The arc of life has been on my mind lately. Turning 70 this month has led me to think about youth and the aging process. I have been thinking about how Pete Seeger was a presence from my early years, and how the friendship and influence of Will Parry has impacted my middle and senior years.

I was first exposed to Pete Seeger by my immigrant parents who had a copy of the Weavers album in their record collection. My age was in the single digits when I first heard “Irene Goodnight” and other folk songs on that album. I knew nothing about the political views of the singers and I frankly do not know if my parents knew anything about their political perspective. I do know we loved the music.

I remember vividly the fear my parents, and particularly my father, felt during the McCarthy era. Both were constantly fearful as a result of their experience in Nazi Germany. While it was never discussed with me, I believe that the McCarthy era had too many parallels to their early experiences in Germany before my Dad was taken to a slave labor camp. Pete and Will were victims of this terrible, repressive time in our country.

I did not hear Pete Seeger’s music, other than that Weavers record, until I left the place of my birth, Charlotte, N.C., and entered Syracuse University in 1961 at age 17. At the time, I did not

Continued on Page 3

How do we make a difference? Show up!!... And be ready to explain our issues and why legislators should support them.

We Did. Seniors made their voices heard by legislators on Senior Lobby Day, February 20. About 40 PSARA members joined some 200 seniors from other senior groups in the state. A morning session provided updates by Governor Inslee, Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler, Rep. Chris Reykdal (D-Thurston Co.) and representatives of agencies supporting seniors and people with disabilities.

Mike Kreidler reported that Washington State is among the top 10 states for registration in the new Affordable Care Act, and while there are still problems to overcome, progress is good. Kreidler is one of only 12 state insurance commissioners elected by voters, which may explain his continued responsiveness to state consumers.

Most members had meetings with their legislators in the afternoon, some in the morning. Reports back from members were positive. PSARA’s legislative agenda provided by our Government Relations Committee was brief and clear. Our lobbyist Pam Crone also provided participants with a succinct update of bill status.

Continued on Page 11
NEW and IMPROVED
Green Lake Discussion Group!

By Susan Levy, PSARA Outreach Vice President

PSARA is pleased to announce that the Green Lake Discussion Group that is held at the Green Lake branch of the Seattle Public Library has a new partner, a new time and a slightly different format. We will be partnering with the Northwest Center for Creative Aging (NWCCA). We are planning a series of discussions entitled “HOT TOPICS FOR SENIORS (and Senior Wannabes!)” starting in March. This partnership is being held in collaboration with the Green Lake Branch of the Seattle Public Library, which means the branch can publicize the event, share information with nearby libraries, post information and put our discussion on their website calendar. Additionally, the library can help make appropriate resources available. We are all very excited about our new joint venture.

The discussions will take place on the 4th Thursday of the month from noon to 1:00 p.m. at the Green Lake Branch of the Library, 7364 E. Green Lake Dr. N. The first discussion topics are:

Thurs, March 27 - Changing the Minimum Wage

Thurs. April 24 - Exploring End of Life Concerns

Thurs. May 22 - How the Library Works for you.

Bring your lunch, your questions and your knowledge for lively discussions about these important topics. The discussions will be facilitated by members of PSARA and NWCCA.

Three PSARA Members on the Radio

Three PSARA members were interviewed in January on the “We Do The Work” radio Program on KSVR at Skagit Valley Community College. Tom Lux, Kristen Beifus, and Bobby Righi spoke about the environment and economic inequality and the need to address these intertwined crises.

The show is hosted by Rich Austin, a retired member of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and a PSARA member. It is produced by Janet McKinney, a retired member of Operating Engineers Local 302.

The interview was aired in three parts: Jan. 7, Jan. 14, and Jan. 21. "We Do The Work” audio clips are available at this Website:
http://www.skagitdemocrats.org/?page_id=246

Donations in Honor of Will Parry:

William Wickline

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know the connection between the disappearance of Pete from television and radio and the McCarthy era witch hunts.

