

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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January 2018

Meet the New PSARA
Co-Presidents

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Join PSARA for MLK Day, Monday, January 15, 2018

Retirement Security Workshop 9:30 a.m., Rally 11 a.m., March 12:30 p.m.

PSARA will participate once again in the annual Martin Luther King Day rally and march on Monday, January 15.

This year we'll also present a workshop – “The Fight to Defend and Expand Social Security and Medicare.”

Please join us to discuss this vital topic at 9:30 a.m. at Garfield High School, 400 23rd Avenue, Seattle. If you can't make it to the workshop, the rally starts at 11 a.m. in the Garfield gym, followed by a march downtown at 12:30 p.m. Look for the PSARA banner.

Our workshop presentation is especially timely as we head into the second year of the Trump administration.

The Republicans' tax scam and their attacks on health care have made it clear that they are engaged in a major assault on our country's social insurance and safety net programs – Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and more. We cannot let them succeed and roll the clock back. In our fight to defend these programs, we must also demand their expansion and improvement in order to win health care and a secure retirement for everyone in our country as basic human rights.

Dr. King was a great champion of health and economic justice, and these are core demands today as we resist Trump and the Republicans' agenda in Washington State and Washington DC. Also, we cannot succeed without tackling the things that keep us from being truly united – racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, anti-immigrant prejudice, class and regional differences.

The workshop features PSARA members Steve Bauck, retired Director of Advocacy and Agency Relations for Northwest Harvest; David Loud, life-long social justice activist who worked over 45 years in health care, the last 10 for Congressman Jim McDermott; and Mark McDermott, lifelong activist in labor, economic justice, immigrant rights, and faith-based social justice movements.

The ML King Day workshop is cosponsored by the Health Care is a Human Right coalition.



PSARA members at ML King Day 2017
(Photo: Garet Munger)

Want to Go Birding with PSARA? You Still Have Time to RSVP! Saturday, January 6, 2018

Want to go birdwatching? This time we're headed to the Skagit Flats, one of the major stopping places for northern migrants, at the request of some of our wonderful PSARA members to the north and their friends. We will look for Tundra and Trumpeter Swans, Snow Geese, Short-Eared Owls and hopefully Rough-legged Hawks and other raptors, as well as migrating sea ducks. Maybe this will be a Snowy Owl year.

We plan to carpool from Karen's house in West Seattle at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, January 6, returning before dinner. Or we can meet you along the way as we carpool north. Bring your binocs if you have them (extras will be available), a lunch, and a donation to PSARA. Email Karen at kerichter100@gmail or call her at 206 679-3295 for more details. The rain date is Saturday, January 20th.

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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Expanding Our Reach

By *Bob Swanson*



As PSARA's newly-elected Outreach Vice President, I want to carry on the amazing work that Susan Levy and Vivian Lee did in reaching out to individuals and organizations to further the mission of PSARA.

As an organization, PSARA has made a commitment to take our work statewide. It's important to me – and I know it's important to you – to make that commitment a reality.

To that end, we will establish an Outreach Committee that will focus on how to develop local leaders in as many legislative districts as we can, organize the distribution of information, and maximize opportunities to present our priorities.

The Making Retirement Security Real for Everyone workshops will be a major part of this outreach. We will coordinate with the Education Committee to find as many locations as possible to do these presentations.

We need your help in this outreach. If there is an organization that you can ask to have this presentation, please contact me so we can get them scheduled. We will focus our outreach to individuals and organizations in labor, communities of color, and the faith community. But we will speak to any group that's interested. If you could help us with at least one group to present to that would be excellent. The more the merrier.

We also need trained presenters to take our workshops to all these organizations. You don't need special skills, just a willingness to talk to people about Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid and the reasons we need to protect and expand them.

PSARA will hold a training for presenters on Monday, January 22, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., at the Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Avenue S, Seattle.

If you or someone you know would be a good candidate for the Outreach Committee, or a potential workshop presenter, or if you have a location to do a Retirement Security presentation, please let me know: robertcswanson@comcast.net or 206-661-4207.

Save the Date! Saturday, February 17, 2018, at 2:00 p.m.

**PSARA House Concert, featuring Clallam County
"Seattle's Slowest Rising Folk Group"**

For the past 37 years, Seattle-based folk/bluegrass group Clallam County and its original members Peter McKee, Pat McIntyre, and Judy Oerkvitz, have performed their unique blend of original, traditional and delusional folk/Americana music throughout the Northwest.

With their songs of hope, resistance, and laughter, they will get you riled up and maybe even singing along in harmony. Celebrate the afterglow of Valentine's Day and show your love for PSARA by joining Clallam County at this intimate house concert to benefit PSARA.

Robby Stern and Dina Burstein have graciously offered their home for this event. We'll have beer, wine, and finger food for you to enjoy along with the music.

