

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

The Monthly Publication of
PSARA EDUCATION FUND
“Uniting Generations for a Secure Future”

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August 2015

The Crisis of Climate
Change
By Jeff Johnson
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Initiative 735 Urges Congress to Amend the US Constitution

By Diane Jones

Get Big Money Out of Elections!
Overturn Citizens United! Corporations Are Not People. Money Is Not Speech! You've heard the slogans - Now you can help do it.

I-735 is an initiative to the Washington State legislature that, when approved, would have our congressional delegation support and sponsor a resolution to amend the US Constitution. The resolution would clarify that the rights listed in the Constitution are rights of individual human beings only. Federal, state, and local governments would be empowered to regulate political contributions and expenditures to ensure that no person or corporation gains undue influence over our government. It also requires that all political contributions be publicly disclosed.

Sixteen other states have already passed similar measures, including two using the initiative process: Montana and Colorado. In both these states the measure passed with over 75 percent voter approval. We anticipate similar results here—but believe, that as a more populated state, Washington would send a much louder message.

Initiative 735 is aimed at ending the corruption that has been building in our democratic institutions. The US Supreme Court decision on Citizens United brought the issue to a head. That decision swept away a century of efforts to limit corporate money in our

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SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE
DECADES OF SUCCESS
CELEBRATION
SATURDAY AUGUST 8TH 2015 1-3 PM

FEATURING

PERFORMERS: KORE IONZ DANIEL PAK • BLUE SCHOLARS' GED • SINGER-SONGWRITER JIM PAGE • **SPEAKERS:** SEN. PRAMILA JAYAPAL, WA LEGISLATURE • HON. KSHAMA SAWANT, SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL • GERALD HANKERSON, SEATTLE KING COUNTY NAACP MARCELLUS OWENS, WA COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK • HEATHER VILLANUEVA, SEIU 775 • REBECCA SALDANA, PUGET SOUND SAGE • LYNNE DODSON, WA STATE LABOR COUNCIL • DR. HUGH FOY, PHYSICIANS FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM • JACKIE BOSCHOK, WA ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS

WESTLAKE PARK, SEATTLE

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Congressman Adam Smith to Speak August 8

Rep. Smith will join us as we celebrate the anniversaries of
Medicare and Social Security.

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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about PSARA and
issues important to all of us,
visit the PSARA website:
www.psara.org**

Frank Irigon Receives National Award

Franks Irigon, PSARA Executive Board Member and Diversity Committee Chair, received an Unsung Hero Award at the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) National Convention in San Francisco in July. The OCA is a national organization of community advocates dedicated to advancing the social, political, and economic well-being of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Frank is a board member of the OCA-Greater Seattle chapter.

The OCA recognized Frank's lifetime achievement in community activism and advocacy going back to his student days at the University of Washington up to the present. Prior to his retirement, Frank was the Executive Director of Washington Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse. Since retiring he has been a constant advocate for social justice, equality in the legal justice system, and race issues. He has been active in advocating for public education opportunities, income fairness, and wherever else his strong voice is needed to speak up for the voiceless.



In Memory of Edie Koch

Edie Koch, our hard working, capable treasurer for many, many years, passed away quietly in her daughter's home in June after a long and painful struggle with cancer. Edie requested that there be no memorial, no designated charity, no fuss. Fortunately, Edie's daughter Melanie provided loving care and even met Edie's standards of fine cooking. Anna Marie Palermo, a PSARA member and devoted friend, provided support, help, rides, and connections to others.

Edie was a strong, loyal, vocal, and dedicated volunteer with PSARA. Additionally, she was much loved by her fellow residents at Michaelson Manor. She led the resident council for a time and fought back against injustices proposed by the Seattle Housing Authority. Edie was much admired for her courage and strength in speaking out for her fellow tenants.

Having struggled with finances as a single mother, Edie was very aware and sympathetic to others' economic needs and felt a duty to help them.

Edie was a steady, reliable, and cost-conscious treasurer for PSARA. First recruited by Will Parry, she saw her work grow over the years as PSARA has grown. Since Edie became too ill to work, we have needed two additional PSARA members to do her job.

We remember Edie with love; we hope our efforts can match hers and can bring about some economic justice to our brothers and sisters who struggle with financial burdens they did not create.



Erratum

The article in the July *Advocate* entitled "Ending Homelessness" by Thalia Syracopoulos incorrectly attributed the presentation of an "Immediate Action Agenda" on 3/26/2015 to the Housing Affordability and Livability Advisory Committee (HALA). The "Immediate Action Agenda" was presented to the Mayor and City Council by the Community Housing Caucus. We apologize for this error.

