Every Vote Counts!

By Jeff Johnson

Legislative District 26, which is made up of parts of Pierce and Kitsap Counties, will have attracted a lot of attention and a lot of money this election season. By mid-October over $1.6 million had already been spent on this state senate race making it the most expensive in state history.

The newly appointed Democratic Senate incumbent Nathan Schlicher was being challenged by long time politician and Republican House member Jan Angel. This legislative race was as much about the differences between these two individuals as it was about the character of our state senate.

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(Mostly) Smooth Sailing As State Health Insurance Exchange Opens

By Roberta Riley

“This is awesome! What a relief,” she exclaimed when the message flashed up on her screen: starting New Year’s Day 2014, Ingrid will have no-cost health insurance. “I can finally get my knee fixed.”

Everyday she carts her shovel, loppers, saw and clippers up and down Seattle’s steepest neighborhoods, tending gardens, digging up shrubs and pruning trees. As the sole proprietor of Seabiscuit Landscaping, Ingrid cannot afford to be hobbled by a bum knee.

"Now that I don't have to worry about how to pay for surgery, maybe I can start saving for retirement," she said. This year she turns 50, and every day she worries about how to make ends meet, especially as she gets older. Happily, she is one of the millions of Americans who will benefit from the Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare.

Continued on Page 10

Why Unions Need to Join the Climate Fight

By Bobby Righi

"The case I want to make to you is that climate change – when its full economic and moral applications are understood – is the most powerful weapon progressives have ever had in the fight for equality and social justice," stated Naomi Klein speaking on September 1 to the founding convention of UNIFOR, a new mega union created by the Canadian Autoworkers and the Canadian Energy and Paper Workers Union.

This speech is a moving call to unions to bring their institutional strength, radical history, and organizational skills into the struggle against the destabilization of the natural systems that we depend on for all forms of life. Kline calls the energy industry and the banks and governments that support them "extractivists" who take and take without giving back. They “take as if there are no limits to what can be taken – no limits to what workers' bodies can take, no limits to what a functioning society can take, no limits to what the planet can take.”

The threats to the climate makes the need to fight austerity all the more pressing because we need public services and public infrastructure to both bring down emissions and prepare for the coming storms. We need to revive and reinvent the public sphere. We need subways, streetcars and clean-rail systems that are everywhere and affordable to everyone. We need energy-efficient affordable housing and smart electrical grids carrying renewable energy. We also need major investments in the old infrastructure. Our future depends on our ability to do what we have so long been told we can no longer do: act collectively. Who better than unions to carry that message?

Continued on Page 11
Introducing PSARA

We are in the process of organizing and prioritizing our education and outreach efforts for the upcoming year, and we are reaching out to our members to ask them for help.

Do you know of any organizations and/or associations who might be interested in having a presentation by PSARA? We currently have programs geared to introducing PSARA and our goals; economic justice; and Social Security. We are preparing programs on Jobs and the Environment and could be part of a panel discussion on many current local and national social and economic justice issues and retirement issues as they relate to current and future seniors.

If you know of any organizations that might be interested in such a program or you would be interested in helping in our education and outreach efforts please let me know.

Susan Levy, PSARA Outreach Vice-President at e-mail outreachvp@psara.org.

Get Ready for December Membership Meeting & Holiday Pot Luck

It’s that time of year again and one of PSARA’s favorite events is just around the corner. We will hold our December membership meeting and holiday party at the Greenwood Senior Center, 525 N 85th St., Seattle on Thursday, December 19 from 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Here is what you have to look forward to: a fabulous potluck, an interesting membership meeting, an opportunity to support PSARA’s growth and development by electing officers and members to the PSARA Executive Board.

Two of the most highly respected human services and social justice lobbyists in Olympia, Pam Crone, PSARA’s lobbyist and Tony Lee, Advocacy Director for Solid Ground, will discuss what to expect in the 2014 legislative session. There will also be lots of time to schmooze with the wonderful people that comprise our membership.

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

Please rsvp to Maureen Bo, adminvp@psara.org or call the PSARA office, (206) 448-9646 and tell us what food item or drink you will bring, i.e. main dish, salad or desert.

This event is always fun and informative so please try to join us!

Donations in Honor of Will Parry

UAW Local 4121  Cecil Harsh  Lonnie Nelson
Weapons of Mass Destruction? How about Corporate Greed...

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

To U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan: I’ve got some questions for you.

