

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

The Monthly Publication of
PUGET SOUND ADVOCATES FOR RETIREMENT ACTION
"Uniting Generations for a Secure Future"

Vol XXVIII, No 9



September 2012

Very rarely, PSARA will phone our members about important events.

To **NOT** be on the PSARA phone list, please email adminvp@psara.org or call PSARA at (206) 448-9646.

PSARA Investment Trust Forum September 27

By *Mike Andrew*

On Thursday, September 27, PSARA will host a forum on one of the most important issues facing this state – the creation of a Washington Investment Trust. The forum begins at 1:30 p.m. and will be held at the Filipino Community Center, 5740 Martin Luther King Jr. Way South in Seattle.



Mike Andrew

The forum features State Treasurer Jim McIntire, who opposes the idea, community banker Darel Grothaus, and Representative Bob Hasegawa, the prime sponsor of the state investment trust bill.

"The concept is pretty simple," Hasegawa explains. "Right now in the state we have a \$32 billion biannual budget. When the state needs to put its

Continued on page 3

Dear Member:

Please check the address label on the back page of your Retiree Advocate. See the date on the label? When that date is **printed in red**, it's time to renew your membership. Your prompt renewal saves us the cost of mailing reminder letters. **Thank you!**

Social Security, Medicare heading into heavy weather

By *Will Parry*

Social Security and Medicare are heading into heavy weather. Dean Baker, the progressive economist, warns that a powerhouse group of CEOs of major corporations is scheming to craft a bipartisan budget package with cuts to Social Security and Medicare at its core, for enactment by the next Congress.

Baker cited a report in the Washington Post by Steven Pearlstein, Pulitzer prize-winning columnist, spelling out the details.

"Many of the same folks who brought the economy to ruin just a few years ago are now going to come up with a plan that is supposed to set the budget and the economy on a forward path," Baker said. "At the center of their proposal are big cuts in Social Security and Medicare."

Pearlstein reports that the CEOs are proposing to change the Social

Security cost-of-living (COLA) formula, making the monthly checks increasingly less responsive to inflation year after year. They also want to raise the normal retirement age (already going up to 67) to 69.

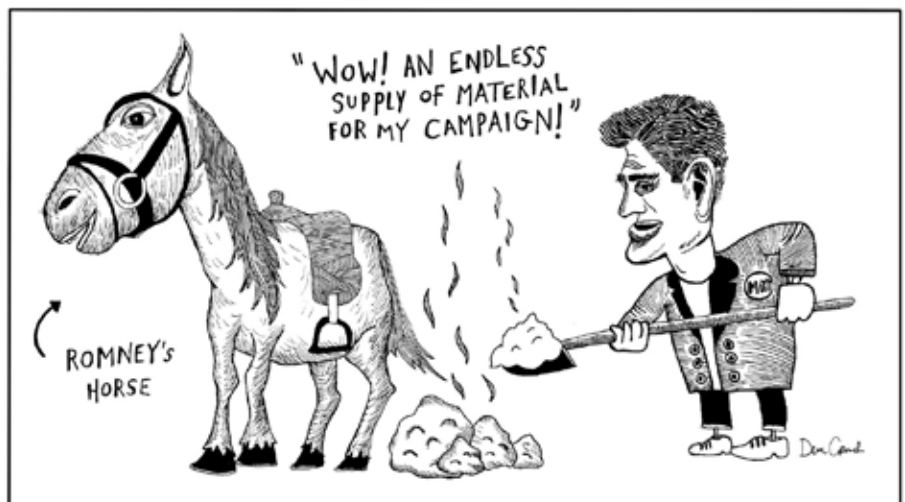
As for Medicare, they would raise the age of eligibility from 65 to 67, sentencing millions of oncoming seniors to an additional two years at the mercy of the profit-oriented health insurance market.

The CEOs' plotting comes as progressive Democrats are increasingly critical of President Obama's limp



Will Parry

Continued on page 8



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, post your comments on our blog, engage in discussions with other PSARA members or visit PSARA on Facebook.

Need to reach us?

Here's a directory of Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action email addresses:

PSARA or its President,

Robby Stern: president@psara.org

Administrative Vice President,

Maureen Bo: adminvp@psara.org

Community VP and Outreach Committee Chair,

Bette Reed: outreachvp@psara.org

Treasurer, **Edyth Koch: treasurer@psara.org**

Government Relations Committee Co-chairs,

Chuck Richards & Tom Lux:

govrelations@psara.org

Retiree Advocate Editor,

Will Parry: pscsc@qwestoffice.net

Our web page: www.psara.org

Web Master, **Reed Wacker: info@psara.org**

Or phone our office at **(206) 448-9646**.