Celebrate and Organize

By Xochitl Maykovich and Robby Stern

This column was co-written by Xochitl Maykovich, a 25-year-old organizer with Washington Community Action Network and a PSARA member, and Robby Stern, the 71-year-old president of PSARA. Another version of it appeared in The Stand, the online newspaper of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

This summer people all over the country will celebrate the 50th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid and the 80th anniversary of Social Security. The successes of Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare deserve celebration. We owe the millions of people who advocated and fought for these programs the respect and recognition of their sacrifices and struggle. At the same time we owe ourselves and future generations the commitment to build a retirement security movement that demands the expansion of these programs. Growing income inequality is taking its toll on the majority of the US population. Expanding Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security is a significant antidote to this escalating economic disaster.

Can you imagine the United States without Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid?

Even though these three programs are the country's most successful anti-poverty programs in history, they remain under constant attack from anti-government types, Wall Street, and other corporate interests. Now, especially with a presidential race on the horizon, the growing progressive movement needs to draw a line in the sand: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid cannot be cut, but instead need to be expanded.

President Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare and Medicaid into law on July 30, 1965. Now Medicare provides coverage to more than 55 million elderly and disabled Americans, and Medicaid covers 44 million low-income adults and children. Medicare and Medicaid help to reduce poverty and health disparities among our most vulnerable communities. In order to further reduce poverty and health disparities, especially as our aging population continues to grow, Medicare and Medicaid must be expanded.

With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid serves as the vehicle for the most significant expansion of health care coverage since 1965. We will advocate for further expansion of Medicaid, including coverage for undocumented residents, and also insist that the program continue to provide comprehensive coverage.

Currently, Medicare fails to cover needed long-term care services. By 2030, one in five people will be over the age of 65, and as our aging population grows, caregiving needs increase. Because many families do not have access to long-term care services, families shoulder the financial cost of caring for their elderly loved ones. Seniors and their families desperately need change in Medicare: seniors and disabled people can no longer wait for long-term care coverage.

Additionally, there is the need for a dental and vision benefit in Medicare coverage. In the 21st Century, it is unacceptable that Medicare not provide coverage for the eyes and teeth when this coverage is so important to our ability to live healthy and dignified lives.

Social Security lifts 22.2 million seniors out of poverty in our country, including 281,000 seniors in Washington alone. Without Social Security, 44.4 percent of elderly Americans would live below the poverty line; but with Social Security, this number drops to 9.1 percent. However, with the growing decline in defined benefit pensions and the inability of working people to save sufficient funds to supplement Social Security benefits, it is essential that we strengthen and expand Social Security, or the problem of senior poverty will grow exponentially over the next twenty years.

Social Security is literally a lifeline for millions of people. But right-wing corporate-owned officials attempt to justify their desire to privatize Social Security with the idea that it is going bankrupt. Social Security is not going bankrupt. If nothing were done to expand Social Security, it would pay full benefits through 2035 and then would continue to pay 85 percent of full benefits.



Xochitl Maykovich

But we will not accept the status quo. We are organizing to strengthen Social Security to address the realities of the 21st century economy and the needs of present and future generations. We will continue to build the movement to scrap the payroll income cap, thereby bringing significantly more revenue into the system. Currently, Social Security is funded through a 6.2 percent payroll tax, but this tax only applies to incomes \$118,500 and below.

Millionaires and billionaires are paying a miniscule amount of their income to Social Security. If we Scrap the Cap, Social Security would pay full benefits for many more decades. Additionally, with a slight increase in the payroll tax on the employer and employee sides, we could significantly expand benefits, helping to assure the dream that people can live their senior years with dignity, respect, and economic security.

We will make it clear to elected officials, from state legislators to presidential candidates, that retirement security is crucial to all of us. Organizations throughout the country, from community groups to unions, will come together to celebrate Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

Here in Washington, we will be celebrating these programs at Westlake Plaza on August 8th from 1PM-3p.m. Please join us at this celebration and participate with us in the struggle to make these programs what those who came before us hoped they would become.

Fountain

By Bob Shimabukuro, Associate Editor

I stood there looking at the newly restored sculpture, "Fountain," at the Seattle Central Community College (SCCC). Stunning. The fountain resounded with energy, hope, and joy, unlike the last time I had seen it, in disrepair. I was also feeling the love, energy, work, excitement, and yes, community organizing, that went into this project.