Upon entering college at Syracuse, I became more aware of the fundamental justice of the civil rights movement. I was particularly impacted when attending a meeting with several of the Freedom Riders and hearing the story of their beatings and close encounters with death. Folk music and freedom songs were thoroughly integrated into the emerging movements for fundamental change. Pete Seeger was one of the voices heard frequently as we struggled to define what needed to be done and what each of us individually was willing to do and to risk.

The arc of my life had changed dramatically as more and more I viewed myself as an activist trying to correct the ills of our country. Music and singing was an integral part of our picket lines and marches. I had not yet gone to jail during the early to mid ’60s, but I heard and read about brave people, young and old, singing songs before they put themselves in harm’s way or when they were in jail together. Pete Seeger, the Freedom Singers, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, Buffy St. Marie and more filled our souls with optimism, determination and spirit.

I first had the opportunity to see Pete sing in the HUB ballroom at UW in the latter part of the ’60s when opposition to the war in Vietnam was growing stronger. He was traveling to college campuses across the country with his message of resistance and determination. We sang with him and we listened attentively as he passionately and angrily insisted we have to “stop this damn war.” I was moved by his commitment and his undying belief that we could stop the powerful U.S. government if we had the determination and the will to keep fighting.

From that time forward, I probably saw Pete in person two or three times and on television a number of times. His songs and his music became part of my penchant for singing during the course of my life. Pete had a deep commitment to justice for working people and the labor movement. My trajectory from the civil rights, anti-war and anti-imperialist movement of the ’60s and ’70s into activism in the labor movement followed the connections that Pete had already made with his music, guided by his political commitments. He was an activist and a cultural worker, and whenever I encountered his music, energy and caring, it gave me greater strength to carry on.

Pete was ahead of me in age, understanding of the world, comprehension of what needed to be done and knowledge of how difficult a challenge we faced. So, it is no surprise that he understood the need to confront the issue of environmental sustainability way before I did. His work in cleaning up the Hudson River and inspiring tens of thousands of people to become active for the survival of our planet stands out as a remarkable achievement.

Will Parry was the moving force behind PSARA becoming active in the fight for environmental sustainability. He passionately advocated for PSARA involvement as a fundamental responsibility to the generations behind us. He led us in calling for opposition to the coal terminals and the coal trains while insisting that our role was to fight for good union family-wage jobs as part of transitioning from fossil fuels to other sources of energy.

I was mightily influenced by Pete and by Will to integrate these two critical issues: the struggle for environmental sustainability and the fight for social and economic justice.

Turning 70, I confront having a lot less time left than what is already behind me. Pete and Will exemplified what it means to engage in a life-long fight for a decent society and a caring world as part of the very core of our individual existence. I will try to emulate them. Their presence in the arc of my life has been a blessing.

Pete, Will, and the Arc of Life
Continued from Page 1
A Legacy in Jeopardy
By Robin Everett

Washington State has a long history of environmental protection. We are consistently ranked as one of the greenest states in the nation. In 1970 Washington established the Department of Ecology. It was the first agency of its kind in the United States, even preceding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Seattle started the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and sparked a grassroots effort that has spread across the country and garnered international attention. Washington is one of the first states in the nation to commit to phasing out its coal power plant in Centralia, and now over 150 coal plants are slated for closure in the U.S. We are truly a leader of the environmental movement. We are truly the Evergreen State.

However, that legacy is in jeopardy. In the dawn of a new era of sustainability, a future of clean, renewable energy, we are faced with a choice to lead this new era or retreat to a past tied to dirty energy.

Big Coal is hoping we pick the latter. Peabody Coal, Arch Coal and others seek to ship nearly 100 million tons of coal through our state every single year through proposed ports at Cherry Point and Longview. From mine to port, these projects threaten our green reputation by releasing toxic coal dust and diesel exhaust along the rail lines, clogging our railroads, ports, and highways, risking our families’ health, polluting our air and water, and stoking the climate crisis. In fact, Governor Jay Inslee, in his first press conference as governor, stated, “this is the largest decision we will be making as a state from a carbon pollution standpoint certainly during my lifetime, and nothing comes even close to it.”

