

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

Vol XXXIII, No 6

June 2018

Trump's SSA
Nominees Cause
Concern
Page 8

June 21 Summer Potluck, Membership Meeting, and Silent Auction Join Us!

By Jessica Bonebright

Please join us at our annual summer event!

Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) President and PSARA member Jeff Johnson will be the featured speaker on the Protect Washington Act – Initiative 1631 – and the importance of the November 6, 2018, midterm election.

The event begins at 11:30 a.m. with a silent auction, then at noon a potluck and socializing. Jeff Johnson will speak at about 12:45 p.m. with time for Q & A following the presentation.

April Sims, WSLC Political Director and PSARA member, will speak on upcoming election issues.

Then we'll hold a brief general membership meeting. We also anticipate having our newly designed PSARA T-shirts available for sale. And Lou Trussock will be on hand to lead us in song.

Jeff is also a leader of the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, sponsor of I-1631. PSARA members can learn how the Protect Washington Act can make Washington the leader in the US with public policy to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and address its negative impacts. The time is now to stop taking our environment for granted and hold large polluters accountable.

I-1631 establishes a fee on the largest corporate polluters to make sure we're all doing our fair share to reduce pollution and address climate impacts. The carbon fees will begin January 1, 2020, and will be invested in our clean energy economy, including wind and solar power as well as healthy forests,

clean water, and clean air. It will create thousands of local jobs across the state. Assistance will also be provided for low-income residents most impacted by climate change and workers who will have to transition to new skills.

The Protect Washington Act is our opportunity to demonstrate the power of joining together with diverse communities and finding common ground to make large-scale positive change. Climate change is a great moral and political challenge of our time. Passage of this initiative will turn the corner on the current trends and protect our environment for future generations and for the health of our communities. With all the negative news coming from the "other" Washington, let your anger fuel action. We can provide hope and inspiration for the next generation by winning this fight and showing that "the power of the people is stronger than the people in power."

Hundreds of volunteers, including many PSARA members, are busy collecting the required 270,000 signatures by June 30 to get on the November 6, 2018, ballot. Visit yeson1631.org for more information or to help if you have the time.

Jeff will also discuss the upcoming midterm election and opportunities to get involved.

Plan to attend and bring a main dish, salad, fruit, dessert, or soft drink to share at our always fabulous potluck lunch. The event will be at UFCW 21 Joe Crump Hall at 5030 1st Ave S.



WSLC President Jeff Johnson will keynote PSARA's June meeting

RSVP by calling PSARA's new phone number, 206-254-4910 or email organizer@psara.org.

Metro route 121 stops at E Marginal Way and S Hudson Street. Walk about three blocks east. Metro route 132 stops at 4th Ave S and S Dawson Street. Walk about four blocks west.

You'll want to arrive starting at 11:30 a.m. to browse the silent auction offerings. Your bids will support PSARA's work. We're still accepting auction donations; email Co-President Jessica Bonebright at president@psara.org to contribute an item, service, or experience.

Jessica Bonebright is PSARA's Co-President.

The Retiree ADVOCATE

Published monthly by the PSARA Education Fund, 321
16th Avenue S, Seattle, Washington, 98144. Phone
(206) 254-4910.

Officers of PSARA Education Fund:

President: **Robby Stern**,
psaraedfund@psara.org
Vice President: **Sally Davis**
Secretary-Treasurer: **Garet Munger**
Advocate Editor: **Mike Andrew**,
organizer@psara.org
Associate Editor: **Bob Shimabukuro**
Photographer: **Garet Munger**
Printing: **Trade Printery**

PSARA Directory:

Co-Presidents: **Jessica Bonebright & Tim Burns**, president@psara.org
Administrative Vice President:
Maureen Bo, adminvp@psara.org
Membership Vice Presidents: **Karen Richter & Bobby Righi**, membershipvp@psara.org
Outreach Vice President: **Bob Swanson**,
outreachvp@psara.org
Secretary: **Frieda K. Takamura**,
secretary@psara.org
Treasurer: **Tom Lux**, treasurer@psara.org
Race/Gender Equity Committee Chairs:
Frank Irigon & Bob Shimabukuro,
racegender@psara.org
Education Committee Chair: **Steve Bauck**,
educationcommittee@psara.org
Climate & Environmental Justice Committee
Chairs: **Kristen Beifus & Tom Lux**,
climateenviro@psara.org
Fundraising Committee Chair: **Karen Richter**,
fundraising@psara.org
Government Relations Committee Chairs:
Mindi Lee & Pam Lux,
govrelations@psara.org

Board Members: Steve Bauck, Kristen Beifus, Maureen Bo, Dorene Carrel, Jim Grayson, Frank Irigon, Diane Jones, Steve Kofahl, Mindi Lee, Vivian Lee, Pam Lux, Mark McDermott, Xochitl Maykovich, Bonny Oborn, Mildred Ollee, Garry Owens, Chuck Richards, Andrea Sawczuk, Bob Shimabukuro, Ronnie Shure, Sarajane Siegfried, Robby Stern, Aganita Varkentine, Michael Warren, Imogene Williams, and Katie Wilson.