The late internationally recognized artist George Tsutakawa, a Broadway High School (BHS) graduate, had gifted "Fountain" to SCCC in 1973, in part because BHS had closed at the end of WWII, and SCCC was located where BHS stood. The old BHS building became the Seattle Central Community College (which was recently renamed the Seattle Central College). In 1940 about a quarter of the BHS students were Japanese Americans; and in 1942 BHS lost those 200 students when they were unjustly subjected to the curfew, mass exclusion, and incarceration of Japanese Americans by President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

To counter the SCCC administration, which was considering ways to remove the sculpture, a small core group of educators (Tina Young, Ken Matsudaira, Melanie King, Deborah Uno, Tracy Lai, Bea Kiyohara) and students (Alia Marsh, Arlene Martinez, Amanda Rogers, Jade Hoiby) took action to save the sculpture from being sold off and to restore "Fountain." This core group involved art students, teachers, community members, and some of the school's maintenance department in restoring "Fountain" to working condition.

They also tied the Fountain Restoration Project to a curriculum which emphasized the connections among historical events and the importance of keeping community treasures and history alive, with a strong social justice perspective. In addition, these core activists engaged the Associated Student Council, community families, BHS alumni, community businesses and non-profits, and SCCC culinary students

and raised the funds needed to bring "Fountain" back to life.

This project reached thousands of people over six years. It was multigenerational. Multicultural. By all accounts, people had a lot of fun. These events happen too rarely. But this is what can happen at a Community College. We need to bring back the Community into the colleges.

These social justice education campaigns inspire people about the role community organizing can play in both keeping our histories alive and adding fresh stories (for example: the community's role in the restoration) to deepen understanding of circumstances surrounding the origin of "Fountain." (For example, that Tsutakawa had donated "Fountain" because 25 percent of the student body in 1942 was sent to concentration camps.) The restoration of "Fountain" story creates an important historical and aesthetic value to the original "Fountain" story.

Just like "Fountain" itself.

. . .

This story is important to PSARA not only because it creates and recreates the historical reality, but also because it demonstrates creative ways to teach and learn, and make learning inviting, interesting, and in some cases, fun. Most of all, it's important because we need creative and critical thinking about the problems we're facing now.

As educator Jesse Hagopian says, "We have more black men behind bars than we had slaves on plantations in 1850; a social catastrophe that all of us need to talk about. . . . We have an epidemic of violence against women. Our education should be about income inequality in US history. We have to teach our kids critical thinking skills, imagination skills, because we have real problems to solve."

It's important to realize learning is a life-long endeavor. The SCCC organizing was also about learning, demon-



strating the possibilities of multigenerational, multicultural learning that can involve critical and strategic thinking, with a little creativity, imagination, and fun. These are important tools in our Struggle (with a capital S) to find a common platform on which we can work together.

Executive Director of Puget Sound Sage, Rebecca Saldaña, says "Our main group, service sector hospitality workers, never were in the middle class in the best of times. We need alliances with people/organizations who have power, are willing to share that power, and see things through our lens, recognizing our liberations are bound together."

Heather Villanueva, Community Strength Organizer SEIU 775 and leader of its Racial Equity Team says "To build a strong movement, we have to be there for each others' fights in a real way, not just when we need something. That's why my work is focused on broader social justice issues. I try to bring my talents and the resources of the union to bear so that we can be a part of a movement that doesn't leave anyone behind."

Saldaña and Villanueva will be speaking at the August 8 Anniversary Celebration for Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare. Join us.

The Crisis of Climate Change

By Jeff Johnson, President of the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) and a PSARA member

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from Jeff Johnson's speech at the WSLC Convention, July 23-25.

Brothers and Sisters, now we have another crisis facing us, though it is one that also presents us with a great opportunity. That crisis is climate change.

Forty-three years ago when I was a student in Washington, D.C., an analyst from the CIA made a presentation in a political science class I was taking. The presentation was on the geo-political ramifications of a warming planet. She hypothesized that if the planet kept going the way it was that we would reach a point in time when the temperate zones, those areas of the world that are the bread basket for the planet, would begin shrinking and that this could set off a geo-political confrontation over food and water.

Now I wish I could tell you that I totally got what she was saying at the time, but I didn't. I looked at it as a hypothesis and with all the interests of a twenty-year-old, including whether there was enough beer in the refrigerator. I assumed that even if this was true, we wouldn't let it happen.

Well, the hypothesis is proving out, and we did let it happen.

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, said before last year's People's Climate March in NYC, "We must act on climate change now. We don't have a Plan B, because we don't have a Planet B."

Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical on climate, linked climate change and inequality together, and said that we have a collective moral responsibility to look after our common good.