If necessary, leave a message and your phone number. We'll call you back.

The Retiree ADVOCATE

Published monthly by the Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action, 2800 First Ave., #262, Seattle, Washington, 98121. Phone (206) 448-9646.

President: Robby Stern

Administrative Vice-President: Maureen Bo

Community Vice President: Bette Reed

Treasurer: Edie Koch

Secretary: Frieda Takamura

Board Members: Mary Anderson, Tim Burns, Rick Erickson, Jim Grayson, Steve Kofahl, Frank Irigon, Vivian Lee, Susan Levy, Gene Lux, Tom Lux, Mark McDermott, Mac McIntosh, Anita Nath, Bonny Oborn, Will Parry, Chuck Richards, Magdeleno Rose-Avila and Michael Warren.

Editor, Retiree Advocate: Will Parry,

Associate Editor: Mike Andrew

Editor Emeritus: Max Roffman

Layout and Printing: Trade Printery

Care Act saves billions

The Affordable Care Act has saved 5.2 million seniors and people with disabilities over \$3.9 billion on prescription drugs since the law was enacted, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announced.

In the first half of 2012, over one million people with Medicare saved a total of \$687 million on prescription drugs in the "doughnut hole" coverage gap for an average savings of \$629.

The law has given seniors and people with disabilities several opportu-

nities to save on prescription drugs. In 2010, people with Medicare who hit the doughnut hole received a one-time \$250 rebate. Those 2010 rebates totaled \$946 million.

In 2011, people with Medicare began receiving a 50 percent discount on covered brand name drugs and a 7 percent discount on generic drugs in the doughnut hole. Last year, these discounts totaled over \$2.3 billion in savings. In the first six months of 2012, people with Medicare have saved \$687 million.

The Power of One

A net growth of 275 new members in 2012. That's a big, ambitious goal. A real challenge. Scary!

Don't be scared. And forget the number 275 for a minute.

Focus instead on that *one new member* you, dear reader, are going to sign up this week. Today, if she's available.

Whether our year's growth objective is 275 or 2,750, the goal will be reached *one member at a time*.

With every active member focused on winning that one next new member, a goal that seemed far, far away suddenly becomes realizable.

So, dear reader, *think small*. Focus on *the power of one*. The next new member. That friend, neighbor, workmate, cousin or aunt. That person you met while waiting for that prescription, or for the bus, or at the coffee counter.

And by the way, don't leave home without the *Retiree Advocate*. It's a great persuader.

Your next new member, multiplied by a couple hundred folks just like you, puts us over the top.

Never, ever underestimate *the power of one!*

- Will Parry



Photo by Garet Munger

FASHION PLATES: PSARA members proudly model our snappy new Tee shirts, printed with "Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action." At \$12 to \$15 each, depending on size, they are moving like the proverbial hotcakes.

190,000 Seattle workers now have paid sick days

By Lynne Dodson and Diane Zahn

A year ago, when you went to a local Seattle restaurant, grocery store or even health clinic, there was more than a passing chance that the person serving you might have come to work sick.

What a difference a year can make. On September 1, 2012, the roughly 190,000 workers in Seattle that did not have had paid sick days will now have them. How did Seattle become one of the few cities in the nation to have this basic worker protection? How did it pass over the opposition of the Chamber of Commerce?

It wasn't easy, but people power made the politics shift to a point where this proposal passed with an 8-1 vote by the city council. A lot of negotiations, partnerships, media coverage, and over 2,500 phone calls, emails and personal testimony by residents made this one of the top political issues of the summer of 2011. The broad coalition helping push this change included the Economic Opportunity Institute, labor unions, small businesses and community groups like PSARA.

So what does the paid safe and sick days law do? The

details can get pretty complicated. But its essence is very simple. Most workers in Seattle will be able to earn paid sick time and use that time to care for themselves or a family member when they are sick or victims of domestic or sexual violence. They will be able to take this time off without losing pay. And they can do so without fear of discipline by their employer.

The law will create safer and healthier families and workplaces and prevent the spread of illness.

Paid Sick Days – it's responsible social policy. Our next step is to advance this common sense protection to all workers across Washington.



Diane Zahn



Lynn Dodson

(Lynne Dodson is secretary-treasurer of the Washington State Labor Council. Diane Zahn is secretary-treasurer of UFCW Local 21. Both are PSARA members.)

PSARA Investment Trust Forum

Continued from page 1

money someplace – it used to put it in a vault in the Treasurer's office, but I don't think all that money would fit in a vault – now we put it in the Bank of America.

