Please Make an End-of-the-Year Donation to PSARA

By Robby Stern

We hope you have found value this year in the content of the Retiree Advocate; the work PSARA has done and is doing on retirement security issues like Social Security and Medicare; the broader solidarity work we have done for economic and social justice; the additional focus we have placed on environmental sustainability; and the educational work to learn from the past to help develop a path for the future.

We continue this work, mostly with volunteers (we pay our editor, our lobbyist, and part-time administrative support person stipends). I hope you share with me a sense of accomplishment about what we are able to do on a low budget, primarily with volunteers.

Our costs have gone up. Our income this year will likely fall below our expenditures.

It is our goal to establish a 501c3 educational arm in 2015 so that donations to the PSARA c3 can be deducted from your taxes.

Meanwhile, I am asking any of you who are able to make an end-of-the-year donation to PSARA over and above what you have already paid for dues and/or donations. If you find yourself in a position where you can make a donation of any amount, fill out the coupon on Page 11 and mail it to us with your donation.

Thank you in advance for whatever you can do.

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Accessing Seattle’s Social Security Office

By Steve Kofahl, President of AFGE Local 3937, representing SSA workers and a member of PSARA’s Executive Board

On October 30, PSARA learned that a memo had been sent to building tenants at the Jackson Federal Building stating: "The Department of Homeland Security has established the Real ID Act. Effective January 19, 2015, the Washington State Driver License will no longer be an acceptable form of identification for entrance to government buildings. The Jackson Federal Building and the Federal Office Building, which are level 4 buildings, will require visitors to show a passport or a Washington State Enhanced Driver License to enter the buildings."

The cost for a passport ($135) or enhanced drivers license ($107) is beyond the means of many of those who need service, and the time taken to secure such ID could create additional hardships.

American Federation of Government Employees, Local 3937, representing Social Security Employees at the JFB, immediately placed this urgent issue on the agenda for a quarterly AFGE/SSA labor-management meeting scheduled for November 6. SSA Regional officials initially assured us that, based on their discussions with the JFB Building Security Committee, the Federal Protective Service (FPS), and SSA Headquarters officials, there would be no change in ID requirements or accessibility.

We were told there were limitations to the new rules that apply to SSA at the JFB and that other documents would be accepted because they have been accepted in the past, and because access for Social Security Administration services is an exception to those rules.

The SSA Administrators also claimed that they were unaware that the Real ID Act of 2005 requirements could create

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Tour The Northwest African American Museum with PSARA

By Frank Irigon, Chair, PSARA Diversity Committee

The PSARA Diversity Committee invites PSARA members to its second event of the year. The Committee will sponsor a tour and discussion at the Northwest African American Museum (NWAAM). The tour will focus on the history, art, and culture of persons of African descent who came to the Pacific Northwest.

A Northwest African American Museum docent will guide us as we tour the current exhibits at the NWAAM, including the Journey, which traces the cultural roots of northwest African Americans.

There will be a discussion period after the tour, led by the docent, but also including members of PSARA’s Diversity Committee. After the tour and discussion, we will go for a no-host lunch at a nearby restaurant, for those who wish to continue the discussion or just socialize and share what we have learned.

The tour will be limited to 25 PSARA members and reservations are on a first-come, first-serve basis. The museum is located at 2300 S. Massachusetts St., Seattle.

Please RSVP by no later than Jan. 20 to Robby Stern, at President@psara.org, or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646. Let us know if you want to attend the tour only or if you want to attend both the tour and the lunch. We will contact you to let you know if you are among the first 25 or if you have been placed on a waiting list.

Don’t Miss the December Holiday Party & Membership Meeting

The usual excellent and yummy potluck will begin the afternoon’s activities at 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 18. We enjoy the good food PSARA members provide, while we socialize and catch up with old friends.

Our speaker, Jeff Johnson, the President of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, will share with us his analysis of the challenges we face as progressives and activists and how we can best work together.

The membership meeting provides the opportunity to make critical decisions impacting PSARA’s future. Besides electing officers and board members, you will be asked to act on proposals from the Executive Board that will determine the future for PSARA in years to come. This will include a package of proposals that were developed by our Long Term Planning Committee and adopted by the Executive Board as recommendations to the membership.