But all we need is our own eyes to recognize that severe weather events (climate change) caused by carbon pollution are dramatically impacting our economy, our health, and our very existence.

Increasing ocean acidification has led to the closing of shellfish operations in Puget Sound and Willapa Bay;

accelerating glacial melt is leading to increased flooding and storm water pollution; increasing droughts are affecting our water supply and food production, causing great hardship for families and communities dependent on the agricultural economy and causing forced migration around the planet as people desperately seek food, water, and economic survival; great storms like hurricanes Katrina and Sandy and Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines have exacted enormous tolls on life and property.

Today 85 percent of Washingtonians believe that climate change is real and that it is largely man-made; this is twenty points higher than the national average.

And 55 percent of Washingtonians believe that climate change will negatively impact them.

We have no choice but to significantly reduce our carbon emissions and green house gas emissions over the next several decades. We need to cap and lower carbon emissions over time. This will mean leaving much of the proven fossil fuel reserves in the ground.

But we do have choices over how we do this if we don't let the oil and fossil fuel industry divide us with false choices over jobs and the environment.

We can have both jobs and a clean and healthy environment if we choose.

We are not going to transition off fossil fuels overnight, but we will have to, over the next several decades, if we are to stop and reverse the negative effects of climate change.

So, as labor, we need to be both on the right side of history, but we also need to be at the table planning for a successful transition rather than being served up on the menu.

As we put in place policies that reduce carbon emissions, we need to make sure that workers who work in fossil fuel-dependent industries are protected. We need to make sure that industries can actually meet carbon emission reduction levels; so we will



need some compliance flexibility to ensure this happens.

We also need to prevent the leakage of jobs and investments in these industries during the transition from unfair competition from companies out of state or out of country that don't have to meet these emission standards.

We need to protect direct line workers in fossil fuel industries and other vulnerable workers, particularly in communities of color. People who work and live closest to industrial sites and highways and whose health is most negatively impacted by carbon pollution must be protected. These workers and community members suffer rates of asthma and lung disease two to three times higher than the general public. We need to change this.

We need to invest in repairing our state's infrastructure – from sea walls to water mains and pipelines, from the electrical grid to water storage and flood plain protection – creating tens of thousands of building trades jobs, protecting against severe weather, and lowering our carbon footprint.

We need to invest money in the renewable energy economy, taking energy efficiency to scale in our public,

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Workers are the Real Stars at Macy's

By Kristen Beifus, with photos by Garet Munger

PSARA joined Macy's associates for not one but two days of ruckus, energy packed, informational picketing in July. These were the first informational pickets ever at Macy's in WA State and were brought on by the all cuts contract proposal that Macy's management had put on the table. Management proposed cuts to health care, cuts to staffing, cuts to pension funding, elimination of a progressive wage scale, inability to use earned time off on demand...and Macy's is demanding

that workers commit to working on the Thanksgiving holiday. Macy's admits that they are doing all of this to shore up profits. Macy's associates have had enough!

Robby Stern kicked off both days of picketing with his "Power to the People" chant. It was never more appropriate. Over 100 community members joined Macy's workers from all seven stores on two of the hottest days of the year. Boisterous picketing occurred at both the Downtown and Northgate stores.



Macy's associates told their stories and led fierce and relentless chants in front of their own stores while leafletting their customers. Community allies connected issues of human rights, marriage equality, transportation, LG-BTQ workers, women, families, social security, and children to the importance of the Macy's bargain. Community members were inspired by the courageous Macy's workers, and the workers were strengthened by the solidarity of the community members.

Unfortunately, Macy's continues to ignore the public support for their workers and the proof is at the bargaining table. Just a week after these extraordinary pickets, the Macy's bargaining team offered only minor shifts that demonstrated that they do not value their workers.

Macy's associates are holding strong. They know that PSARA members and other community members are with them. So please keep yourself hydrated and cool, PSARA, as Macy's workers need you for this journey. Retail workers are rising and demanding decency, dignity and respect from their employer !!!

Kristen Beifus is a community organizer with UFCW 21, a PSARA Executive Board member, and Co-chair of PSARA's Environmental Committee. Garet Munger is Secretary-Treasurer of the PSARA Education Fund and PSARA's official photographer.



Greeks Reject Austerity, EU Rejects Democracy

By Mike Andrew

“The Germans are trying to do with tanks what they couldn’t do with tanks,” said Greek activist Christos Giovanopoulos at a June speaking event in Seattle’s Hillman City neighborhood.

Giovanopoulos, a member of SYRIZA, the party that won Greek elections on an anti-austerity platform in February, was in Seattle on a solidarity mission, trying to drum up support for his embattled country.