“Why should we let the Bank of America make money off of our money?” Hasegawa continues. “Why don't we just create our own institution? We'll keep the money here, we make money off of our money, and then we control the money so we can leverage it back into our communities.”

The idea for a Washington Investment Trust (WIT) draws heavily on the success of the 92-year-old Bank of North Dakota (BND), currently the only state-wide publicly-owned U.S. bank. The BND has helped North Dakota escape the budgetary crisis other states are in the midst of.

In 2009, in fact, North Dakota sported the largest budget surplus it had ever had.

The reason the BMD has been suc-

cessful, and that WIT could be just as successful, is that states' budget deficits are not the result of over-spending, as Republicans claim.

Instead, they're caused by loss of revenues and increased borrowing costs resulting from the Wall Street banking crisis. Jammed with toxic assets and derivatives, on top of the subprime mortgage debacle, the Wall Street credit machine ground to a halt in the fall of 2008 and has still not recovered.

By providing affordable, low interest credit for business expansion, new businesses and student loans, the BND has helped North Dakota sidestep the credit crisis altogether.

The BND partners with private banks, providing a secondary market for mortgages; offers “wholesale” banking services such as check clearing and liquidity support to private banks; and invests in North Dakota municipal bonds to support local economic development.

In the last ten years, the BND has returned more than a third of a billion

dollars to the state's general fund. North Dakota is one of the few states to consistently post a budget surplus.

Hasegawa said a key feature of the WIT is that it will partner with financial institutions, community-based organizations, economic development groups, and guaranty agencies. He said the Washington Investment Trust will offer “transparency, accountability, and accuracy of financial reporting,” a welcome change from the secretive accounting methods common among large Wall Street banks..

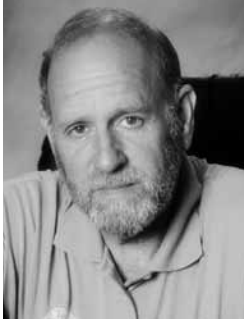
Hasegawa has been working on the investment trust bill since introducing what he calls the “first test bill” in 2010. The next year, a companion bill was also introduced in the state senate, and the measure got committee hearings in both houses of the legislature.

“We saw a very good response from the public [at the committee hearings] – the public just came out for it,” Hasegawa says, “Unfortunately we couldn't get the votes to get it out of committee,” in part because of McIntire's opposition. The legislation will be re-introduced in the next session.

Honoring the Sikhs

By Robby Stern

PSARA members attended a moving memorial at the Sikh Gurdwara (temple) in Renton August 11, to honor the Sikhs and police officer who were murdered and wounded in the racist armed attack in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. An estimated 1,000 people attended, including mourning members of the Sikh community, from whom we learned something about the history and content of the Sikh religion and the history of the Sikh community in the Puget Sound region. Public officials, including Senator Maria Cantwell, expressed their sympathy and support. An emotionally-charged candlelight vigil was held, surrounding the pond in front of the Gurdwara.



Robby Stern

We all understood in a deep way that no matter who is targeted, such attacks are attacks on our entire community. We will stand shoulder to shoulder as a community to express our abhorrence of these acts of hatred. It was uplifting to comfort the Sikh community and to feel their gratitude as we stood with them in this hour of mourning and remembrance.

PSARA Gets Active for Marriage Equality

PSARA does not endorse candidates but we do support or oppose ballot issues. Our PSARA Executive Board has determined that PSARA will staff the Yes on R – 74, Marriage Equality Referendum phone banks a couple of evenings this fall.

We will staff the R - 74 phone banks on Wednesday, September 19 and Wednesday, October 17. The phone bank location is UFCW 21, 5030 1st Avenue South in Seattle and the hours are 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

PSARA members unable to come to UFCW 21 on those dates will be able to make phone calls from home those two evenings, using a list provided by the Yes on R-74 campaign. The campaign will train you, whether you are at the phone bank location (preferred) or phone banking from your home phone.

We can be the first state in the country to pass voter-approved marriage equality! To participate, please email president@psara.org or call the office, (206) 448-9646.

Other Campaign Opportunities

Organizations with whom PSARA is affiliated are sponsoring door-to-door election-year walks and phone banks. Here's information for our members.

The Washington State Labor Council is coordinating campaign walks and phone banks for the Governor's race and the Attorney General's race. PSARA members are invited to participate. The walks and/or phone banks are targeted to union members, retired union members and their families. Here's the information for Puget Sound counties:

WALKS:

9:30A.M.- 3 P.M. (9:30 a.m. snacks/training/pair up, 10:30 a.m. first knock, 2:30 p.m. last knock and a barbecue)

King County: contact Max Price (206) 962-3161

Saturday, September 15, Auburn, Intl. Association of Machinists 751Hall, 201 A Street SW

Saturday, Oct. 20, Renton, Plumbers & Pipefitters Hall, 595 Monster Rd.

