision in the state minimum wage law. That law contains a training wage provision that allows for a subminimum wage in very limited circumstances of special programs, and that exception would be in the proposal he submitted to the City Council. According to the Mayor’s blog, these exceptions are allowed after a “rigorous application process” to the Department of Labor & Industries (L & I). Such a petition from employers has been approved five times in five years.

The Advisory Committee and Mayor’s proposal did include a “temporary” tip credit and a temporary deduction from the minimum wage for employers who provide additional benefits like health care. This allowance is not allowed in state law. But given these deductions go away within several years, it was grudgingly accepted by Labor negotiators as necessary to reach a final agreement. The addition of the “training wage” provision has added a new negative piece to the proposal. The Mayor indicated in his statement that the Labor representatives on the Advisory Committee would have preferred no exceptions to allow subminimum wages.

I will wait and see the content of the final ordinance that passes the Seattle City Council. At the recent City Council hearing at Rainier Beach High School, I testified on behalf of PSARA after a vote by our Executive Board. I stated that PSARA will support the Advisory Committee’s proposal provided it is not weakened by City Council action.

Hodaviah and the hundreds of thousands of low wage workers in Seattle and throughout the country deserve better. I have decided to sign and urge others to sign the initiative now being circulated by $15 Now. We need a fall-back position if this legislative effort with the Mayor and the Seattle City Council goes awry. At the same time, it is preferable to accomplish the $15 minimum wage legislatively rather than engage in a risky and expensive initiative campaign – a campaign in which large business interests will pour millions of dollars to confuse voters and stem the national tide.

I still can support the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, although I would have liked it to be stronger. If it gets weakened and less protective of low wage workers, I want other options to be available.

He Is Serious

Sen. Marco Rubio is considered a serious candidate in 2016 for the Republican nomination for President. We need to pay attention to what he says. Recently he announced his position on the nation’s retirement crisis. He wants to cut Social Security by raising the retirement age, thus forcing seniors to work even longer than they do now. In addition, he endorsed Rep. Paul Ryan’s proposal to privatize Medicare and convert it to a voucher system where seniors would either purchase coverage from private insurers or purchase a modified Medicare plan. His proposal would result in millions of seniors paying more for coverage.

Of course there is a much more constructive approach. Scrap the Cap on Social Security premiums and Social Security is financially healthy for the remainder of this century.

Allow Medicare to provide coverage for everyone and authorize the Medicare system to negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies for the cost of prescription drugs. Medicare would become financially healthy for the rest of the century, and older workers would not have to hang on to jobs for health care coverage.

The problem with these reasonable proposals is that they do not serve Sen. Rubio’s corporate friends.
A comprehensive report by the Black Women’s Roundtable, a nonprofit that seeks equitable public policy, details the multitude of disparities faced by black women living, working and raising families in the United States. The report assessed conditions of black women in areas of health, education, labor force participation, wages, retirement security, safety, civic engagement and more.

The report’s findings include:

• Maternal mortality is especially high among black women, who are three times more likely to die in childbirth than white women.
• Black women are disproportionately victims of violence.
• Black women are more likely than women of any other racial group to work, especially among mothers.
• Despite strides in educational attainment, black women are the most likely group to work for poverty-level wages.
• Due to the wage gap and over-representation in low-wage fields, black women over 65 have the lowest household incomes of any demographic group.

It is clear that race matters when it comes to economic mobility. A study from the Economic Opportunity Institute called “Chutes and Ladders” found that black people born into the lowest tier of the income scale were less likely to achieve upward mobility when compared to their white counterparts. Nationally, nearly two-thirds of black people are raised in the bottom quintile, compared to just 11 percent of white people. People of color, and especially women of color, are much more likely to work minimum wage jobs and live below the poverty level. The racial wealth gap is significantly worse than the income gap and has widened over the last several decades, according to a report issued last year by the Urban Institute.