PSARA couldn’t agree more. We have deemed climate change one of “the transcendent issues of this time in history.” Our mission is “uniting generations for a secure future.” Will future generations feel united with us if we sell out their future for short-term goals? So we choose to be a leader in this new era and reject proposals that short-change that vision for a better world for our children.

We are pleased to see that the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) agrees with the public that there is a lot at stake in determining whether or not coal export is good for Washington State. Responding to more than 215,000 public comments, mostly supporting serious analysis of the impacts of mining, transporting and burning coal, they have decided that only a broad and sweeping review of all the risks will suffice. Ecology’s commitment will ensure we will have all the information we need to determine if these proposals cause harm to our health, environment and economy.

Unfortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers will hide under a rock and limit their scope to a study around the approximate site of the terminals.

Both projects are now in the study phase, which can last from 2-3 years. In the meantime, PSARA will continue to work with our allies to educate our members and the public about the connection between coal and climate change, with its tremendous human toll and economic cost. In the future, PSARA members will be asked to attend public events where the fate of coal exports through Washington will be considered.

Meanwhile, you can contact the WA Department of Ecology and thank them for their work to assess the impacts of these terminals: WA Dept. of Ecology, Director Maia Bellon, maib461@ecy.wa.gov.

Robin Everett is an Organizing Representative for the Sierra Club and a PSARA member.

To All of You
By Lonnie Nelson (1932-2014)

My love for each of you is there in my work, some named and some not.

Remember to laugh. Being frustrated and angry can only go on for so long; then you have to do something about it or let it go.

Mostly doing something worked the best for me.

If you have ever wondered what kept my spirits up, it was knowing all those others working for real change.

My life has been satisfying, exciting and rich. Even with difficulties everyone has to survive.

Buy lots of wine, good cheese, sparkling cider and cake. Rent the Labor Temple for music, poetry and friendship.

Invite all my friends to celebrate our travels together and the road you have ahead.
"You’re going to major in what? Philosophy? What kind of work can you do with that?" my mom asked when I called to tell her I was switching from a math to a philosophy major. “Public Relations?” I was speechless. Then I almost laughed.

But she continued, “That’s not what dad was thinking.” That got my attention. But I didn’t want to push the question.

My dad had always told me, “You weak, you sick all the time. Cannot do manual labor. You have to use your brains.” After graduating from college, I picked up some cabinetmaking skills and worked at my own shop trying to prove my dad wrong. I also did some (volunteer) community organizing work in Portland.

When Mom was visiting me, I asked her, “What was dad thinking, Mom?” She replied, “He wanted you to be a great social reformer. He thought maybe a lawyer would be good for that.” A lawyer?

* * *

“Why are you telling him all this stuff?” I overheard Mom ask. “Well, he doesn’t understand me now, but he will when he grows up,” Dad answered.

I was in the third or fourth grade when I overheard that. I listened to a lot of Hegel and Marx stuff from Dad when I was a kid. And I didn’t understand any of it. But I thought, “Well, I have until when I grow up to understand.” So I just put the stuff out of my mind.

About the same time, Dad came to me with an old book called 100 Geometric Proofs. It was an old worn copy, so I think he had had it for a long time. I thought they were cool.

“Puzzles. Teach you how to solve puzzles.” That’s what he said. I don’t know why. Hegel and Marx and geometric proofs.

Dad was competitive. He would challenge me. And lord it over me if he got done before me. The Richard Sherman of his time. If he didn’t, he’d count how many steps I took. And say, “I did it in much less steps.” “Yeah, but you’ve done this before.” “You think you’re better than me? We’ll do five proofs. See who can do five better.” And we would “play” some more. But I didn’t care. It was fun. I didn’t care about being timed. Or how many steps it took. Sometimes, he could do these proofs in half the time, and half the steps and would get furious, because he was an impatient man, at how long I was taking. But I refused his requests to help me. I wanted to do it myself. And in most cases I did.