Pierce County: Contact Nathe Lawver (253) 973-3765

Saturday, September 15, Tacoma IBEW 76 Hall, 3049 S 36th

Saturday, October 13, Tacoma IBEW 76 Hall, 3049 S. 36th

Snohomish: Contact Michele Stelovich (360) 303-8410

Saturday, September 22, Everett Labor Temple, 2800 Lombard

Saturday, October 20, Everett Labor Temple, 2800 Lombard

Thurston, Lewis, Mason: Contact Kay Halpain, (509) 869-0366

Saturday, September 29, Olympia WSLC/WFSE. 906 S. Columbia
Saturday, October 13, Olympia WSLC/WFSE, 906 S. Columbia

Whatcom, Skagit: Contact Michele Stelovich, (360) 303-8410

Saturday, October 6, Mount Vernon Steelworkers Hall, 47 Alder Lane

Members in other parts of the state: Call the PSARA office (206) 448-9646 or email president@psara.org, for information about walks in your area.

PHONE BANKS:

Labor-sponsored phone banks are scheduled in all areas of the state. The contacts for these phone banks are:

Benton & Franklin Counties: Rigo Rivas ((509) 396-4911

Clark & Cowlitz Counties: Judy Kuchel (360) 600-9645

King County: Max Price (206) 962-3161

Pierce County: Nathe Lawver: (253) 973-3765

Snohomish County: Michele Stelovich (360) 303-8410

Spokane County: Beth Thew (509) 939-0688

Thurston, Lewis, Mason Counties: Kay Halpain (509) 869- 0366

Whatcom, Skagit Counties: Michele Stelovich (360) 303-8410

PHONE BANKING SENIORS:

To phone bank seniors exclusively and during the day, Washington Community Action Network, with whom PSARA is affiliated, is sponsoring phone banks targeted to the Governor's race and focusing on home care and long term care issues. The phone banks begin October 17 and will operate on weekdays with shifts from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2- 6 p.m.

Most of the phone banking will occur at the offices of SEIU Healthcare 775, 33615 First Way, #A, Federal Way, WA.

There will be four shifts at the offices of UFCW 21, 5030 1st Avenue, Seattle: 9 a.m – 1 p.m. shifts on October 25 and November 1, and 2 – 6 p.m. shifts on October 26 and November 2.

Contact for these phone banks: Susie Levy, (206) 805-6676.

I hope PSARA members will find a way to participate in the November elec-

Ryan and his 'plan' a disaster for seniors

By Mike Andrew

With his choice of Republican Congressman Paul Ryan as his vice presidential running mate, Mitt Romney very literally told the country's seniors to "drop dead!"



Mike Andrew

The choice reflects Romney's weakness both as a candidate and as a leader, because it was clearly a concession forced on him by the far right of the Republican Party, which neither likes nor trusts him. At the same time, it commits the Republicans and their presidential ticket to a draconian privatization scheme that would gut healthcare for America's seniors.

The notorious "Ryan Plan" would provide federally subsidized vouchers for people now 55 and younger who elect to opt out of Medicare and purchase private for-profit insurance instead. To keep your Medicare coverage, you'd have to make up the difference in cost out of your own pocket.

Because health care costs keep going up, the value of Ryan's vouchers also increases by the annual growth in GDP plus 0.5%.

Let's look at how that plays out in the real world. Last year, America's GDP grew by just 1.7% (well below the historical average of 3.3%). Therefore, under Ryan's plan, seniors' healthcare subsidy for 2012 would rise by 2.2%.

But that's not nearly enough to cover the rise in real health care costs. According to Standard & Poor's calculations, private health insurers and Medicare combined paid an average 5.8% more per person for healthcare services in the last year.

The flaw in Ryan's plan becomes even more evident when you separate private insurance plans from Medicare.

Private insurance costs rose 7.7% last year, S&P determined, while outlays under the regulated Medicare program increased just 2.7%.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that the Ryan plan could cost seniors an extra \$6,400 a year. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office reached a similar conclusion.

That number looks bad enough when it stands alone, but it looks even worse if you compare it to figures for retirees' income and expenses.

According to the Employee Benefits Research Institute (EBRI), the median income for retirees 50 and older is \$30,480.

This is a little more than half of the median income for a working adult – \$53,548 – so right off the bat, retirees have to learn to economize. But, according to the EBRI numbers, they simply can't economize enough, because the median spending for retirees is \$31,365, or \$885 a year more than they take in.