It is Monday: Mom has two cans of corned beef. One large head cabbage. Maybe a bottle of milk. Some fruit from our yard, and some vegetables, some tofu, shoyu, spices bought by increasing credit from a friendly family store across the street. We’ve already spent advances on my Dad’s pay, so there’s not much coming in the next payday. How she goin’ feed one family of nine for the rest of the week?

Big Sister has a date. She forgets and eats some kim chee before her date. She is mortified. Number 4 boy goes to the store across the street, with a short shopping list, has 50 cents from his mom. He wants to get some Dentyne gum for Big Sister so that her breath won’t smell bad from the kim chee. Turns out the total will be more than 50 cents. What Numbah 4 boy goin’ do?

Try hard for dis one, okay Arne? If no can understand, ask your boss. ‘Tink maybe he can help you, yah? He grew up Hawaii, you know.


Why faddah have meltdown? What choo tink faddah and oncle should do?

This high stake test for you, Arne. You get one wrong, go back Harvard. You get two, go back high school. All three, I’m afraid you need to go back to intermediate school. Maybe all the way back to preschool. Hope you don’t flunk your preschool test.

* * *

While the Washington State news coverage about education and high stakes standardized testing has focused mostly on the Garfield High School parent/teacher/student boycott of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, there has been little reporting about Common Core, a curriculum guide for public schools to “ensure” that our “broken” public school system can once again be the best in the world. What may be surprising is the speed by which it has become the official education policy in over 45 states.

But it’s easy to see why. We need to back up a bit.

The previous federal program, Bush’s No Child Left Behind, has created a nightmare. Teachers, even those who had been recognized as best teachers, have been ridiculed, fired, and in some cases, publicly humiliated into committing suicide because their students had not achieved higher test scores.

After No Child Left Behind fizzled, Arne had a much better idea. Let’s have a competition, he said. Race to the Top (RTTT), which pits school districts against each other for big federal dollars, had some conditions. Districts had to accept, among other things, Common Core, Charter Schools and Test-Based Teacher Evaluation. It didn’t guarantee any RTTT grant money, but districts received extra points in their application if it did. Most of the States fell in line.

Everyone knows competition breeds excellence. That’s what all coaches say. That’s what a lot of business leaders say. What do the rest of us say? Competition breeds nothing but a few winners (the 1%), a lot of cheaters, and many, many losers. What a waste of human potential. And it’s almost impossible to win, because the 1% winners control the rules of engagement.

Informed educators/teachers have been writing about the attack on the public school system, the corporate greed and the utter absurdity of it all. (If you want more comprehensive information check with Rethinking Schools, Wayne Au, Diane Ravitch’s Reign of Error, Stan Karp, Jersey Jazzman. They can also lead you to more sources.)

But I don’t think enough has been written about “knowledge,” who controls the “knowledge bank” of the US and the whole world for that matter, and how that all connects to jobs, health, environment, quality of life.

The knowledge bank of a boy born to poverty in Hawaii is vastly different than the knowledge bank of a boy growing up in South Side Chicago. But both have knowledge banks equally as important as the child of a $70 billion man who is now telling us what we need to know in order to “just maybe possibly” work for him.

When there is so much concentration of wealth and high unemployment in this country, it’s very tiring to hear the 1% continue to place the blame on the schools, or the teachers. They never hold themselves responsible, despite the great inequities which exist today. That they can dictate the terms of educating our children, 25% of whom are living in poverty, is really offensive.

That they can claim they will help us reach their status by doing what

Continued on Page 10
PSARA Meets with Sen. Patty Murray on Federal Budget & Stands with Grocery Workers

By Robby Stern

Senator Patty Murray invited PSARA to a meeting to discuss the upcoming budget negotiations between the Senate and House. Many in Congress have a strong desire to avoid the damage and drama that just occurred during the federal government shut down and the debt default crisis. There also seems to be a desire to eliminate sequestration, i.e. the across the board cuts that went into effect the last time they could not agree on a budget.

These upcoming negotiations present challenges for those of us who support preserving and strengthening our earned benefits and safety net programs. A negotiated agreement cannot and should not include cuts to our earned benefits and further reductions in programs essential to the most vulnerable in our communities. Sequestration makes no sense but eliminating sequestration if it means greater cuts to vital programs while the defense budget is held essentially harmless is unacceptable. Congress must raise revenue which Senator Murray proposed in the budget that passed the Senate prior to the previous budget crisis!