Visit our website for up to date
information or to renew:
www.psara.org
or visit PSARA on Facebook

Macy's Workers Organize for Vital Retail Jobs

By Kristen Beifus

Retail continues to be one of the largest sectors in the US economy, employing 16,720,000 people as of January, 2018. However, in just the last year the retail industry eliminated more than 54,000 jobs. This is more than all of the coal mining jobs in the US combined. While we have heard a lot about the need to save coal jobs and manufacturing, there is very little advocacy for the retail sector.

Yet not all retail is the same. According to analysis done by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), while overall 54,000 retail jobs were lost in 2017, women retail workers lost 160,300 jobs, while their male counterparts gained 106,000 jobs. Yes, you are going to need to re-read that last statement. In retail, women lost jobs and men gained jobs.

According to the IWPR, in department stores 60 percent of workers are women and 44 percent are people of color. They are the workers shouldering almost the entire burden of these job losses. Workers who still have their jobs face cuts to hours, pay, and benefits as stores such as Macy's attempt to hold on to their profits at the expense of workers.

That is why Macy's associates across Western Washington and on the east coast (UFCW Local 400) are coming together to draw attention to this rapid decline in the retail industry and the day-to-day impact this is having on workers and their families. The loss of jobs has led to gross understaffing, leaving associates doing the work of multiple workers. This not only adds stress, it creates unsafe conditions as workers are all alone in cavernous stores.

It is vital that the retail industry maintains good living wage jobs. Macy's has an obligation to its workers, as their brand would not exist if knowledgeable associates were not selling things people need every day.

According to Candice Hemphill, Macy's Associate-Leader:

Right now Macy's is doing layoffs, yet they are also posting positions at the same time. Not only does this affect us, the associates, but also the community. When customers come to shop and there's no one to help them, that's not a good shopping experience, and they cannot find what they need and want. So Macy's loses money. Shopping online can be nice, yet sometimes you want to touch the product, try on the product, and just see true color. You can't do that online.

On June 24th join LGBT+ and all Macy's associates and their labor family for Seattle Pride. There they will "Work-it" in the parade, just as they do every day for Macy's. More actions will follow as the contract campaign unfolds. For more information contact: kbeifus@ufcw21.org

Kristen Beifus is an organizer with UFCW 21 and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

A Successful Event on Whidbey Island

On May 8, about 50 people were at the Langley United Methodist Church for a screening of the CARE documentary and a discussion of the growing crisis in the provision of long-term care. There were some great snacks with baked treats provided by Dina Burstein. The program was introduced by Mully Mullally, a respected long-time resident of the Island and a PSARA member. The film was very impactful. There followed a panel facilitated by Scott Chaplin, a Whidbey Island activist, a PSARA member, and a leader in the organizing committee.

The panel included two local residents, Cheryn Weiser, a family caregiver and Executive Director of Island Senior Services, and Jerene, an independent caregiver and a new PSARA member. They were joined by Maddie Foutch from SEIU 775, who explained the Long Term Care Trust Act and its status in the legislative process. The panel was followed by a Q & A.

Robby Stern then explained a little about PSARA and urged people to join, indicating we hoped to establish a PSARA committee on Whidbey Island. Many thanks to the Whidbey organizing committee and the participants in the program.

PSARA Endorses Initiative 1631

By Bobby Righi

The PSARA Executive Board, upon receiving a recommendation from the Climate and Environmental Justice Committee, unanimously voted to endorse Initiative 1631, filed by the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy a month ago.

There is a long list of reasons to support this initiative. Some of the main reasons for the endorsement were:

- We recognize the need to pass on a safe, healthy environment for future generations of Washingtonians.
- A transition from polluting fossil fuel energy to clean energy will create thousands of good high-paying local jobs that support the communities they are in without burdening the health of their neighbors.
- Over 600,000 Washingtonians live with asthma and thousands more suffer from upper respiratory illnesses and diseases caused by air pollution.
- We can ensure clean energy investments are targeted to those communities that are most affected by pollution and climate impacts.
- We believe in supporting affected workers and their communities in the transition to clean energy to ensure a clean energy future which can include everyone.

- We have a responsibility to invest in our state's natural resources, and we must restore and protect estuaries, fisheries, and marine shoreline habitats; prepare for sea level rise; increase the sustainable supply of water; and improve infrastructure for treating storm water.

This initiative has been years in the making with organizations from across the state taking part. It is truly a citizens' movement and reflects the concern that Washingtonians have about climate change and our frustration with lack of action by the federal government. Of course, now the federal government, led by the EPA is going in the direction of promoting more fossil fuels!