Later when we reached the end of the book, he asked, “How did you like that?” “Good fun,” I answered.

“Good,” he said. “Help you solve problems with your head. That’s what you need to do. Not good trying to solve problems with body.”

After immigrating to Hawaii (the Big Island) from Okinawa, Dad enrolled in Hilo Boarding School to learn English (and have a place to stay I assume). He moved to Maui and continued his studies at Lahainaluna School, another boarding school, with a high school work study program.

There, he had a math teacher who was very impressed with Dad and thought Dad could go to college. He was also the teacher that introduced Dad to Marxism.

Unfortunately, Dad was expelled from the school in his junior year after knocking down a luna of the school’s work program during a dispute about how the luna was treating Dad and others.

Well, what has this story got to do with PSARA? PSARA, along with other more personal events which have occurred during the past year, have awakened thoughts about my relationship with my dad, mom and family and our collective memory. So I expect that many such thoughts will be awakened this next year also. Hope you find them interesting.

Bob is Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate and a PSARA Executive Board member. He is also the author of the book Born in Seattle - The Campaign for Japanese-American Redress.
The New Face of Hunger: Working-Age People Are Now the Majority of SNAP Recipients

By Mike Andrew

For the first time since SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as “Food Stamps”) started in 1964, the majority of SNAP recipients are working-age people, and not children and seniors.

In other words, families who would have been food-secure even ten years ago now have to rely on government subsidies to buy enough food.

A new study by University of Kentucky economists and The Associated Press shows that the demographics of food insecurity have changed significantly over the life of the program.

First, federal spending on SNAP has doubled since 2008, reaching a total of $80 billion in 2013. More Americans are now on food stamps than at almost any other time in the past decade, indicating the effects of the “Great Recession.”

In fiscal year 2006, about 26 million people were enrolled in the program. As of July, 2013, almost 48 million people, or about a seventh of the U.S. population, are participating.

Second, the new report shows that 50.2% of the U.S. households receiving SNAP since 2009 include adults between the ages of 18 and 59. In 1998, the portion of such households getting food stamps was only 44%, according to the report.

In addition, the findings show that the percentage of SNAP households headed by someone with a four-year college degree has increased from about 3% in 1980 to 5% now, and the share of recipients who have at least some college training has leaped from 8% to about 28%.

Households headed by adults with at least a high school diploma have jumped from 9% of food stamp recipients to about 37% over the past three decades, the report says.

Thirty years ago households headed by high school dropouts accounted for the largest share of food stamp recipients. Now they account for only 28% of enrollees in the program.

The report identified multiple causes for the changes in SNAP enrollees, but it highlights the role that rising food costs and stalled wage growth have played in driving more working people under the poverty line.

The analysis notes that even the modest inflation of recent years has outstripped increases in average wages in the United States. In other words, a full-time job is no longer a guarantee against hunger.

While average weekly earnings in the U.S. rose from $768 in 2012 to $776 in 2013, rising inflation means that the 2013 earnings were equivalent to $2 less per week than the 2012 earnings, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The U.S. minimum wage has also remained at $7.25 per hour since June 2009, even as the cost of living has increased.

While the need for SNAP assistance increases, funding for the program is being cut.

In the current fiscal year, SNAP funding is flat, after four years of increase. Congress’s decision not to extend the increases means about $5 billion less for the program this year. For a family of four receiving a maximum food stamps allotment, benefits fell from $668 to $632 per month, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The “compromise” Farm Bill signed by President Obama on February 7 cuts a further $8 billion from SNAP over the next 10 years. College students and immigrants who can’t prove their legal status are now ineligible for SNAP assistance.

Another 850,000 households in 17 states will lose $1080 per year in benefits because the Farm Bill changes the way the government estimates their home heating costs.

The new report on SNAP underlines the importance of the push for a higher minimum wage, as part of a comprehensive policy to address stagnant working class incomes in the U.S.
Some of you may have heard that, unlike his last year’s budget, President Obama will NOT be proposing cuts in Social Security through a so-called “chained CPI” in his FY 2015 budget. This is not only a huge victory for seniors and working families, it is an enormously impressive victory for grass-roots progressive politics. It means that, in all likelihood, we have successfully beaten back an unprecedented effort to make major cuts to the most important safety net program in the country.