Robby and Dina's home holds 40 people for an event like this, so be sure to make your reservations ASAP by emailing organizer@psara.org or calling Mike Andrew at 206 261-8110. Please indicate the number of seats you would like to reserve.

Introducing Your New PSARA Co-presidents

Interview with Jessica Bonebright and Tim Burns

By Mike Andrew

For the first time in almost nine years, PSARA has a new president – in fact two new presidents – at the helm. Robby Stern has stepped down after a long and successful run as PSARA President, and Jessica Bonebright and Tim Burns have stepped up as Co-Presidents.

“Between the two of us we should be able to fill at least one of Robby’s shoes,” Tim laughed when I sat down to talk to them about their plans for the organization.

Both Jessica and Tim come with substantial experience in labor organizing and community groups and have already taken on key leadership roles in PSARA.

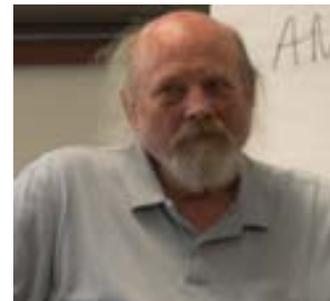
Jessica was on staff with SPEEA, the Boeing engineers’ union, and was also a past president of the Martin Luther King County Labor Council. Before being elected Co-President, she was PSARA’s Membership VP.

Tim was a machinist at Northwest Airlines for more than 39 years and an active member of IAM 1040. He was also Chair of the 30th Legislative District Democrats. Tim has been the longtime Co-Chair of PSARA’s Government Relations Committee.

Both joined PSARA because of the organization’s visibility and record of activism.

“After I retired from the airline I was looking for a retiree organization to get involved in,” Tim told me. “I remember Robby made a presentation to a King County Democrats meeting. When I talked to him afterwards, he invited me to come to a PSARA meeting, and I don’t think I’ve missed a meeting since.”

“When I retired I knew I wanted to stay active,” Jessica said. “I’ve been into progressive activism my whole life. I always saw Robby or Maureen out there with PSARA, so I joined. I didn’t really envision moving into leadership, but it seems like in no time I was moving up the ranks.”



New PSARA Co-Presidents Jessica Bonebright and Tim Burns

“I’ll tell you, it was a big learning curve,” she added. “It’s a full time job.”

“And then some!” Tim exclaimed.

When I asked them about PSARA post-Robby, both expressed confidence mixed with concerns.

“Robby built the organization to where we have the resources to hire a staff person,” Jessica told me. “I hope we don’t lose ground. Robby knew how to run meetings and keep them interesting. But when I look at the caliber of our other leaders, the Executive Board and the Committee members, I feel we can do it.”

“I have complete admiration for Robby,” Tim replied. “Robby has been the voice and the face of PSARA. I hope we’ll see a continued upward trend, even though I don’t know right now exactly what it’s going to look like.”

“Fewer and fewer people are able to retire, so we’ll always have a pool of future members,” Jessica added. “In the Trump era people seem more motivated and more active.”

“Politics are important not only for our members but for everybody now,” Tim said. “We’ve got to continue to speak truth to power. The truth is on our side.”

“PSARA can be the organizational structure to build power and give people an avenue for activism,” Jessica concluded.

Although both Jessica and Tim have

been around PSARA for a while, I asked if they’d been surprised by anything.

“That we’ve been able to draw together diverse talent and activism,” Tim answered. “We’ve got people who paddle kayaks, we’ve got people who were Black Panthers...”

“Yes, I’m so impressed by PSARA’s diversity,” Jessica agreed. “The challenge is to improve on that. That’s so critical to our success.”

“Everyone has an issue,” Tim observed. “We have to find out what people’s issues are.”

“It will take two of us just to keep up with all the relationships – our committees, coalitions, our partners – that’s our strength,” Jessica said.

Finally I asked what they wanted PSARA members to know about them.

“We’re not Robby, but we’ll try to carry on in ‘Robby mode,’” Tim said. “There will be hiccups in the transition, and there will be some changes, but people will see us building on our values and strengths.”

“Our values are under attack,” Jessica stated. “People with money and power are out to destroy the things we rely on. It’s time for people to step up. After all, there’s a lot more of us than there are of them.”

“PSARA can be the vehicle for people to get involved. There are people out there who need to hear from us. They need to see us.”

How the 'Millennium Migration' from Latin America Shaped the US for the Better, Part II

By Peter Constantini, Reprinted from *Foreign Policy in Focus*

The taco-truck multiplier

With nearly a decade of hindsight, it is clear that on balance there never was an immigration crisis in an economic sense. The Millennium Migration produced modest but tangible benefits for the great majority of native consumers and workers.

