

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

Vol XXXIII, No 11

November 2018

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Don't Miss PSARA's 2018 Legislative Conference! Monday, November 19

PPSARA's annual legislative conference will be Monday, November 19, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the UFCW 21 Union Hall, 5030 First Avenue S, Seattle.

We are excited to have as our speakers this year State Senator Rebecca Saldana, 37th Legislative District; Pam Crone, our lobbyist; and Maddie Foutch, SEIU 775 lobbyist and lead advocate for the Long Term Care Trust Act. This year we anticipate that several bills benefiting seniors have a chance of passing. But only if we are active in talking to our representatives and telling them our stories.

The Legislative Conference will provide you with information to help you meet with your legislators.

Senior Lobby Day in Olympia is set for February 21, 2019, and we are making in-district appointments with our legislators prior to that, so you have an opportunity to meet closer to home if that is more convenient.

PSARA is committed to working on issues that affect all generations, and with that in mind we have established an agenda of things that are most important to us and will have an impact on our lives. Our 2019 Legislative Agen-



PSARA members discuss our legislative agenda at last year's conference.

Photo: Garet Munger

da is almost finalized, but the broad outlines remain the same as last year.

Retirement Security: Long term care is a top priority for us. We support the creation of a Long-Term Care Trust Fund to enhance retirement security by providing financial assistance for long term care.

State Budget: We want a more progressive revenue system and more accountability.

Housing: We need more low-income housing and support significant allocations to the Washington Housing Trust Fund.

Health Care: We support legislation to expand health care coverage to all Washington residents.

Reserve your place now! RSVP to organizer@psara.org or call 206-261-8110.

Join Us at PSARA's Post-Election Sing-Along Party, Sunday, November 11

Let's Party!!! PSARA is hosting a music party with Lou Truskoff. Join our members to celebrate our election victories and perhaps lift our spirits after some inevitable disappointments. What better way to do it than singing along with Lou. This is a free event so

bring your friends and family. Robby may even bring his one-and-a-half-year-old grandson, Manny, and lead us in a Yellow Submarine, one of Manny's favorite songs.

Meet us in the Beaumont Room in the Bayview Towers, 2815 Second Av-

enue, Seattle, on Sunday, November 11, from 2:30-4:30. We will provide some beer, wine, soft drinks and snacks for the occasion. Just bring your wonderful singing voices.

For further information contact Mike Andrew at organizer@psara.org or Karen Richter at fundraising@psara.org

The Retiree ADVOCATE

Published monthly by the PSARA Education Fund, 321
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New Seasons on Notice!

As you can guess, Thanksgiving is by far the busiest time in the grocery business. Ballard New Seasons Market will be counting on big profits Thanksgiving week. *Retiree Advocate* readers will remember that New Seasons is also developing a Central District store at 23rd and Union.

Community members from the Central District were able to meet with New Season's Co-CEO, Kristi McFarland, last week and gave her a deadline of Friday, November 16, to address community concerns about gentrification, workers' rights issues in New Seasons stores, and the company's financial connections to right-wing funders, the Murdock Trust. New Seasons workers in Portland sent a letter of support in solidarity with Seattle workers and community groups.

We hope she can make commitments by then (you know, because the company claims to be so friendly and progressive!), but just in case, we want to mobilize to have a presence outside the store during that week. This means folks holding signs and flyer customers alongside members of UFCW. We may even have some big paper mache visuals, too!

**PSARA will adopt a flyering shift on Tuesday, November 20
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Ballard New Seasons, 951 NW Ballard Way, Seattle**

There's one further update on the New Seasons issue. A New Seasons worker was able to testify to the Washington State Investment Board, and their testimony was so compelling that the Board voted to review New Seasons' majority stock-holder, Endeavour Capital, before their next round of investment.

This is a huge win and a much stronger commitment from the Board than anyone anticipated!

Stay tuned for further developments on this front and possible activity in December.

We Remember David Ayala, Jackie Dupras, and Mildred Ollee

Sadly, we have to note the passing of three long-time PSARA members: David Ayala, Jackie Dupras, and Mildred Ollee. We'll write more about their remarkable lives in the next issue of the *Retiree Advocate*. Our thoughts are with their families and friends.