The reality is that discrimination is a significant factor in the disparities that people of color live every day. However, gaps in public policy have no doubt contributed to increasing inequality.

Here in Washington there are several solutions that would have dramatic impacts for the state’s women of color:
• Paid sick and safe days: Nationally, 62 percent of black workers and 47 percent of Latino workers have access to paid sick leave, compared to 64 percent of white workers. In addition to time to recover from illness or care for a sick loved one, the law enacted in Seattle and a bill proposed for statewide coverage ensure access to paid time off for victims of domestic violence. Paid sick leave also allows time for preventive care, including prenatal and wellness visits.
• Family and medical leave insurance: Women of color are less likely to use paid leave to care for a new child, largely due to decreased access. Implementation of paid family leave in California led to increases in average duration of maternity leave from one to seven weeks for black mothers and from 4 to 7 weeks for white mothers. Paid leave also increases duration of breastfeeding, which provides long-term benefits to children.
• Increase the minimum wage and eliminate wage gaps: Gender and racial wage gaps are persistent and pervasive. Women make up 47 percent of Washington’s labor force, but 56 percent of minimum wage workers. Similarly, people of color make up 27 percent of our labor force, but 38 percent of those earning the minimum wage. A minimum wage increase and elimination of wage gaps would help to secure economic stability for women of color, as well as all low-wage workers.
• Increase access to employer-provided retirement plans and boost Social Security benefits: Due to life-long wage and wealth gaps, African Americans face severely limited incomes in retirement. More than three in five black Americans have no retirement savings, and black women are among the least likely to be eligible for Social Security Spouse or Widow benefits. Yet, Social Security continues to make up at least half of black women’s income in retirement. Ensuring access to employer-sponsored retirement savings plans, as well as sufficient Social Security benefits, would ensure a more dignified retirement to workers of color.

Addressing the disparities faced by black women would certainly increase their ability to achieve upward mobility, but it would also address the roadblocks to economic security faced by so many Washington workers and their families. Good jobs — those that provide a living wage, paid leave, retirement contributions and health coverage — have become increasingly more scarce, despite a more experienced and better educated workforce. Without policy interventions, those at the bottom rungs will continue to fall further behind.

Tatsuko Go Hollo is a policy associate at the Economic Opportunity Institute and a PSARA member.
Wake-Up WA! Why Investment in Our Infrastructure Can’t Wait

By Kristen Beifus

PSARA recently participated in the “Repair Washington: Creating Good Jobs, Strengthening Infrastructure and Building Climate Solutions” forum convened by the Blue-Green Alliance (BGA). The BGA is a national and local coalition of labor and environmental groups working together to address the environmental climate crisis and the crisis of an economy that is failing to produce enough family-wage jobs.

David Foster, the Executive Director of BGA, opened the forum with a wake-up call about the problems we are collectively facing. Since 1980, the US has faced 144 major natural events that have caused over $1 billion in damage and resulted in an excess of $1 trillion for recovery. Our 19th/20th century infrastructure is not holding up to the climate challenges that we are facing in the 21st century.

There are 800 water main breaks in the US each day, resulting in the loss of 15% or 7 billion gallons of drinking water. With rising temperatures we are even more dependent on water, a scarce resource in a growing number of areas in the US and worldwide.

In a recent study, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave the US an overall rating of D+ for infrastructure, including aviation, bridges, dams, drinking water, schools, transit, roads, rail and solid waste. WA State received a C.

Failing infrastructure and growing natural disasters linked to climate change provide an imperative for government to invest heavily in repairing WA and the US infrastructure. Essential public investment would create hundreds of thousands of jobs, reduce income inequality, and reduce the impacts of climate change on our communities. The Blue-Green Alliance estimates that in WA State alone, some 77,900 jobs could be supported through investment in our infrastructure.

Local government officials who attended the forum pointed out that local jurisdictions are taking the lead. For example, Seattle is taking a leadership role in transitioning power to be more carbon neutral.