The preponderance of research shows that native-born workers experienced net gains in incomes and employment from immigration. There was no correlation between the proportion of undocumented immigrants in an area and lower wages or employment. Benefits were stronger for middle and higher-wage workers. But even the 6 percent of the workforce with less than a high-school diploma experienced few to no negative effects on the average. Rather, their falling incomes and rising insecurity were overwhelmingly caused by automation, outsourcing, stagnant minimum wages, and declining unionization. And their wages dropped much further in areas with few immigrants than in areas with many.

Mexican immigrants brought with them a hundred-year tradition of navigating the immense northerly economy. Some returned to places where local farms and businesses had welcomed them back year after year. Grapevines cultivated over decades of annual migrations following the harvests helped them find work and avoid conflicts. New immigrants needed a paycheck right away to eat and send remittances home, so they tended to stay away from areas with higher unemployment, and gravitated to places with plentiful low-wage jobs. If they didn't find work or encountered competition in one place, they were much more likely than natives to move on and look for work elsewhere.

Labor markets for undocumented workers and for natives were often segmented, complementing rather than competing with each other. Close to half of the undocumented hadn't finished high school, and many lacked experience transferrable to North American workplaces. Most did not speak much English. Few could compete with, much less "steal jobs" from, native workers. Instead, new-

comers often "bumped up" natives into jobs requiring better communications skills in English. The resulting specialization of labor increased efficiency and productivity. The group that experienced the most competition was previous immigrants.

The expanded workforce lowered prices for products such as produce and houses. Many immigrants were necessarily entrepreneurial, and started small businesses more often than natives. All immigrants brought their purchasing power to their new communities, increasing demand for goods and services and helping their economies grow.

Undocumented immigrants are also much less likely to commit crimes or be imprisoned than comparable U.S. natives. All pay local taxes and many pay national ones, but they use very few public services and collect virtually no public benefits.

Most labor unions and low-income community organizations have recognized immigrants as allies, not enemies. The infrequent cases of friction between immigrant and native workers have nearly always been fomented by employers trying to divide and conquer by pitting groups against each other. The best way to prevent abuse of immigrants, most organizers agree, is to join forces to protect everyone's human and labor rights.

Can the arc of the moral universe cross borders?

The rights of immigrants are nearly the same as those of natives. When people cross a border into another country, they bring their basic rights with them regardless of immigration status. International law and human rights treaties guarantee most human, civil, and economic rights to all, not just citizens.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants strongly criticized the United States in 2007 for failing to comply with international law protecting immigrants against abuse and discrimination. And the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States has delivered two judgements against the U.S. for

discriminating against Mexican workers based on their immigration status.

The US Constitution and labor laws also guarantee most rights to all people living and working in the country, not just citizens. Morally, as well, entering the country without permission is clearly not a crime comparable to any of the felonies we often associate with the term. Rather, it's an administrative infraction not too different from parking overtime, or trespassing for a benign purpose.

Yet despite the widespread benefits brought by the Millennium influx, nativists and restrictionists have long deployed legislative and public relations machinery that manufactures "illegals" out of undocumented human beings.

A 50-year series of law and policy changes have reduced immigration quotas for Mexicans and Central Americans to levels so low that, practically, there is no line they could wait on to migrate legally. They have also criminalized immigration by turning simply re-entering the country, along with other civil infractions and minor misdemeanors, into phony "aggravated felonies." Enforcement growth on steroids has swept greatly increased numbers into a judicial assembly line which railroads prisoners through in large groups, making a travesty of due process. Excessive prison sentences and deportations mete out disproportionate punishments for non-criminal actions, tearing apart families and communities.

To kids who are afraid to go to school because their mom and dad might be gone when they get home, this must feel a lot like a police state.

Legislation guaranteeing yearly minimums of prisoners has funneled a generous revenue stream into private prison corporations. Their owners have in turn filled the coffers of their legislative enablers.

To overworked parents imprisoned for minor immigration infractions, the detention centers must look a lot like a gulag.

Peter Constantini is a PSARA member. This is Part II of a longer article first published in Foreign Policy in Focus. Part I ran in the December Advocate, and the rest of the article will appear in future issues.

Summit on Fighting Right-To-Work

By Robby Stern

Across the US the Koch brothers and other right-wing billionaires are funding efforts to silence public and private sector workers and their unions by promoting "right-to-work". Billionaire-funded organizations in Washington State are supporting the "right-to-work" agenda. The goal is to sharply diminish and/or eliminate the economic and political power of unions and organized workers. This is one part of a larger strategy by right-wing oligarchs and their allies to consolidate political and economic control of our country.

PSARA members are invited to a summit on "Fighting Right-to-Work", sponsored by the Washington State Labor Council, Monday, February 5, 2018, at the SeaTac Hilton Hotel, 17620 International Blvd, SeaTac from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. RSVP required.

"Right-to-work" laws mean that workers who gain higher wages and benefits through union-led collective bargaining are legally entitled not to pay dues or a representation fees to their unions.