Of course, most retirees are not living it up at posh country clubs, or spending their money on dressage horses. In fact, much of their spending goes to uninsured medical expenses.

Seventy percent of retirees living below the poverty line have suffered acute health conditions such as cancer, lung disease, heart problems, or stroke, compared with 48% for those above the poverty line, according to health and retirement study data.

And almost all seniors living in poverty – 96% – have one or more chronic health conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, psychological problems, or arthritis, versus 61.7% of retirees with incomes above the poverty line.

This emphasizes even more the importance of Medicare.

If we think of a typical retiree – let's call her "Mary Median" – Mary will spend \$885 more than her income, which means she'll have to dip into her savings to get by.

If Mary retires at 65 and lives till 85, she'll need \$17,700 in savings to sustain herself.

Under the Ryan Plan, Medicare would cost Mary \$6,400 more every year. That means that if Mary lives to 85, she has to have saved not \$17,700, but a whopping \$145,700 just to cover extra costs for her medical insurance. Of course, Mary has no way of knowing how long she'll live, and how much savings will be enough to see her through.

What will Mary do?

If she owns her own home, she could sell it or borrow against her equity, but the collapse in housing prices means she won't get nearly as much out of it as she might have 10 years ago. If she rents, she could move to a cheaper

The Ryan plan could cost seniors an extra \$6,400 a year.

place, but that often means moving farther away from stores and essential services. She could skimp on food, but poor nutrition is a major factor in ongoing health problems.

Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan leave Mary with no good solution, none at all. And, since Mary represents median income, fully one-half of all retirees are in worse shape than Mary.

According to a separate study by EBRI, nearly one-half – 47.2% – of younger baby boomers are at risk of not having enough savings to pay basic retirement expenses and uninsured health care costs. Among older boomers, the percentage is only slightly less – 43.7%.

And this is with Medicare still in place! How many more will be at risk

Continued on page 6

Seasoned movement leaders prepare for the new century

By Will Parry

The over-used word “historic” may well apply to a remarkable gathering held in Greensboro, North Carolina during the last three days of July.

In that city, where in 1960 four courageous students defied the segregation laws of the South by sitting at a lunch counter and refusing to move until served, a group of distinguished leaders from the defining social movements of the 20th Century have declared themselves the “National Council of Elders.”

Ministers, activists, poets, former elected officials, retired military, disciples of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., they committed themselves to educating and mentoring the emerging leaders who will challenge social and economic injustice throughout the 21st Century.

The council was conceived by the Reverend James Lawson; his brother, the Reverend Phillip Lawson, and the retired educator, Vincent Harding. All three had worked closely with Dr. King and others in the movement. They were joined in Greensboro by seasoned leaders of the labor, civil rights, peace, women's, immigrant, and gay rights movements.

“It is the first time in this country that people from movements of all kinds have come together, in many cases after

40, 50 or 60 years of organizing, for the creation of a more perfect union,” Harding said. Together, the founding elders have engaged in more than 1,250 years of social activism.

The Elders rejected the idea of “passing the torch.” Instead they intend to join with the younger advocates, organizing in “Occupy” and other movements as they develop.

As Nelson Johnson, co-founder of the Beloved Community in Greensboro, said at an initial press conference: “The past is a way of equipping us for the future, and we ain't in no way tired yet!”

The founders at Greensboro included Dolores Huerta, co-founder with Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers; Mel White, who co-founded Soulforce, an LGBT advocacy organization; Dorothy Cotton of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Dr. Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmins, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock.

Others included Joyce and Nelson Johnson, founders of the Beloved Community in Greensboro; Arthur Waskow, peacemaker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; John Fife, co-founder of the Sanctuary movement; Louie Vitale, a founder of the anti-nuclear Nevada Desert Experience; Marian Wright Edelman,

founder of the Children's Defense Fund; Grace Lee Boggs, Detroit social activist; and Sr. Joan Chittister, O.S.B., peace and human rights advocate.

During their spirited three-day conference, the Elders expressed concern that even if President Obama is re-elected, the assault on social and economic rights has gained a dangerous momentum. It is their objective to apply their hundreds of years of collective experience, based on non-violent advocacy, to check and reverse that momentum and to mould a nation more responsive to the needs of its people.

Ryan 'plan'

Continued from page 5

if Romney and Ryan win election and privatize Medicare?

In the latest version of his budget plan, Ryan has opened the possibility that some seniors could opt to keep Medicare, but the Medicare program will have to compete with private insurance plans.

In the Republican bizzaro world, Medicare is like a 401K – you put money in while you're working, and then take money out as needed when you retire. But Medicare was never meant to be a private savings account. Medicare is a national insurance program, and like all insurance programs, it only works well when everyone is in the pool.