Joining me at the meeting with Sen. Murray was one of our PSARA members, a 70 year old woman. Our member’s sole source of income is her Social Security payment, around $950 per month. She spoke to Sen. Murray about how adoption of the Chained CPI would amount to a significant decline in her income and in her ability to remain an activist member of the community. She is already unable to afford basics like the cost of internet service and shopping for clothes. Sen. Murray heard clearly how our member would suffer a very significant loss if the Chained CPI is adopted as part of the agreement.

Sen. Murray pointed out that the Chained CPI did not appear in either the Senate’s proposed budget in the House budget authored by Rep. Ryan. What was in the House budget was raising the age of eligibility for Social Security, greater cost sharing for Medicare and block granting Medicaid. Sen. Murray knows these proposals are a terrible idea.

We suggested to the Senator that instead of cutting Social Security and Medicare, the Democrats should go on the offensive and propose strengthening Social Security and Medicare. There is a road map to accomplish that goal. Sens. Harkin & Begich have co-sponsored the Strengthening Social Security Act that would scrap the Cap on Social Security. PSARA also recommends lowering the age of eligibility for Medicare to bring a healthier cohort into the program. Others at the meeting proposed giving the Secretary of Health & Human Services the ability to negotiate with Pharma over the cost of prescription drugs, a huge money saver.

Sen. Murray really listened to us and was very sympathetic to the ideas we discussed. I do not envy her having to negotiate with Paul Ryan, a hard line right winger. We will have to be active as the negotiations begin on October 30.

Victory for Grocery Workers is a Victory for All of Us

Some PSARA members may be asking why PSARA became so involved in supporting the grocery workers in the Puget Sound region as they came within minutes of a strike? What is the connection between an organization that advocates for a secure and dignified retirement for all and a fight by grocery workers for dignity and respect? Twenty four hours before the final negotiated settlement was reached, some PSARA members attended a spirited community rally in support of the grocery workers at Westlake Park in downtown Seattle. We actively expressed our solidarity.

Jeff Johnson, the President of the WA State Labor Council discussed the role the grocery workers play in our lives. How many times have each of us sought the help of these workers when we go to their stores? How many times have they provided a sympathetic ear or helpful direction. Jeff pointed out that the workers are the ones who establish the reputations of the stores – it is certainly not the corporate executives who most of us cannot even name.

It is a matter of common decency, a value we desperately need to live in a civilized society, that the workers who provide this essential human service be treated with dignity, respect and the ability to experience economic security for themselves and their families.

Many seniors, living on fixed incomes are financially vulnerable. That financial vulnerability accompanies our increasing fragility as we get older. But, we cannot afford to have tunnel vision. Low wage workers are also financially vulnerable and the cuts to their wages and health care benefits proposed by the large grocery corporations could have easily sent their already difficult lives into a tail spin.

We live in communities and our lives are interdependent. We need allies to fight to preserve and strengthen our earned benefits against those who seek to decimate these programs.

To have allies, we must be allies. Vulnerable populations standing together can be a significant and maybe even a majority force in our communities and in our country.
The One Percent gets One Percentier:
Income inequality at highest level since World War I

By Mike Andrew

Not feeling the so-called “economic recovery”? No wonder! You wouldn’t unless you’re a corporate CEO, a hedge fund manager, or an investment banker.

New research by an economist at UC Berkeley shows that the incomes of the richest Americans have bounced back from the crash of 2008, while those of working people haven’t even started to rebound.

According to a study titled “Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States” by Emmanuel Saez, the income inequality gap has been expanding, rather than narrowing, as the 2007-2009 recession recedes. In fact, that trend has been unfolding for more than 30 years, with the highest earners only temporarily set back by the most recent downturn.

Let’s look at the numbers.

During the first years of the “recovery,” 2009-2012, the top One Percent saw their income jump 31.4%, while the bottom 99% saw their incomes grow by only 0.4%. In other words, the One Percenters took 95% of the total income gain.

In 2012, the richest 10% of Americans got more than half of all the income generated by the economy – 50.5% - the largest share since record-keeping started in 1917.

It gets worse. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, wages fell at the fastest rate ever recorded during the first quarter of 2013.

Hourly wages fell 3.8% in the first quarter, the biggest drop since the Bureau began tracking wages in 1947. In fact, real wages have now declined for the 40th consecutive year! According to the 2013 Economic Report to the President, wages adjusted for inflation reached their peak in 1972, and it’s been down hill ever since.

Income for the One Percenters has soared by 275% over the past 30 years, while the rest of us have lost ground.

“Higher productivity + lower wages = greater inequality.”