Bob Guenther, a labor leader from the Centralia area, discussed the Washington state plan to phase out the coal plant in Centralia by 2025. Along with the phase-out comes a commitment to keep the community whole and to transition coal power plant workers to new jobs so that healing our environment does not cause economic suffering in the community.

Bob expressed hope that this model could also be used in Montana and Wyoming for similar phase-outs.

Jeff Johnson, President of the Washington State Labor Council, spoke of a Blue Green trip to Denmark of which he had been a part. He expressed hope that we can be inspired by Denmark, which has committed to being fossil fuel-free in 2050 with a “just transition” jobs policy.

KC Golden, Senior Policy Advisor of Climate Solutions (Seattle) reminded those at the forum that we need to challenge our own assumptions about the best way to address climate change and inequity. The environmental movement needs to support building more, not less, and the labor movement needs to support building more sustainably.

For the work that needs to be done to sustain our planet, we need government investment, we need private investment and we need community investment. The National Infrastructure Development Bank Act, co-sponsored by Susan DelBene, is a good start.

However WA State can not wait for federal support. Washington legislators and local officials need to be part of repairing WA, because the condition of our infrastructure is unacceptable. In the process, we can create tens of thousands of family-wage jobs, reduce our carbon footprint and prepare our communities for the 21st century.

Kristen Beifus is co-chair of PSARA’s Environmental Committee and serves on the PSARA Executive Board.

May Day, 2014: PSARA joins thousands of others to march for immigrant rights and a $15 per hour minimum wage.

(Photos: Garet Munger)
PSARA Summer Potluck & Membership Meeting
Thursday, June 19 – 12:00 to 3:00 p.m.

**Featured speaker will be Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, the first avowed Socialist elected to the Seattle City Council. She will discuss the proposals for a $15 minimum wage for all workers in Seattle and other critical issues confronting our communities.**

12:00 Potluck lunch and socializing: Please bring a main dish, salad, fruit, dessert or soft drink to share at the party. RSVP – Phone and let us know the food item you can bring: 206-448-9646, OR – e-mail Maureen at adminvp@psara.org.

12:45 pm. Presentation and discussion with Seattle City Council Member Kshama Sawant

1:30 pm. Membership meeting

2:15 pm. Enjoy the food and socializing with other PSARA members who make PSARA a fast-growing, vital and respected organization.

Location: Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 North 85th Street, Seattle. On BUS Line #48. 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-email Maureen Bo at adminvp@psara.org or leave a message on the office phone 206-448-9646.

There is parking in the Senior Center parking lot and in the surrounding neighborhood. Please leave the parking in the Senior Center for those members who may have difficulty walking.

Also, if you can, please bring items of non-perishable food for the Labor Agency Food Bank.

We must collect our utensils and dishes after the meeting OR bring compostable utensils. The Senior Center cannot have non-compostable garbage in their bins.
PUBLIC FORUMS ON SOCIAL SECURITY
FREE AND OPEN TO ALL!

WEDNESDAY JUNE 4TH 7:00 P.M.
BETHANY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
6230 BEACON AVENUE SOUTH SEATTLE, WA 98108


with featured speakers:

Terry O’Neill
President, National Organization for Women

Rep. Adam Smith
U.S. Congress, WA-9th District

Marilyn Watkins
Policy Director, Economic Opportunity Institute

THURSDAY JUNE 5TH 7:30 P.M.
WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE, SYRE CENTER

CO-SPONSORS: Whatcom Community College Federation of Teachers, AFT | Washington State Labor Council | Northwest Washington Central Labor Council | Whatcom Peace and Justice Center | Mr. Baker Planned Parenthood | Ferndale, Bellingham & Lummi Food Banks | Lynden Project Hope | Bellingham YWCA | Ferndale Senior Center | The Opportunity Council | The Social and Environmental Justice Committee of the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Terry O’Neill
President, National Organization for Women

Rep. Rick Larsen
U.S. Congress, WA-2nd District

Marilyn Watkins
Policy Director, Economic Opportunity Institute
There's No Need to End Saturday Mail Delivery

By Sen. Bernie Sanders, reprinted from Reader Supported News

The U.S. Postal Service is one of our most popular and important government agencies. It provides universal service six days a week to every corner of America, no matter how small or remote. It supports millions of jobs in virtually every other sector of our economy. It provides decent-paying union jobs to some 500,000 Americans, and it is the largest employer of veterans.