At the same time, the union is required to represent these non-dues-paying workers in collective bargaining and in disputes with the employer. The goal of right-to-work is to significantly damage the income of unions.

The Janus vs. AFSCME case will be heard before the US Supreme Court this coming spring. The case would establish "right-to-work" in the public sector. It is widely believed that the right-wing US Supreme Court will decide against organized labor and that all public sector unions in the US will be subject to "right-to-work". The Pacific Legal Foundation (Bellevue, WA) and the Evergreen Freedom Foundation (Olympia), as well as President Trump's U.S. Justice Department have filed amicus briefs supporting "right-to-work."

The Summit will share best practices and skills for building stronger unions in the presence of "right-to-work". It will also discuss gaining public support for unions as they organize in a "right-to-work" environment.

Nationally, and in our state, unions



have stood with PSARA as we educated and organized to preserve and expand Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Washington State unions are important allies and supporters of PSARA. Now is a critical time for PSARA to stand with the labor movement as it faces this ferocious attack.

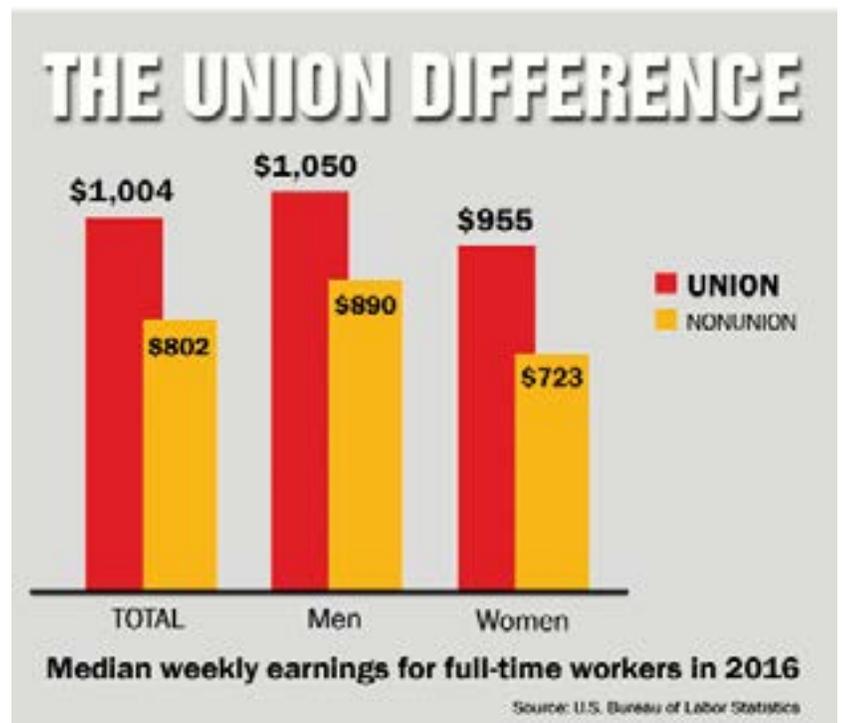
If you would like to attend the summit, please RSVP to organizer@psara.org or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646.

Why Unions?

The chart at right illustrates one important benefit of unions. Union workers get higher wages than non-union ones. That's especially important at a time when real wages have been stagnant for decades and income inequality is on the rise.

What the chart doesn't illustrate is the second great benefit of unions. Unions can be instruments of power -- economic and political power -- for working people. We're stronger when we're organized and we use our resources for a common purpose. We can win a voice on the job and a voice in our communities as well.

Right-wing billionaires hate unions for both reasons. They would have us work for nothing if they could, and they want to keep us powerless to fight for a better world.



What Do We Do? We Fight!

The full-page newspaper ad at right was placed in the *Seattle Times* by the Washington State Labor Council and cosponsored by PSARA, along with several other retiree organizations and unions.

Several PSARA members stepped up to donate money for the ad when the call went out for help.

Similar ads -- each one targeting a Republican member of Congress -- were placed in newspapers all around the state.

As we know, the ads, the phone calls to Congressional offices, the protests at public appearances by members of Congress didn't stop all the Republican members of our Congressional delegation from voting for the Trump tax giveaway.

In the end, Congress passed the tax bill pretty much on a party-line vote, with only a handful of blue-state Republicans voting No. Trump signed the bill on December 22.

Even worse, Speaker Paul Ryan plans to slash Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid -- programs we rely on -- to help finance this corporate raid on the national treasury.

Legislation to cut these essential programs -- which, by the way, we've already paid for with our taxes -- may come early in 2018.

We have to be ready for the fight.

For PSARA this means both challenges and opportunities.

The challenge, of course, is to go beyond merely defending what we have and demanding expansion of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

We have an opportunity to grow PSARA as a multi-generational organization leading the fight for retirement security for everyone. It will be a fight, but we know how to fight. And when we fight, we win.