Some people might say this is the result of “market forces” working themselves out, but according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), that is just not the case. In fact, a large part of the widening gulf between rich and poor has been due to tax and budget policies that redistribute wealth upwards, favoring the already rich at the expense of working families.

In addition, the boost in income for the One Percenters and the real cream of the crop – the top one-tenth of one percent – is correlated with tax cuts, the EPI study found.

Corporations are also able to shield a large part of their income from any US taxes at all by moving the money offshore.

The largest US-based companies expanded their stockpiles of untaxed offshore capital by $183 billion in 2012, increasing such holdings by 14.4%, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Microsoft, Apple, and Google each added to their offshore holdings by more than 34% in 2012. Combined, those three companies alone plan to keep $134.5 billion outside the US government’s reach, more than double the $59.3 billion they held back only two years earlier.

A Wall Street Journal analysis of 60 big US companies found that, together, they moved a total of $166 billion offshore in the last year alone. That shielded more than 40% of their annual profits from US taxes, and also from their own shareholders, since it left the money off-limits for paying dividends, buying back shares, or making new investments in the US.

Fed up yet?
Thank you, Gov. Inslee, for holding these hearings. Your leadership on the environment and climate change is well known and very much appreciated by Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA), the people of Washington State, and people around the country.

I am speaking on behalf of PSARA. Our organization works to unite generations for a secure future, a future that includes: adequate & dependable income; comprehensive, affordable health care, including prescription drug coverage; access to affordable housing, transportation, and social services and support for our family care-giving responsibilities.

PSARA believes that fighting climate change is tightly bound together with working for social justice. We need more jobs and we need to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels. This is not a contradiction. In 2013 we should not be told it is either jobs or the environment. We need to move past this false divide.

To both slow the advance of climate change and to mitigate its devastating effects, we need much more investment in the public infrastructure – keeping up what we have in the ways of bridges and tunnels and investing in more diverse public transportation to make moving around both efficient and affordable for everyone. We also need a “smart” energy grid that allows the efficient use of alternative energy sources. We need energy efficient housing, both private and public housing affordable to all of our communities.

We need more well-paying sustainable jobs in this state, jobs that produce high social benefit. Many of those jobs already exist and there are thousands of them, many in sectors we might not think of as ‘green.’ They are the caregivers for children and the elderly, food workers, teachers, and maintenance workers. These workers deserve to be paid a living wage so they can support their families and contribute to our economy in WA. That is why raising the minimum wage is actually a green strategy.

We need fair trade policies that protect workers’ rights and protect the environment. We need to reject Free-Trade Agreements such as the TPP which encourage uncontrolled extraction and selling of collective natural resources for shareholder profits at the cost of people and our planet.

Fossil fuel companies need to pay for the damage they have done and continue to do. That means taxing fossil fuels and ending the handsome subsidies the companies receive. This would make available the funds to build the infrastructure we need and pay living wages to all workers. It would also help to make the world livable and healthy for our children and grandchildren and future generations.

We are in favor of trade policies that benefit all Washingtonians

By Stan Sorscher and Kristen Beifus

We might think of trade agreements as merely setting the terms for the flow of goods and services between countries. However trade agreements also set the global standards for political, social, cultural and moral values. The US Constitution is full of political and social protections for humans and communities. The Constitution never mentions corporations – not once.

In contrast, NAFTA-style trade agreements look like a corporate Bill of Rights, full of protections for investors and corporations, enforced by special courts or tribunals. These NAFTA-style trade tribunals are indifferent to public good or public interest. Instead, they value profit and maximum possible trade at all cost. Trade tribunals can prevent regulation of fracking in Canada, grant Chevron immunity to pollute the Amazon in Ecuador, stop Australia from discouraging cigarette smoking, prohibit country of origin labeling, forbid preferences for local producers, and overturn manufacturing strategies to develop green industries in America. According to current free trade deals, these legitimate public policies all limit global companies’ potential profits. They are called “barriers to trade” and companies can sue countries, seeking compensation for their investment and potential future profits.

Two huge new trade agreements may go to Congress soon – The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with the US and Pacific Rim countries and Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the US and Europe. These agreements will determine our quality of life now and for generations to come. Basically, “the deal” in trade agreements is that countries can have access to US markets, and in exchange they agree to corporate-driven global governance. So in the clearest terms, the TPP and TTIP will change the very nature of democracy and global governance. It will affect everything we do in our communities, at every level.

Washington state’s economy thrives from the products we make and sell to the world. We can sell airplanes, AND protect the environment. We can export software and apples AND maintain high living standards and promote public health.