Think back to where we were three years ago on this issue. At that time, virtually every Republican in Congress was pushing “entitlement reform.” Sadly, a number of Democrats and the President held a similar position. Further, with much of the effort being organized by powerful billionaires like Pete Peterson, the Koch brothers and others, the mainstream media had largely bought into the line that Social Security was “going bankrupt,” and that cuts were needed.

How did we win this victory? Our strategy was simple. We did it the old fashioned way by educating and organizing.

In the Senate we formed the Defending Social Security Caucus, which made it clear that Social Security was not going broke, has $2.7 trillion in its trust fund and can pay out every benefit owed to every eligible person for the next 19 years. We also pointed out that Social Security has not contributed to the deficit because it is independently funded by the FICA payroll tax. Lastly, we made it clear that the proposed cuts were not mere “tweaks,” but that millions of senior citizens, disabled veterans, and people with disabilities were going to be seriously hurt by reducing their COLAs. Our progressive allies in the House did exactly the same thing.

Perhaps most importantly, however, was the role played by grass-roots organizations. A massive coalition representing millions of Americans came together including senior groups, unions, veterans’ organizations, women’s groups, civil rights groups, disability organizations and others. Petitions were signed, calls to Congress were made, emails were sent and demonstrations and rallies were held. In essence, grass-roots America made an offer that members of Congress could not afford to refuse. We told them we knew what was going on and there would be a political price to pay if they ignored us. And they didn’t.

The political lesson to be learned here is pretty simple. If people stand together, and are prepared to build strong grass-roots coalitions, there is very little that cannot be accomplished. Last week, we won a major victory in preventing large cuts which would have caused devastating financial problems for some of the most vulnerable people in our country.

Now, as we think into the future, we must not simply be reactive, we must be pro-active. In the midst of an obscene level of income and wealth inequality, we must develop and fight for an agenda which expands the middle class and improves the lives of those most in need. Among other areas, we should be working to expand Social Security, create millions of new jobs, raise the minimum wage, extend long-term unemployment benefits, reverse global warming, make college affordable, develop a progressive tax system and create a health care system which guarantees health care for all.

The truth is that while the Koch brothers and their right-wing allies have virtually unlimited sums of money at their disposal, there are real limits to what they can do if we confront them intelligently. On issue after issue, the vast majority of Americans agree with our views -- not right-wing extremism.

Our job is to educate and mobilize them. We have just won a major victory, and we can do it again and again.

Thanks for all your efforts.
My Trip to Cuba

By Mark McDermott

I recently spent 10 days in Cuba as part of a delegation led by Witness for Peace (WFP), a politically independent, nationwide grassroots organization of people committed to nonviolence and led by faith and conscience. Its mission is to support peace, justice and sustainable economies by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices that contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Before I went, I checked out Cuba on the CIA and World Bank websites. The national income per person in the U.S. is 8 times higher than Cuba’s. Life expectancy in Cuba and the U.S. are identical. The CIA says a child born in Cuba has a 20% better chance of surviving than one born in the U.S. Why?

Our country invaded Cuba in 1898, 1906, 1912 and 1961. We supported brutal military dictators for decades while they maintained a “great investment climate for U.S. corporations.” I went to Cuba because my government has been waging an economic, political and diplomatic war (the Embargo) against this small country for 50+ years. I wanted to see Cuba for myself and form my own opinions about our nation’s policies toward Cuba.

Cuba is the only country in the world where Americans cannot legally visit as tourists. North Korea, Iran, Iraq, China, Afghanistan and Sudan - fine. Anywhere but Cuba. If you or I went to Cuba as a tourist and spent any money, we would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to ten years in prison and a $250,000 fine and civil fines of up to $65,000. With very few exceptions, Americans can only go to Cuba by joining a delegation led by an organization licensed by the State Department. Our license request took 16 months. Why are you and I threatened with long prison sentences and huge fines if we want to see Cuba through our own eyes?