David Ayala



Jackie Dupras



Mildred Ollee

We Must Act to Save Our Planet, Ourselves

By Jeff Johnson, reprinted from *The Stand*

“It’s a line in the sand and what it says to our species is that this is the moment and we must act now...”
- Debra Roberts, co-chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

“Today the world’s leading scientific experts collectively reinforced what mother nature has made clear -- that we need to undergo an urgent and rapid transformation to a global clean energy economy,” - former US Vice President Al Gore

“If the planet were a bank, we would have already saved it.” - Clara, transit worker in Paris 2015

Over the past two weeks two important reports on climate have come out. The US Environmental Protection Agency released a 500-page report. Buried deep in the report is a projection that temperatures will rise seven degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century. This is nearly four degrees Celsius, which would dramatically change life as we know it on earth.

- Allow states to regulate their own coal power plant emissions
- Relax requirements on how energy companies maintain and repair methane leaks
- Open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling.

Trump’s plan is to double down on fossil fuel production and use.

The other report, released last week by the working group of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, noted that the earth’s temperature has already risen one degree Celsius since 1880, and the earth’s temperature may well increase another half a degree Celsius by the year 2030 – only 12 years from now.

This means we will be subject to even more severe storms, droughts, flooding, sea level rise, loss of lives, property, and jobs, and political and economic demands arising from forced migration around the world.

But the U.N. Report also is hopeful. While pointing out that keeping the planet at or below 1.5 degrees Celsius



Jeff Johnson

The leading scientists in the world are telling us that we need to stop arguing over what carbon policy is the best one or whether we get one more mile of highway funding tomorrow and instead go all in for saving our planet, our economies, our jobs, and our lives.

This level of global warming would create hundreds of millions of water and food refugees, create catastrophic sea level rise, create mega storms and droughts impacting the whole planet and cause the extinction of many species of life.

What has been the Trump administration’s plan of action in the face of such predictions?

- Freeze Obama administration’s plans on making cars more fuel efficient
- Withdraw California’s ability to set their own carbon emission standards

is essential and to be successful will require unprecedented shifts to renewable energy systems and transport, “it can be done within the laws of physics and chemistry.”

The question really is one of political will and whether there be a “just” or an “unjust” transition.

Clara, the transit worker quoted at the top of this article, nailed it. There is no question that there is enough money to make the transition away from fossil fuels, and indeed hundreds of billions of dollars were spent bailing

out the world financial system over the last decade at the expense of working people. Her question is, Do we value the planet as much as we do the banks?

The leading scientists in the world are telling us that we need to stop arguing over what carbon policy is the best one or whether we get one more mile of highway funding tomorrow and instead go all in for saving our planet, our economies, our jobs, and our lives.

Of course how these decisions are made and by whom makes a difference. Any policy that significantly lowers carbon emissions, builds high quality labor standards into renewable energy investments, and provides a “Just Transition” for workers and our communities should be supported.

We can, as Emperor Nero did, fiddle while Rome burns. Or we can accept the clarion call of Mother Earth – “Save me to save yourselves.”

Jeff Johnson is President of the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) and a member of PSARA. The Stand is the online newspaper of the WSLC.

Minnesota Valve Turners Acquitted

By Bob Barnes

October 9, Clearwater County Court-house, Bagley, Minnesota. Day two of the last trial of the Valve Turners, five people and their support teams who two years earlier had shut down all the pipelines carrying tar sands oil into the US from Canada. Earlier court cases in Washington, Montana, and North Dakota had resulted variously in trials, mistrials, new trials and appeals. The other Valve Turners and their support teams are free at the moment.

This one was supposed to be special, but turned out to be a rollercoaster. The court had initially ruled that the "necessity defense" could be used. This would allow the defense to argue that breaking the law was a lesser offense than allowing a larger crime to continue, assuming all other legal methods had been exhausted, and would allow expert testimony to back up defense arguments. But, in a stunning turnaround, the week before the trial was to begin, the judge excluded most of the expert testimony that was to be used to bolster the case.

On day two the prosecution presented their case, then rested. The defense made a motion to dismiss the one and only charge against Emily Johnson of damaging a pipeline. The other two defendants had been charged with aiding and abetting. And the judge agreed. He acquitted them, citing that there was not sufficient (or any) evidence that could convince a jury that any damage to an actual pipeline had occurred.

It was a bittersweet victory. The Valve Turners were denied the ability to state the necessity of their actions in front of a jury. They also noted that white privilege put them in a much different place than, say, indigenous activists arrested at Standing Rock now facing more serious charges for crimes such as praying on pipeline property.

But it was a victory nonetheless. Our comrades are back on the streets with us, complete with their bolt cutter, still planning on engaging in the struggle

to literally save the world as we know it.

As Emily Johnson said after the trial, "We are fast losing our window of opportunity to save ourselves and much of the beauty of this world. We turned those valves to disrupt the business-as-usual that we know is leading to catastrophe and to send a strong message that might focus attention to the problem. We will continue to do that in every peaceful way we can; the stakes are far too high for us not to."

The legal fight is not over. The Valve Turners arrested in other states are appealing their convictions and are still facing the possibility of new trials and prison terms. To get more on this story, find out how you can support the legal battle, and join in the struggle, go to the Valve Turners site on Facebook at #Shut It Down.

Bob Barnes is a member of PSARA.



Annette Klapstein, Ben Joldersma, Emily Johnson, and the bolt cutter the Clearwater County Sheriff returned to them.

Meet Barbara Flye, New Advocate Cartoonist

Barbara Barron Flye was born and raised in the Detroit area and moved to Seattle in 1992. At the moment she is gainfully unemployed, enjoying time with her family and friends, volunteering for causes she believes in, and learning to illustrate.

Her professional background of community organizing, leadership development, and grassroots lobbying has focused on advancing public policies that promote a more just society. Through the art of editorial cartooning, she aims to provide a humorous outlet for all of the anger, frustration, and disbelief that comes from witnessing firsthand this crazy contradiction of a country we live in.

She is married to a really great guy and has two teenage kids. She has been a proud member of PSARA for many years.



Barbara's work is featured on Page 7. We welcome her to the pages of the *Retiree Advocate*.

Not So Random Thoughts

By Robby Stern

When the November issue of this newsletter reaches you, we will be less than two weeks away from learning the results of the midterm election. Obviously, there is a lot riding on this election. The US House and Senate races will have a huge impact on what happens with Social Security and Medicare in the next two years, as well as many other federal issues that matter to all of us. The Washington State House and Senate races will help determine the outcome of the Long-Term Care Trust Act and other legislation of concern including the state's two-year budget.

In addition, there are a number of very consequential initiatives and a referendum on the ballot.

I am hoping, hoping, hoping that I-1631 will pass. If it does, it will become a beacon for the rest of the country. I, like many of you, am deeply worried about what the future holds for our kids, grandkids, and generations to follow and our planet. Will the voters overcome the onslaught of oil company money that pays for the constant lies being broadcast in their TV and radio ads and mailers? The funders of the opposition are lying about I-1631 and showing little regard for the future of our planet, despite what they say. They simply do not want to pay a carbon fee, as it would cut into their profits.

The public opposition of a number of the Building Trades Unions and the failure of other unions like the Boeing Machinists Union to publicly support I-1631 is deeply disappointing. I was an active union member for almost the entirety of my adult life, including more than a decade as a member of the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters. In the last 15 years of my work life, before retiring, I worked for the Washington State Labor Council as Special Assistant to the President, advocating with all my heart and soul for unions and working people. I worked with the Building Trades Unions, the

Boeing Machinists and their members to assist them in achieving their legislative and policy goals. I spoke and led songs at rallies to support these unions when they were in struggles with their employers. I was and continue to be a brother, ally, and friend.

Some of today's labor leaders fear that the needed reduction and ultimate elimination of fossil fuel driven energy will lead to the loss of present-day jobs. They are allowing this fear to drive their decision on I-1631. They are choosing to ignore the overwhelming scientific evidence that we are rapidly heading for a climate disaster. Their alignment with a fossil fuel industry that positively knew the damage they were causing and their campaign to urge their members to vote No is very painful. These leaders care about the future of their kids and grandkids as much as I do. How can they be embracing the oil industry and the No campaign?

Fortunately, over 60 percent of unions in Washington support I-1631. Polls indicate this will be a very tight race, and we need all the help we can get for I-1631 to be approved. For the sake of our children, grandchildren, future generations, and our planet, go to the website "Yes on 1631" and volunteer. You can also join the PSARA phone bank on Saturday, Nov. 3. Call the PSARA office for more information. The last two weeks will matter!