After 20 years, the NAFTA experiment has failed people, communities, our planet and Main Street businesses. It has however, been great for the shareholders of global companies. Communities all around the world, across the US and
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2013

PSARA Annual Winter Party
Membership Meeting, Election, Speakers, Discussion and Socializing

We have two outstanding speakers who will discuss the 2014 legislative session. Pam Crone, PSARA’s lobbyist and Tony Lee, Advocacy Director for Solid Ground, are two of the most highly respected human services and social justice lobbyists in Olympia.

12:30 to 3:00 pm THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

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

1:00 pm. Program & brief business meeting including election of PSARA officers and board members.

2:15 pm. Enjoy the food and socializing with other PSARA members.

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

If you cannot drive or take public transit and need a ride, or if you can offer a ride to a member who cannot drive, please e-mail Maureen Bo at adminvp@psara.org or leave a message on the office phone 206-448-9646.
Concerning the differences between the candidates' this letter from a union leader to rank and file union members in the district says it well: "If you live in the 26th Legislative District, I would like to urge you to consider voting for Senator Nathan Schlicher.

Nathan is tired of partisan gridlock in Olympia and, as our Senator, he refused to accept pay during the "Special Legislative Sessions" this spring because he believed legislators should be penalized for not getting a budget passed on time. Nathan doesn't believe in politics as usual.

He is a no nonsense kind of guy who gets things done in Olympia. As an emergency room doctor he fought to protect health care coverage for thousands of low income children, seniors and veterans, and he passed health care legislation that saved the state $30 million a year in wasteful spending.

Nathan supports middle class families. That's why he fought to close tax loopholes that benefit Wall Street banks and big corporations rather than further cut vital services we rely on. He believes that we should be investing in job creation in Washington State.

As a father, Nathan knows that education is the key to our kids' future. So he supports getting schools the funds they need to reduce class size, ensure that students are reading, writing and doing math at grade level, and that students are prepared for work, apprenticeships, and college.

Nathan's opponent, Jan Angel, has changed. She is not looking out after middle class families when she opposes raising the minimum wage, opposes collective bargaining, supports reducing pension benefits, and supports eliminating health care benefits for part-time public employees.

We think the choice is clear. Nathan has a track record of supporting middle class families and Jan prefers big corporate interests.

Nathan was appointed to finish out Derek Kilmer's term after Derek was elected to Congress. As a consequence Nathan had to run in 2013 and if he wins he must run again in 2014. He is an attorney and a working emergency room doctor. In his first legislative session he compiled a 100% voting record on behalf of working families.

His opponent, Jan Angel, is the Washington state co-chair of ALEC (the American Legislative Exchange Council) which is a national Republican organization that provides model legislation to states on right-to-work, privatization, defunding public pensions, voter ID laws, etc. Jan has a lifetime 22% voting record for working families.

The character of our state Senate is also at stake in this election. When Senators Rodney Tom and Tim Sheldon joined with Republican senators to create the Majority Coalition Caucus (MCC) they drove politics significantly to the right in the state senate. Rather than "governing from the middle" as was claimed when the MCC was formed, MCC legislation was put forward attacking the injured worker safety net, paid safe and sick leave, family leave insurance, pensions, collective bargaining, etc.

In the 2012 elections we lost a critical senate race in the 17th LD by 74 votes, which allowed Don Benton, the other state co-chair of ALEC, to maintain his seat and created the possibility for the MCC forming. We said then that we could never let this happen again. So we have walked and we have phone banked for Nathan and we did it some more and some more and…..

If Nathan Schlicher wins in the 26th LD, it will not change the numbers in the state senate. The MCC will still will have 25 votes to 24. But the election is the first litmus test for the MCC. Do voters see the MCC as governing from the middle or do they see them as another group of corporate Republicans who have created deep divisions in our legislature and are waging an attack on the poor and working class?

On November 5th the voters will let us know. In the meantime the labor movement will be walking and phone banking for Nathan right up to the very last day for mailing in ballots.

Jeff Johnson is President of the WA State Labor Council, AFL/CIO, the largest labor organization in the state and a PSARA member.
No Grocery Strike! Tentative Agreement Reached

By Bob Shimabukuro

It came down to hour 70 (of 72) of their notice to strike, but the United Food and Commercial Workers 21 & 367 and Teamsters 38 announced, at 5 pm October 21, that a tentative agreement with the national grocery chains had been reached. Details of the contract would not be released until union members themselves had the opportunity to review the agreement and vote on it.