We visited a wide range of schools, religious organizations and religious leaders, museums, art galleries and studios, and attended a number of music and dance performances. We did not have a Cuban government guide with us and were free to go where we wanted in the evenings. We went all over Havana and spent two days in the countryside. A short trip and many strong impressions.

I have traveled extensively outside the U.S., but I did not know what to expect. We saw no homeless people. Virtually no panhandlers. The streets were safe even late at night. The people looked healthy yet poor. Very few cars, stores and restaurants. Very few police. None with the submachine guns that you see in other large Latin American cities. Virtually no graffiti. No sense of street gangs and potentially violent alienated youth. Many people were critical of some of their government’s policies and wanted a more open economy. At the same time, no one was willing to say they wanted a multi-party government. I think they feared saying this aloud.

One night as we wandered around, we had the opportunity to talk at length with two women about their hopes and dreams. We asked them if they would trade their universal health care, free education through grad school, access to culture and sports and a safe country largely free from violent crime in exchange for a higher standard of living and greater political freedoms. They both said: “NO! WE WANT BOTH! We see no reason why we can’t and shouldn’t have both. Our system has not had a fair test while your powerful country has its boot on our throat. When you go home, please get your government’s boot off our throat. Once it is gone, we can fairly test our system. If it can’t deliver both, then we will change our system again like we did in 1959.” They meant end the Embargo.

The American people agree that our government should change its Cuba policy. In a recent poll, 62% of the American people said they wanted all economic sanctions lifted on Cuba. Sixty-one percent want all travel restrictions lifted. Fifty-six percent want to normalize relations with Cuba, including majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

The time is now to end our country’s economic sanctions on Cuba. It is time that we as a free people are not denied our rights to travel to Cuba. This decades-old policy has not worked and we, the people, want it changed. If you agree, contact the President and your members of Congress and tell them to end the Embargo and the travel restrictions.
Unnatural Disasters: Ice Storms, Droughts, Earthquakes, and Fossil Fuels

By Mike Andrew


The news media call these events “natural disasters,” yet they are anything but. In fact, evidence suggests they are the consequence of deliberate choices made by corporate CEOs, specifically the decision to continue to consume fossil fuels at a reckless pace.

More than 200 million people have been affected by unusually cold weather in North America alone, in an area ranging from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean, and from Hudson’s Bay to the Caribbean.

The continental U.S. recorded the coldest temperatures ever, since the National Weather Service started keeping records in 1870. And on January 7, Ontario, Canada, experienced day-long temperatures colder than concurrent temperatures on Mars, which the rover Curiosity measured at −29 °C (−20 °F).

Highways, airports, and even local businesses were shut down by ice storms, blizzards, and the sheer cold. Evan Gold of the weather research firm Planalytics calculated that the U.S. economy lost some $5 billion due to cold and storm-related disruption.

Because the blistering cold weather also coincided with a spike in the prices of fossil fuels normally used for home heating – oil, coal, and natural gas – many people were unable to heat their homes adequately. An estimated 20-30 Americans have died so far as a direct result of the cold snap.

Weather anomalies are also being reported in other areas of the globe, with more than 100 cold-related deaths reported in the Ukraine, and similar deaths also reported in India.

Meanwhile, a bubble of warm air sits over much of the West Coast, with California experiencing a disastrous drought.

California normally produces more than half of the fruits, nuts, and vegetables consumed in the United States. It is also the country’s leading dairy producer. That means drought-related price increases for basic food commodities will impact every family in the country.

But that’s not the whole story. The weather patterns affecting the Northern Hemisphere have been extremely uneven. While snow cover in Eurasia and North America was above average, the ice cover in the Arctic was 4.5% below the 1981-2010 average.

Between 2001 and 2013, at least nine major scientific studies have been published on the link between climate change and extreme temperature fluctuations in mid-latitude North America.