Like many other Greeks, Giovanopoulos’s thoughts went back to Greece’s epic resistance to German occupation during World War II – an inevitable association considering that Greece’s principal antagonist is the German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble.

When Greece entered the Eurozone in 2001, most Greeks hoped the move would open up the country to foreign investment, create more jobs, and lead to a brighter future for what was still a relatively poor country.

In fact, entering the Eurozone led to economic catastrophe. Instead of constructive investments, Greece was opened to predatory lending by European banks. When the global economy went into recession in 2008, the bottom fell out of the Greek economy, and the Greek government was no longer able to pay its debts to foreign bankers.

Then came the “bailout.” I put the word in quotes, because no one was bailed out, least of all the Greek people. In fact, all that happened was that the European Central Bank and the IMF (international Monetary Fund) bought up bad Greek loans from private banks and then engaged the European governments to force the Greeks to pay them back – at exorbitant interest rates.

After the “bailout” came austerity. While the “bailout” was no bailout at all, the austerity was all too real. The EU’s enforcers, the so-called Troika – the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the IMF – insisted that Greece “reform” its economy to qualify for more “assistance.”

More quotes, because this “reform” made Greece go backwards and not forward to a genuine solution of its economic problems. The “assistance” only came in the form of more high-interest loans doled out in installments too small to make a real change in Greece’s economic situation.

The price of this “assistance,” the cuts in government spending demanded by the Troika, the layoffs of workers, reductions in wages, cuts in pensions, privatization of state assets – all the austerity measures made the situation worse, not better.

Today Greece’s economic situation is worse than that of the US in the grip of the Great Depression – 28 percent unemployment, 50 percent for workers under 25 years of age, retirement pensions down to 625 Euros (\$684) per month, retirement ages rising to 70, and national debt rising to 200 percent of GDP.

Even the IMF has admitted that Greece is now trapped under an unsustainable mountain of debt.

The SYRIZA government was elected in February promising to end this crushing austerity program.

But the EU ignored the vote of the Greek people, and insisted on new austerity measures. SYRIZA resisted, but it was trapped by political constraints not of its own making.

On July 5 almost 62 percent of Greek voters rejected an EU proposal that would have mandated even more budget-cutting in return for another round of loans. But by the same margin Greeks tell pollsters they want to stay in the Eurozone.

A “Grexit,” or Greek exit from the Eurozone, would allow the country to control its own currency, and use devaluation as a device to manipulate international exchange rates to its own



Dueling Finance Ministers: Yanis Varoufakis of Greece (left) and Wolfgang Schaeuble of Germany (right).

benefit. Argentina did this when it cancelled its foreign debts and devalued its currency in 2005.

While many economists – Nobel laureates Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz among them – believe a Grexit could ultimately benefit Greece, Greek voters seem to be more cautious. Under the circumstances, Greek Prime Minister and SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras had to promise that he would not take the massive NO vote in the July referendum as permission to drop the Euro.

The other problem facing SYRIZA was that German Finance Minister Schaeuble is just fine with a Grexit. According to former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, Schaeuble is using the EU’s negotiations with Greece to work his own political agenda.

“Schaeuble has a plan,” Varoufakis told then-British Chancellor Norman Lamont in late May.

“He believes that the Eurozone is not sustainable as it is. He believes there has to be some fiscal transfers, some degree of political union. He believes that for that political union to work without federation [that is, without Germany sacrificing some of its national sovereignty], without the legitimacy that a properly elected federal parliament can render, can bestow upon an executive, it will have to be done in a very disciplinary way.

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SCOTUS Decision Establishes Retirement Equality as Well as Marriage Equality

By Mike Andrew

The US Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell vs. Hodges* not only established marriage equality as the law of the land, it also ushered in the possibility of retirement equality for lesbian and gay seniors.

One of the many problems unique to lesbian and gay retirees is that many sources of retirement security have historically been tied to marriage. Since we were prevented by law from marrying our partners, we were excluded from the Social Security and pension benefits that were available to our straight counterparts. Even our homes were at risk if our partner died. That has all changed now that same-sex marriage is legal in all 50 states.

US Attorney General Loretta Lynch acknowledged the historic change in a July 9 statement.

"Following the Supreme Court's historic decision in *Obergefell* that every couple has the same right to participate in the institution of marriage, whether the partners are of the same sex or opposite sexes, I directed Justice Department staff to work with the agencies to ensure that the ruling be given full effect across the federal government," Lynch said.