That followed the 3-day notice to strike on Friday, and weekend rallies at Westlake Park with an energetic crowd which cheered and honored the grocery workers for standing up for dignity and respect for all workers.

Community groups, public officials and other unions pledged support and willingness to support the workers by not crossing picket lines, helping with the picketing, and food and cash donations.

The strong support from community groups has been present since April and had picked up strength as the grocery chains offered only cutbacks in hours and reduced benefits.

The longer the national grocery chains stalled, the negotiations began to take on the feeling of a grassroots community campaign for developing support for the grocery workers, stressing the issues that all can get behind: Dignity. Family wage. Health care. And most of all, for respect. These are the folks that count. They don’t sit in fancy shielded offices, they deal with the public all the time. Their voice should count.

When I asked organizational leaders, why their organizations support the grocery workers, they all had similar reasons: Some mentioned corporate greed. Others criticized businesses passing on the responsibility of health care from employer to government. Living wage, income inequality, and fairness were also issues. But for the community organizations, individuals and unions supporting the UFCW in their quest for a fair wage and benefits package, the overriding concern was solidarity, that this fight is not only for UFCW and the Teamsters, it is for all of us.

Rich Stolz of One America (organizes in the immigrant and refugee communities):

“At stake are basic notions of respect and fairness around wages, health care and treatment. . .This contract negotiation has become a flash point for the broader fight for all workers struggling for dignity in the workplace.”

Verlene Jones, of A. Philip Randolph Institute (an AFL-CIO affiliate labor union/civil rights organization), put it succinctly: “This fight is everyone’s fight. It’s about corporate greed.”

Tim Harris of Real Change (advocates for the homeless and low wage workers) noted:

“We understand what it is to be squeezed and economically vulnerable. (Our vendors) get that when hourly workers get pushed around for the benefit of shareholders, we all lose right down the line.

“Our vendors have joined solidarity pickets and handed out leaflets to their customers, and are happy to see Real Change stand up for their friends. They don’t see this as someone else’s fight. They see it as their own.”

Steve Lansing, community organizer for UFCW21, commenting on the support, said that the “strong support of the broader community has been very important in the decision of the employers to withdraw a number of (unacceptable) proposals.” He also added that the large community support buoyed workers morale and increased pressure on the employers.

Needless to say, this was an important victory. We still don’t know the terms of the contract, and how difficult and intransigent the national chain grocers were. To use a football analogy, it was fourth and one for them, and we held them off and we got the ball back at about the same line of scrimmage. Or, we intercepted a pass and ran it back for touchdown. Or, they punted and pushed the line of scrimmage back for us. But in all cases, we got the ball back.

The campaign demonstrated that reciprocal partnerships of community and labor can be successful, especially over wages and working conditions, and for respect and dignity for all.

We’ve also seen this happen in the legislative arena, when community organizations and a lot of unions (including UFCW21 and Teamsters), partnered in the successful R-74 (Same Sex Marriage Referendum) campaign.

And I don’t want to forget, there is a small group of community organizations working with labor on the Social Security office consolidation move downtown.

No issue should be too big or too small to tackle. As long as we can find common interests, we can build partnerships. For inevitably, all of our interests end up on the same road. As Verlene Jones said, “This fight is everyone’s fight. It’s about corporate greed.”

I’ll drink to that!
State Health Insurance Exchange Opens

Continued from Page 1

The brand-new federal healthcare exchange got off to a rocky start in October during the debt ceiling drama when Republicans shut down the federal government in an effort to defund this health reform measure. But people in our state fared much better because our leaders opted to create our own state exchange. As of this writing, over 62,000 Washingtonians have signed up for coverage using Washington Healthplanfinder.

Ingrid is one of them. She now has the peace of mind that, come January 1, she can see a doctor without fear that medical bills will bankrupt her.

She kindly allowed me to observe as she ploughed through the online enrollment process, which took about an hour. This enabled us to come up with a few tips to help others in our state get enrolled:

Before you begin, have a good strong cup of coffee and gather:
- last year’s tax return and this month’s income information;
- your bank account information; and
- the names and correct spellings of any doctors and/or hospital(s) where you would want to be treated.

Then go to the official website://www.wahealthplanfinder.org/ (Beware to type every letter correctly – there are scam sites out there.)

Click on the box to begin an application, bearing in mind the site has some fussy features, such as no AutoCorrect and a limited number of symbols that must be used to create one’s personal password.

Don’t be stymied by the strange, multiple-choice security questions at the outset. My hunch is some of those questions are intended to verify you are a real human being, not a machine. (But I confess, I am not a computer programmer.)