Rep. Dave Reichert

Next, they're coming for your Social Security and Medicare.

Rep. Dave Reichert (R-Auburn) and his colleagues are about to vote on "tax reform" legislation that the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office says will mostly benefit corporations and the wealthy, will raise taxes on lower-income Americans, and will add an estimated \$1.4 trillion to the budget deficit over the next decade.¹ This tax giveaway will cost more than \$5,700 for every adult in the United States!

Even worse, if this passes, they plan to cut Social Security and Medicare benefits to help pay for it.

How do we know? They said so!

Even before their tax giveaway has passed, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Florida) said, "You also have to bring spending under control... The driver of our debt is the structure of Social Security and Medicare."²

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) says he wants Republicans to focus in 2018 on reducing spending on "entitlement" programs, including Social Security and Medicare.³

Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, said that House Republicans will soon turn toward "tackling the entitlements."⁴

Entitlements. That's what some politicians call the Social Security and Medicare benefits that you've paid for your entire working life. They are planning to cut those essential benefits that you earned for your health care and basic necessities. Why? So they can pay for trillion-dollar tax cuts for the wealthy.



It's not too late to stop this.

Any day now, a final vote will happen in the House on this tax giveaway to corporations and the wealthy. **Call Rep. Dave Reichert TODAY at 202-225-7761 in Washington, D.C. and 509-885-6615 in Wenatchee** and tell him to vote NO on this "tax reform" legislation.

And tell him to keep his HANDS OFF the Social Security and Medicare benefits that you have earned.

1. "Senate GOP tax bill hurts the poor more than originally thought, CBO finds," *The Washington Post* (11-26-17)
2. "Sen. Rubio tells a secret: After giving a tax cut to the rich, GOP will cut Social Security and Medicare," *The Los Angeles Times* (11-30-17)
3. "GOP eyes post-tax-cut changes to welfare, Medicare and Social Security," *The Washington Post* (12-1-17)
4. "Republicans May Use Cuts in Entitlement Programs to Reduce Deficit," *The New York Times* (11-15-17)

A message from the working men, women and retirees of the following organizations:

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO	North Central Washington CLC	UFCW 21
Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans	American Federation of Teachers, Washington	Teamsters 117
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action	Washington Education Association	Machinists 751
Retired Public Employees of Washington	Wash. Federation of State Employees/AFSCME	SEIU 1199NW

Learn more and get updates on this tax giveaway at The Stand — www.thestand.org

Paid for by the Washington State Labor Council and the above-listed unions—321 16th Ave. S., Seattle, WA, 98144

PSARA Membership Meeting

Big Changes, New Leaders, Renewed Dedication

Photos by Garet Munger

PSARA's longtime President, Robby Stern, stepped down after almost nine years at the helm of our organization. At right, newly-elected Membership Co-VPs, Bobby Righi and Karen Richter, express our appreciation for Robby and Dina. Below, PSARA Executive Board Member Garry Owens shares memories of almost 50 years of friendship with Robby.



While some leaders step down, new ones come forward to carry on the work. Below right, newly elected Co-President Tim Burns introduces new Government Relations Committee Co-Chairs Mindi Lee and Pam Lux.



PSARA members look forward to another year with new officers, new energy, and renewed dedication to the organization and our mission.

Would You Buy a Used Tax Bill from This Man?

By Mike Andrew

Republicans were quite blunt about why they wanted – no, needed – to pass the Trump tax giveaway. And it wasn't to help the middle class, create jobs, or stimulate economic growth.

Very simply put, they had to pass the tax bill because their rich backers were demanding a payoff for all the money they invested in electing them and Trump. Getting a return on investments is an axiom of capitalism, after all.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, for example, predicted political disaster if the tax bill failed.

"The party fractures, most incumbents in 2018 will get a severe primary challenge, a lot of them will probably lose, the base will fracture, the financial contributions will stop, other than that it'll be fine," he warned.

His House colleague Chris Collins also admitted that he was facing pressure from donors to ensure the GOP tax cut proposal got done.

"My donors are basically saying, 'Get it done or don't ever call me again,'" Collins said

And how faithfully Republicans delivered! According to an analysis published by the AFL-CIO, investment banks, hedge funds, and other Wall Street firms are the biggest winners from this tax bill.

The richest 1% of households will receive 83% of tax cuts, and the richest 0.1% will get an average tax cut of more than \$148,000. The tax bill is full of complex tax gimmicks that would encourage tax dodging while enriching lawyers and accountants.

House Ways and Means Chair Kevin Brady of Texas intervened to slash the top tax rate from 39.6 percent to 37 percent, because, he claimed, he wanted to offer relief to people who would pay more because the SALT (State and Local Tax) deduction had been limited. Apparently only the richest taxpayers – couples earning more than \$600,000 – merited tax relief.