If you allow people who can buy attractive private insurance policies to opt out of Medicare, the ones who will be left – the poorest, oldest, and sickest seniors who would never be insured in a private for-profit system – will be dependent on a derelict program that lacks the resources to pay for their care.

No wonder Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman wrote recently “Ryanomics is and always has been a con game.”

Photo by Garret Munger



FEATURED SPEAKER:
President Barbara Easterling, of the Alliance for Retired Americans, keynoted the annual Washington State ARA Convention in Tukwila August 23. PSARA president Robby Stern was re-elected as a Community Vice President of WASARA.

What Would Florence Nightingale Do?

Chris Barton, RN

Born in 1820 in England, Florence Nightingale is viewed as the Mother of modern nursing. Throughout her life she practiced as an avid healthcare advocate and social reformer. Until her death at 90 years old in 1910, she never wavered in her belief that high quality patient care was a basic human right.

Since the time of Florence Nightingale the goal of nursing has been to advocate for and to provide a safe and caring environment that promotes patient health and well-being. Is the advocacy that Florence Nightingale practiced as relevant for the 21st century as it was for the 19th century? What would Florence say today in the face of healthcare reform and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act?

The 2010 Affordable Care Act has already improved the health of millions of Americans who had no access to healthcare or were underserved by the system. With continued insurance for dependent children up to age 26, no-cost screening and preventive care for seniors, the improved drug coverage for Medicare recipients and the mandate for health insurance companies to spend the premiums on healthcare, not over-the-top executive salaries and marketing, we have a good start to changing our healthcare system into one that works for us.

Linking quality outcomes to hospital payment is a major initiative of the ACA. Hospitals will receive full Medicare and Medicaid payments only when they can demonstrate good practice. Hospitals will no longer be paid for treating an infection that shouldn't have happened during your hospitalization. Hospitals will not be paid for patients who are readmitted within 30 days of discharge for the same diagnosis due to poor discharge planning or inadequate outpatient follow-up. Private insurance companies are adopting these criteria also. This initiative will force hospitals to spend more resources on patient care (like nursing staff) than on marketing and extravagant

facilities.

Among all the other changes that are already in place and still to come, the recent improvements for women's health are also important to note. I'm sure Florence would be pleased that women now have access to no-cost contraception, screening tests such as pap smears and

mammograms and prenatal care. She believed in promoting egalitarian human rights and would see the improvements in coverage for women particularly significant in healthcare reform.

As a nurse myself for 40 years, I believe Florence would be at the forefront in the fight to promote health care for all and to protect the Affordable Care Act.

Nurses have always had the professional and ethical responsibility to advocate for patient health and safety. We must also use our voices to support the

political and public will in this country to improve everyone's access to quality healthcare.

When I mark my ballot in November for my local, state and national political candidates for office, I'm going to keep

"I believe Florence would be in the forefront in the fight to promote health care for all and to protect the Affordable Care Act."

in mind Florence's voice of advocacy. I'm going to make sure that the political leadership in Washington State and in this country not only support the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, but also work to continue meaningful healthcare reform. I see that vote as my responsibility as a nurse who advocates for the health and well-being of my patients.

If Florence Nightingale were alive

(Chris Barton, RN, is Secretary/Treasurer and Director of the Nurse Alliance of SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, and a PSARA member.)

Caregiver standards critiqued

A new study furnishes compelling evidence of the need for the national Caring Across Generations campaign that's just getting up steam.

Researchers at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine interviewed personnel at 180 agencies that provide caregivers to persons who need help to live independently at home. The results, as summarized in The New York Times, are troubling, to say the least.

Only one in six agencies tested potential caregivers' basic knowledge about the requirements of the job. Only one third required drug testing of applicants for caregiving work. Only 15 percent provided some type of training before sending a caregiver into someone's home.

And none of the 180 agencies tested potential caregivers' "health literacy" – their ability to understand medical terms and instructions.

At the heart of the Caring Across Generations program are measures to transform the quality of caregiving as a profession by providing a living wage, health coverage and other benefits, as well as well-designed training programs and a career path.

If such standards become law, profit-motivated agencies will have to reform, or go into some other line of business. Caregivers will be prepared to meet the challenges they will surely face. And the nation's millions of infirm elderly will have their basic needs met with skill and compassion during their final years.

Harkin launches crusade for retirement security

By Rap Lewis

Senator Tom Harkin is embarked on a crusade to provide security for workers in retirement by rebuilding the nation's private pension system.