The next round of questions asking about pregnancy status, long-term care, whether any college students live in your household and whether you have unpaid medical expenses, are geared to helping people get into a certain programs.

Last of all come questions about income, which determines whether an applicant qualifies for no-cost or low-cost coverage.

This part was somewhat perplexing for Ingrid because in one place, the application asked about monthly income, and in another about monthly business income. As a sole proprietor, Ingrid’s income is one and the same. So, at first she filled in the same amount in both places, but quickly realized doing so made her income appear double what it actually is. Then she put her last month’s income into the “gross monthly amount” bracket and a zero into the business income bracket, and was able to properly deduct her business expenses by dividing by 12 the total amount declared on her previous year’s tax return.

She checked her work for accuracy, then pressed the next button and immediately learned of her new, no-cost coverage, a feature of the Medicaid expansion of the Affordable Care Act. Her face beamed as she read the good news. It was a sweet moment.

Then an error message popped up: “the application has malfunctioned.” She won a war of words from myself, promising that the process, which took about an hour. This enabled us to come up with a few tips to help others in our state get enrolled:

Before you begin, have a good strong cup of coffee and gather:
- last year’s tax return and this month’s income information;
- your bank account information; and
- the names and correct spellings of any doctors and/or hospital(s) where you would want to be treated.

Then go to the official website://www.wahealthplanfinder.org/ (Beware to type every letter correctly – there are scam sites out there.)

Click on the box to begin an application, bearing in mind the site has some fussy features, such as no AutoCorrect and a limited number of symbols that must be used to create one’s personal password.

Don’t be stymied by the strange, multiple-choice security questions at the outset. My hunch is some of those questions are intended to verify you are a real human being, not a machine. (But I confess, I am not a computer programmer.)

The next round of questions asking about pregnancy status, long-term care, whether any college students live in your household and whether you have unpaid medical expenses, are geared to helping people get into a certain programs.

Last of all come questions about income, which determines whether an applicant qualifies for no-cost or low-cost coverage.

This part was somewhat perplexing for Ingrid because in one place, the application asked about monthly income, and in another about monthly business income. As a sole proprietor, Ingrid’s income is one and the same. So, at first she filled in the same amount in both places, but quickly realized doing so made her income appear double what it actually is. Then she put her last month’s income into the “gross monthly amount” bracket and a zero into the business income bracket, and was able to properly deduct her business expenses by dividing by 12 the total amount declared on her previous year’s tax return.

She checked her work for accuracy, then pressed the next button and immediately learned of her new, no-cost coverage, a feature of the Medicaid expansion of the Affordable Care Act. Her face beamed as she read the good news. It was a sweet moment.

Then an error message popped up: “the application has malfunctioned.” She wondered if she’d entered something incorrectly. She feared she might have to redo the entire application.

So she dialed the official call center and learned the system is currently overwhelmed with high volumes of people eager to enroll.

Fortunately, Ingrid’s fears did not materialize. Within hours, she received an email message with a link asking her to login to the official website once again.

She clicked on the link, logged in with her username and password, and, to her delight, it all worked. A message promptly popped up indicating her application was received and her Washington Apple Health Adult coverage begins 1-1-14. Nine more pages of information about her new coverage followed. As her eyes skimmed the words on her screen, a smile spread over her face. At long last, financial security is within her reach.

Roberta Riley is Communications Consultant at Northwest Health Law Advocates and a Member of PSARA.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Continued from Page 3

they want us to do is laughable, when they’ve been consolidating their wealth and power for the last 40 years. And when we ask that they pay a fraction of the wealth they have stolen from workers’ pension funds, obscene government contracts, and shutting down factories and schools so that they can build expensive high rises, they scorn and tell us, “tough sh.., learn our culture, only then can you join our country club.” I don’t want these robber barons deciding what should be taught, what should be tested and what the correct answers are.

We don’t want to live by silly words and remarks as “competition breeds excellence,” and “let’s teach the poor how to live like us by adding value to their lives.”

We know that corporate greed, left unchecked, will eventually destroy us. It is destroying us already. It’s time for the 1% to learn how the rest of us deal with our basic needs, and how poor folks (especially poor kids) can blossom, if given the opportunity.

* * *

So what does all this have to do with Arne’s test? Plenty. Those three vignettes happen to be true. They make a lot of sense to me. And to others who have had the privilege of growing up in Hawaii and/or as poor as my family was. As I said, our knowledge base is as important to our survival as is the knowledge base of the child of the “$70 billion man.” The common core approved by the $70 billion man discredits (or is it “devalues”?) what it doesn’t understand, and elevates principles which dehumanize all.