"Thanks to their leadership and the quick work of the Social Security Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs, today I am proud to announce that the critical programs for veterans and elderly and disabled Americans, which previously could not give effect to the marriages of couples living in states that did not recognize those marriages, will now provide federal recognition for all marriages nationwide."

After the Supreme Court struck down the Federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in *USA v. Windsor* (2013), most federal departments afforded full recognition to lesbian and gay mar-

ried couples, but the Social Security and Veterans Administrations would only give spousal benefits to same-sex couples living where state governments also recognized the legality of their marriages.

In other words, a couple legally married in New York could apply for and get Social Security spousal benefits if they continued to live in New York but not if they moved to Florida. The same was true for survivor benefits.

Imagine deciding to retire to Miami, which thousands of New Yorkers do, only to find that your income will be drastically reduced because you no longer qualify for the same Social Security income you used to count on. Imagine that after a year or two in Miami your husband or wife dies, and you lose the income from their Social Security because the state of Florida says you weren't married in the first place.

For lesbian and gay seniors who had pensions, as about 30 percent of seniors do, the prospects could be just as bad. Even if the pension plan provided for domestic partners, many plans simply offered the surviving partner a one-time cash payment instead of continuing income.

Even people's homes were at risk if they were not legally married. The surviving spouse of a married couple can inherit real property automatically when their spouse dies and not have to pay estate or probate taxes. On the other hand, the surviving partner of an unmarried couple may have no legal title to their home at all.

Even if the survivor's name is also on the deed and even if they are left the home in a valid will, they will still have to pay taxes on the property that a married spouse would not have to pay. In fact, that was the underlying complaint of plaintiff Edie Windsor in her suit

against DOMA – when her wife died, leaving her their home, she was hit with a whopping \$350,000 tax bill she would not have had to pay if the federal government had recognized their marriage. Fortunately, the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell* changed all that by enabling lesbian and gay couples to marry in all 50 states and to have those marriages accorded all the benefits of opposite-sex marriage.

While the *Obergefell* decision establishes legal equality for lesbian and gay couples and makes retirement security easier for them to obtain, it still doesn't wipe out all the inequities. LGBT retirees often get less in Social Security benefits to begin with, simply because they earn less and are unemployed more than straight workers.

According to the Williams Institute, gay men earn 10-30 percent less than their straight counterparts. There is not a significant gap between the earnings of straight women and lesbians, but women as a whole earn 30 percent less than men.

Lesbian and gay seniors are four times less likely than their straight counterparts to have children or grandchildren to help support them as they age. They are also twice as likely to live alone, according to a study by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.

Finally, a survey released earlier this year by the Equal Rights Center based in Washington DC found that lesbian and gay seniors received less favorable quotes on pricing and availability when seeking rooms at senior centers than straight seniors.

An estimated 2 million people aged 50 and older identify as LGBT, and that number is expected to double by 2030 according to the Institute for Multigenerational Health at the University of Washington.

Let's Stop the Lying about the Confederate Battle Flag in South Carolina

By Mark McDermott, Chair of PSARA's Education Committee

Many of you might assume the Confederate flag has been flying over the South Carolina capitol since the end of Reconstruction in the 1870's. Here is the real story and its broader context.

In 1901, the Jackson, Missouri, Examiner newspaper announced: "The community at large need not be especially surprised if there is a Negro lynching in Independence (Missouri). The conditions are favorable at this time. There are a lot of worthless young Negro men in town who do nothing and stand around and swear..."

In 1915, Democratic President Wilson hosted the world movie premiere of "The Birth of a Nation," a viciously racist glorification of the Ku Klux Klan saving the South from "black savages" after the Civil War.

On May 22, 1917, the front page of the Memphis, Tennessee, Commercial Appeal newspaper announced that whites would lynch Ell Persons, a black youth. Here is a description of this crime against humanity:

"Vendors were on hand to sell pop, sandwiches, and chewing gum. Women wore their best clothes to the event. Parents wrote notes to schoolteachers requesting their children be excused to witness the lynching. An estimated five thousand spectators gathered as Persons was tied to a stake in the ground, then drenched with ten gallons of gasoline and burned alive... Later that afternoon Person's head and one of his feet were thrown from a passing car into the midst of a group of African-Americans."

What did the Governor, National Guard, Mayor, police chief, and Memphis police do? Nothing. Their inactions were crimes against humanity and pre-meditated cold-blooded murder. Where is the statue to honor Mr. Persons? Does he not deserve being remembered?

Black lives do matter, yesterday, today, and forever. No one was con-

victed of this gruesome murder. This type of savagery is part of the so-called great heritage that defenders of the Confederate battle flag claim to honor, although they won't admit it.

In 1919, the NAACP published "Thirty Years of Lynching in the U.S. 1889-1918" which documented over 3,200 lynchings of African Americans. Their task was made more difficult as state and local governments had little interest in tracking brutal murders that were poorly investigated and for which virtually no one was convicted. Murder of African Americans with impunity was part and parcel of our democracy.

African Americans and their allies fought back demanding federal anti-lynching laws, as state and local governments, police, prosecutors and judges would not stop this reign of terror. In 1937 alone, 59 federal anti-lynching bills were introduced. All were defeated.

In 1938, after the defeat of another federal anti-lynching bill, the South Carolina State House erected the Confederate battle flag in their chamber. For 73 years or 26,000+ days after the end of the Civil War, the State House had failed to take action to "honor their Civil War dead" by putting up a battle flag. What a coincidence. No action for 73 years and the anti-lynching bill woke them up to their responsibility to honor the war dead. What a lie. In 1956, the South Carolina State Senate put the battle flag up in protest of the Supreme Court ordering school desegregation. In both cases, they were asserting their state's right to allow lynchings to go unpunished and continue inferior segregated schools.



In 2010, Governor Nikki Haley said the flag was "not something that is racist" but rather "tradition that people feel proud of." US Senator Lindsey Graham initially said the flag was "part of who we are." Mr. Graham is right. That flag is part of the culture of racist communities including white collar bigots like Ms. Haley and Mr. Graham and their centuries' long bigotry and brutality toward African Americans.

I am thrilled that the bigots have been forced to retreat and take down their hated symbol, but our work is far from over.

Governor Haley has refused to expand the Medicaid program which would provide affordable quality health care for hundreds of thousands of working poor South Carolinians. This cruel act has and will continue to have severe impacts on the African Americans there. We know that people without access to quality health care die younger and needlessly in too many cases. It is reasonable to assume that more African Americans will die each year in South Carolina from lack of affordable health care than were killed in the massacre in Charleston.

Murder by lynching is always wrong. Murder by massacre is always wrong. Is allowing people to die needlessly from lack of access to health care murder? If not, what is it?

Initiative 735

Continued from Page 1

elections and endorsed the dangerous idea that corporations have constitutional rights. Corporations already have limited liability, perpetual life, and receive many financial advantages given by the state.

By extending constitutional protections to corporations and other legal entities, not only do they enjoy more rights than people, they in essence gain veto power over democratically enacted laws. When constitutionally protected, corporations have the ability to challenge any law that gets in the way of their profits.

US Supreme Court decisions since the 1970s have overturned laws protecting open and fair elections, citing First Amendment rights. As a result, the way has been cleared for unlimited anonymous giving by individuals to "independent" campaign groups like Super PACs, and unlimited spending on referendums, effectively erasing limits on aggregate contributions to candidates. These decisions invite corruption; and once corruption becomes institutionalized, it is very hard to uproot.

WAmend is collecting signatures with volunteers, reflecting the spirit behind our initiative process. Organized labor and farmers worked hard to add this form of "direct democracy" to the Washington State Constitution in 1912 in order to respond to a state legislature that wasn't being responsive to the will of the people but, instead, to the will of railroad, bank, and timber corporations.

Rather than raise \$500,000 to pay for out of state contract workers to collect signatures, we have chosen instead to raise and spend \$250,000 to hire local campaign organizers to help empower citizens to engage in direct democracy.

You can help us get I-735 on next year's ballot by going to our website, www.WAmend.org, and signing up. Join others in volunteering to collect signatures. And if an organization you belong to is not yet listed as endorsing, consider encouraging them to do so.

Diane Jones is WAmend coordinator and a PSARA member. She can be reached at dianejones@wamend.org

In Solidarity With The Charleston Nine

Photos by Garet Munger



On July 7, PSARA members joined hundreds of community allies to march in solidarity with the Charleston Nine, murdered by a self-identified white supremacist, at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina.



A standing room only crowd gathered at Capitol Hill's First AME church and then marched to Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park for a closing rally. In spite of the somber occasion, the mood was determined and optimistic.



The Crisis of Climate Change

Continued from Page 5

commercial, and residential sectors; building high speed electric rail; investing in electric car technology and infrastructure; investing in mass transit; expanding our capacity for various forms of renewable energy; and creating tens of thousands more jobs.

And we need a "Just Transition" -- one that invests carbon revenue in mitigating rising energy costs. One that assists vulnerable communities, providing income and benefit support to direct line fossil fuel workers. And one that provides job and training opportunities to direct line workers and to workers in communities of color.

The late visionary labor leader Tony Mazzocchi, from the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, once said, "We need to treat workers as good as dirt."

He was referring to the new super fund created to clean up toxic waste sites. Tony believed that we should have a super fund to invest in transitions for workers so that they would not have to bear the burden of economic transition. It is important for workers to be able to maintain their wage and benefit packages and the standard of living they have struggled for and won over time.

"I want [our grandchildren], all of them, to live out their lives on a vibrant, living planet. So do you.

"To make that future a reality, we have work to do.

"Our work starts by listening to the scientists. Their verdict is virtually unanimous. Unless we handcuff the fossil fuel industry, Planet Earth as we know it is doomed."

Will Parry, The Retiree Advocate, December, 2012

Greeks Reject Austerity, EU Rejects Democracy

Continued from Page 7

"And he said explicitly to me that a Grexit is going to equip him with sufficient bargaining, sufficient terrorizing power in order to impose upon the French that which Paris has been resisting. And what is that? A degree of transfer of budget-making powers from Paris to Brussels." [My emphasis.]

In other words, while Greek negotiators were resisting pressure to submit to new austerity measures, Schaeuble didn't really care about Greece at all. He

was using the negotiations to undermine Germany's principal EU rival, France, and preparing to invest a German-dominated EU with sovereign power.

In the scenario described by Varoufakis, the "fiscal waterboarding" of Greece, as he put it, was merely collateral damage in a much wider contest for economic and political control of Europe.

On July 6, while most Greeks were still celebrating the landslide anti-austerity vote in the July 5 referendum, Varoufakis resigned his office "at the request of the Prime Minister." Observers saw it as a signal from Tsipras to the EU that he was prepared to cut a deal rather than risk being forced out of the Eurozone.

Tsipras couldn't get a deal, however, because Schaeuble wasn't interested in a deal. He was only interested in using Greece as a negative example to bully the rest of Europe.

With banks running out of money and hospitals running out of medications, Greece was forced to take what the EU insisted on.

"We have been forced to make a difficult compromise under urgent conditions," Tsipras told the Greek parliament. "We were at the limits of our economy and our banking system, and at the limits of Europe -- where conservative forces, obsessed with austerity, dominate."

"Change Greece, change Europe," SYRIZA said in their successful election campaign. But can Europe change, or will it be dominated permanently by bankers and their right-wing political allies?



To Renew or Donate

PSARA Education Fund
2800 1st Avenue, Room 262, Seattle WA 98121
Donations are tax deductible

- Basic contribution: \$20
- Limited income/living lightly: \$15 or whatever you can afford
- Supporting: \$50 New contributor
- Sponsoring: \$100 or more Renewing contributor

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Meetings & Events

PSARA Environmental Committee: 10 a.m.- 11:30 a.m., Thursday, Aug. 6, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave., Room 208, Seattle. All welcome as we determine how we can best address the causes and solutions to the fossil fuel-created climate crisis.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 6, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All welcome as we discuss taking action on important local, state, and federal issues.

Medicare, Medicaid & Social Security: Celebrating Decades of Success! 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 8, Westlake Park, 4th Ave & Pine Street, Seattle.
Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid and the 80th Anniversary of Social Security. Add your voice to the demand that Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid be expanded to address the 21st century economic realities.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 13, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. The topic of discussion will be: Health Care for All – Single Payer, ACA, What Should We Know? All are welcome. For further information contact Susan at sjlevy.01@gmail.com

PSARA Diversity Committee: 11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 20, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16 Avenue S., Seattle. Members welcome as the Committee continues planning for the next committee project.

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

Hold These Truths

Hold These Truths, written by Jeanne Sakata is a one-person play about Gordon Hirabayashi and his belief in the US Constitution. Using his words, Hirabayashi challenges the WWII curfew, mass exclusion, and subsequent incarceration of Japanese Americans dictated by President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

A University of Washington student at the time, Hirabayashi believed that the curfew and the exclusion/incarceration were unconstitutional. In a one-day trial in Seattle, he was convicted of violating curfew and exclusion orders. The US Supreme Court upheld the rulings against Hirabayashi in 1943.

However, his convictions were vacated years later (exclusion orders---1986; curfew orders---1988), because prosecuting attorneys had withheld critical and available information in 1943.

Hold These Truths has been performed numerous times and has received rave reviews. The play is being performed at ACT Theater and runs through August 16. **For ticket info: <http://www.acttheatre.org/Tickets/OnStage/HoldTheseTruths2015>**