PSARA members are active in gathering signatures around the region and we have been going out in small groups to work together and give each other support. This makes the signature gathering work even more fun. If you would like to join, just send an email to Bobby Righi at membershipvp@psara.org. We are going to go out in groups to the Folklife Festival and the Burien Pride march and several other events. Join in!

Bobby Righi is PSARA's Membership Co-Vice President.



Bobby Righi (left) at the I-1631 launch event at El Centro de la Raza, May 10. (Photo courtesy of Karen Richter)

Join PSARA for Pride Month

June is Pride month, and PSARA will proudly participate in a number of events celebrating our LGBT+ members, co-workers, and neighbors.

We'll start off with the Burien Pride Festival, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Saturday, June 2, in Burien Town Square Park, 480 SW 152nd St., Burien.

PSARA's Southend Committee will have a booth. Stop by, say "Hi" and help gather signatures for I-1631.

On Friday, June 22, PSARA -- working with the Old Lesbian Oral History Project and Pride At Work -- will present "Herstory": An Oral History of Old Lesbians.

The program features videos and live readings from the personal histories of older lesbians. The event will be at Gay City's Calamus Auditorium, 521 E Pike Street, Seattle.

Finally, we close out Pride month with the Seattle Pride Parade, 11 a.m., Sunday, June 24, 4th Avenue, downtown Seattle.

Once again PSARA will have a contingent in the parade. The parade begins at 4th Avenue and Columbia Street and ends at Seattle Center. We'll have a vehicle for people to ride if you don't want to walk the whole distance.

Stay tuned for more details.

A Conversation with Burien Mayor Jimmy Matta

By Danny Bobrow and Andrea Sawczuk

On Thursday, May 10, Burien's newly elected Mayor, Jimmy Matta, spoke for more than an hour with Southend PSARA members.

Mayor Matta was elected to the Burien City Council in November, 2017, and was chosen as Mayor in January. Since then, Matta has been learning about his constituency, information which he shared with us, while asking for our help and support. He spoke with warmth, humor, and realism about the challenges that we all face as citizens of King County, Washington State, and the nation.

The Mayor began our conversation by giving us some background. We learned that he was a labor leader and that he is a member of the Carpenter's Union and of PSARA. He shared his personal history very openly as he addressed topics important to him, his family, and Burien. Some of his thoughts are encapsulated in the following topics:

Burien Demographics: Mayor Matta is learning about Burien demographics and creating task forces to address the issues faced by Burien, which was historically a bedroom retirement community. Thus, the city center has been developed around access for seniors. In recent decades, as Seattle living expenses have increased, middle- and low-income families have moved to Burien for its reasonable prices, welcoming appeal, and its support of diversity.

Today, Burien is comprised of 45 percent minority groups, of which 25 percent are Latino and the rest are people of color from other communities, primarily Native American, Korean, and Vietnamese.

Burien Challenges: Mayor Matta presented the challenges faced by Burien and how he plans to address them. These challenges include: a small city budget, troubled youth, homelessness, seniors, and public transportation.

We've included his discussion of seniors and public transportation in this article, as they are the topics of most interest to PSARA members.

Seniors: Mayor Matta is looking for ideas of how to help Burien's seniors. The newly opened Merrill Gardens, with retired, assisted living, and nursing home residents, and Maverick, a senior living facility, have residents who are wary of going out alone in the evening to participate in the nightlife along 152nd Street in Burien, given the series of attacks on seniors by some of the troubled Burien youth. Suggestions from PSARA members included:

Pair a senior with youth or adult volunteers, who will accompany the senior to their destination and ensure they return to their residence safely.

Create a Burien Senior Center that offers lunches and dinners at a nominal charge, following the model of Des Moines, SeaTac, and Kent Senior Centers.

Organize seniors to be volunteers at local events.

Organize a night-out program modeled after the National Night-Out program that has been highly successful in Federal Way.

Organize a task force focused on acquiring funding from King County Senior Services to fund senior activities, safety, support, and access to resources. PSARA members also asked that Mayor Matta back the PSARA resolution advocating for expanded Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits. Mayor Matta agreed but was concerned about financing expanded benefits over the long term.

In response, "Scrap-the-Cap" was discussed as a means of increasing revenue for these programs. The Mayor agreed to consider these ideas and bring them to the Burien City Council.



Danny Bobrow and Andrea Sawczuk

Public Transportation: Mayor Matta spoke about the need to expand public bus lines from Burien to Seattle and the resistance his plan has faced by some Burien residents. He noted that emails and letters are effective ways of influencing decisions by elected officials, recognizing that, as PSARA members, we know and practice the value of sending emails and letters.