Long story short, the melting of polar sea ice – which is proceeding at an unexpectedly rapid pace – replaces white, reflective ice with dark, heat-absorbent open water. As a result, the polar regions heat up faster than other parts of the globe, reducing the temperature difference between the Arctic and more southerly regions.

Unfortunately, it’s that temperature difference that drives the now-famous “polar vortex” – the jet stream winds that circle the poles. Consequently, the jet stream has become weaker and more erratic in its course, sending very cold air usually confined to the poles streaming into central North America.

The danger for humanity is that this weather pattern will become the new normal, as industry continues to consume fossil fuels, and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions continue to melt polar ice.

And that’s not all. The hunt for new sources of fossil fuels to burn is leading to threats to the very crust of the earth.

While we expect earthquakes along the boundaries of the earth’s tectonic plates – the big pieces of our planet’s crust that rub and jar against each other – Oklahoma, far from tectonic boundaries, is experiencing earthquake “swarms,” with as many as 2,600 quakes in 2013 alone.

Most of them have been very small, but more than 200 measured over 3.0 on the Richter scale, big enough to be felt by people on the ground.

The culprit might be fracking – the process by which oil and natural gas are extracted from shale by cracking the rock with explosives and then pumping millions of gallons of fluid into the cracks to keep them open while the fossil fuels flow to the surface.

The cause might also be wastewater disposal wells, which are drilled to dispose of contaminated water that is a byproduct of oil drilling. There are reportedly more than 10,000 of such wells in Oklahoma.

In any case, it is clear that the fossil fuel industry is putting the earth’s climate and the health and safety of its people at risk.
Time to Expand the Family and Medical Leave Act

By Marilyn Watkins

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act turned 21 this February. The law has helped millions of Americans take time off work to nurture their newborn child, care for a critically ill family member, or recover from their own serious health condition. But America’s families will not regain economic security until all workers have access to paid leave for health and family care.

With Congress locked in dysfunctional bickering, cities and states will have to lead the way.

Women now make up half the workforce. Ever growing numbers of workers are providing care for older family members, and more than two-thirds of Washington State school kids have all their parents in the labor force. But women still earn far from equal pay – even with the same qualifications and in the same jobs as men.

Part of the problem is that the FMLA provides only for unpaid leave. It doesn’t cover workers in smaller companies, those who have changed jobs in the past year or work less than 1,250 hours for the same employer. It also can’t be used for preventive medical care or routine illnesses like the flu or a child’s fever. Without policy standards, 40% of workers don’t get a single paid sick day, and only 12% have paid family leave benefits.

Those statistics mean that people are forced to go to work when their child or parent is sick, or lose needed family income. Too many women go back to work a few days following childbirth, or miss the final weeks of their parent’s life.

Washington State is helping lead the movement for policy change. Seattle’s Paid Sick and Safe Leave Law, which PSARA members helped pass, has been protecting working families and helping the local economy thrive since September 2012. Now campaigns for sick leave are underway in Tacoma and under consideration in other cities around the state.

In the state legislature, HB1313 based on the Seattle sick leave policy has passed the House. Unfortunately, the bill faces an uphill battle in the Republican-controlled Senate. The Senate is more likely to pass SB6307, overturning city sick days and minimum wage laws.

The Work and Family Coalition has also developed a family and medical leave insurance proposal that would assure all workers have a source of income during those occasions when they must take extended time off for care – when a new baby is born, cancer strikes, or a parent becomes seriously ill. We know paid family and medical leave will improve outcomes for young children, seniors, and working families. In the states with insurance programs already in place, parents not only take longer leaves to care for a new child, but new moms are less likely to go on public assistance or food stamps, and are more likely to be employed – and at higher wages – a year following birth.

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Paid leave policies may seem like common sense, but winning change won’t be easy. There are powerful lobbying groups representing mega corporations whose owners flourish under the status quo and view any policies to empower working women and the middle class as a threat.

Let’s not wait for another flu epidemic to pass paid sick days. Let’s not allow another whole generation of kids to be born without paid family leave. Our elected representatives need to hear from us loud and often that we expect them to act.