The Iowa Democrat chairs the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, known as the HELP Committee. Over the past two years, the HELP Committee has held a series of hearings on retirement security issues. In a new report, Harkin summarizes the findings of those hearings:

- There's a \$6.6 trillion gap between the amount US workers have actually saved toward retirement and the amount they should have saved.
- Half of all Americans have less

than \$10,000 in savings.

- Only one in five Americans will receive pension income in retirement.
- In 2010, nearly 6 million Americans over the age of 65 lived in poverty, and the number is growing.

"For most of the middle class the dream of a secure retirement is slipping out of reach. We are facing a retirement crisis," Harkin said. "I intend for this report to be a starting place in an evolving discussion about retirement security.

"Over the coming months, I plan to bring together business and labor lead-

ers, policy experts, advocates and my fellow lawmakers to implement necessary reforms. The retirement crisis is simply too big to ignore, and it is time for us to roll up our sleeves and get to work."

Harkin proposes to address the cri-

A secure retirement benefit the worker takes with him and cannot outlive.

sis by creating a new type of privately-run retirement plan he calls "Universal, Secure and Adaptable (USA) Retirement Funds." The new plan would combine the advantages of traditional pensions – that is, lifetime benefits and pooled, professional management – with 401(k) portability and ease for employers.

This would give working families a path to a secure retirement benefit that they could take with them when they change jobs, and that they cannot outlive.

USA Retirement Funds would also make it simple for small employers to offer a benefit without having to shoulder the risk and the administrative burden.

The 75 million Americans who lack a workplace retirement plan could use existing payroll withholding systems to make automatic contributions toward their retirement.

Harkin's proposal is intended to start a discussion. Interested persons should convey their ideas to Harkin by email at Retirement_Security@help.senate.gov or by regular mail to Retirement Security Project, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, 428 Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC 20510.

Social Security, Medicare heading into heavy weather

Continued from page 1

defense of the these basic social insurance programs.

"If I were the President, I would come down hard and fast," Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) said. "Social Security is inviolable."

Vermont Independent Senator Bernie Sanders also criticized Obama.

"The President of the United States is out there campaigning every day," Sanders said. "Have you heard him say very clearly to the American people that Social Security has not caused one penny of the deficit, that Social Security has a \$2.7 trillion surplus, and I, Barack Obama, am going to do everything I can to make sure that we do not cut Social Security, but we figure out a way to extend it for 75 years? Have you heard him? I haven't heard him. It

causes me concern, and I'm chairman of the caucus to defend Social Security."

During talks last year with House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), the President reportedly floated a proposal to undercut the Social Security COLA and to raise the age of eligibility for Medicare.

Roger Hickey, co-director of the Campaign for America's Future, expressed concern that Obama and the Democrats would soften their stance on protecting Social Security and Medicare in anticipation of cutting a deficit deal with Republicans. And Rep. Raul Grijalva, co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said Democrats need "to be more definitive and stronger" in their defense of the basic programs.

Corporate America stole our prosperity -1980 to today

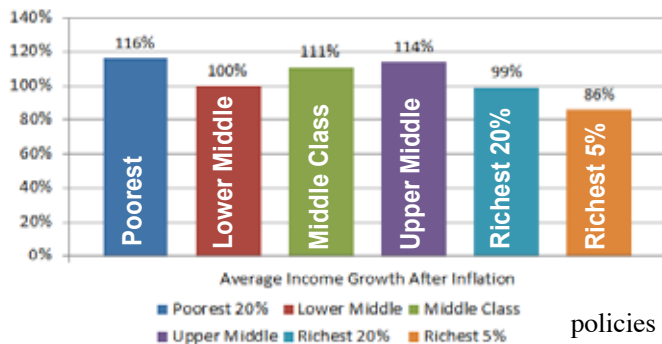
By Mark McDermott (Member of PSARA Executive Board)

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 set the stage for Corporate America's all-out offensive to reassert their domination of our country and economy. Armed with a comprehensive political and economic strategy, a well-oiled propaganda machine, vast financial resources, a clearly articulated vision and values for America, and a resurgent right wing, the offensive began in earnest.

Relentless attacks against working people and unions, major cutbacks in critical social programs, extensive deregulation of financial industries and other key industries, large tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, and aggressive promotion of free trade and the export of manufacturing jobs were the centerpiece of the big promises to restore widespread prosperity. At the same time, major increases in military spending were coupled with a more aggressive foreign policy.

What happened under the new corporate dominated regime? Good-bye shared prosperity. Hello stolen prosperity. No longer would Americans, poor, working class, or middle class share fairly in the growing wealth of our nation. Look the first graph below

30 Years of Shared Prosperity – 1947-1979

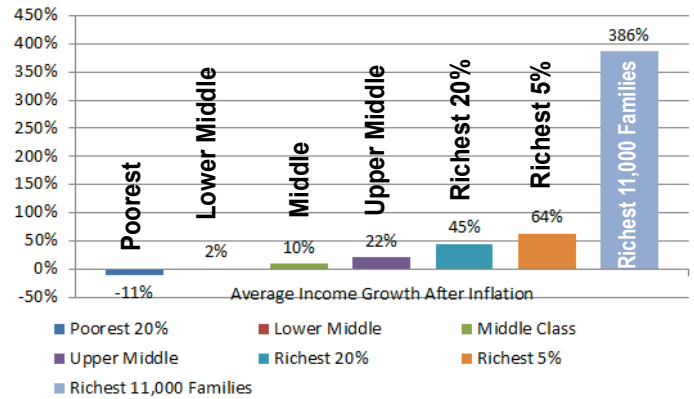


During the shared prosperity of the late 1940s to the late 1970s, all income groups of families saw their average incomes double after inflation with the exception of the richest 5%. A rising economic tide was lifting all boats. Poverty rates plummeted, income gaps between whites and people of color were narrowing and women began to gain on men. Many challenges remained. However our long-term direction of the nation was producing greater opportunity and security for most Americans.

Since the late 1970s, shared prosperity has disappeared. The poorest 20% of families saw their average incomes drop by 11%, the lower middle class's average income only rose 2% and the middle class's rose only 10%. During the previous 3 decades the income gains of these three groups were 116%, 100% and 111%.

Now look at the second graph below.

30 Years of Stolen Prosperity: 1979-2010



The past three decades have been wonderful for the super-wealthy and corporate America. Between 1979 and 2006, the average income for the richest 11 thousand American families rose 386 percent. In 2006, their average income was \$35.5 million. Tax rates for the super-wealthy were also cut. By 2010, corporate after-tax profits as a share of the total national income reached a record high while federal corporate tax rates reached the lowest point in more than 60 years. Times have never been better for Corporate America.

Today, we are still recovering from the worst recession since the 1930s. High levels of unemployment, mortgage foreclosures, poverty, and hunger and widespread economic insecurity remain serious problems.

We face a crossroads. The election of Mitt Romney will unleash a new wave of corporate domination and continuation of policies that advance the wealthy and powerful at the expense of the people. The re-election of Barack Obama is critical but it is far from enough. Next month we can begin to explore the long-term strategy to bring renewed economic security and opportunity for all Americans.

To Suscribe, go to . . .

<http://www.psara.org/membership.pdf>

Meetings and Events

Overheard

“God gave burdens, also shoulders.”

Yiddish proverb

PSARA Government Relations Committee:

12:30p.m. – 2 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 12, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. Discuss and help plan PSARA’s participation in city, state and national issues. Help get ready for 2013 Legislative session and discuss recent updates on Social Security, Medicare and the Caring Across Generations campaign. All PSARA members welcome.

PSARA Phone Bank for Marriage Equality, Referendum 74:

5:30 – 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 19, UFCW 21, 5030 1st Ave, Seattle, 98134. Help make Washington the first state in the country to establish voter-approved Marriage Equality. RSVP to president@psara.org or call (206) 448-9646

PSARA Executive Board Meeting:

1 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 20, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. **All PSARA members are welcome.**

Forum: Would the Proposal for a State Investment Trust (state bank) Be Beneficial to the People of Washington? 1:30 – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 27, Filipino Community Center, 5740 Martin Luther King Jr. Way South, Seattle, 98118 (M.L King Jr. Way South & South Orcas). This very important forum will feature State Treasurer Jim McIntire, Rep. Bob Hasegawa, and community banker, Darel Grothaus discussing the potential benefits and risks of creating a state investment trust. Sponsored by PSARA, WA State Labor Council and District Lodge 751, Intl. Association of Machinists

Early Warning: PSARA Legislative Conference:

10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Saturday, November 10, UFCW 21, Joe Crump Hall, 5030 1st Ave, Seattle, 98134. Learn what can be anticipated for the 2013 legislative session. Join with other PSARA members from your legislative district to advocate with your legislators for PSARA’s legislative priorities. Light continental breakfast will be provided. RSVP to president@psara.org or call PSARA office, (206) 448-9646.

Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action
2800 First Avenue, Room 262
Seattle, Washington 98121
(206) 448-9646

We Built this country!

We wake it up every day, we make it run and we put it to sleep every night And it's time that we took it back for the American worker. Anyone who says that America can't afford retirement security, or healthcare, or decent pay for honest work, or great schools, or a postal service, or cops or firefighters and teachers and nurses, well they don't know what they're talking about and we don't accept their defeatism!

**– AFL-CIO President
Richard Trumka**