An update from Dorene Carrel, Southend PSARA Co-Chair, has been shared with PSARA members:

"Metro is seeking the City's approval to make these proposed changes, which include more pedestrian crossings, widened and new sidewalks, and changing some of Ambaum to three lanes instead of four to accommodate the sidewalk improvement. These changes would also enable elderly and disabled riders to board the bus more easily. At our last SE PSARA meeting it was suggested by Mayor Jimmy Matta that the City needs to receive more letters and emails in favor of Metro's proposed changes. Right now the majority of letters oppose the changes. The changes have also been approved by the Transit Riders Union. Katie Wilson, PSARA Executive Board member and General Secretary of the TRU, will be our next speaker on June 14."

Danny Bobrow and Andrea Sawczuk are PSARA members. Andrea also serves on PSARA's Executive Board and is Co-Chair of the Southend Committee.

Not so Random Thoughts

By Bob Shimabukuro

Tomiko: You Okinawan? How come you don't have "Okinawan eyes" like Lia Shigemura?

Bob S: I got naturally beautiful eyes. (That's what my aunts used to say when I was little. And my eyelashes too. And my curly hair. "What a waste for a boy.")

Thinking quickly, mind racing, but had to stick on subject as my eyes got blurry. But I took my glasses off, rubbed my eyes gently and accidentally pushed my eyelids upward and was surprised by the clarity.

While working in Los Angeles, I wrote an article about Asian girls/women taping their eyelids or getting lid surgery so that they wouldn't look so "Oriental" -- in this particular case, meaning they wouldn't look so slant-eyed.

I got a strong reaction from many women that I'd better be careful because there were a lot of "wanna-be" TV anchors wanting to have "Lia Shigemura" eyes. A lot of Okinawans have "round" eyes.

Never heard of any guys taping their lids or getting "lid surgery," but now I'm thinking maybe lid surgery would help. Wonder if any guys had lid surgery. Maybe I'll check on YouTube. See if any Do It Yourself videos of taping lids are out there.

Black Panther Party 50th Anniversary Celebration

Because our Race/Gender Equity Committee is looking into how public schools plays an important part in Equity, I attended the "School to Prison Pipeline," with presenter Jesse Hagopian. He got a little feedback from an elder Panther.

Hagopian had made the statement that we need the public schools to teach peoples' histories/cultures, not just the dominant culture. The elder

replied we should have our parents and families responsible for teaching our kids, his point being, why should we let white teachers tell us our history/culture.

Hagopian replied that it's hard to do that when a lot of people who could be doing that are in jail.

Later, in a discussion in our Race/Gender Equity Committee meeting, PSARA Board member and elder Panther Garry Owens said that in their evaluations of the BPP 50th, they saw a need to connect with their youth to let them know what happened before. Most of youth attendees were surprised to find out what their earlier generations had accomplished.

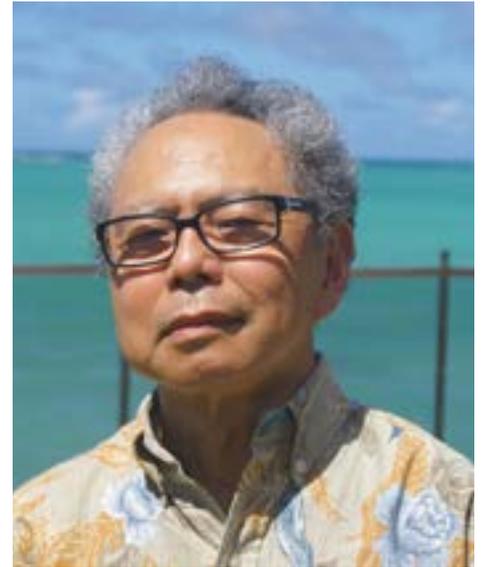
Board and Committee member Vivian Lee then added her comments reminding folks that even before the Panthers, her parents and grandparents were paving the way in the early 1900s for them.

Owens added that when he goes to tutoring sessions at the libraries, he sees that the more recent East African students are accompanied by adults who teach; while the older community Blacks come with their phones or use the computer to play/learn.

Oromo/Okinawa: connecting the dots

I think back to a time when I was working with the Oromo community in trying to get them a grant for a program to keep their kids aware of where their ancestors were from, their cultural home before they were carved up by European Partners.

So when they asked me to help them I couldn't refuse. When they asked where I was from, I told them that my cultural home was Okinawa, which was claimed by Japan and set aside for US military. I was born on the Island of Maui, in the state of Hawaii, another country that was swallowed by the US military.



Bob Shimabukuro

Our committee is moving to include public education as a topic of concern, because it is important that a true narrative must replace the one we got now for any equity to be considered. So stay tuned.

This article may give you an idea of the direction that the PSARA Race/Gender Equity Committee is taking and why we changed the name of the Committee.

Everything's pretty blurry now.

Still, take a breath, then keep moving.

Bob Shimabukuro is Associate Editor of the Retiree Advocate and Co-Chair of the Race/Gender Equity Committee.

Eviction

By Pam Lux

Eviction. That word makes most of us shake in our shoes. Could it be us next? The reality is that most of us are two paychecks away from becoming homeless. Now that is scary.

The PSARA Government Relations Committee recently had a speaker, Edmund Witter, from the King County Housing Justice Project, part of the King County Bar Association. Witter explained to the Committee what happens when the landlord serves an eviction notice in King County. As with many things in Washington, the laws are on the side of the landlord and are more regressive than any other place in the country. Seattle's laws are more landlord friendly.

The Housing Justice Project (HJP) is a small office funded by local municipalities, the Washington Bar Association and the State of Washington. Seattle does not fund this valuable service. Last year this group of three lawyers and two support staff handled 1,900 cases of eviction. 50 percent of the cases they handled were people with disabilities.

The 1973 Landlord/Tenant Act (RCW 59.12) set tenants' rights back, and we have not yet recovered any of them. Here are some highlights of the process. In some cases, from the time you get notice of eviction to being homeless is 17 days, three days to pay or get out, seven days to go to court and seven days to get out after the court decision. The evictions are heard by commissioners appointed by the judges to hear cases the judges don't want to be involved in.

A recent survey by All-Home found that the eviction rate is up 11 percent. Once you are served with notice to evict, you have a legal process that is costly to the tenant. The fees, landlord's court costs, and any additional fines are tacked on to the past-due rent. We are one of few jurisdictions that allow this,

rather than keeping the fines separate from the past due rent.

Where can you go for help if eviction is looming over you? The Housing Justice Project, Seattle Tenants Union, Solid Ground, Washington Law, help.org, and 211.

Here is a brief look at how evictions happen:

For not paying rent.

If you are even one day behind in your rent, your landlord can begin the eviction process. If you are behind in rent, your landlord only has to give you three days' notice. (RCW 59.12.030(3).)

If you pay all the rent you owe within three days after getting the notice, the landlord must accept it and cannot evict you. S/he does not have to accept partial payment. If you do not pay the whole amount within three days, you must move out.

For not following the rental agreement.

If you break one of the terms of the rental agreement, the landlord can give you a ten-day notice. (RCW 59.12.030(4).) Example: your landlord can tell you to move out if you keep a cat despite the rental agreement's "no pets" rule.

If you fix the problem within ten days after you get the notice, the landlord must stop the eviction process. If you do not fix the problem within ten days, you must move out.

Can I refuse to pay rent if my landlord does not make needed repairs?

No! If you do not pay rent, no matter the reason, your landlord can start the eviction process against you.



The time on the notice is up. What if I am still living in the unit?

The landlord can go to court and file an eviction process. The process is called "Unlawful Detainer" in Washington. To start the process, the landlord must deliver to you a "Summons" and "Complaint for Unlawful Detainer." RCW 59.12.070; RCW 59.18.070 (2).

I moved out before the time on the eviction notice is up. Can my landlord still take me to court?

Yes. Your landlord cannot file an eviction lawsuit against you now. S/he can still sue you for rent or other damages s/he says you owe. Your landlord has six years after you move out to sue you for rent owed.

Pam Lux is Co-Chair of PSARA's Government Relations Committee.

PSARA Summer Potluck, Membership Meeting, and Silent Auction

Thursday, June 21, 2018
11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

11:45 a.m.: Silent Auction

Noon: Potluck and Socializing

12:45 p.m.: Keynote speech by WSLC President Jeff Johnson

1:45 p.m.: Update on electoral issues by WSLC Political Director April Sims

Featuring songs by our own Lou Truskoff

UFCW 21 Joe Crump Hall
5030 1st Avenue S, Seattle

Served by Metro routes 121 and 132.

Route 121 stops at E Marginal Way S and S Hudson Street. Walk about three blocks east.

Route 132 stops at 4th Avenue S and S Dawson Street. Walk four blocks west.

Limited on-street parking is available.



Jeff Johnson



April Sims



Lou in action

All are welcome! Please bring a potluck dish to share.

**If you have an item to donate to the silent auction, call PSARA at 206-254-4910
or email president@psara.org**

RSVP to PSARA, 206-254-4910 or email organizer@psara.org and let us know what you'll be bringing to the potluck.

Trump SSA Nominees Cause Concern

By Steve Kofahl

On April 12, President Trump announced the nominations of wealthy businessman (women's apparel, investments) Andrew M. Saul as Social Security Administration (SSA) Commissioner, and David F. Black as Principal Deputy Commissioner. The Republican-controlled Senate and Senate Finance Committee will hold confirmation hearings and vote to confirm these nominees probably this summer.

Saul and Black would fill vacant unexpired terms that end January 19, 2019.