On the other hand, the average household making less than \$75,000 would pay more in taxes by the year 2027. In all, 70 million households making less than \$100,000 eventually would pay more.

All this at a time when corporations are already "sitting on a record amount of cash reserves: nearly \$2.3 trillion," according to former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who should know.

Some powerful Republican lawmakers even managed to get special deals for their own favored donors. Senator Lisa Murkowski, for example, sold her vote in return for a section of the new tax bill that authorizes oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Some even sold their votes for personal financial gain. Senator Ron Johnson, for example, originally opposed the tax cuts, but later changed his vote to Yes after a deduction for pass-through businesses like his own was increased.

Johnson admitted to reporters that raising the pass-through deduction to 23 percent was what secured his support for the bill. While this change will add another \$60 billion to the cost of the tax package, it will give Johnson a tidy little tax break.

Self-proclaimed deficit hawk Bob Corker also sold his vote for a tax break. Although he too initially opposed the tax bill, Corker suddenly became a Yes vote after the conference committee added a provision that would give real estate investors an extra tax cut.

Because of Corker's real estate holdings, the provision could personally save him more than \$1 million.



(Photo: NBC News)

Corker's only defense was to claim that he hadn't actually read the bill before changing his vote and therefore wasn't guilty of self-dealing. In other words, "I'm not a crook, I'm just a fool."

Plenty of other GOP lawmakers, including Speaker Paul Ryan, also stand to benefit from the way the bill handles taxes on pass-through income.

According to the *International Business Times*, 14 Republican lawmakers – including some of the Senate's most powerful figures like Orrin Hatch, Lamar Alexander, and Rand Paul – have between \$36 million and \$163 million worth of real-estate or property-related investments. In 2016, those 14 legislators earned between \$2.6 million and \$16 million of annual income from those investments, and all are now entitled to big tax deductions.

Trump himself stands to benefit from the very same provisions. According to *Forbes* magazine, Trump could save \$11 million per year on his real estate holdings. And because the Trump tax bill drastically cuts inheritance taxes, Don Jr., Ivanka, Eric, Tiffany, and Barron will get an extra \$4.4 million when the old man dies.

Regulators OK deal that could close Colstrip coal plant by 2027

\$10 million in transition funds will go to workers, community

By Marc Krasnowsky

Washington State utility regulators have approved a deal that paves the way for closing the Colstrip, Montana, coal-fired power plant by the end of 2027 and provides \$10 million in transition funding. Whether the funding spells justice for Colstrip's 360 power plant workers, 400 coal miners, and overwhelmingly coal-dependent economy remains to be seen.

On December 5, the state Utilities and Transportation Commission ruled on a rate case brought by Puget Sound Energy, which supplies electricity and natural gas to more than one million Washington State customers. King County represents half of PSE's service territory, and environmental/clean energy groups in the area have long argued for closing the Colstrip plant, which soon will be the only direct provider of coal-fired electricity to the Pacific Northwest.

Deals already are in place to transition the Boardman, Oregon, and Centralia, Washington, generating facilities off of coal and to close Colstrip units 1 and 2 by 2022. PSE is the largest owner of Colstrip generating unit Nos. 3 and 4.

The settlement approved by the Washington commission -- worked out between PSE and the NW Energy Coalition, Sierra Club, Renewable Northwest, Natural Resources Defense Council, the consumer/low-income advocacy group the Energy Project and others -- allows a small electricity-rate increase so PSE can recoup its Colstrip investments by 2027.

When we wrote about the Colstrip issue in the September 2017 *Retiree Advocate*, environmental groups and others, including PSARA, were calling for a 2025 closing target. The two-year delay is less important than the pledge of \$10 million in worker and community transition funding, with half that money coming from PSE shareholders rather than consumers.

Just how that money will be spent is yet to be determined. The amount

could grow larger with commitments from the other Colstrip owners and would come on top of the \$4.6 million the federal government awarded Montana this August to retrain coal workers across the state.

PSARA's full support for coal-plant transitions hinges on economic justice for affected workers and their communities, who are not to blame for a dirty-energy industry that puts everyone at risk from deadly pollution and devastating climate change.

Moves toward a clean-energy economy are key to safeguarding humanity's future. But combating climate change cannot become an excuse for ending union-wage jobs, hanging workers out to dry, and then offering insecure, low-wage, and benefits-free renewable energy jobs in return.

At a recent NW Energy Coalition conference panel on Just Transitions, Washington State Labor Council President Jeff Johnson pointed out the dirty little secret that a lot of the new clean energy jobs come with minimum wages and no benefits. "These have got to be better jobs," Johnson insisted.

Meanwhile, he said, the labor movement's general feeling is that not enough has been offered Colstrip workers. He cited former Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (now part of the Steelworkers) leader Tony Mazzocchi's call for a "Superfund for Workers," so we can "treat workers and communities as well as we treat dirt."

