

Medicare Premiums and Co-Pays Set to Soar for Some in 2016

By Steve Kofahl

Beneficiaries collectively pay 25% of the costs of Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) through premiums and co-pays, and costs have increased more than expected this year. An additional \$7.5 billion to \$10 billion is needed to close the gap. However, 70% of beneficiaries will not pay higher premiums next year.

With no Social Security COLA increase in 2016, a “hold harmless” provision of the law prevents net Social Security payments from dropping due to Medicare premium increases, except for higher-income beneficiaries. Premiums will remain at \$104.90. The remaining 30% of beneficiaries will have to pay 50% higher premiums to make up the difference, an unprecedented increase, unless Congress acts.

Individuals with modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) over \$85,000 and couples over \$170,000 will pay 50% more, deducted from Social Security payments. There are four brackets of higher income beneficiaries, with a set premium level for each. Beneficiaries in the fourth tier, with MAGI over \$214,000 for an individual and \$428,000 for a couple, will have monthly premiums increase from \$335.70 to \$509.80.

In addition to those with higher incomes, the following will pay about 50% more in monthly premiums, with premiums rising from \$104.90 to \$159.30:

- 1) Beneficiaries whose premiums are not deducted from Social Security payments,
- 2) Beneficiaries first enrolled after 2015, and

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Native American Perspectives on Sovereignty Featuring Senator John McCoy

On Tuesday, November 10, from 10 a.m. to noon, the PSARA Diversity Committee is honored to host a presentation and discussion with State Senator John McCoy.

The struggle of indigenous people in Washington to address the historical, cultural, and political attacks on their sovereignty as independent nations with enforceable treaties has been an important part of Washington State history. Senator McCoy, a member of the Tulalip Tribe, will address topics such as tribal recognition, tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, and issues and challenges facing indigenous people in Washington.

Senator McCoy represents the 38th District, which includes the Everett, Marysville, and Tulalip communities in Snohomish County. He is the only self-identified Native American in the Washington State Senate.

Senator McCoy served 20 years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring in 1981 with extensive training in computer operations and programming. He worked as a computer technician in the White House from 1982-1985. He then worked in the private sector, becoming instrumental in leading the development of what is now the Quil Ceda Village Business Park on the Tulalip Reservation, serving as General Manager of the development until he retired from that position several years ago.

The forum will take place at the Washington State Labor Council offices, 321 16th Avenue S. in Seattle.



PSARA members Lisa Decker (left) and Vivian Lee (right) were part of a demonstration in front of Swedish Medical Center, demanding that Swedish adopt a more humane policy on medical debt. Also at issue is Swedish/ Providence's policy on reproductive health. Led by Washington CAN!, PSARA joined with other allies to demonstrate our concern about both issues.

(Photo courtesy of Xochitl Maykovich.)

The Retiree ADVOCATE

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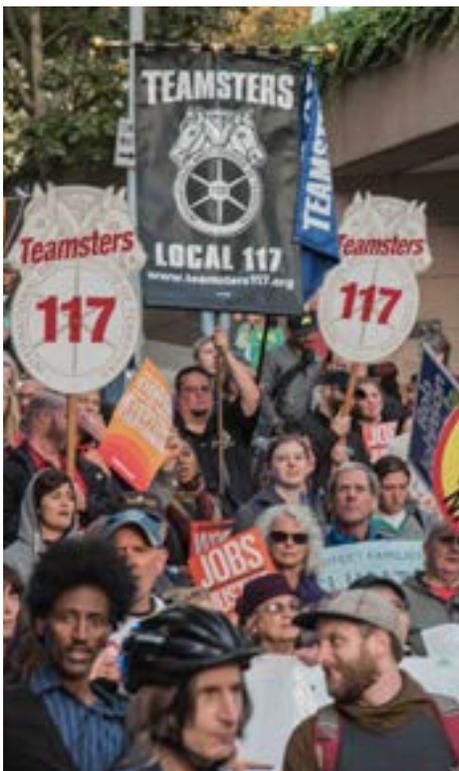
People's Climate March, October 14

Our Lives, Our Work, Our Future

Photos by Garet Munger



PPSARA members joined 1,000 labor and community activists in the October 14 People's Climate March, as part of a national day of action. After meeting at Seattle City Hall, we marched to the rally point in Occidental Park to hear a selection of inspiring speakers, including Naomi Klein. All the diverse contingents were united around a common goal -- a just transition away from a fossil-fuel-based economy. Climate change affects communities of color and low-income communities disproportionately, and we resolved that no one should be left behind in the shift to a green economy. (A review of Naomi Klein's film, "This Changes Everything" is on Page 8.)



Three Years and Counting

By Robby Stern

What will PSARA look like three years from now? The Long-Term Planning Committee and Executive Board have been discussing that question for many months. We know the following:

1. PSARA is playing a leading role in helping to build a movement in our region that demands that everyone should be able to retire and live their senior years with economic security, dignity, and respect.

2. PSARA as an organization makes a valuable contribution to the larger movements for economic and social justice, the movement to address climate justice and environmental sustainability, and the movement to fight institutionalized racism.

3. The Retiree Advocate is appreciated by our members as a good source of news, analysis, and insight.

4. We cannot continue to function as we do now. We operate as a primarily volunteer-run organization. Our growth (which is a good thing; we need to grow even more if we want to become more effective in influencing policies and elected officials) and breadth of activities has created a growing administrative and management burden. Asking a volunteer or volunteers to spend the many hours a week coordinating and carrying out this work is just not viable in the long term.

5. We need more revenue to achieve our goals. The revenue will be used to provide the management and coordination necessary to work effectively over the years to come.

As we approach our general membership meeting in December, we are facing some turnover of our leadership. Most notably, Maureen Bo, our amazing Administrative VP, is stepping down. She will remain a member of the Executive Board (if elected!) and will continue to provide leadership and coordination to our wonderful volunteers who month after month mail the Retiree Advocate to our members. But she needs to cut back on her volunteer time. She has done so much for our organization.

Also stepping down is one of our long-term Executive Board members, Rick

Erickson. Rick has been a powerful and passionate voice for workers and seniors and for progressive policies for PSARA. He will continue to volunteer when and where he can, but he is no longer able to volunteer on a regularly scheduled basis. Rick has been generous with his time, his commitment, and his financial resources, and we will miss his presence on the Board.

We have other members who are willing to step up and help, but what is clear is that we will need to either consolidate some of PSARA's functions with a larger organization with paid staff or hire staff ourselves.

The PSARA Executive Board will be coming to you, our members, at our December meeting, with organizational recommendations and By-law changes along with our annual election of officers and Executive Board members. If any of you are interested in helping more and taking on the responsibility of joining our Executive Board or becoming an officer, please contact Maureen and let her know.

I urge you not to assume that PSARA will always be here as the spunky and vibrant organization that we are. So many times I hear how wonderful PSARA is (I really appreciate hearing that!) and what a valuable resource it is in our community. Like many other organizations that are worthwhile, PSARA requires commitment, nurturing, and adaptability. We are trying to continue to meet the needs and expectations of our members and fight for the kind of community to which we all aspire. Please help us however you can.

PSARA Joins Campaign for Gates to Divest from Fossil Fuels

Led by PSARA's Environmental Committee, PSARA has joined the campaign for Bill and Melinda Gates and the Gates Foundation to move the charity's investments out of fossil fuels. Their investment level in fossil fuels is estimated at \$1.4 billion according to a tax filing from 2013.

The fossil fuel divestment movement is growing very fast. Over 440 institutions and 2,040 wealthy individuals worth over a combined \$2.6 trillion have committed



to divest. Divestment sends a message that benefitting from fossil fuel profits is immoral in the context of the growing threat of climate change. Divestment, particularly by large stock holders, creates more opportunity for education about climate change and social and political momentum for action to address the threat of climate change.

PSARA signed on to a letter to Bill and Melinda Gates that states in part: "We believe that a charitable foundation with the global reach of the Gates Foundation has a moral obligation to divest completely from the fossil fuel industry."

The letter goes on to say: "We believe that the Gates Foundation's continued investment in the fossil fuel industry runs counter to the objective of much of the philanthropic work of the Foundation, especially the work you carry out in the world's poorer nations. This is where global warming is having the most immediate impacts and science has now confirmed will only grow more devastating as time goes on."

I am personally not a huge fan of the Gates Foundation or the fact that Bill and Melinda can have so much wealth that they can have influence in so many areas of human interaction including health care and education. That being said, it seems like the addition of PSARA in this campaign is a good step in the struggle to address climate justice and environmental sustainability.

Vouching for Vouchers

By Margie Joy

I've spent quite a bit of time over the last few weeks talking to people about Initiative 122. See last month's Advocate for the details of the initiative which basically says No big money, no secret money, no shady deals, increased transparency in reporting contributions, limited spending, and more public debates.

The Seattle Times has suggested a no vote on the initiative because it budgets only enough money for 13 percent of the vouchers, and it favors incumbents. The Times editorial also said that there is a loophole in the initiative in that candidates will be encouraged to double dip--get vouchers and take contributions. I think there's another way of looking at this.

Unfortunately, not everyone votes. Under this system, for those who do vote, their votes will have more power. Candidates will woo them for their vouchers by addressing their concerns. This is not about every potential voter; it's about the ones who vote. If the number of voters increases, which would be a good thing, the initiative allows for the City Council or the Seattle

Ethics and Election Commission (SEEC) to adjust the value of the vouchers and/or their distribution. Once candidates reach their spending limit, they get no more vouchers. The math has been done on this.

As to the suggestion that incumbents have the advantage because the vouchers are distributed in January each year and many challengers do not file until the May deadline, it might be that candidates will file earlier, which would make more sense. As changes to the current system are made, other changes will follow.

The so-called "loophole" is actually a good thing in that if a challenger is getting big money, the candidate receiving the voucher is released from the limits. The initiative is trying to level the playing field, not compromise candidates who voluntarily register to be part of it. The voucher system is protected when candidates opt out of spending limits--this is not a fault in the initiative. Candidates can defend themselves if they are targeted by an independent expenditure committee (IE), and they will also be discouraged from tolerating the IEs.

A related and somewhat preposterous notion is that the initiative will increase the flow of money into political action committees. This is already happening: Look at the boondoggle over the threats made to Jon Grant last week. He was told by a developer that an IE for Tim Burgess (ironically called Seattle Needs Ethical Leaders) would disappear if Grant would halt a lawsuit against the developer.

The irony surrounding initiative 122 is not lost on me. It is ironic that 122 has big money behind it; it is ironic that it says in order to participate in the system, one must contribute money. But, sadly, it is true. This is an attempt to make the system fairer and more responsive to its citizens. And it's a start, Seattle. Will it bring world peace? End the influence of those with big money to invest in our elections? A resounding "NO" to both questions. However, it attempts to include more of us and give us more control over our political process. For that, I'm willing to vote "yes" and see what happens.

Margie Joy is a PSARA member and a member of the Retiree Advocate Editorial Board.



At left, Catherine Pottinger staffs the Transit Riders Union booth at the October 20 Make Seattle Affordable rally at Seattle City Hall. Above, PSARA President Robby Stern speaks to the rally.

(Photos: Garet Munger)

Ground-Breaking Legislation to Protect Workers

By Leonard Smith



were inundated with emails from the companies' customers. Customers were erroneously told that any regulation of the new services would doom them. In spite of those threats, the City Council emerged with a sensible plan designed to protect the public and workers. Uber and Lyft, however, had other ideas. They threatened that if the City implemented its plan, they would use the City's referendum process to overturn the work of the Council.

In response to that threat, Mayor Murray

brought stakeholders together to hammer out a compromise and head off a destructive initiative process. The sides emerged with an agreement that would allow taxis and TNCs to compete in an environment where passengers would be protected and workers could earn a living wage. Or so they thought.

Uber and Lyft call their drivers "partners" (similar to a retail business calling its workers "associates"). This is Orwellian doublespeak. Drivers are not partners, they are employees. It's as simple as that.

These so-called "partners" have no control over how much they can charge for a ride. Rates are set by Uber and Lyft. Drivers are told what year and model their cars must be and how to behave to customers. They can be terminated, or "deactivated" at any time. Deactivation means, in essence, that the car you have invested in to make a living can no longer be used to pick up passengers through the service. Drivers are often deactivated without warning, and they have no means for challenging the deactivation. If drivers are lucky enough to find someone in the company of-

fices, they are rarely told why they are not being allowed to work.

Sometimes deactivation occurs when a customer gives a driver less than a 5-star rating. A low rating can be a mistake. It can occur because the customer doesn't like the driver. Or because the customer is drunk. Or because the driver dropped the customer off in a safer location than was requested and the customer got upset. It doesn't matter. With deactivation, the driver is out of a job.

Uber and Lyft drivers are not protected by our City's new minimum-wage law. When Councilmember O'Brien held a press conference to announce the bill, one Uber driver reported earnings of less than \$3 per hour after expenses. That same day the driver was deactivated for a reason that proved to be false. It took O'Brien's intervention to get him reinstated.

So, what is the solution to ensure that drivers can earn a living wage and have basic rights on the job? A union, of course, where drivers can sit at the negotiating table as true partners and bargain an equitable contract - a contract that levels the playing field so that companies have to compete on the quality of the experience and not on the backs of their workers.

This bill can serve as a model for gig workers across the country. It has the potential to help drivers and others win a real voice and the opportunity to improve their wages and working conditions. So what can you do? Contact the City Council and tell them to support this legislation. Tell them to take it to a vote of the full Council without delay, because, as Robby Stern testified at the committee meeting, "Justice delayed is justice denied." These workers and their families can't wait.

Leonard Smith is Director of Organizing for Teamsters Local 117 and a PSARA member.

On October 2, drivers in Seattle's for-hire industry won an important victory when the City Council's Finance and Culture Committee unanimously voted to pass a bill that would give taxi, for-hire, and drivers for transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft collective bargaining rights. This is a massive step toward ensuring that workers in the new gig (i.e., on demand) economy have a voice over their conditions of employment.

Getting to this point has been an amazing journey. When Uber and Lyft first came to our city, they entered the market with a bang. They promised low-cost trips to passengers in cars that could be summoned with a smart phone. No cash was required - they had your credit card on file. If you didn't have a credit card, the service was unavailable to you. Disabled passengers in need of wheelchair accessible vehicles were also out of luck.

Uber and Lyft violated existing laws and then went on to dictate to the community what our city's public transportation policy should be. Public officials who tried to bring order to the chaos

Proposition 1-Let's Move Seattle Levy

By Katie Wilson

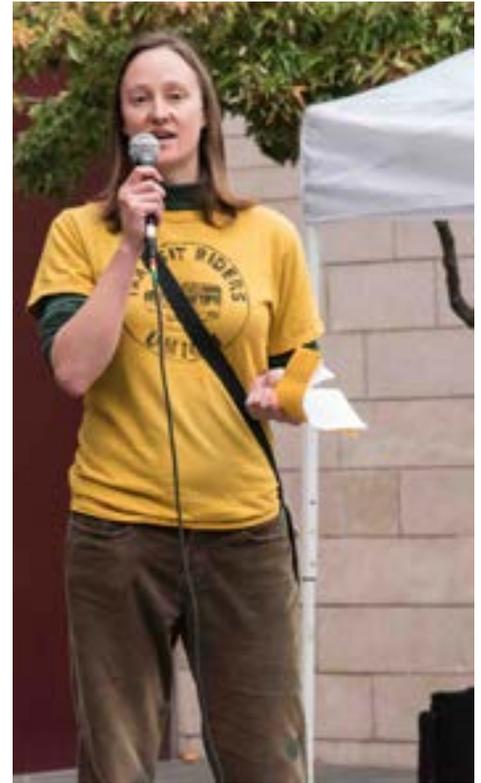
This fall, Seattle voters will decide whether to make a nine-year, \$930 million investment in our city's transportation system. Prop 1, otherwise known as the Let's Move Seattle Levy, promises to fund long-overdue improvements to Seattle's crumbling and overburdened transportation infrastructure. Highlights include seven new "Rapid Ride Plus" bus corridors; funding for a new light rail station at Graham Street and a pedestrian bridge across I-5 at Northgate; new bikeways and greenways; and new sidewalks, arterial repaving, and pothole repair.

Like last year's Prop 1 to preserve and expand Metro bus service, this levy is supported by a broad and diverse coalition of organizations and individuals, including labor, business, environmental, and social justice groups, and transit advocates – not to mention the Mayor and unanimous support from the City Council. The most prominent opponents so far are the Seattle Times and the League of Women Voters.

price tag has caused some consternation and rightly so. There is debate about how regressive or progressive property taxes shake out to be (does the cost get passed right on to renters, or not?), and uncertainty as to how voters will respond to the rapid volley of property tax measures coming our way: parks and preschool, now transportation, then on to the Seattle Housing Levy that is likely to double in 2016. This gets to the heart of bigger issues of affordability and funding in our city. Who can afford to live here, and who will foot the bill for all the basic infrastructure and services that are necessary to make a big city habitable and functional?

Seattle might be called the Emerald City for all our trees, but green is also the color of money, and a six-figure salary is increasingly the ticket to enjoying life in the leafy shade. If you ain't got the do-re-mi, well, don't let those emerald gates hit you on the way out.

But don't take my word for it: ask the



Katie Wilson is the General Secretary of the Transit Riders Union and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

(Photo: Garet Munger)

Seattle might be called the Emerald City for all our trees, but green is also the color of money, and a six-figure salary is increasingly the ticket to enjoying life in the leafy shade.

The Transit Riders Union is urging a YES vote, despite our disappointment that a more progressive funding package proposed by Councilmembers Nick Licata and Kshama Sawant was rejected this summer. As it is, Let's Move Seattle would be funded entirely by property tax, and it's the biggest levy in Seattle's history. The cost to the median homeowner is \$275 per year, but the increase is only \$145 since the levy's predecessor, Bridging the Gap, is expiring.

Seattle voters have been historically "generous" with property tax levies, and hopefully they will keep the tradition going this fall. But the \$930 million

students at Rainier Beach High School who have been organizing for student bus passes. Everyone at city hall and the school district agrees it's a travesty that low-income families should have to scrounge for bus fare so their kids can get to school, especially when youth fares have doubled from \$0.75 to \$1.50 just in the past few years. But, they say, where will we find the funding?

The scale of public investment that is needed to effectively tackle our multiple crises of homelessness, affordable housing, and underfunding of basic services simply cannot be achieved

unless we do something about our notoriously regressive tax system. That means the wealthy and the corporate class paying their fair share, too. And that means our elected officials stepping up and doing what it takes to make this happen, even if that means ruffling some feathers.

In the meanwhile, the Transit Rider's Union is recommending a Yes vote on Proposition 1 – Let's Move Seattle. At the same time we join PSARA and other progressive organizations in our commitment to fight for a fairer method of funding all of the housing and services needed to make Seattle an affordable community for all people.



PSARA MEMBERSHIP MEETING, ELECTION, AND HOLIDAY PARTY

Thursday, December 17, 2015 – 12:30 to 3:00 p.m.

***LOCATION: Greenwood Community Senior Center,
525 North 85th Street, Seattle. On Bus line #48.***

12:30 p.m. - Potluck Lunch and Socializing. Please bring a main dish, salad fruit, dessert, or soft drink to share at the party. ***RSVP needed.*** Please let us know the food item you can bring by leaving a message on the office phone: 206-448-9646 or e-mail adminvp@psara.org.

1:00 p.m. – Business meeting, election of officers, and discussion of future planning.

2:30 p.m. – Enjoy food and socializing

If you cannot drive or take public transit and need a ride, or if you can offer a ride to a member, please e-mail Maureen Bo at adminsp@psara.org or leave a message on the office phone 206-448-9646.

Ten Questions Compiled by the National AFL-CIO Concerning the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

1. How will the TPP raise American wages? While there certainly are some U.S. companies that will benefit from the TPP, how will the TPP restore the connection between increased productivity and increased wages? By encouraging and rewarding more outsourcing of jobs, it is likely to put downward pressure on U.S. wages, as prior FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) have done.

2. How will the TPP ensure labor obligations actually are enforced? Will it require an administration to self-initiate a case when another party's labor rights violations are well known? Will countries like Vietnam and Malaysia be in compliance with the labor standards on day one? Existing trade deals allow too much discretion to delay labor rights complaints or ignore them altogether. From what is publicly known about the TPP, these and other critical labor issues remain completely unaddressed.

3. How will the TPP fix our trade balance or create jobs when it contains no mechanism to control currency manipulation? Addressing currency manipulation is probably the single most effective way the United States can create jobs, as it allows U.S. products to compete on fair terms in the global marketplace. The promised TPP tariff benefits could be undermined overnight if trading partners devalue their currency. Despite urging from Congress, all reports indicate no effective currency disciplines are included in the TPP.

4. What mechanism will ensure a level playing field between foreign investors and American small businesses and their workers? Foreign investors will have access to a private justice system

— investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) — that allows them to bypass American courts and hold for ransom laws and regulations they think will interfere with their profits. This right creates an enormous influence that local businesses and workers simply won't have. The administration is characterizing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as the "most progressive trade agreement ever." Unfortunately, the administration has indicated it will remain classified to the public for some time.

5. Will the TPP ensure all parties adopt climate measures at least as strong as those the United States implements — or allow for offsetting fees at the border? If it fails to do this, then the TPP will exacerbate incentives to move production outside the United States to escape carbon reduction efforts.

6. How will the TPP adequately protect local and national control over public services? If important public services, including schools, libraries, the Post Office, and water systems aren't completely carved out of the TPP's obligations, American taxpayers may be stuck having to pay a ransom to wrest back democratic control over expensive, low-quality, private contractors.

7. Will the TPP adequately protect against unfair competition by state-owned and state-subsidized companies? Such companies often operate at a loss simply to drive U.S. competitors out of business. They also may buy U.S. companies in order to take technology to their home country, leaving U.S. workers holding the bag. It's not clear how small U.S. businesses will be able to use the TPP to fight back.



8. Will the TPP ensure the United States "writes the rules" of trade? For example, the reported weak rule of origin for automobiles ensures that China and other non-TPP countries will be able to benefit from the TPP without ever joining. That means China still can write its own rules. Americans need to know "who" is the "we" writing the rules, because it doesn't appear to be working people.

9. How will the TPP "help Americans buy American"? The TPP will require many government purchasing decisions to treat bidders from the 11 TPP countries with exactly the same preferences as U.S. bidders. Won't this actually reduce the likelihood that Americans can use their own tax money to create jobs here in the United States?

10. Will the TPP make medicines more expensive? Will the drug pricing provisions give foreign pharmaceutical companies more leverage to force Medicare to cover their products and pay higher prices for them?

Oh Canada!

Conservatives crushed in Canadian elections

By Mike Andrew

In national elections on October 19, Canada's Liberal Party crushed the ruling Conservatives, and swept back into power after 10 years in the opposition.

The Liberals picked up 150 new seats in Parliament, more than tripling their representation. The Conservatives, in contrast, saw all their gains from the past four elections wiped out.

The charismatic young Liberal leader, Justin Trudeau, is the son of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who dominated Canadian politics in the 1970s.

Canada's Liberal Party is "liberal" more in the British than in the American sense of the word. Americans would say they are "socially liberal, but fiscally conservative."

Successive Liberal governments brought in pensions for seniors, a national health care system, and same-sex marriage. On the other hand, the last time the Liberals were in power (1993-2006), they cut social spending and pushed many safety-net programs onto the provincial governments in order to balance the federal budget – imitating many policies of the USA's Ronald Reagan.

In the current election campaign, the Liberals said they would run a budget deficit for their first three years in office to fund infrastructure projects that would create jobs, give a short-term boost to Canada's sagging economy, and lay the groundwork for a more diversified future economy. After that, they promised, they would return to a balanced budget.

The Conservative Party was not the only loser. The NDP (New Democratic Party), a group of social democrats in the mold of the USA's Bernie Sanders, lost more than half of its seats in parliament, falling from second to third place in representation.



Liberal leader Justin Trudeau was seen as the best chance to dump Harper.

NDP leader Tom Mulcair was blamed for frittering away a double-digit lead in early polling. Many former NDP voters apparently shifted to the Liberals, thinking that Trudeau was a surer bet to unseat Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

In addition to new infrastructure spending, the Liberals also promised to cut taxes for middle-class Canadians and raise taxes on the rich. By doing so, the centrist Liberals positioned themselves to the left of the overly cautious NDP.

Although Harper had won three successive national elections, he was the victim of his own economic policies.

Harper's enemies accused him of "Americanizing" Canada, and his economic policies would certainly be familiar to American conservatives. For example, Harper cut income taxes across the board, and reduced federal funding for social programs. He also cut funding to climate change research and pulled Canada out of the Kyoto Protocol agreement to control greenhouse gasses.

Harper's economy increasingly depended on oil extraction, especially from the tar sands in Alberta province. That, in turn, depended on a high



Overly cautious NDP leader Tom Mulcair frittered away a double-digit lead.

global price for oil and an efficient way to export it via the United States.

Business Insider magazine estimates that falling oil prices may have cost Canada up to three percent losses in GDP, while the U.S. benefited from the lower prices with a gain of two percent in GDP.

Canada's oil industry also ran into a reinvigorated environmental movement, which blocked development of the Keystone XL pipeline that was to transport tar sands oil through the U.S. to Gulf Coast ports for export to the global market.

The Conservatives won a majority of seats only in Alberta province, which benefits directly from the oil industry and where unemployment is lower than the national average, and in neighboring Saskatchewan, also with a very low unemployment rate.

The Liberals, on the other hand, swept the Atlantic provinces, where unemployment is almost twice the national average. Trudeau's party also reversed all the gains NDP made in Quebec in the 2011 election, taking 19 seats from the social democrats in that province. Even in British Columbia, a stronghold of NDP, the Liberals came out ahead, with 17 seats to NDP's 14.

To Louise Parry

By Rachael Levine,
PSARA member and former
Executive Board member

Her lips speak
of the miles she has walked
of the attention she paid
of the care she gave.

Her eyes speak
of the signs she carried
walking with the man she married
and the hope of peace.

Her eyes speak then
of wrongs she sighted
and later righted
in solidarity with friends.

Her eyes speak
of the rivets she guided
the seeds she sowed
the notes she transcribed
the children she comforted
the food she prepared
the work of tallies, phone calls,
labels
this work she embraced
over all these long years.

Her eyes also speak
with quiet wonder
of mountains and lakes
of music and books
of daytime splashing
and campfires at night.

Her eyes speak.....wisely
from her book of life
written gently with strength
and strongly with love.

To the wonderful "doer,"Louise

Editor's note:

Louise Parry was the wife and com-
rade of our late editor, Will Parry. This
poem was written on the occasion of her
80th birthday, November 13, 2005. She
died June 29, 2006.

We remember the past to learn how
to fight for our future.

Medicare Premiums and Co-Pays Set to Soar for Some in 2016

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3) State payments of Medicare premiums for low-income Medicaid recipients. The annual Medicare Part B deductible would increase from \$147 to \$223 for everyone.

Cutting Social Security benefits for higher-income beneficiaries through increased Medicare premiums undermines public support for both programs, particularly among those with the most political power.

Beneficiaries with premiums not deducted from Social Security payments, new beneficiaries, and cash-strapped state anti-poverty programs, should not have to bear a disproportionate burden. Means-testing and inequitable premiums break faith with the social insurance underpinnings of both Social Security and Medicare, which are meant to provide equitable benefits to all who contribute.

The White House can also ask Center for Medicare and Medicare Services Secretary, Sylvia Mathews Burwell, to dip into contingency funds to close the gap, but these reserves are already too low, according to Medicare actuaries.

Senator Ron Wyden's Medicare Premium Fairness Act (S. 2148) and its companion bill in the House (H.R. 3696) would freeze premiums at 2015 levels. Please ask your lawmakers to actively support this legislation

Steve Kofahl is President of American Federation of Government Employees Local 3937 representing Social Security Administration workers and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

"Congress doesn't regulate Wall Street, Wall Street regulates Congress."

Senator Bernie Sanders

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

Name (Please print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Meetings and Events

PSARA Environmental Committee: 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Thursday, Nov. 5, **Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) office, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle.** All welcome as we assess PSARA's participation in the October 14 National Climate Action Day and plan future activities.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 5, **Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Avenue, Seattle.** All welcome as we discuss taking action on important local, state, and federal issues.

Native American Perspectives on Sovereignty Featuring State Senator John McCoy: 10:00 a.m. – noon, Tuesday, November 10, **WSLC office, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle.** All welcome. See article on Page 1.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 12, **Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle.** Brown bag lunch. The topic of discussion will be "Separation of Church & State—What Do Recent Events Mean?" All are welcome. For further information contact Susan at sjlevy.01@gmail.com

PSARA Diversity Committee: 11 a.m. – noon, Thursday, Nov. 19, **WSLC office, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle.** All welcome as the Committee continues planning for more long-term work.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 19, **WSLC office, 321 16th Avenue S., Seattle.** All are welcome.

PSARA General Membership Meeting & Holiday Party: 12:30 – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, December 17, **Greenwood Community Senior Center, 525 N. 85th Street, Seattle.** Help shape PSARA's future, join the holiday fun, and add to the potluck!! More information on Page 7 of the newsletter.