However, Trump also nominated Saul to lead the SSA for the next 6-year term, which expires January 19, 2025. That means that it is critically important for Social Security, over the long term, that the Senate makes the right decision.

Saul appears to have no experience with Social Security or the SSA. He was a Trustee of the Manhattan Institute from 1999-2007, a think tank that advocated for partial Social Security privatization in 2003, for large-scale delivery of social services outside of government in 2006, and for use of the SSA database as "a dragnet for identifying all illegal workers" in 2007.

Saul was George W. Bush's choice for the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, where he was Chairman from 2002-2011. Bush said that the 401K-style Federal Thrift Savings Plan was a model for Social Security privatization.

Saul briefly ran for Congress in 2007, but abruptly withdrew for unspecified personal reasons just after Hatch Act concerns were raised about his campaign fund-raising while a Federal employee. There were also 2007 media reports that he received political contributions from parties and individuals who did business or sought business with the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority, where he was Vice-Chairman of the Board.

Media reported that a 2012 incident



David F. Black

occurred when Saul attempted to enter a restricted area near his Westchester County estate, had to be physically restrained by a Department of Environmental Services Officer, and falsely identified himself as a law enforcement officer.

Even this little bit we know about Saul should raise alarm bells about his character and his close connections to those who favor privatizing Social Security. Indeed, his main qualification may be that he is a New York crony of Donald Trump, having graduated from the Wharton School in the same year.

We know more about Black, the SSA General Counsel from 2007-2015, referred to last month by *Government Executive* as the White House's senior advisor embedded at the SSA.

During the six-day October, 2013, government shutdown, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) effectively shut down AFGE (American Federation of Government Employees) and the other unions at the SSA. Line managers told us that they were directed not to consult with the SSA Office of Labor-Management Employee Relations with their questions about labor-management issues as they always had in the past, because OGC was calling the shots.

Most SSA employees were considered "excepted employees" during the shutdown, and required to work



Andrew M. Saul

without pay, although Congress later voted to pay them. There was a great deal of chaos and confusion and more need for employee representation than in normal times.

Those who served as union representatives were not allowed to fulfill their legal and contractual responsibilities to the employees, by order of the OGC.

Black also reversed the OGC's position that the Social Security Act requires that every person who files for benefits must personally receive an explanation of applicant rights and responsibilities from an SSA employee. As a result, too many people who file online are being overpaid or underpaid.

The Social Security Works Washington Coalition, including PSARA, is working with the offices of our Senators to ensure that these nominees are fully and carefully considered.

Senator Cantwell is a member of the Finance Committee, with Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, the Democrats' ranking member. All of us who care about Social Security should contact their offices and urge them to question both candidates extremely closely and, at the least, oppose their confirmation for more than a single term.

Steve Kofahl is the retired President of AFGE 3937, the union that represents Social Security workers. He is a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

Yanis Explains Why the Head Tax Is Necessary

By Bobby Righi

Yanis Varoufakis appeared on KUOW on Tuesday, May 15, with Adwoa Gyimah-Brempong and Bill Radke.

Yanis Varoufakis, the former Finance Minister of Greece and an economics professor and author of several books which have been translated into numerous languages, was in Seattle this week to talk about his book *Talking to My Daughter About The Economy: A Brief History of Capitalism*.

Bill Radke: "How would you explain Seattle's Head Tax to a 12 year old?"

Yanis: "It's all about the ecosystem. You know, we want to protect the ecosystem. Why do corporations want to be in Seattle? They want to be here because of the community spirit, the great music scene, the fact that it has attracted all those people who moved here for non-corporate purposes. Corporations want to latch onto that because their own people want to be in a city like that. But when they come in, there is a displacement effect and they do a lot of damage to the ecosystem. It is a question of insuring that we can recycle and recreate the ecosystem that attracted them here in the first place. Corporations are not very good at maintaining the ecosystem that attracts them.

"They do create jobs, but at the same time they destroy the community which attracts the jobs in the first place. So, it is a bit like the conundrum of the predator and the prey -- when the predator has a good life until the prey becomes scarce."

Radke: "The 'prey' in this case being the poor people who can no longer afford to live and work in Seattle?"

Yanis: "Those people who actually make Seattle a good city to live in are the ones who will be displaced by the so-called 'job creation' of Amazon and the rest. And, let's face it, the reason we are having this conversation is because Amazon and the big tech companies have been magnificent at evading taxes for so many years across the world."

There is much more in his interview. For example, Varoufakis says that it is understandable that the iron workers would shout against the Head Tax because there are so few good jobs to be had in this system. The workers say they want more corporations to move here and provide jobs. But, Yanis says, they too will be displaced by corporations moving in, and they will not be able to live and work in Seattle. This has



Yanis Varoufakis
(Photo: ACN)

already happened to blue collar workers in London.

Listen to the interview on the KUOW website:

<http://kuow.org/post/tech-companies-are-committing-crimes-against-logic-says-former-greek-finance-minister>

Bobby Righi is PSARA's Membership Co-Vice President.



PSARA members, including Imogene Williams (right hand corner of the photo), are among hundreds who packed the Seattle City Council chambers on May 14 to support the proposed head tax on the city's biggest businesses.

In favor, five Council members: Mosqueda, Gonzalez, Herbold, O'Brien, and Sawant. Opposed: Harrell, Bagshaw, Johnson, and Juarez, plus Mayor Jenny Durkan.

Although the compromise proposal finally agreed to by a unanimous City Council will not bring in nearly enough money to solve the epidemic of homelessness in a grossly expensive city, it still set the precedent that huge corporations like Amazon need to pay their fair share.

Stay tuned for further developments.

Social Security's Customer Service Budget Finally Got An Increase – But It's Only a Starting Point

By Nancy Altman

Social Security doesn't add a penny to the deficit. Neither does the cost of administering the program – the field offices, telephone lines, employee salaries, and other expenses. All of it comes from Social Security's dedicated revenue and accumulated surplus, which is \$2.9 trillion and growing. Congress does have the authority, though, to limit how much the Social Security Administration (SSA) can spend in any given year.

Since Republicans took control of the House of Representatives in 2010, they have starved SSA of the funds needed to ensure that the American people can easily access their earned benefits. Adjusted for inflation, SSA's operating budget is now ten percent lower than it was only six years ago. During the same time period, the number of Social Security beneficiaries has increased by thirteen percent as 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day. And every year, SSA's costs for field offices and other fixed costs go up by over \$300 million.

The results have been predictably disastrous. Forced to do more with less, SSA has closed 64 field offices and lost over 25,000 employees. At the offices that remain open, wait times have steadily increased, with the average visitor being forced to wait over an hour. Hold times on SSA's 1-800 number have grown so long that half of callers hang up the phone in defeat.

Worst of all, over one million Americans are waiting for a hearing to determine if they are eligible to receive Social Security disability benefits – protections that they earned with every paycheck. The average wait time for a hearing is nearly two years. Thousands of Americans with disabilities have died while waiting for a hearing, and many more have been forced to declare bankruptcy and become homeless.

This is outrageous. Social Security is extremely efficient. It spends less than a penny of every dollar on administrative expenses. The rest is paid in benefits.



Nancy Altman

But even that level of administrative expense is too much for today's Republicans. In every year since 2013, Congress has allowed SSA to spend only 0.7 percent. It is time to stop starving SSA. It is time to expand Social Security's modest benefits, and it is time to restore and increase SSA's budget.

For Congressional Republicans, the starving of SSA's administrative budget has always been about ideology. Social Security is too popular, even among Republican voters, for them to cut benefits in broad daylight. So instead they are undermining the program's customer service to make it harder for people to access their earned benefits. In the long run, their goal is to erode confidence in the program and dismantle it brick by brick.

This March, Social Security beneficiaries finally got some good news. Thanks to Social Security champions including Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative John Larson (D-CT), together with grassroots activists around the country demanding a change, the recent omnibus funding bill passed by Congress included a \$480 million increase in SSA's funding.

This is an important victory. But it is only the first step. SSA should be opening new field offices, expanding hours, and increasing services to meet the needs of the growing population of beneficiaries. Congress must stop meddling with SSA's funding levels and let the agency determine what is needed to ensure that Social Security beneficiaries receive quality service.

In the next few months, Congress will be considering next year's budget for SSA. Our elected representatives must be told to increase SSA's funding and stop handcuffing the agency.

The upcoming midterm elections provide an opportunity to hold Congress accountable. Every single member of the House of Representatives and one third of Senators are up for reelection this November. For the next seven months, there will be hundreds of campaign events and debates all over the country.

All supporters of Social Security should attend these events and ask all candidates for federal office a simple question: "Will you vote to expand Social Security or cut it?" That includes allowing SSA to spend more of its own revenue to continue to provide the first class service the American people have purchased and deserve.

For too long Republicans have been able to avoid accountability by talking about "saving" Social Security, failing to recognize that Social Security is a solution, not a problem. We must hold politicians' feet to the fire. Find out whether they share our values and see the importance of expanding, not cutting, Social Security and its related administrative costs. Then, vote accordingly, and tell your friends and family to do the same.

Nancy Altman is President of Social Security Works and a member of the Social Security Advisory Board (appointed by Democratic House Leader Nancy Pelosi).

Ignore the Noise: Stay Focused on the Issues This Election

By David Groves

If, like me, you have grown weary of partisan bickering, finger-pointing, and inaction in both Washington, DC, and Olympia, it is tempting to disengage as another election season approaches. Once again, we will be saturated with campaign advertising and “distraction news” manufactured by political consultants to try to get us to vote a certain way -- or perhaps discourage us from voting at all.