If we allow the 1% to establish their standards and monocultures as the “correct” one, all of ours will die and, eventually, so will theirs. All humanity dies. It’s time to fight back. Embrace common sense, reject Common Core.

For those who, perhaps like Arne, don’t understand the stories or the questions, stay tuned. There’s more to come.
Trade Policies that benefit all Washingtonians
(Continued from Page 6)

in WA state are losing confidence in this failed NAFTA-style trade model reflected in the TPP and TTIP.

We have an opportunity as TTP and TTIP negotiations advance. Supporters of TTP and TTIP will ask for “Fast-Track” voting rules, which would tie Congress’ hands by requiring a simple up-or-down vote. Many elected officials will feel compelled to accept a bad deal, when their preference would be to improve the language so it works for people and communities.

Please call or email your representatives in Congress to OPPOSE FAST TRACK, when it comes before them in the House and Senate.

Stan Sorscher, a PSARA member, is Labor Representative at the Society for Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) and President of the Washington Fair Trade Coalition. Kristen Beifus, a PSARA Executive Board member, is the Executive Director of the WA Fair Trade Coalition.

Why Unions Need to Join the Climate Fight
(Continued from Page 1)

The renewal of the public sphere will create millions of new, high paying union jobs that don’t hasten the warming of the planet. She calls on us to notice that there are already lots of workers in low-carbon jobs: the care-givers, educators, sanitation workers and other service sector workers. Turning these low-paying, low carbon jobs into higher-paying jobs is itself a climate solution and should be recognized as such. Naomi Kline argues that climate change puts us right in the middle of the struggle for social justice and arms us with arguments that raise the stakes significantly.

How to pay for all of this? Fossil fuel companies and the banks that finance them make obscene profits and we have to get our hands on some of these profits to help clean up the mess they have made. It is a concept well established by law: the polluter pays. How to get at these enormous piles of money? A national carbon tax and higher royalties are two ways as well as a financial transaction tax and raising corporate taxes across the board. Ending subsidies is a good idea, as well.

In the U. S. we, the taxpayers, subsidize the oil, gas, and coal industry to the tune of $14 billion to $25 billion a year. Estimates vary depending on what is counted as a subsidy. If health costs of burning fossil fuels are factored in, all of these figures are way low! What might we do with, say $40 billion a year in infrastructure improvement, health and education? To his credit, Pres. Obama has asked every year for a $4 billion cut to fossil fuel industries but congress has never seen fit to vote on the proposals.

The speech by Naomi Kline, “Overcoming ‘Overburden’: The Climate Crisis and a Unified Left Agenda” calls on workers in all fields to unite and look for better ways the economy can work. She calls on us to stop believing in the lies of the “extractivists” and come up with our own vision. It is a must read for all of us interested in social justice and the way forward. Read the whole speech at: http://www.naomiklein.org/articles/2013/09/why-unions-need-join-climate-fight

Bobby Righi is a member of PSARA’s Environmental Committee & a retired member of AFT-WA. Naomi Kline is the author of The Shock Doctrine.

Stand with us as we stand with you

One thing that’s crystal clear from the fight over the grocery contract - building alliances pays off. Will you be part of an alliance for a cleaner, healthier, and more equitable world? To start, all you have to do is use the coupon below to subscribe to the Retiree Advocate. Already a subscriber? Great! The next step is to make our alliance even bigger. Give a subscription to a friend or co-worker. Stand with PSARA as we stand with working families like yours.

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http://psara.org/become-a-member-of-psara

PSARA members shared the love with UFCW 21 grocery workers at the 15th Avenue QFC. Community support was crucial in getting the giant grocery chains to back down.

(Photo: Garet Munger.)
Meetings and Events

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 6, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. The committee will be working on the PSARA legislative agenda for 2014. All PSARA members welcome.

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

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, November 21, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. The Committee will be making further plans for the 2014 legislative session.

Green Lake Discussion Group: 12 p.m. – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 5, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. PSARA Outreach Committee led discussion group. Topic TBD. (Note different time for discussion.)

PSARA Environment Committee: 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 5, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. All PSARA members welcome.

"The central issue of our time is the reality of widening inequality of income and wealth. Everything else - the government shutdown, the fight over the debt ceiling, the continuing negotiations over the budget deficit - is a dangerous distraction. The Right’s success in generating this distraction is its greatest, and most insidious, triumph."

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich