

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

Vol XXXII, No 3

March 2016

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This Changes Everything: The Movie

PPSARA members can join with labor and community members in a dinner and film on Thursday, March 3, or a brown bag lunch and film on Friday, March 4. There is no charge!

Based on climate activist Naomi Klein’s highly acclaimed book, *This Changes Everything*, the film has also received rave reviews. At the end of the film there will be a discussion on the local ways to take action on climate. Our questions and ideas will add to the richness of the experience.

There are two showings to choose from:

Dinner and a movie (RSVP PSARA office, 206-448-9646)

Thursday, March 3, 2016

6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.,

UFCW 21, 5030 1st Ave. S., Seattle, 98134

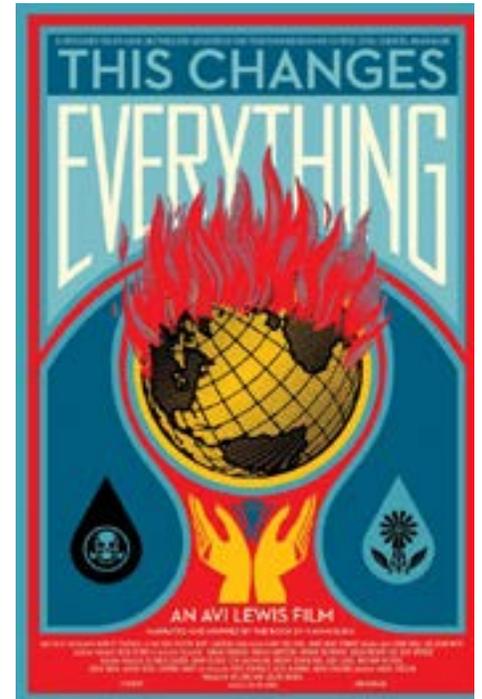
Brown bag lunch (No RSVP necessary)

Friday, March 4, 2016

11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.,

Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle 98144

This night or afternoon at the movies is sponsored by the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; UFCW 21; Teamsters 117; and PSARA.



Fighting for Health Care as a Human Right

By Teresa Mosqueda

News broke earlier this month from the Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner that the number of residents in Washington State without insurance had been cut in half since the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) went into effect. In 2012, the uninsured rate was 14.5 percent, and, at the time, there were just over one million Washingtonians without health coverage. According to the Commissioner’s new report, in 2015 the number of Washingtonians without health coverage had dropped to 522,000 or about 7.3 percent of the population.

Much of Washington State’s success is due to our passage and implementa-

tion of Medicaid Expansion, a provision in the ACA to expand traditional Medicaid to cover low-income adult workers who have no other affordable health care options but did not previously qualify for health care because they were not among the poorest workers, were not disabled, or did not have children. As of January this year, just 32 of the states in this country had adopted Medicaid Expansion. What’s heartbreaking: the remaining states that have yet to implement Medicaid Expansion are notably the states with the largest low-income populations,

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Washington State Democratic Caucuses

Saturday, March 26

10:00 a.m.

Have a voice, take a stand.

To find your caucus site and pre-register, visit:

<http://www.wa-democrats.org/page/2016-democratic-caucuses>

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Seniors Have Eyes, Ears & Teeth Act

By Robby Stern

How often have many of us heard a family member or friend on Medicare mention that she or he is not able to afford getting a hearing aid or eye glasses or decide not to go to a dentist? Many seniors will decide, if they have to go to a dentist, not to allow x-rays. Seniors regularly decide not to have annual eye examinations. Frequently seniors decide not to have their hearing checked, because even if their hearing is going bad, they cannot afford the cost of a hearing aid.

Maybe there is some help on the way!

In October of 2015, Rep. Alan Grayson introduced H.R. 3308 entitled Seniors Have Eyes, Ears, and Teeth Act. The bill, so far, has 97 co-sponsors including Washington Representatives Jim McDermott and Derek Kilmer. The bill would require Medicare to cover eyeglasses, hearing aids, and examinations related to vision and hearing. It would also require Medicare to cover services in connection with the care, treatment, filling, removal, or replacement of teeth or structures directly supporting teeth.

The bill has no chance of passing in this Congress. But 97 co-sponsors is no small number, and when we bring it to the attention of some of our other Washington representatives, they will also support it.

It is time to challenge Congress to make Medicare the program it needs to be. It is nonsensical that Medicare fails to cover such vital health care needs. Failing to address dental, vision, and hearing in all too many cases leads to more complicated and more expensive health conditions. PSARA will be contacting our Congressional representatives and asking them to co-sponsor this bill. We will also ask our U.S. Senators to introduce a companion bill in the U.S. Senate.

It is time to end this absurdity. It is time to pressure Congress to pass legislation that includes eyes, ears, and teeth in Medicare's coverage.

PSARA Joins Stand with Women Campaign

It's going to take all of us to update the rules so that all women can be equal partners in the new economy and their families can thrive. That's why PSARA has joined the Stand with Women Campaign:

FOR FREEDOM: Support Fair and Equal Reproductive Rights for Women.

We STAND WITH WOMEN to support pro-active policies to expand access to women's health care, including birth control and abortion, and against efforts to limit services or to criminalize pregnant and parenting women.

FOR FAMILY VALUES: Abolish Maternity and Family Penalties at Work.

We STAND WITH WOMEN to demand that businesses adopt responsible leave policies that protect women against discrimination, harassment, and maternity penalties on the job.

FOR FAIRNESS: Raise Wages and Provide Equal Pay for Equal Work.

We STAND WITH WOMEN for equal pay for equal work, raising wages in industries that pay women workers poverty wages, guaranteeing women the right to form a union, and ensuring fair promotions and representation in leadership.

FOR OPPORTUNITY: Invest in Women and Families for a Better Future.

We STAND WITH WOMEN for investments in affordable childcare, education, job training, and retirement security that enable women to participate fully in the economy.

PSARA Backs Initiative 1433 Campaign

By Robby Stern

Raise Up Washington, a coalition of union, faith, and community organizations, is supporting Initiative 1433. If sufficient signatures are collected, Washington voters would be asked to approve raising the Washington State minimum wage incrementally to \$13.50 per hour. I-1433 would also allow Washington workers who currently do not have paid sick and safe leave to earn up to seven days of paid sick and safe leave per year. PSARA, by a unanimous vote of our Executive Board, will support the initiative, become a member of the Raise Up Washington coalition, and collect signatures.

Why do we care?

1. It is the right thing to do! The initiative would raise wages for 730,000 low-income workers in Washington, providing nearly \$2.5 billion more in earnings annually. Currently, the state minimum wage is \$9.47. Fifty-three percent of the workers earning less than \$13.50 per hour are over 30. Contrary to common expectations, a greater share of workers earning less than \$13.50 per hour are over the age of 55 (13%) compared to teens (9%). The majority are working full time. Before deducting taxes, they earn less than \$20,000 per year for a full-time worker.

One million people in Washington do not have paid sick or safe leave at their jobs. Safe leave would make it possible for victims of domestic violence to stay away from their work site and still be compensated. Many victims of domestic violence are assaulted or even killed at their place of work.

Woman and people of color would especially benefit from the initiative. Nearly 30% of women workers and more than 40% of Black and Latina workers earn less than \$13.50 per hour. An increase in the minimum wage to \$13.50 would provide an additional \$607 per month to help meet basic needs like food, shelter, and health care.

2. An increase in the minimum wage will make it possible for these workers to earn a higher Social Security benefit when they are seniors and also add resources to the Social Security Trust Fund. While by no means the only answer or even the primary answer to the negative impact income inequality has had on the Social Security system, raising the minimum wage is a step forward. When workers earn more money, their contribution to the Trust Fund increases and their benefits increase.

3. Washington workers who have access to paid sick days can afford to stay home when they are sick or need to care for family members. The workers and their families will no longer have to suffer a financial penalty. Seniors and other members of the broader community are not as likely to be exposed to illnesses from workers who serve them at restaurants, grocery stores, or other places where they seek services. The initiative is a good step forward for the public health.

According to the Economic Opportunity Institute, "Paid sick leave is associated with more well-child visits, cancer screenings and other preventative health care services.... Sick leave also allows victims of domestic violence or sexual assault to seek safety, treatment, and legal assistance."

We can expect to hear that increasing the minimum wage will increase unemployment. The Washington Budget & Policy Center has issued a Frequently Asked Questions document. They state, "The impact of raising the minimum wage on employment has been evaluated extensively in the research literature. The weight of the evidence overwhelmingly shows that, on net, raising the minimum wage does not have a discernible impact on employment." They go on to cite multiple studies that demonstrate that fact. They



also point out that had the minimum wage kept pace with inflation, using 1968 as the base year, the minimum wage would be \$16 per hour.

PSARA has supported a \$15 minimum wage, and we still do. While I-1433 does not achieve that goal statewide, it is another important step forward, and the addition of paid sick and safe leave makes getting behind the initiative that much more meaningful.

The initiative increases the minimum wage to \$11 in 2017, \$11.50 in 2018, \$12 in 2019 and \$13.50 in 2020. It allows workers to earn one hour of sick and safe leave for every 40 hours worked. We would wish for more, but the polling demonstrates that this formula has a much better chance of winning statewide.

Raising the minimum wage is one tool in the toolbox to address income inequality. Workers organizing and taking collective action to be represented by unions is another critical strategy in changing the unacceptable income inequality that burdens our community and our country. PSARA will continue to support efforts to organize to achieve fair working conditions and the hope of a secure and dignified retirement.

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Putting Our Time and Money Where Our Hearts Are in the 2016 Elections

By Mark McDermott

I wish I could have a face-to-face, one-on-one conversation about the 2016 elections with each of you. I can't, so I will try through this article.

One of my greatest joys is my twice-weekly play dates with Walter, my four-year-old grandson. If Walter is lucky, he will live into the 22nd century. Almost every visit I ask myself if I am doing enough to ensure that he will grow into adulthood with the world moving toward a more positive future. I don't ever want him to ask me, "Why didn't you and your generation do more to give me a better world in which to start my adult life?"

Some of my least favorite activities are the conversations that focus on how awful the Republican primary fights are. I agree their debates and rhetoric are filled with an extraordinary amount of racism, sexism, homophobia, immigrant bashing, union bashing, Muslim bashing, climate change denying, warmongering, hate stirring, etc., etc. If I missed any revolting and disgusting categories, please feel free to add them. These are truly perilous times.

I want to interrupt these conversations by saying, "Enough of talking about how screwed up these people and their views are. I share your heart-felt disgust, contempt, and concerns

None of us has control over what Trump, Cruz, Rubio, and the Koch Brothers, etc. are doing. You and I have control over what each of us do as individuals and families during what may be the most important election of our lifetimes. I have no right to judge what others do. I do have the right to judge myself and my actions.

I was born a native-born, English speaking, straight, able-bodied, white, male American citizen. I had nothing to do with any of these characteristics. Although I lived in poverty as a youth, I benefitted greatly from growing up in our country with good schools, great opportunities, and a life free from discrimination because of who I am. So what is my duty and responsibility this year?

I worked hard all my life and saved some money. My success was not achieved alone. I am standing on the shoulders of previous generations who sacrificed and fought to create great opportunities, pensions, Social Security, and Medicare for people like me. It is my duty to pay it forward for future generations.



Voting is not enough. I have a lot of free time. I can doorbell, phone bank, register voters, get signatures for initiatives, educate voters, and give to organizations that are building power in our communities. Much of this is hard and sometimes not fun, but it is how we win elections.

I ask each of you to do the same. Make a serious commitment and carry it out. We don't know each other's financial circumstances. We don't know each other's time commitments to family, etc. I urge each of you to seriously wrestle with the questions I raise. We all have choices to make here. If there were ever a time to step up it is now. Do we really want a president who calls Mexican immigrants rapists and drug dealers? A president who wants to bomb the Middle East until the sands glow? NO! The real question for each of us in these elections is: "Will we really put our money and time where we say our hearts are?"

These are tough questions. I ask myself and you, "Will we raise these questions in a kind and thoughtful way with those we are close to? If not, why not?" If we lose these elections, we will have plenty of time in the next four years to complain. Let's win and reduce the need for venting our frustrations.

Mark McDermott is on the PSARA Executive Board and is Co-chair of PSARA's Education Committee.

Enough of talking about how screwed up these people and their views are. Let's also talk about what you and I and our families and friends are going to do to ensure that our country and state do not elect people who espouse these views.

about where these people would lead us. I understand the need to vent. But let's also talk about what you and I and our families and friends are going to do to ensure that our country and state do not elect people who espouse these views. In particular, I want to ask you and me how much money and time are we willing to donate to these election fights to defeat them, elect better yet imperfect leaders, and stay active after the elections?"

Last month I wrote about a trip of a lifetime to Egypt and Ethiopia. It cost a lot of money. I ask myself: "Should I spend an equivalent amount of money on the elections and initiatives? Should I spend more? If not, why not? How many hours of free labor should I commit to the elections?" I am going to answer these questions in the privacy of my own home. I want to push myself hard on these questions. I can afford to donate more than these trips cost.

Groups Challenge Right-Wing Freedom Foundation in Complaint to AG

Video shows Freedom Foundation plotting to elect Republican candidates

By Mike Andrew

Nine LGBT, human rights, and labor groups are challenging the tax-exempt status of the right-wing Freedom Foundation in a complaint to Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson.

The complaint, filed February 16, was spearheaded by the Northwest Accountability Project, a group that describes itself as “dedicated to shining a light on right-wing extremism and the moneyed special interests behind it.”

Northwest Accountability Project was joined in the complaint by NARAL Pro-Choice Washington, Progressive Majority Washington, Pride At Work, American Federation of Teachers Washington, the Washington State Council of Firefighters, Teamsters Local 117, and the Washington State Labor Council.

The complaint to Ferguson follows discovery of a videotape by the Northwest Accountability Project documenting statements by Freedom Foundation operatives that they are actively trying to help Republican candidates.

The video was shot at a fundraiser for Republican State Rep. Lynda Wilson and shows Freedom Foundation CEO Tom McCabe and foundation staffer Scott Roberts explaining the right-wing group’s strategy.

To the Freedom Foundation, “freedom” means the freedom for corporate interests and their right-wing Republican allies to run their backward political agenda unchecked.

They want to attack labor unions with so-called right-to-work laws and other tactics so unions will be unable to fund Democratic candidates, McCabe and Roberts say.

“Why are we focused on the labor unions?” McCabe asks in the video. “They are by far the largest contributors to the Democratic Party.”

Later in the video, McCabe endorses the idea of keeping the Washington Legislature under Republican control and even encourages donors in the

room to contribute to specific races.

Scott explains that the Freedom Foundation attacks unions in order to force them to spend money defending their right to organize workers.

“[F]or every dollar [unions] spend defending their idea is every dollar they don’t have to spend against our good candidates,” he says.

Working to elect Republicans and defeat Democrats would be a clear violation of IRS and Washington State rules for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations.

The video is available at the Northwest Accountability Project website, nwaccountabilityproject.com.

The February 16 complaint is the second filed against the Freedom Foundation. Last year, a 24-page complaint from a dozen organizations demanded that the IRS revoke the group’s tax-exempt status for “flagrantly” disregarding federal laws banning intervention in political campaigns.

“The Freedom Foundation is blatantly ignoring the state and federal rules that prohibit tax-exempt organizations from engaging in partisan political activity — and as a result, they’re getting tax breaks while taxpayers are footing the bill for their conservative attacks,” said Andrew Biviano, Founding Board Member of the Northwest Accountability Project.

“It’s outrageous that the Freedom Foundation is engaging in partisan attacks on the middle class, the environment, and the values that we hold here in the Pacific Northwest, while hiding behind a bogus 501(c)(3) tax exemption.”



January 27: PSARA Executive Board Member Imogene Williams spreads the word outside Wells Fargo.

Loss of its 501(c)(3) status would make it more difficult for Freedom Foundation to raise money, especially from charitable foundations.

Northwest Accountability Project and its allies are also going after Freedom Foundation funders like the Murdock Charitable Trust. Founded to help Christian charities, the Trust does give money to good causes, but it also funds extremist anti-choice, anti-Gay, and anti-labor organizations like the Freedom Foundation.

In fact, the Freedom Foundation has received \$756,000 from the Murdock Trust to fund its illegal anti-union political operations.

Wells Fargo executive Jeffrey Grubb sits on the Murdock Board and helps make decisions about who gets money.

On January 27 about 40 picketers, including PSARA members, took the fight to Wells Fargo’s downtown Seattle office building, demanding that Grubb sever his ties with the Trust or stop giving money to groups that use it for their own political agendas.

Against the Trans-Pacific Partnership:

Editor's Note: PSARA has joined with more than 1,500 other organizations to sign the following letter to our Congress members:

Dear Representative/Senator:

We urge you to oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a binding pact that poses significant threats to American jobs and wages, the environment, food safety and public health, and that falls far short of establishing the high standards the United States should require in a 21st Century trade agreement.

If enacted, the TPP would set rules governing approximately 40% of the global economy, and includes a "docking" mechanism through which not only Pacific Rim nations, but any country in the world, could join over time. The question policymakers should be asking about these rules is whether, on the whole, they would create American jobs, raise our wages, enhance environmental sustainability, improve public health and advance human rights and democracy. After careful consideration, we believe you will agree, the answer to these questions is "No." Our opposition to the TPP is broad and varied. Below are just some of the likely effects of the TPP that we find deeply disturbing.

Offshoring U.S. jobs and driving down wages

The TPP would offshore more good-paying American jobs, lower wages in the jobs that are left and increase income inequality by forcing U.S. employers into closer competition with companies exploiting labor in countries like Vietnam, with workers legally paid less than 65 cents an hour, and Malaysia, where an estimated one-third of workers in the country's export-oriented electronics industry are the victims of human trafficking.

The TPP replicates the investor protections that reduce the risks and costs of relocating production to low wage countries. The pro-free-trade Cato Institute considers these terms a subsidy on

offshoring, noting that they lower the risk premium of relocating to venues that American firms might otherwise not consider.

And the TPP's labor standards are grossly inadequate to the task of protecting human rights abroad and jobs here at home. The countries involved in the TPP have labor and human rights records so egregious that the "May 10th" model — which was never sufficient to tackle the systemic labor abuses in Colombia — is simply incapable of ensuring that workers in Mexico, Vietnam, Malaysia and all TPP countries will be able to exercise the rights they are promised on paper. Even if the labor standards were much stronger, the TPP is also so poorly negotiated that it allows products assembled mainly from parts manufactured in "third party" countries with no TPP obligations whatsoever to enter the United States duty free.

The TPP contains none of the enforceable safeguards against currency manipulation demanded by a bipartisan majority in both chambers of Congress. Thus, the often modest tariff cuts achieved under the pact for U.S. exporters could be easily wiped out overnight by countries' willingness to devalue their currencies in order to gain an unfair trade advantage. Already, the TPP includes several notorious currency manipulators, and would be open for countries such as China to join.

In addition, the TPP includes procurement requirements that would waive "Buy American" and "Buy Local" preferences in many types of government purchasing, meaning our tax dollars would also be offshored rather than being invested at home to create jobs here. Even the many Chinese state-owned enterprises in Vietnam would have to be treated equally with U.S. firms in bidding on most U.S. government contracts. The pact even includes financial services provisions that we are concerned might be interpreted to prohibit many of the commonsense financial stability policies necessary to head off future economic crises. The TPP is a major threat to the U.S. and global economy alike.

Undermining environmental protection

The TPP's Environment Chapter rolls back the initial progress made in the "May 10th" agreement between congressional Democrats and President George W. Bush with respect to multilateral environmental (MEAs) agreements. The TPP only includes an obligation to "adopt, maintain, and implement" domestic policies to fulfill one of the seven MEAs covered by Bush-era free trade agreements and listed in the "Fast Track" law. This omission would allow countries to violate their obligations in key environmental treaties in order to boost trade or investment without any consequences.

Of the new conservation measures in the TPP, most have extremely weak obligations attached to them, requiring countries to do things such as "exchange information and experiences" and "endeavor not to undermine" conservation efforts, rather than requiring them to "prohibit" and "ban" destructive practices. This stands in stark contrast to many of the commercial obligations found within the agreement.

The TPP's controversial investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system would enable foreign investors to challenge bedrock environmental and public health laws, regulations and court decisions as violations of the TPP's broad foreign investor rights in international tribunals that circumvent domestic judicial systems — a threat felt at home and throughout the Pacific Rim.

Despite the fact that the TPP could threaten climate policies, increase shipping emissions and shift U.S. manufacturing to more carbon-intensive countries, the TPP fails to even include the words "climate change."

Jeopardizing the safety of the food we feed our families

The TPP includes language not found in past pacts that allows exporters to challenge border food safety inspection procedures. This is a dire concern given the TPP includes countries such as Viet-

PSARA joins 1,500 organizations to oppose the TPP

nam and Malaysia that export massive quantities of shrimp and other seafood to the United States, significant amounts of which are now rejected as unsafe under current policies.

As well, new language in the final text replicates the industry demand for a so-called "Rapid Response Mechanism" that requires border inspectors to notify exporters for every food safety check that finds a problem and give the exporter the right to bring a challenge to that port inspection determination. This is a new right to bring a trade challenge to individual border inspection decisions (including potentially laboratory or other testing) that second-guesses U.S. inspectors and creates a chilling effect that would deter rigorous oversight of imported foods.

The TPP additionally includes new rules on risk assessment that would prioritize the extent to which a food safety policy impacts trade, not the extent to which it protects consumers.

Rolling back access to life-saving medications

Many of the TPP's intellectual property provisions would effectively delay the introduction of lowcost generic medications, increasing health care prices and reducing access to medicine both at home and abroad.

Pharmaceutical firms obtained much of their agenda in the TPP. This includes new monopoly rights that do not exist in past agreements with respect to biologic medicines, a category that includes cutting-edge cancer treatments. The TPP also contains requirements that TPP nations allow additional 20-year patents for new uses of drugs already under patent, among other rules that would promote the "evergreening" of patent monopolies. Other TPP provisions may enable pharmaceutical companies to challenge Medicare drug listing decisions, Medicaid reimbursements and constrain future U.S. policy reforms to reduce healthcare costs.

With this agreement, the United States would shamefully roll back some of the hard-fought protections for access to

medicine in trade agreements that were secured during the George W. Bush administration. Indeed, the pact eviscerates the core premise of the "May 10th" reforms that poor nations require more flexibility in medicine patent rules so as to ensure access. All of the TPP's extreme medicine patent rules will apply equally to developing countries with only short transition periods for application of some of the rules.

Elevating investor rights over human rights and democracy

Contrary to Fast Track negotiating objectives, the TPP's Investment Chapter and its ISDS system would grant foreign firms greater rights than domestic firms enjoy under U.S. law. One class of interests — foreign firms — could privately enforce this public treaty by skirting domestic laws and courts to challenge U.S. federal, state and local decisions and policies on grounds not available in U.S. law and do so before extrajudicial tribunals authorized to order payment of unlimited sums of taxpayer dollars. Under the TPP, compensation orders could include the "expected future profits" a tribunal determines that an investor would have earned in the absence of the public policy it is attacking.

Worse, the TPP would expand U.S. ISDS liability by widening the scope of domestic policies and government actions that could be challenged. For the first time in any U.S. free trade agreement, the provision used in most successful investor compensation demands would be extended to challenges of financial regulatory policies. The TPP would extend the "minimum standard of treatment" obligation to the TPP's Financial Services Chapter's terms, allowing financial firms to challenge policies as violating investors' "expectations" of how they should be treated. Meanwhile, the "safeguard" that the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) claims would protect such policies merely replicates terms that have failed to protect challenged policies in the past.

In addition, the TPP would newly allow pharmaceutical firms to use the TPP to demand cash compensation for claimed violations of World Trade Organization (WTO) rules on creation, limitation or revocation of intellectual property rights. Currently, WTO rules are not privately enforceable by investors.