Here’s why we need to ignore that noise. There are some major issues in play in 2018 that will dramatically affect our retirement security, health care, and standard of living -- issues that matter. Here are just a few:

SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

– In December 2017, when Congress approved and President Trump signed \$1.5 trillion worth of tax cuts targeted to corporations and the rich, they made no secret about how they planned to pay for it. Before the ink was even dry on that tax giveaway, 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.”

Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas), chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, said they will now turn toward “tackling the entitlements.”

Entitlements. That’s what some politicians call the Social Security and Medicare benefits that you’ve paid for your entire working life. Some of them want to cut those essential benefits that you earned for your health care and basic necessities. Why? To pay for trillion-dollar tax cuts for the wealthy. And they hope to do this in 2019 because nobody wants to cut Social Security and Medicare right before an election.

HEALTH CARE – This month, states began receiving preliminary 2019 premium-rate requests for Affordable Care Act (ACA) individual-market policies, and the numbers don’t look good. Insurers are seeking steep price increases or to leave state ACA exchanges entirely. Why? Because “Obamacare” successfully lowered uninsured rates and mitigated cost increases, but has become unstable

because of actions and inaction by Congress and the White House.

“The growing frustration with the Trump administration’s management — reflected in letters to state regulators and in interviews with more than two dozen senior industry and government officials nationwide — undercuts a key White House claim that Obamacare insurance marketplaces are collapsing on their own,” reported *The Los Angeles Times* last year when insurers sought big rate hikes.

Some candidates for office -- at both the national and state levels -- have specific proposals about how to fix what ails the nation’s health care system so consumers can retain access to affordable coverage. Others seem more interested in doing nothing other than blaming “Obamacare” as the market collapses.

FREEDOM TO JOIN TOGETHER – By the time you read this, the US Supreme Court may have already ruled in the Janus case that is expected to impose so-called “right-to-work” restrictions on public employees nationwide. If not, they will by June 25.

But if you think that’s the worst politicians can do to weaken and ultimately kill unions, you should see what they’re doing in Missouri right now. Its Senate just voted to force public employee unions to get permission every single year from

each union member to deduct their union dues. They also voted to require public unions to hold recertification votes every three years and to require more than 50 percent of workers covered by the contract to vote “yes” to be recertified. In other words, anyone not voting would be presumed a “no” vote.

There are legislators in Olympia who would love to see such restrictions imposed on unions right here in Washington State, in both the public and private sectors. Their goal is nothing less than the destruction of organized labor. And corporate-funded “bill mills” like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) have already drafted up union-busting bills for them to introduce.

This is why it is critical to stay engaged on the issues. Find out where candidates stand on these bread-and-butter issues, and others important to you and your family. Ignore the manufactured distractions intended to divide and discourage us.

Focus on these issues that matter. And then vote accordingly.

David Groves, a PSARA member, is Editor of The Stand (www.TheStand.org) and Communications Director of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

To Renew or Donate

PSARA Education Fund

321 16th Avenue S, Seattle WA 98144

- 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

Burien Pride Festival: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Saturday, June 2, Burien Town Square Park, 480 SW 152nd St., Burien. Visit PSARA's booth and help gather signatures for I-1631.

PSARA Fundraising Committee: 10:30 a.m. - Noon, Tuesday, June 5, 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, June 6, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). *Topic: Our Favorite Apps (bring your own device).* Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Climate and Environmental Justice Committee: 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, June 7, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All welcome.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 7, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All welcome.

PSARA Education Committee: 2 p.m., Tuesday, June 12, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S, Seattle. All are welcome.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 14, Green Lake Branch, Seattle Public Library, 7364 E. Green Lake Dr. N, Seattle. Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Southend Committee: 12:30 p.m., Thursday, June 14, White Center Library, 1409 SW 107th St., Seattle. All are welcome as we plan PSARA events in South King County.

Burien Strawberry Days: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Saturday June 16 and Sunday, June 17, SW 152nd St., Burien. Visit PSARA's booth and help gather signatures for I-1631.

PSARA June Potluck, Membership Meeting, and Silent Auction: 11:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, June 21, UFCW 21 Joe Crump Hall, 5030 1st Ave. S, Seattle. See flyer on Page 7 for details.

“Herstory” – An Oral History of Old Lesbians: 2-4 p.m., Friday, June 22, Gay City Calamus Auditorium, 521 E Pike St., Seattle. The Old Lesbian Oral History Project, PSARA, and Pride At Work sponsor live readings from the histories of older lesbians. All are welcome!

Seattle Pride Parade: 11 a.m., Sunday, June 24, 4th Ave., Downtown Seattle. Once again PSARA will have a contingent in the Seattle Pride Parade. Stay tuned for more details.