Whether you are a low-income elderly woman living at the end of a dirt road in Vermont or a wealthy CEO living on Park Avenue, you get your mail six days a week. And you pay for this service at a cost far less than anywhere else in the industrialized world.

Yet the Postal Service is under constant and vicious attack. Why? The answer is simple. There are very powerful and wealthy special interests who want to privatize or dismember virtually every function that government now performs, whether it is Social Security, Medicare, public education or the Postal Service. They see an opportunity for Wall Street and corporate America to make billions in profits out of these services, and couldn’t care less how privatization or a degradation of services affects ordinary Americans.

For years, antigovernment forces have been telling us that there is a financial crisis at the Postal Service and that it is going broke. That is not true. The crisis is manufactured.

At the insistence of the Bush administration, Congress in 2006 passed legislation that required the Postal Service to prefund, over a 10-year period, 75 years of future retiree health benefits. This onerous and unprecedented burden—$5.5 billion a year—is responsible for all of the financial losses posted by the Postal Service since October 2012.

Without prefunding, the Postal Service would have made a $623 million profit last year. Excluding the prefunding mandate, the Postal Service estimates it will make more than $1 billion in profits this year. This is not surprising, since the Postal Service made a combined profit of $9 billion from 2003-06, before the prefunding mandate took effect.

The mandate allows the antigovernment crowd to proclaim that the Postal Service “is going bankrupt.” Their solution is to slash hundreds of thousands of jobs, close thousands of post offices, eliminate hundreds of mail processing plants, end Saturday mail, and substantially slow down mail delivery.

In the House, Rep. Darrell Issa (R., Calif.) passed a bill through his committee that would do all of these things. The bill would drive more customers to seek other options and will lead to a death spiral—lower-quality service, fewer customers, more cuts, less revenue and eventually the destruction of the Postal Service.

In the Senate, Sens. Tom Carper (D., Del.) and Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) also passed a postal reform bill through the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. While not as destructive as the House proposal, the Carper-Coburn bill could lead to the loss of about 100,000 jobs, allow the Postal Service to eliminate six-day mail delivery, substantially slow down the delivery of mail, and lead to the loss of more mail processing plants and post offices within the next few years.

There are much better ideas that would strengthen, not destroy the Postal Service, and they are in the Postal Service Protection Act that has been introduced by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D., Ore.) in the House and by me in the Senate. The House bill has 174 co-sponsors. The Senate bill has 27 co-sponsors.

First, prefunding must end. The future retiree health fund now has some $50 billion in it. That is enough. This step alone will restore the Postal Service to profitability.

Second, the Postal Service should have the flexibility to provide new consumer products and services—a flexibility that was banned by Congress in 2006. It is now against the law for workers in post offices to notarize or make copies of documents; to cash checks; to deliver wine or beer; or to engage in e-commerce activities (like scanning physical mail into a PDF and sending it through e-mail, selling non-postal products on the Internet or offering a non-commercial version of Gmail).

A recent report from the Postal Service Inspector General suggests that almost $9 billion a year could be generated by providing financial services. At a time when more than 80 million lower-income Americans have no bank accounts or are forced to rely on rip-off check-cashing storefronts and payday lenders, these kinds of financial services would be of huge social benefit.

It is time for Congress to save the Postal Service, not dismantle it.

Sen. Sanders is an independent senator from Vermont.
PSARA Endorses Minimum Wage Plan, But It’s Not a Done Deal Yet

By Mike Andrew

PSARA’s Executive Board has endorsed the minimum wage plan proposed by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray’s Income Inequality Advisory Committee (IIAC), which would, when fully implemented, give Seattle workers the highest minimum wage in the country.

Many labor and community organizations have also endorsed the plan, but Murray may have unintentionally thrown a wrench into the gears with comments he made to the Seattle Times editorial board on May 12.

The IIAC was made up of representatives of business, labor, and community non-profits and was supposed to offer a plan that could garner broad support across all sectors of the city.

The compromise was complicated, with phase-in periods from three to ten years, and a plan that would allow employers to count tips and healthcare benefits towards the minimum wage goals for the first few years, and then phase that system out as the minimum wage phased in.

When the plan debuted at a May 1 press conference, it seemed like it had a good chance of going through. But then Murray tinkered with the terms of the deal before transmitting draft legislation to the City Council.

The City, Murray told the Seattle Times, would help employers qualify for a little-known state “training wage” program, and therefore be able to pay newly-hired employees less than minimum wage.

“We put it in the language since the agreement came out,” Murray told the Times editorial board. “I’ve committed that this city will advocate to get those certificates for that period of time. It’s something that initially we couldn’t get labor to agree to. I’m not sure we got them there, but we did it anyway.”

While the Times welcomed Murray’s intervention, some on the labor side characterized it as a “bait and switch” tactic.

“We support the proposal that was transmitted by the [IIAC] committee,” Martin Luther King County Labor Council (MLKCLC) Executive Secretary Dave Freiboth told the Retiree Advocate. “But I’m pretty damn upset by the Mayor’s comments – and you can put that on the record.”

“The training wage was intended as a compliance issue,” Freiboth explained, to make the City ordinance square with state law. “It was not discussed as a way for the City to facilitate or encourage businesses to pay substandard wages.”

In a blog post, Murray seemed to walk back his statement to the Times. “A training wage is not something I endorse and is not part of this deal,” he wrote in a post dated May 16. State law has tough protections in place, Murray explained, and his proposal “is narrowly tailored with criteria to ensure the wages of other workers [are] protected.”

Murray’s assurances may not be able to save the compromise, however, as labor leaders accused the business side of trying to change the terms of the deal behind closed doors.

On May 21, eight members of the IIAC, including all four labor members, sent a letter of concern to the City Council. While saying that the signers still “believe the Mayor’s compromise proposal remains the best way forward,” the letter warns that the plan is being weakened.

“We are very concerned that the City Council’s Central Staff is presenting options to the Council to weaken the Mayor’s proposal,” the letter charges.

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Minimum wage not a done deal

Continued from Page 9

“The options the Central Staff contemplates... are options that the [IIAC] considered and rejected as part of the negotiated settlement.”

Signing the letter were Freiboth; IIAC co-chair David Rolf of SEIU 775NW; Diane Sosne of SEIU 1199NW; Steve Williamson, signing for UFCW 21 political director Sarah Cherin; Pramila Jayapal of the Center for Community Change; Eric Liu of Citizen University; Nicole Vallestero Keenan from Puget Sound SAGE; and entrepreneur Nick Hanauer.

The same day, the MLKCLC unanimously passed a resolution urging the City Council to “create a more adequate enforcement mechanism, shorten the length of the phase-in to a reasonable period of time and remove the healthcare phase-in, training wage, and any tip penalty, including a ‘temporary’ tip penalty, from any $15 per hour minimum wage ordinance.”

Murray’s legislation came to the City Council with eight cosponsors, every member except Kshama Sawant. Sawant says the IIAC plan is “good” and “a step forward,” but her 15Now organization has launched an initiative campaign to pass the $15 wage without a waiting period for big business and without the complicated tips and healthcare rules.

Sources say that a pro-business initiative will also be filed, but whether either side will actually go to the ballot now seems to depend on what the City Council does with the mayor’s proposal.

A new EMC Research poll shows that a whopping 74% of Seattle “likely voters” support a $15-per-hour minimum wage, up from 68% support in January.

A clear majority – 57% – supports the IIAC plan, and that number jumps to 66% when respondents are told who backs the plan. The 15Now proposal gets 45% support, and that goes up to 50% when pollsters explain Sawant is backing it.

Downplaying Good News to Push Austerity at Postal Service

By David C. Yao

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe claimed in a May 9 press release that the Postal Service had its “third straight quarter of revenue increase.” Actually, the Postal Service has been reporting revenue increases for five straight quarters.

Why is Donahoe minimizing the winning streak? Perhaps someone in Postal HQ’s statistics department was snoozing that day. But there is a more disturbing explanation.

Over the last few years, faced with falling revenue, postal management has closed post offices, slashed rural office hours, sold historic buildings, cut jobs, and consolidated processing plants.

More recently however, postal finances have improved. Cash on hand increased from $2.3 billion to $3.7 billion over the last two quarters.

Despite that, Donahoe has continued his campaign to impose austerity on the public (pushing to end door-to-door delivery, for example), and on employees (efforts to privatize its trucking arm and shift retail work to Staples.) His ally in Congress, Representative Darrell Issa (R-Calif) — the postal Voldemort — is pushing for a drastic overhaul.

Their biggest weapon has been the persistent “we’re losing billions” message — drumming into the public and employees that there is no use in resisting.

Donahoe is apparently marching to the tune of big mailers, companies that send out a lot of advertising or presort mail at bargain-basement wages to take advantage of bulk mail rates. They don’t go to small towns to mail letters — or to ordinary post offices, for that matter. They want a streamlined network of postal facilities without the costs imposed by the mandate for prompt, universal service.

In fact, postal reform is needed, but not the slash-and-burn kind. Expanding postal banking, beyond money orders, could provide valuable financial services to underserved areas and populations, as well as generate substantial revenue, according to a January report by the Postal Service’s Inspector General. Germany, Israel, and South Korea already do it. In fact, postal banking services were offered in the U.S. from 1911 to 1964 as a trusted alternative to banks.

Why are phony losses reported in postal press releases and parroted by the media, despite the reality of rising revenue and operating profits? Congress is to blame through a 2006 law that required the Postal Service to pump $5.5 billion a year for 10 years into a federal treasury account, ostensibly to pre-fund future retiree benefits. Plumping up the federal budget was the motivator, not future retirees’ needs. In fact, for the past several years no actual money has changed hands — the Postal Service, unable to pay, has defaulted on this debt. But guess what? It still counts as an asset in the federal budget… and a debt in the postal budget.

And this artificial debt is being used as a battering ram to fool the public into thinking service cuts are necessary, when they really aren’t.

David C. Yao is Vice President of the Greater Seattle Area Local, American Postal Workers Union, a founding member of Communities and Postal Workers United, and a member of PSARA. This article first appeared in Labor Notes and The Stand and is posted here with the author’s permission.

By Bob Shimabukuro, Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate and member of PSARA’s Executive Board

“H e is extremely eloquent, therefore extremely dangerous.”

It was so glaringly missing. How could such an important piece be left out from the “In Struggle: Asian American Acts of Resistance,” exhibit at the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian American Experience? As I sifted through all the information (text and visuals) packed into the small exhibit and wondered how did we (Community Advisory Committee for the exhibit) fail to include the most important (to me, at least) act of resistance: Thinking, putting words together, writing poetry, songs, protest documents. As African American Ishmael Reed says, “Writing is Fighting.”

The Committee changed the focus of the exhibit from civil disobedience to acts of resistance because we felt that the definition was too limiting. To focus strictly on getting arrested misses that sometimes the “cost” of resisting involves a lot more than a few hours/days in jail; costs like deportation, assault, injury and even death.

We also wanted to dispel some of the “model minority” garbage that creeps up from time to time about Asian Pacific Islanders. A major problem within our community is that often those who have been successful are ignorant about our own history. They suggest that all we have to do is “dump our cultural baggage” and we would be better off.

What we wanted to show was that the API community did not mildly acquiesce in the face of injustice and cruelty. We did resist. People in our community put themselves “on the line,” and, when available, did join others in like situations to try to change what was going on. In doing so, the exhibit could also explain what our community felt: anger, sadness, joy and solidarity with others.

The exhibit covers a lot of ground. It covers, as Acts of Resistance: strikes; refusal to comply with discriminatory regulations; protesting public school segregation (in 1884); mass refusal to registration laws; resistance to E.O. 9066, draft resistance, and loyalty oaths; sit-ins (trespassing); refusing orders (while in the military); and, as discussed in earlier issue of The Advocate, a community potluck at the site of the former Puyallup Fair Grounds Detention Center during World War II.

But we missed out on “writing.” And to think, I did know about a group of Issei mothers, the Mothers’ Society of Minidoka, who had collectively written a letter to the President of the United States, asking “as parents of citizens,” not to draft their sons.

Knowing the common attitude we have of Japanese immigrant women, this definitely is a stereotype-breaking story. But suffice it to say that though the letter never did get to the President, it still is important for reasons we may discuss in later articles.

How does all this connect to John Trudell? A lot, but it’s mostly personal. I was in a rented Whidbey Island cabin and the TV in the cabin did not have a regular cable lineup, it just had your regular hotel lineup and not any sports (meaning, at the time, no March Madness basketball). I came across a documentary about John Trudell which I watched, and the Mothers of Minidoka came to my head, because I was thinking at the same time about the “In Struggle” exhibit and wondered then whether “Eloquence” is a crime. I had a lot of things on my mind, and pretty much forgot about the Mothers’ Society of Minidoka at the next meeting of the committee.

Too bad.

(PSARA’s Diversity Committee is planning a tour at the Wing Luke Museum featuring the “In Struggle...” exhibit. After viewing the exhibit, we will discuss the exhibit and API activism. Then we will have a no-host lunch together. The date is not yet set. Stay tuned.)

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Meetings and Events

**PSARA Education Committee**: 10 a.m.–11:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 4, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave, Seattle. All members welcome as we evaluate our first labor/community forum and plan for the second forum.

**PSARA Government Relations Committee**: 1 p.m.–2:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 4, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave, Seattle. All members welcome as we discuss PSARA’s participation in a variety of local, state and national issues.


**PSARA Environmental Committee**: 2 p.m.–3:30 p.m., Thursday, June 5, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave, Room 226, Seattle. All members welcome as we continue to discuss how we can harmonize the fight for environmental sustainability with the struggle to create good family-wage jobs.

**Social Security: Preserve It, Strengthen It, Pass It On**: 7:30 p.m.–9 p.m., Thursday, June 5. Whatcom Community College, Syre Center, 237 W. Kellogg Rd., Bellingham, WA. Rep. Rick Larsen will join Terry O’Neill and Marilyn Watkins at our first public event in Bellingham.

**PSARA Diversity Committee**: 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Thursday, June 12, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave, Room 226, Seattle. The Committee is planning a program for PSARA members to tour the “In Struggle: Asian American Acts of Resistance” exhibit at the Wing Luke Museum. This event will include viewing the exhibit and other exhibits at the museum, a discussion and a no-host lunch in the International District.

**PSARA Potluck & General Membership Meeting**: 12:00 Noon–3 p.m., Thursday, June 19, Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 N. 85th St., Seattle. Featured speaker, Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant. All PSARA members are encouraged to attend.

**Green Lake Discussion Group**: Noon to 1:00 p.m., Thursday, June 26, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch and discussion. Topic: Income Inequality, Co-sponsored by PSARA and the Northwest Center for Creative Aging.