With Japanese, Australian and other firms newly empowered to launch ISDS attacks against the United States, the TPP would double U.S. ISDS exposure. More than 1,000 additional corporations in TPP nations, which own more than 9,200 subsidiaries here, could newly launch ISDS cases against the U.S. government. About 1,300 foreign firms with about 9,500 U.S. subsidiaries are so empowered under all existing U.S. investor-state-enforced pacts. Most of these are with developing nations with few investors here.

That is why, until the TPP, the United States has managed largely to dodge ISDS attacks to date. In these, and multiple other ways, the TPP elevates investor rights over human rights and democracy, threatening an even broader array of public policy decisions than described above. This, unfortunately, is the all-too-predictable result of a secretive negotiating process in which hundreds of corporate advisors had privileged access to negotiating texts, while the public was barred from even reviewing what was being proposed in its name.

The TPP does not deserve your support. Had Fast Track not become law, Congress could work to remove the misguided and detrimental provisions of the TPP, strengthen weak ones and add new provisions designed to ensure that our most vulnerable families and communities do not bear the brunt of the TPP's many risks. Now that Fast Track authority is in place for it, Congress is left with no means of adequately amending the agreement without rejecting it entirely. We respectfully ask that you do just that.

Thank you for your consideration. We will be following your position on this matter closely.

"Being tortured has been the best experience in my life."

Part III of an interview with David Ayala, organizer with Working Washington

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

Editor's note: This is Part III of an interview with David Ayala, now an organizer with Working Washington. In Part I, in the January *Retiree Advocate*, Ayala recounted how he became an opponent of El Salvador's right-wing government in the 1980s. In Part II, in February, he recalled the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, which brought the political crisis in El Salvador to "a point of no return."

The rest of the interview will appear in subsequent issues of the *Retiree Advocate*.

Ayala's visibility as an opposition figure eventually led to his arrest by the government in 1989.

He was going to a government office to try to renew his passport so he could travel outside the country. Another member of his union had recently been arrested, which Ayala thinks may have put him on the radar of the security services.

While he was waiting outside the office, four Treasury Police arrived. One said, "I know you," and called him by name. "I thought of running. I didn't know if they would kill me. But if I ran, the people around me could be hurt. So I decided not to run, to face the whole thing.

"They handcuffed me and put me in a car, a Ford, down on the floor so nobody could see me. They drove all around so I wouldn't be able to tell where we were going.

"Finally, we came to a place where they knocked on a big iron door — bam, bam, bam. Inside, somebody said, 'What you got for me today?' The driver said, 'Oh, I've got a good fish for you. He's a labor leader and university student. Went to Nicaragua twice.' They could see it on my old passport. That's how it began."

According to Ayala, after a political arrest the government had three days to "log you in" — that is, to acknowledge having you in custody. "For those

first three days," he explains, "you can be killed. If they don't log you in, they don't accept responsibility that they have you."

Then, for the first 15 days of official custody, statute allowed the government to keep political prisoners out of the legal system — and effectively, to torture them — before they were transferred to a regular prison.

"They disappeared me," Ayala says. "For 15 days I was in their hands."

Techniques

Ayala had been trained by the national coalition of popular movements in how the system worked, and how to withstand torture. The training taught him "to keep your head cool."

He and his fellow political prisoners kept track of the different techniques of torture the government used.

For the first three days they beat him. "That nearly drove me crazy. They hit me to knock the wind out of me. They would hit you to break your wrist. Lots of hits. They had learned where to hit you so that it hurt but didn't leave a mark. And they would tie you up in painful positions."

Another tactic was to leave you alone for a few days, so "you start thinking that they forgot about you." Then they may put you in with people you don't know and who may be informers, even though "they may talk nicely about being in the struggle."

"There are psychologists behind this stuff who know how you are responding to the torture that they are applying," Ayala recalled. They mixed physical torture with psychological and physiological abuse. Sometimes they withheld food and water. "I was not fed for three days. I was given water once, a little tiny



David Ayala

bit a day. And then they were abusing me physically. They were slapping my face. They hit it so hard, and this stuff inside bleeds really easily, so there was blood, but there's no mark."

Another technique they used was the *capucha*, or hood. "In some ways it's like waterboarding. But it's not water here, it's like harina — a plastic bag with flour inside. And sometimes the powder gets inside you, and it doesn't let you breathe right. Meanwhile there's one guy in the back of you holding your head back, and somebody's hitting your face and asking you questions: 'Where are the bombs? Where are the bombs?'"

"There was one moment that I almost died," Ayala remembers. He was handcuffed and stretched out, and he fainted.

The torturers believed he was almost dead and called in a higher officer. "I heard their conversation, and they were worried" because they had already logged him in.

Both David Ayala and Peter Constantini are PSARA members.

Cuba in Transition

By Tom Lux

Cuba is in transition. Before President Obama moved toward diplomatic relations, Cuba was already changing some of its economic laws. There is much discussion about the economic transition and also debate about the possible effects on Cuba and its people.

Cuba is a poor, third-world country, and the people are proud of their independence, which they fought hard for in the revolution after centuries of domination by Spain and then the United States. The US Embargo has hurt them economically, and they call it one of the longest genocides in history. The collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's main trading partner, resulted in the loss of 73 percent of its international trade in the 1990's.

It is a beautiful, tropical island of friendly people with fields of tobacco, corn, black beans, rice, and sugar. Havana has retained much of its old-world charm with its Spanish colonial architecture and brightly colored buildings. Unfortunately the crumbling buildings that have not been renovated yet speak to the widespread economic needs.

The revolution set priorities that Cubans continue to hold dear and to strive for. Education is a right and free for everyone. Cuba has one of the highest rates of literacy in the world. Everyone is guaranteed the basic necessity of food. In fact the portions per meal, in the city as well as in the countryside, are much larger than I am used to. The staples, of course, are black beans and rice, which are served with deliciously prepared beef, pork, chicken, or seafood, as well as vegetables and soup.

No one is homeless. Housing is also a guaranteed right and rents amount to a few pesos a month. As in many parts of the world, there is movement from the country into the urban areas, which is putting a strain on housing, but there are no tent encampments along the

highway like we see in our cities, and there are no foreclosures or evictions.

And, of course, Cuba has free health care for all -- from the neighborhood doctor and nurse who visit about 1,200 citizens monthly, to the most advanced hospitals with the latest technology and research. Cuba has trained over 4,000 doctors from around the world in their 14 medical schools. The foreign students who are trained there return to their countries and serve their communities. While we were there we met with about a dozen of the US students who are earning their degrees and plan to practice in underserved communities in our country. The US will not sponsor these students, so they apply through the Pastors for Peace organization.

The challenge for Cuba will be to maintain its priorities and its independence while allowing some foreign investment and businesses. Even before the US and Cuba entered into negotiations, Cuba started to allow small enterprises such as souvenir stalls and shops, grocers, auto repair and refurbishing shops, bed and breakfast rooms for rent (we saw many of these in the tobacco region), taverns, and restaurants (called paladares).

I asked one of our lecturers, "In Seattle we have a few companies that started small, such as Microsoft, Starbucks, and Amazon. How do you keep businesses from expanding and gaining overwhelming economic and political power?" He said that they are aware of this possibility, but I got the feeling that they are still wrestling with this issue.

Although travel restrictions are still in place in the US, the number of American tourists visiting the island in 2015



Havana: The Museum of the Revolution.
Photo by Tom Lux

rose 77 percent. Recently, an agreement was reached to allow US airlines to again fly to Cuban cities. While we were there we saw tour bus after tour bus; the hotels seemed to be completely full, and parking was scarce. The Cuban Tourism Ministry, I have read, is contracting with luxury developers to build hotels, resorts, and golf courses to accommodate the rapidly growing tourism. These are some of the issues that Cuba will be dealing with during the economic transition and the possible lifting of the Embargo.

It seems to me the Cuban people are facing a difficult juggling act. Rapidly expanding tourism with new flights and cruise ships, a growing small enterprise sector, a housing crunch, an aging population, expanding internet use, etc., while maintaining the revolution's priorities of free universal education and health care and adequate housing and food. I have the feeling that they are up to the challenge, and hopefully we can learn from them.

Tom Lux is PSARA's Treasurer and also serves as President of the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association.

Fighting for Health Care as a Human Right

Continued from Page 1

that have the most people who could get comprehensive and free health coverage under Medicaid Expansion.

Sure, Washington State is among the states recognized for reducing the uninsured rate in our state, but those fighting for health coverage for all remain concerned with the staggering number of uninsured and worry about those who are still underinsured (those who have coverage, but can't afford to use it). A 2015 report by the Washington State Office of Financial Management showed that at that time almost two-thirds of the uninsured population were actually eligible for coverage but not covered. Using this data in October last year, the Health Benefit Exchange showed that almost 132,000 individuals were eligible for Medicaid but not yet covered, and over 204,000 were eligible for the Exchange but not yet enrolled.

Why is this? Affordability of health coverage premiums, complicated technological and web application problems, confusing health care terminology, correspondence, and covered benefits, among many other factors. This is according to the November 2015 report by Northwest Health Law Advocates, which surveys health care navigators. Recognizing that there are far too many uninsured still and that affordability remains a barrier, Commissioner Kreidler noted, "We can and should celebrate our success, but we also need to continue finding new ways to tackle the growing costs of health care, including lowering costs for consumers."

We can do it. In Washington State, we made a commitment to cover all kids in 2005 and then two years later passed legislation to make that coverage possible with free and affordable health coverage. And when they said "all kids," the commitment was truly for all children. Advocates who believe that health care is a human right want to see that commitment repeated for



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all residents of this state and see the success of "cover all kids" replicated for all residents. And when we say all residents, we mean all those in our state, including populations that were shut out of health coverage under the ACA.

In 2015, the Health Care is a Human Right Coalition worked with Rep. June Robinson to introduce House Bill 1321, which calls for the legislature to make a commitment to cover all residents of the state. Last year, the bill received a great hearing where coalition members and individuals told their stories of those who are shut out from health coverage and still cannot afford their premiums, prescriptions, and out-of-pocket costs.

In 2016, we made progress. Earlier this month, the bill was voted out of Rep. Eileen Cody's Health Care and Wellness Committee. The legislation was not considered by the full House of Representatives.

Our next step is to continue our advocacy. We will push to make sure we as a state don't settle into the status quo. We will continue the fight to expand health coverage to all residents -- such as Medicare for All at the federal level -- and/or using waivers at the state level to expand health coverage to those who are shut out and priced out of health care right here in our state.

Join us in this movement. We've made progress, but reducing the number of uninsured in this state by half simply means we are halfway to our goal. PSARA is a member of the Health Care is a Human Right Coalition and we will all work together to achieve the goal of making health care as a human right a reality.

Teresa Mosqueda is the Political and Strategic Campaign Director of the WA State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and a PSARA member.

PSARA Backs Initiative 1433 Campaign

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What's next for I – 1433?

Petitions have been printed, and there will be a massive volunteer signature gathering campaign. I know PSARA has a number of excellent signature gatherers, and getting signatures on this initiative will not be difficult.

On Saturday, March 5, you can participate in a campaign kickoff event at 8:30 a.m. at the Washington State Labor Council Seattle Office, 321 16th Ave. South. If you cannot make it to the kickoff, you can sign up to volunteer for signature gathering by going to www.raiseupwa.com/get-involved/. You can also call 206-254-4930 to volunteer to get signatures and/or help out in the office.

PSARA can also assist our members to get petitions for signature gathering. Contact the PSARA office by email at president@psara.org or call the office at (206) 448-9646.

Let's Be Practical... Or Not

"Everyone, of course, is thrilled with thousand of new young voters flooding the system in this campaign. It resembles the famous 1968 "Children's Crusade" for Eugene McCarthy, when tens of thousands of young people joined the political process to protest the war in Vietnam. Now, as then, the establishment is attempting to teach the newcomers what is 'practical' in an effort to temper their contagious idealism.

"The word 'practical' has simply become the hallmark of the establishment as a way to stop change."

David Mixner, LGBT activist

Mark Your Calendars: Give Big Day

On Tuesday, May 3, the Seattle Foundation is once again sponsoring Give Big Day. The PSARA Education Fund is one of the designated non-profits eligible to receive funds on Give Big Day. Please plan to make a contribution to the PSARA Education Fund on Give Big Day.

We will have more specific information on how to make a donation in the April newsletter. What you should know is that your donation will be increased by a special stretch fund from the Seattle Foundation thereby increasing the value of your donation to the Retiree Advocate and PSARA's educational work. Your donation will be tax deductible.

Our educational work is becoming more demanding as the presentations become more frequent and our geographic reach expands. Your donations make a huge difference in assisting our educational work. Please mark your calendars for May 3!

PSARA Social Security conference in February 2015. This is one example of the many vital educational events that will be supported by your generous donations on Give Big Day, May 3.



(Photo: Garet Munger)

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

New PSARA Book Group

PSARA Environmental Committee: 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Thursday, March 3, Seattle WA State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle. All welcome!

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m., Thursday, March 3, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave., Seattle. All welcome as we review how Senior Lobby Day went and what lies ahead.

This Changes Everything-The Movie: 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., Thursday, March 3, UFCW 21, 5030 1st Ave. S., Seattle. Dinner, movie and discussion. Please RSVP to PSARA office, 206-448-9646. Sponsored by PSARA, UFCW 21, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and Teamsters Local 117.

This Changes Everything-The Movie: 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Friday, March 4, Washington State Labor Council offices, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle. Brown Bag, movie and discussion. Sponsored by PSARA, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, UFCW 21, and Teamsters Local 117.

Green Lake Discussion Group: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, March 10, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. Topic: *Age-Friendly Cities - What does it mean? Is Seattle Age-Friendly?* All are welcome. For further information contact Susan at sjlevy.01@gmail.com

PSARA Diversity Committee: 11 a.m. - noon, Thursday, March 17, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle. All are welcome as we continue planning our activities for 2016.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. - 3 p.m., Thursday, March 17, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16th Ave. S., Seattle. All are welcome.

Several PSARA members have asked if there could be another book group to discuss *This Changes Everything*, by Naomi Klein. The *New York Times Book Review* referred to *This Changes Everything* as the most important book on the environment since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962.

The PSARA book group would meet five times, on Saturdays or Sundays for two hours beginning in March. Actual times are worked out with participants. The meetings will be three weeks apart and normally involve reading 90 pages between sessions. Bob Barnes, Michael Righi, and Bobby Righi led the previous book group and will facilitate this discussion.

The first PSARA book group on *This Changes Everything* was very successful, and all of the participants felt like it had been a great discussion and a great learning experience.

If you are interested in participating, please email adminvp@psara.org or call the PSARA office at (206) 448-9646. If there are enough people interested, we will launch this second book group.