Mazzocchi argued that "paying people to make the transition from one kind of economy -- from one kind of job -- to another is not welfare" and that those who've spent their lives working in toxic industries to satisfy society's material and energy demands "deserve a helping hand to make a new start in life."

Instead, Johnson said, our policy on dislocated workers has been "Good luck. That's not good enough anymore."



Colstrip in action
(Photo: SpotUs/Flickr)

So, will the Colstrip settlement provide economic equity for Colstrip? The Johnson/Mazzocchi standard won't be met without additional commitments from Colstrip's other owners and effective advocacy from labor interests on the various boards and commissions that will divvy up the funds. But it's surely better than an always-possible corporate cut-and-run that leaves workers and their communities with nothing other than a polluted mess.

This and future settlements must flow from the concept that we're all going to fry together if we don't guarantee climate and environmental equity to poor people, communities of color, women, those suffering sex and gender oppression, and workers throughout the world.

We must all stand in solidarity with our union sisters and brothers facing career-ending closures at Colstrip and other fossil-fueled facilities. Those workers and working families everywhere would benefit from funding a truly just transition that creates good jobs in renewable energy and energy efficiency, training for those jobs, and replacement income.

(For an interesting history, check out the Labor Network for Sustainability's "Just Transition -- Just What Is It?" <http://www.labor4sustainability.org/uncategorized/just-transition-just-what-is-it/>)

Marc Krasnowsky is a member of PSARA's Environmental Committee.

The Diverse Coalition Emerging Around Public Banking

By Cindy Ann Cole and John M. Repp

When the Seattle City Council passed the 2018 budget, it contained a \$100,000 appropriation for a feasibility study for a Seattle Public Bank. The Council has a long, many-step process for deciding what gets put in the final budget. Public comment and testimony is part of the process. Several members of the Seattle Public Banking Coalition went to City Hall on November 1, 2017, to testify. There was a huge crowd there as we arrived, and we got slot number 87. The big issue was stopping the sweeps of homeless camps. And we supported that.

In the course of the testimony of many young activists for all kinds of needs our "prosperous" city is not meeting, we heard informed and impassioned testimony for a public bank! That is when we realized that there is a diverse coalition emerging which understands what Wall Street banks are doing to destroy our country. And that a public bank has the potential to meet some of our city's needs. The next morning we heard that the first "balanced" budget did not have the money in it for a feasibility study. We immediately contacted our supporters to email their city council members, and so did activists of 350.org, Democratic

Socialists and others. The City Council was flooded with emails. The next iteration and the final 2018 budget had the \$100K appropriation in it.

On December 1, 2017, at the Economic Opportunity Institute, this emerging coalition got together face-to-face and on speakerphone to discuss next steps. Sitting around the table or on the phone were activists from Black Lives Matter, local tribal members of the Standing Rock Coalition, 350.org, Democratic Socialists, and MLK County Labor Council as well as several experienced bankers, retired government officials, and a law school teacher. We understand this type of emerging coalition is happening all over the country in our big cities with public banking, and hopefully other cross-class issues.

Now we know that a feasibility study is not a public bank. If we had to battle for \$100K for a feasibility study, imagine how



John Repp and Cindy Cole

much we will need to battle for the capital of a public bank that is large enough to be a depositor for Seattle.

The Seattle City Council is committed to stop banking with Wall Street because they invest in deadly new fossil fuel infrastructure and practice fraud as a business model. We need a Seattle Municipal Public Bank that will invest in affordable housing, renewable energy, and other pressing needs for the good of all in our city.

Cindy Cole and John Repp are PSARA members.

Cracked Callus

By Bob Shimabukuro

This is a photo of the POTUS, VPotus, his cabinet, family, advisors, and Congressional members of his party. Over the past few months, they have caused me great anger and distress, but on Tuesday this week, they popped the cork, so to speak, and opened wounds that I could not explain.

Looking at the heel this afternoon (December 21), my doctor told me not to worry. This is alright; it's recovering nicely; it's just a case of a big callus that cracked open, but since it isn't infected it should be okay. She also recommended a podiatrist who might want to shave some of the callus off.

"Okay," I said, as my mind told me that what she'd said was, "She (the podiatrist)

might prescribe that some members of Congress might get shaved down."

"How's that going to help the Prez and Congress behave like real human beings?" I asked myself. Couldn't answer that. But my doctor also added that the podiatrist could tell me how my callus got so big, and how that could be prevented. Since there is another big callus on my other foot, I was certainly concerned and worried. She gave me other advice on making sure that it doesn't get infected and/or expanded.

As I walked out of the doctor's office later, she wished me a happy solstice. I couldn't help but notice that I was feeling more relaxed than when I walked into the office.



But when I got out of the building, I thought about Alice's photo of those guys and just burned. It's hard to take. Their smug faces, too. Really.

Let's catch a deep, deep breath; then keep moving on. We have to.

Bob Shimabukuro is Associate Editor of The Retiree Advocate and Co-chair of PSARA's Race/Gender Equity Committee.

Fighting the Greed

By Garry Owens



Garry Owens

One of the questions of the day for the 65+ population in this country is how could our paid taxes since 1965 (the year Medicare/Medicaid were created) be considered a "political football" by politicians and corporate moguls who have managed to stash away 28 trillion dollars in the Cayman Islands? For me the answer is simple: greed and insensitivity!

We are the richest nation in the world and yet there are politicians who believe it is OK for the government to back away from a program that provides health care for older citizens. We were led to believe that working hard for 30, 40, 50 years would, could and should offer us the opportunity to have health care coverage as we suffer the inevitable age-related ailments in our golden years. We know the money of our individual and collective contributions were there in the national treasury. But now, as a result of the tax scam legislation – Medicare and Medicaid will become a rhetorical political football. They will say "entitlements" must be limited.

Give me a break! A former co-worker provided a saying that is appropriate. "I was born at night but not last night!"

If you are young or old, it seems to be OK, according to the Republican majority, for the government to leave you behind.

Many of the members of Congress seem to believe that we cannot mount a movement to resist their heinous actions and policies that will inevitably create stress and despair for seniors. Their actions are wrong, cruel, deceitful, and violate our civil and human rights on many levels.

Fifty-two years ago, when President Johnson (with former President Truman at his side) signed Medicare into law to help the elderly population access needed health care services. It was intended as a first step, but the decades long call for "Medicare for all" has fallen on the deaf ears of most national politicians.

We know that when Medicare was first proposed in the late 1950s as a national health insurance program, it was thought that the "private" system was good enough for the time-being. We also know that other countries did not follow the U.S. example. They established "health care for all" as the ethical pathway for their governments to follow.

The U.S has, for the most part, remained reliant on the private system. The politicians adopted the rhetoric that a government-funded program would erode the trust between patient and doctor. What we know is that it was really about protecting the profits of insurance companies and other centers of profit in the enormously inefficient health care

system.

Now we are at another historic juncture that challenges our values, our pocket books, and the decision makers in Washington DC.

Our nation spends billions on weapons of mass destruction allegedly because other countries are determined to take away our democracy and resources. The drive to war is considered more important than the basic human right of health care from birth to death. The greed of the wealthy and the political power behind that greed get in the way of the preservation and expansion of Medicare and Medicaid.

At PSARA I hope we share the determination to actively resist Trump and the Republican Party oligarchy. I hope that our state of mind is that we will not allow our age group to become a historical footnote that generated no real political traction. We should make sure that we continue to say like was said in the sixties: "Hell no, we won't go!" Not without one hell of a fight.

Garry Owens is a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

Don't Miss Senior Lobby Day February 22

You can sign up now for Senior Lobby Day, Thursday, February 22, 2018.

Registration begins at 8 a.m. in Olympia, and we can expect to return to Seattle at approximately 3 p.m. after meeting with our legislators.

PSARA will try to arrange rides for everyone who wants to go, but please RSVP ASAP. Let us know if you need a ride or if you can offer rides to other PSARA members.

RSVP to govrelations@psara.org or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646.

This is our chance to get face-to-face with our elected representatives. Reserve your place now!

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

Name (Please print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Meetings and Events

PSARA Fundraising Committee: 10:30 a.m. - Noon, Tuesday, January 2, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All are welcome.

West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes: Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 3, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). *Civic Poet Claudia Castro Luna talks about poetry and how to write poetry.* Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Environmental Committee: 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, January 4, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All welcome.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, January 4, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 1st Ave., Room 226. All welcome.

Go Birding With PSARA: Saturday, January 6. See details on Page 1

PSARA Education Committee: 10 a.m., Tuesday, January 9, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, January 11, Green Lake Branch, Seattle Public Library, 7364 E. Green Lake Dr. N., Seattle. *Nancy Pearl talks about her latest book.* Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Southend Committee: 12:30 p.m., Thursday, January 11, Burien Library, 400 SW 152nd St., Burien. Join us for lunch before the meeting, 11:45 a.m., at Elliott Bay Brewhouse & Pub, 255 SW 152nd St., Burien. All are welcome as we plan PSARA events in South King County.

PSARA Race/Gender Equity Committee: 11 a.m. – Noon, Thursday, January 18, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle. All welcome.

PSARA Participation in ML King Day: Monday, January 15. See details on Page 1.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, January 18, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

Train the Trainer: 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Monday, January 22, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. Learn how to present PSARA's workshop "Making Retirement Security Real for Everyone." All are welcome, but please RSVP to educationcommittee@psara.org or call the PSARA office, 206-448-9646.