Take Action: Call your state Senator today at 1.800.562.6000. Ask them to support HB 1313 (Paid Sick and Safe Leave) and oppose SB 6307 (preempting local minimum wage and sick leave laws).

Marilyn Watkins is Policy Director of Economic Opportunity Institute in Seattle, and chairs the Washington Work and Family Coalition and a member of PSARA.
Senior Lobby Day: "YOU ALL ROCK!!"
Continued from Page 1

would like copies of either of these reports, you can call the office at 206-448-9646, email me at adminvp@psara.org or visit our website at PSARA.org.

Our members who spoke to legislators represented us well. Most members reported good responses on our issues from their Representatives in the House.

The Senate is more difficult with the current Republican controlled majority. There is less hope for our issues passing in the Senate. But watch for emails from PSARA. Members for whom we have emails on our Constant Contact list will receive an email if there is more advocacy that can be done on our issues this session.

We have many allies to thank for this chance to promote our issues. Machinists 751 Retirees shared their bus with PSARA members and shared our issues. PSARA/Machinist members Robin and John Guevarra and Pat Paulsen helped organize the bus and recognized the benefit our organizations have in working together on our lobbying issues. Walt and Karen Bowen, leaders of the Washington Senior Lobby, did their usual excellent work in putting the conference together.

Our Government Relations Committee Co-Chair Chuck Richards, carpool drivers and Legislative District coordinators who made the appointments and arrangements helped us to show up on time and with the right information to make visits effective.

PSARA has an effective daily presence in Olympia through our lobbyist, PSARA member Pam Crone. We are developing a growing presence in the state legislative process and that is a result of you, our members. PSARA will continue to advocate for progressive policies and spending priorities in Washington that will make the lives of seniors, our children and grandchildren better.

Go Team!

PSARA’s Government Relations Committee helped prepare our legislative agenda and briefed our lobbyists.
(Photo: Garet Munger)

2014 Membership Drive
By Susan Levy, PSARA Outreach Vice President

PSARA is excited to announce that we have 49 new members as of the end of Jan 2014. This is the largest increase in membership in one month in a long, long time. Currently, PSARA has over 1,200 members and with each additional member we become stronger advocates for all of our issues.

Welcome new members. Welcome to all of you who have renewed your membership this year. And thanks to all of you who asked a friend to join or gave a gift membership subscription to a friend or family member. Thanks also to the PSARA executive board members who each committed to bringing in five new members by the end of 2014. Some have already achieved the goal.

So, what’s next? Your executive board members will continue to recruit new members. And we hope each of you will also try to recruit (or gift) at least one new member in March. Remember a gift membership ($15.00 a year) will give the recipient 12 issues of our wonderful newsletter. You know the value of this source of information - a newsletter of important, up to date information on issues that matter to all of us.

There is a membership form below that you can use.
And remember there is a small prize for one of our members who recruits (or gifts) at least five new members. Everyone who recruits five or more new members will be entered into a drawing for a $25.00 gift certificate. So please let us know the name and number of people you have recruited or gift memberships you have given.

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

**PSARA Education Committee:**
10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 5, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 208, 2800 First AV, Seattle. All members welcome as we evaluate Senior Lobby Day and plan for future activities.

**PSARA Government Relations Committee:** 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 5, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First AV, Seattle. All members welcome as we make final plans for Senior Lobby Day.

**PSARA Environmental Committee:**
1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 12, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First AV, Room 226, Seattle. All members are welcome.

**PSARA Diversity Committee:** 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Thursday, March 13. Call the office for meeting location.

**PSARA Executive Board Meeting:**
12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, March 20, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

**Green Lake Discussion Group:**
Note new time: Noon to 1:00 p.m., Thursday, March 27, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch and discussion. Topic: Changing the Minimum Wage. Co-sponsored by PSARA and the Northwest Center for Creative Aging.

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**Statement of support from PSARA and other community organizations:**

"We support raising the minimum wage in the City of Seattle to a base wage of $15 per hour for everyone without exceptions."