Changing our by-laws requires approval by our membership. The Executive Board is proposing significant by-law changes that relate to our long-term planning. Provided members agree with the changes, we will elect an additional Vice President position to help better divide up the work of the organization.

Just as a reminder, if you wish to run for the PSARA Executive Board beginning in January, 2015, please contact Maureen Bo, the Chair of the Election Committee at adminvp@psara.org or 206-448-9646.

For planning purposes, we ask you to RSVP for the Holiday Potluck & Membership Meeting. Tell us what food or beverage you can bring, i.e., main dish, salad, dessert, juice. RSVP to Maureen at adminvp@psara.org or 206-448-9646.

For planning purposes, we ask you to RSVP for the Holiday Potluck & Membership Meeting. Tell us what food or beverage you can bring, i.e., main dish, salad, dessert, juice. RSVP to Maureen at adminvp@psara.org or 206-448-9646.

Also, please consider bringing a non-perishable food or drink item or cash for the ML King County Labor Council Food Bank.

The meeting is at the Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 N. 85 St., Seattle. (See the flyer on Page 7 for more information on transit and parking.)
Come Out Swinging: Robert Reich's Thoughts on 2014

By Robby Stern

I want to share with you this piece from Robert Reich’s blog analyzing the recent elections.

The Choice of the Century

The President blames himself for the Democrat’s big losses Election Day. “We have not been successful in going out there and letting people know what it is that we’re trying to do and why this is the right direction,” he said Sunday.

In other words, he didn’t sufficiently tout the Administration’s accomplishments.

I respectfully disagree.

If you want a single reason for why Democrats lost big on Election Day 2014, it’s this: Median household income continues to drop. This is the first “recovery” in memory when this has happened.

Jobs are coming back but wages aren’t. Every month the job numbers grow but the wage numbers go nowhere.

Most new jobs are in part-time or low-paying positions. They pay less than the jobs lost in the Great Recession.

This wageless recovery has been made all the worse because pay is less predictable than ever. Most Americans don’t know what they’ll be earning next year or even next month. Two-thirds are now living paycheck to paycheck.

So why is this called a “recovery” at all? Because, technically, the economy is growing. But almost all the gains from that growth are going to a small minority at the top.

In fact, 100 percent of the gains have gone to the best-off 10 percent. Ninety-five percent have gone to the top 1 percent.

The stock market has boomed. Corporate profits are through the roof. CEO pay, in the stratosphere. Yet most Americans feel like they’re still in a recession.

And they’re convinced the game is rigged against them.

Fifty years ago, just 29 percent of voters believed government is “run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.” Now, 79 percent think so.

According to Pew, the percentage of Americans who believe most people who want to get ahead can do so through hard work has plummeted 14 points since 2000.

What the President and other Democrats failed to communicate wasn’t their accomplishments. It was their understanding that the economy is failing most Americans and big money is overrunning our democracy.

And they failed to convey their commitment to an economy and a democracy that serve the vast majority rather than a minority at the top.

Some Democrats even ran on not being Barack Obama. That’s no way to win. Americans want someone fighting for them, not running away from the President.

The midterm elections should have been about jobs and wages, and how to reform a system where nearly all the gains go to the top. It was an opportunity for Democrats to shine. Instead, they hid.

Consider that in four “red” states — South Dakota, Arkansas, Alaska, and Nebraska — the same voters who sent Republicans to the Senate voted by wide margins to raise their state’s minimum wage. Democratic candidates in these states barely mentioned the minimum wage.

So what now?

Republicans, soon to be in charge of Congress, will push their same old supply-side, trickle-down, austerity economics.

They’ll want policies that further enrich those who are already rich. That lower taxes on big corporations and deliver trade agreements written in secret by big corporations. That further water down Wall Street regulations so the big banks can become even bigger – too big to fail, or jail, or curtail.

They’ll exploit the public’s prevailing cynicism by delivering just what the cynics expect.

And the Democrats? They have a choice.

They can refill their campaign coffers for 2016 by trying to raise even more money from big corporations, Wall Street, and wealthy individuals. And hold their tongues about the economic slide of the majority, and the drowning of our democracy.

Or they can come out swinging. Not just for a higher minimum wage but also for better schools, paid family and medical leave, and child care for working families.

For resurrecting the Glass-Steagall Act and limiting the size of Wall Street banks.

For saving Social Security by lifting the cap on income subject to payroll taxes.

For rebuilding the nation’s roads, bridges, and ports.

For increasing taxes on corporations with high ratios of CEO pay to the pay of average workers.

And for getting big money out of politics, and thereby saving our democracy.

It’s the choice of the century.

Democrats have less than two years to make it.

We have some major battles on our hands as a result of the federal and state elections and bureaucratic decisions, like the one to require passports or Enhanced Washington Driver’s Licenses in order to go to the Social Security office in the Jackson Federal Building.

As we get ready to enter the new year, please be assured that PSARA will do all that we can to promote policies that serve the 99% and not the 1%.

We are making long-term plans that will hopefully make us more effective. Please come to the winter holiday party and membership meeting to learn more and help us move forward.
Vulture Capitalists Hover Over Argentina

By Mike Andrew

On November 3, Argentina barred the US-based consumer products giant Procter & Gamble from doing business in the country. The move was only the latest incident in an ongoing fight for Argentina’s economic survival. Only a month before, on September 30, a US court held the Argentine government in contempt for refusing to obey an order to pay off two US hedge funds that own Argentine government bonds.

The two hedge fund outfits – NML Capital and Aurelius Capital Management – are examples of what are often called “vulture funds,” and their beef with Argentina goes back to 2001 when the country was fighting its way out of a disastrous fiscal collapse.

When Argentina defaulted on about $100 billion of debt in 2001, the country’s banks seemed to be collapsing like a house of cards. Nevertheless, the Argentine government fought back with an aggressive stimulus program, financing new low-cost housing, roads, bridges, and schools. The government also offered low-income families a monthly allowance to help support their children.

Argentina also renegotiated its debt, agreeing with the majority of its bondholders to repay at least a portion of the $100 billion it owed them. More than 90% of the country’s bondholders accepted swaps for lesser-valued bonds and agreed to forego interest on those bonds.

As it turned out, bondholders who accepted restructuring did pretty well. They were offered 30 cents on the dollar, but by 2012 they received returns of about 90 cents, according to estimates by Morgan Stanley.

So far so good. But not all Argentina’s bondholders were so accommodating. NML and Aurelius Capital bought up Argentine bonds at a big discount after the 2001 default. These funds then rejected the terms of restructuring and demanded a full repayment of the debt – with interest.

Although they represent only 7% of Argentina’s bondholders, they sued Argentina in US courts, trying to prevent the country from paying any of its more cooperative creditors until they get everything they demand.

NML is owned by American citizen Paul Singer, but is based in the Cayman Islands so Singer can evade US taxes on his earnings. Aurelius Capital is owned by Mark Brodsky, one of Singer’s former employees.

In July, a US court froze Argentine assets in American banks to prevent them from paying other investors before the vulture funds were paid off. Singer and Brodsky have also tried to seize Argentine assets, including an Argentine Navy ship that was detained for several weeks in Ghana.

Argentina’s president, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, went on national television to say her country would not honor the US court’s ruling.

Her government was willing to negotiate with the vulture funds, she said, but “What I cannot do as president is submit the country to such extortion.”

In September, only days before the US courts found Argentina in contempt, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution condemning NML and Aurelius.

“The vulture funds will not stop unless we stop them ourselves,” Argentine Foreign Minister Hector Timerman told UNHRC before the vote. “The billions that these vulture funds grab in countries in the south lead to school closures, hospitals without medicines, political instability, insecurity and violence.”

The resolution was approved by 33 votes to 5, with nine countries abstaining. Shamefully, the United States joined Britain, Germany, Japan, and the Czech Republic in voting against it.

If vulture capitalism wins, Argentina’s remarkable economic recovery may be at risk. Unlike the US “recovery” from the 2007-2008 recession, Argentina bounced back from near collapse by reducing rather than increasing economic inequality and now has the lowest inequality index in Latin America. In the mid-1970s, the richest 10% of Argentina’s population had an income 12 times that of the poorest 10%. That figure had grown to 18 times by the mid-1990s, and by 2002, the peak of the crisis, the income of the richest segment of the population was 43 times that of the poorest.

However, because Argentina’s recovery was fueled by social spending, these high levels of inequality were reversed. By 2006 the ratio was down to 26 to 1, and by 2010 it was only 16 to 1.

Remarkably, the Argentine economy has grown by over 6% a year for seven of the last eight years; unemployment has been cut to 7.2% from a whopping 20% in 2002; and the poverty level has fallen by almost half over the last decade.
For five years, a group of concerned citizens has been working with Representative and now Senator Hasegawa to establish a public bank in Washington State. We have worked the “outside game” helping him drum up popular support for the five bills he sponsored. Because of the gridlock in Olympia, we are turning our attention to the city of Seattle. (Senator Hasegawa will continue to sponsor a public banking bill in Olympia.)

Seattle presently banks with Wells Fargo, one of the largest Wall Street banks. The taxes and fees owed our city are deposited directly in Wells Fargo which also cuts the city’s checks. They are a private multinational corporation with a legal mandate to maximize profits for the benefit of their stockholders. In today’s global markets, the highest profits are made in the emerging economies and in the speculative trading of financial paper. Locally, maximizing profits means a preference for investing in office buildings and luxury condos rather than affordable housing.

A Seattle Public Bank would be established to serve the public interest. When fully up and running, it would hold the taxes and fees Seattle collects. It would be able to finance infrastructure projects that the city now funds by selling municipal bonds, i.e., borrowing the money at interest, often from the same Wall Street Banks. A Seattle Public Bank could partner with community banks and credit unions, expanding local credit resources for small business, creating new jobs. The bank would create a new revenue stream for Seattle. Because Washington State is a home-rule state, the Seattle City Council has the power to establish a public bank.

All over the world, much of the banking is done by public banks. Many central banks are public. Ours, the Federal Reserve, is private. A Federal Reserve Bank of Boston paper said the accepted position in the United States is for banks to be private “unless there is a market failure.” We think the crash of 2008 caused by Wall Street was a massive market failure.

In Germany, 40 percent of the deposits in banks are held by locally owned savings banks. Public banking has played a large role in the transition to wind and solar in Germany. In the United States, the Bank of North Dakota (BND) is a successful model of public banking. It is a banker’s bank. For 90 years it has been standing behind and has preserved the most robust community banking network in the country. BND kept the community banks in the traditional business of home mortgages, farm loans and small business loans, and away from the high profit financial instruments Wall Street was selling. Thus, North Dakota escaped the effects of the crash.

We need to look ahead and see the public bank as a long-term project. Eventually, it could liquidate Seattle’s $4 billion debt. It could create the funding for a transition to renewable energy, for affordable housing, and the creation of thousands of good jobs. It could start a process of financial independence from Wall Street for our cities, counties, and states, and eventually the nation. It is something we can do despite the political gridlock in Washington D.C. and in Olympia. Like the $15 Now campaign, Seattle could lead the nation.

There will be a public forum on a Seattle Public Bank on December 10, 2014, at University Temple, United Methodist Church, 1415 NE 43rd, Seattle, at 7 p.m. with Nick Licata (Seattle City Council), Dr. Thomas Keidel (German Public Savings Banks), Dr. Karl Beitel (UC Davis), and Gwendolyn Hallsmith (Public Banking Institute).

Cindy Cole and John Repp lead the Seattle Public Bank Coalition and are PSARA members.
Better Access to Dental Care
By Siobhan Ring

PSARA has joined with the Washington Dental Access Campaign to win passage of the Dental Access Bill. We join with tribes, health care organizations, community-based groups, senior groups, and individuals standing up to make sure all Washingtonians can get the care we all need to stay healthy.

Without dental care, many adults and children live in pain, miss school or work, and in extreme cases, face life-threatening emergencies.

Three weeks ago nearly 2,000 people waited all night for a chance at free dental care at the Seattle/King County clinic with Remote Area Medical.

One-third of seniors in Washington have untreated tooth decay. That doesn’t just cause a toothache. Oral health problems can lead to dangerous and costly health issues. The mouth is part of our body, and when our mouth is sick our body gets sick too. Just two years ago Steve McNall, a son, uncle, and worker in Lacey, Washington, died from an abscessed tooth.

All of this suffering could be prevented if we improved access to preventive dental care. In Alaska and Minnesota more people are getting the care they need to stay healthy thanks to new dental therapists. As part of the dental health care team, these providers are efficiently and cost-effectively improving access to care.

Dental therapists are supervised by a dentist through a practice plan contract that can include off-site supervision. That means they can bring care to where people need it most; including satellite clinics in rural communities, senior centers, and care facilities.

In Alaska and Minnesota, adding dental therapists resulted in more people having access to culturally-connected providers. Patients travel less and have shorter wait times for care. Community clinics and private practices have a stronger bottom line and can see more uninsured and Medicaid-insured patients.

Every study of the providers has demonstrated that they provide care at an equal or higher level of quality as that of a dentist. It’s a solution that works.

So with momentum growing and overwhelming evidence that dental therapy improves access to care and builds stronger communities, why hasn’t this legislation been passed? There’s one powerful self-interest standing in the way: organized dentistry. The Washington State Dental Association and the American Dental Association are pouring money and misinformation into a campaign to block states like ours from updating our laws and improving access to care.

The American Dental Association even lobbied for and won a clause in the Affordable Care Act to prevent sovereign American Indian tribes from bringing this tribal-born solution to their own communities.

Change is needed and change will come, but it will take all of us raising our voices to overcome the narrow but well-resourced interests that are trying to block progress.

Today, more than 4,300 Washingtonians have signed a petition to Washington State Governor Jay Inslee and the Legislature urging them to make it easier for people to get affordable, basic dental care. Our goal is 5,000 signatures and PSARA members can help!

Visit www.wadentalaccess.com to sign the petition or sign the petition at our general membership meeting. You can also join a community teleconference call with the legislative sponsors of the Dental Access Bill on Wednesday, December 17, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Sign up at www.wadentalaccess.com.

Siobhan Ring is the Mobilization Director at the Children’s Alliance and a PSARA member.

To find out more about the campaign or share your story, contact Marcos Zuñiga, Oral Health Access Project Manager, at Children’s Alliance at 206.324.0340 x28 or Marcos.Zuniga@childrensalliance.org.
PSARA Annual Winter Party & Membership Meeting

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2014

Featured Speaker: Jeff Johnson, President of Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

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 p.m. Jeff Johnson speaks and takes questions.

1:45 p.m. Business meeting and election of PSARA officers and board members.

2:30 p.m. 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.
Solidarity is a concept that has great historical and current importance in social justice movements. Instead of fighting alone, we look to others with shared interests, needs, and beliefs and join forces—that’s often how pivotal victories are won. In the labor movement, a national imperative is to reach out to community groups to strengthen our impact. “Divide and conquer” is an odiously familiar strategy to those of us working for social justice. We see it used to undermine movement-building along lines of race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, and more.

Solidarity between the young and the old—or the lack thereof—is not necessarily a well-known or often-discussed idea.

There are so many negative stereotypes of young- and retiree-aged people. Why is “old” such a dirty word in our culture, signaling a loss of relevance and vitality? “Never ask a woman her age.” “He’s pretty sharp for an old guy.” And why does “young” bring to mind objectifying beauty standards, naïveté, or the often-racist trope of the “hoodlum”? Both groups are marginalized, discredited, ignored—and vulnerable to bad policy, be it on health care, student loans, or cost of housing. Our earning power may be less than that of people in the prime of established careers, our voices may be quieter, and our platforms may be smaller.

Here’s where intergenerational solidarity comes in.

Intergenerational solidarity refers to how people of different generations live together, help and depend on one another in their daily lives, and how they perceive the social policies that support individuals at different life stages. --“INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN IRELAND,” http://www.icsg.ie/content/intergenerational-solidarity-ireland

There is a rich potential area of connection and alliance between people who are already working for or share interests in the work of social justice. Younger and older people may think the other disregards their future, their interests, and their well-being, but we actually have a lot in common.

Too often we only see one side of the story: younger workers, sometimes resentfully, paying taxes to support older workers’ retirement benefits and healthcare costs; or the heavy duty of older generations to preserve the environment and social safety nets for those to come. Generational solidarity is a call to end individualism, to explore human connections and relationships in new, deeper ways, and to create change that is based in strong communities.

All communities and all movements are built on relationships. We need to communicate with each other to understand each other. Communicating with allies often requires some intentionality and strategy. Working with any identity that spans all racial, ethnic, sexual orientation identities can be tricky. There is no such thing as “all women,” for example—lived experiences can’t be disregarded, or we will never work successfully together. Similarly, there is no monolithic Youth or Age.

When examining the idea of intergenerational solidarity, we also have to realize that we’re talking about solidarity between different generations, not simply between people of different ages. Just as being raised in different countries or having different religious beliefs can create breaches within a workforce or a movement, different generational life experiences can create distance between young and old. Many young people today remember grandparents who lived through the Great Depression and ever after rationed everything from clothing to toilet paper. We may also have parents whose formative years saw the civil rights movements of the 1960s, and older siblings who formed their careers during the economic boom of the 1980s. Or perhaps, today, we are parents watching our college-educated kids move back home for lack of work—or grandparents, wondering what kinds of lives our grandchildren will have without job security, health insurance, or pensions.

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What’s in the New Seattle City Budget…and What’s Not

By Mike Andrew

By the time you read this, the Seattle City Council will have passed the budget they crafted in a November 14 Budget Committee meeting involving all nine Council members.

Acting on the recommendations of Council Budget Chair Nick Licata and Council members Kshama Sawant and Mike O’Brien, the Council added $8.5 million to Mayor Ed Murray’s draft budget, for a total $4.8 billion two-year package.

Licata, Sawant, and O’Brien were backed up by a People’s Budget hearing held October 30. The purpose of the People’s Budget hearing was for community and labor activists to give input on what their constituencies actually need from a City budget.

PSARA President Robby Stern participated, along with Council member Sawant; Council member Licata’s legislative assistant Newell Aldrich; Sharon Lee of the Low Income Housing Institute; Paul Bigman, representing the Martin Luther King County Labor Council; Juan Jose Bocanegra of El Comite; Carino Barragan of Casa Latina; Katie Wilson of the Transit Riders Union; John Fox representing the Seattle Displacement Coalition; and Julia Ismael and Steve Dashle from Seattle Human Services Coalition.

Perhaps the biggest change to the Mayor’s proposal was the addition of budget items to help low-wage workers.

First, the City Council added funding to raise the wages of the lowest-income City workers to $15 per hour in 2015, rather than making them wait to be phased-in with private sector workers.

Second, the Council voted to provide minimum-wage funding for the City’s non-profit social services contractors, so that workers who provide necessary services for Seattle’s most vulnerable residents can also see their wages rise more rapidly.

Finally, the Council added funding to support the new Office of Labor Standards, which will enforce the City’s minimum wage, paid sick days, and wage theft ordinances. One million dollars was added for community outreach to inform workers of their rights, and almost $200,000 was allocated for investigators, to start in 2015.

The council also voted $400,000 to fund Career Bridge, an Urban League program that links men of color – including those who may have been incarcerated – with jobs and assistance. Last year, the council declined to fund the project.

An additional $500,000 was added over the two-year budget to implement a paid parental leave policy for City workers of any gender.

The Council added more than $1.2 million over the two years of the budget for homeless services, including additional services for encampments – the first time the City Council has embraced homeless camps as a viable stopgap for our poorest residents. The Council also added funding for a year-round low-barrier women’s shelter.

Council members also added an additional $150,000 for Youth Care, for outreach and services to homeless youth. The money will be used in part to pay an outreach manager to be present fulltime at Westlake Park downtown, and/or Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill where many homeless youth congregate.

To pay for the dozen or so additions to Mayor Murray’s budget, the Council agreed to investigate – but not yet act on – Council member Sawant’s proposal for a millionaire tax. Sawant’s idea of cutting salaries for the City’s elected officials and upper level managers went nowhere, however.

While the City’s new budget is clearly progressive, and certainly an improvement over the Mayor’s draft proposal, not all the ideas put forward at the October 30 People’s Budget hearing made it in. On behalf of PSARA, Robby Stern set out a number of concerns that still need to be addressed by the City:

• Sidewalk and other infrastructure repair.
• Increased budgets for the city’s Senior Centers.
• Assistance for low-income people to pay for utilities and transit service.
• Ending Seattle Housing Authority’s so-called Stepping Forward plan to increase rents on SHA’s low-income housing units by as much as 500% over the next six years.

“It’s outrageous, and we have a lot of seniors in Seattle housing,” he said about the plan. “We’ve got to stop that plan. The City Council should be taking that pledge [to not reappoint SHA board members who support Stepping Forward]. We’ve got to change who is on that board.”
Shared Prosperity Issues Win Voter Approval

Continued from Page 1

Voters who showed up across the nation passed progressive policies for working families, yet elected conservative candidates. In Arkansas, Alaska, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Illinois voters passed minimum-wage increases proving they want policies to address income inequality and create greater shared prosperity. In Massachusetts, Oakland, CA, and Montclair and Trenton, NJ, voters passed paid sick leave policies showing that sick leave should no longer be a privilege for the few, and extend leave to more working families.

Voters, at least those who showed up, agreed with policies that lift low-wage workers out of crushing poverty and voted to provide additional support to help workers take care of their families. And this was the policy result from the conservative voting majority who turned out to elect Republicans. Just imagine what could happen if more left-leaning candidates ran on a platform of creating greater shared prosperity and addressing income inequality.

To re-engage the progressive electorate and make sure they are present and participating in 2016, voters need inspiration.

Last year, progressives in the WA House of Representatives passed a handful of bills on the Washington State Labor Council Shared Prosperity agenda to create greater equity – from sick leave to wage theft prevention measures. This upcoming session, the agenda will be back again. Elected leaders have a chance to show voters, starting now, that they are using every tool possible to address income inequality and rebuild the middle class.

The 2015 Shared Prosperity legislative agenda (which can be found at the Washington State Labor Council website when you click on Legislative Issues) includes raising the minimum wage, passing sick leave, stopping wage theft, creating paycheck fairness, ensuring retirement security, and investing in capital and infrastructure living-wage jobs. These are some of the policies working families need, and it is also the platform candidates can stand on to show voters they are responding to the call for greater economic security.

States not only need the policy initiatives to win at the ballot, but we need progressive candidates to win office to ensure good policies are protected and advanced. Perhaps, in 2016, we will have a ballot that yields progressive policy wins and retakes the majority with candidates who stand proud to run on these principles embodied in the Shared Prosperity agenda. The Shared Prosperity agenda is our roadmap to advancing needed policies, and for re-engaging progressive majorities to turn out and vote.

Teresa Mosqueda is Government Affairs Director of the Washington State Labor Council and a PSARA member.

Dia de los Muertos 2014

PSARA members joined the Martin Luther King County Labor Council’s Diversity Committee and Darigold workers to commemorate Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead). On this day we remember our brothers and sisters who have passed and rededicate ourselves to continuing their struggle. Dia de los Muertos 2014 was dedicated to Cesar Chavez and Lonnie Nelson. (Photos: Garet Munger)
service barriers when they signed the Occupancy Agreement with the General Services Administration. Since the Passport Agency vacated the JFB space now occupied by SSA, we asked whether the Passport Agency left the building because of Real ID Act access concerns, and SSA said that they had never heard that was the reason.

We had done our research before the meeting, finding "REAL ID Enforcement in Brief" at http://www.dhs.gov/real-id-enforcement-brief. The "Limitations" section states that "The Act does not require individuals to present identification where it is not currently required to access a Federal facility (such as to enter the public areas of the Smithsonian) nor does it prohibit an agency from accepting other forms of identity documents other than documents from non-compliant states (such as a U.S. passport or passport card)." This section also states that "For example, the Act does not apply to voting, registering to vote, or for applying for or receiving Federal benefits."

Since Washington is a non-compliant state, we questioned whether the first limitation applies. And, because visitors come to SSA for many other services in addition to filing for and receiving benefits, we questioned whether the second limitation applied. By the end of the discussion, SSA Regional officials stopped using the term "assurance," and instead used "expectation." We asked for something in writing, and were told that it would be supplied to our AFGE National Council President.

That written response stated that SSA "anticipates" no changes based on discussions with FPS and the broad interpretation of the exceptions by FPS, and that the Agency will continue to work with FPS on the matter.

We are uncertain whether additional access problems will arise in January, or some time after that date. With our concerned elected representatives and community partners, we will continue to press for restoration of accessible, equitable service for everyone who seeks SSA services, and assurance that things will not get worse next year.

Taking Intergenerational Solidarity Into Our Own Hands
Continued from Page 8

These relationships shape how we see the world, our responsibilities to it, and our power to create change.

It's true that different generations may communicate differently, have contrasting ideas about etiquette, strategy, and goals, or prioritize social issues differently. We don't, however, have to let these rifts divide us as we work for stronger, healthier communities.

Often the idea of the family comes up when we're talking about connecting with and working with different generations. Most people in North American societies don't have much occasion to connect with older or younger people outside the extended family, so this becomes a point of reference. We have to recognize, however, that we are not each other's grandparents or grandchildren, but individuals coming together on an equal platform of respect.

As we begin to ask not “What do we owe each other?” but “What can we achieve together?” -- new relationships, alliances, and even new “families” can begin to emerge.

I would like to invite you to talk with older and younger people in your community and your life about the idea of intergenerational solidarity. Here are some questions to help you think about your generational perspectives -- its strengths, weaknesses, special assets.

1. What social movements were occurring as I was growing up? How did I learn about them?
2. What defining historical events happened during my childhood, and how did they shape my ideas about the world?
3. As a child and young adult, did I feel empowered or disempowered to create social change?
4. What has my generation achieved in the realm of social progress?
5. What have the biggest challenges of my generation been?
6. What policies particularly affect people of my age group or generation?

How can other generations support positive policies around this issue?

"This is a group of the best people in the city; in Puget Sound; (in the state?) They are lovingly collected, well-informed, inspired and therefore inspiring. They are in it for the long haul. They make real change."

At PSARA's Summer Meeting, participants were asked to write down a one-sentence description of PSARA. This is what one of our members said about us.

Won't you join us in the struggle to change the world? You can use the coupon below to sign up, or give a membership to a friend.

To subscribe or renew visit

http://psara.org/become-a-member-of-psara
Meetings and Events

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 3, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All members welcome as we plan for Senior Lobby Day.

PSARA Environmental Committee: 1 p.m.-2:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 10, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Room 226, Seattle. All members welcome as we discuss the work PSARA will do to add our strength to the struggle to address the causes and solutions to the crisis created by climate change.

PSARA Diversity Committee: 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 11, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Room 226, Seattle. All members welcome as the Committee continues our work on planning a tour of the Northwest African American Museum for PSARA members.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, December 11, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. Year-end wrap up. We'll celebrate and have a discussion of books from the Banned Book List, solicit ideas for next year’s programs and enjoy some year-end treats. All are welcome, new and returning participants. For further information contact Susan at outreachvp@psara.org

PSARA Education Committee: 12:30 – 2:00 p.m., Monday, December 15, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All members welcome as we discuss harmonizing the Committee’s work with PSARA’s long term strategic plan.

PSARA Annual Winter Party & Membership Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, December 18, Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 North 85th St., Seattle. Featured speaker, Jeff Johnson, President, Washington State Labor Council. More information on transportation and food on Page 7 of this newsletter.

PSARA Diversity Committee Tour of Northwest African American Museum: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, January 29, Northwest African American Museum, 2300 S. Massachusetts St, Seattle. A docent-led tour about the roots of the African American community in the Pacific Northwest. See article on p.2 for more information and how to RSVP.

Lakota Statement on the Keystone XL Pipeline

The Lakota people have always been stewards of this land. We feel it is imperative that we provide safe and responsible alternative energy resources not only to tribal members but to non-tribal members as well.

We need to stop focusing and investing in risky fossil fuel projects like TransCanada’s Keystone XL pipeline. We need to start remembering that the earth is our mother and stop polluting her and start taking steps to preserve the land, water, and our grandchildren’s future.

I pledge my life to stop these people from harming our children and our grandchildren and our way of life and our culture and our religion here.

Rosebud Sioux Tribal President Cyril Scott