Also on the ballot, I-1634 contains a concept promoted by ALEC (the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council). ALEC is composed of conservative and right-wing state legislators and corporate representatives who sit together and develop legislative proposals with ALEC staff. These policies that become legislative proposals promote the of the corporations who fund ALEC. One of those ideas is to "preempt" legislative power away from local jurisdictions like the various cities and require that legislation on that



subject be done at the state level where corporations have more influence.

I-1634 would preempt the ability of local jurisdictions to enact certain policies related to public health. Specifically, the City of Seattle passed a sugar beverage tax which was adopted as a public health policy. (The increase in obesity, heart disease, and diabetes is a significant public health problem.) I-1634 would bar any other jurisdiction in Washington from implementing a sugar beverage tax. It requires that such a policy can only be passed by the state legislature. Big soft drink corporations are the primary funders of this initiative, while public health advocates are the most vocal opponents.

For purposes of full disclosure, the Teamsters Union, representing the drivers who work for these companies, has endorsed the initiative.

I viewed a misleading ad from the proponents of this initiative on TV recently and then received a mailing with the same theme. A senior woman was saying she supports I-1634 because she does not want essential food items taxed. The large sugar beverage corporations are using scare tactics to get

Continued on Page 11

Bob's World

By Bob Shimabukuro



Family photo: Bob's mom is on the far left.

Mom: "Why do you keep telling him all these things. He's too little to understand.

Dad: "When he grow up, he understand."

Mom & Jiisan

When Mom reached retirement age, she decided to take a trip to visit all her children, so she planned a vacation to visit San Francisco, where she could meet with Roy who lived in San Francisco, and Ann, her husband Johnny, and her grandson Carlos, who lived in Gilroy; then to the Maryland/Washington D.C. area to visit with my cousin Irene and her husband George and their son David; Tom, my oldest brother, and Toki, my oldest sister, who was like a back-up mom to the younger children. (She said that she was changing my diapers when she in grade school).

Then she would fly back to the Northwest, check with Sam in Seattle, fly south to Portland to stay with me and my daughter Mira for a few days, then fly back home. Great Plan. Except the morning after she reached Portland, she had a bad stroke (aneurysm), and ended up staying in Portland for close to two months. Toki decided that I would need help taking care of Mom, so she set up a schedule for my siblings who would come to Portland. Sam, who was living in Seattle, would come whenever he could, presumably on weekends.

When Mom was released from the hospital, we were given some instructions on what we should do, one of which was to ask Mom questions like "What's your name?" "What day of the week is today?" "Who's the president of the United States?"

Mom would refuse to answer, she was so offended. So Tom and I thought about interviewing her about herself. She agreed. And we learned a lot. About half an hour a day.

But after the third day, she said, "No

more questions. My memory is fine. No need to go on." And then she clammed up.

Dis and Dat from interview and conversations with Mom

Mom was tri-lingual

I never heard Mom speak pidgin. So I couldn't count that.

Tom: "What language was spoken in the house?"

Mom: "Uchinanguchi. (Okinawan)." "Really?"

"Yes. At first. As the years went by, more Japanese was spoken. And then more English. I was also going to Japanese school after regular English school. They didn't have Uchinanguchi school."

Helping out family members

After Mom got to (my) home, she noticed that even after Ann and Carlos came in to help, I was still just hanging around and wasn't going to my shop. (My shop was only 3-4 blocks from my house.)

"You're taking a vacation?"

"You seem to take a lot of vacations and sick leaves. How are you getting along? You know, financially?"

"Well, Roy helps me out a lot."

"Oh good. Daddy would be very happy. He always said, 'I hope everybody help everybody when they can.'"

"Well, I'm glad to make Dad happy!" We had a good laugh at that.

Surviving the Depression era

Me: "Grandpa owned the farm, you said. What were the Depression years like?"

Mom: "It was different than other folks, because we had guaranteed income. So we didn't suffer as much as other people. Jiisan (grandfather) had signed a 3-4 year agreement with Libby's that they would buy all the pineapples he could grow. And he did have good sweet pineapples. Libby's actually honored the agreement. They paid for all the pineapples but then came in with a bulldozer, dug a ditch, then pushed most of the pineapples into the ditch. They said if we gave away all the pineapples they couldn't recoup their losses. Po Ho (what a waste)!"

Haole House (Pukalani)

Mom: "People used to call our house 'haole house,' it was the first in the area. It meant that we had real plumbing (in the kitchen, bathroom, and furo) and electricity. And some extras: We also had a huge stainless steel tub to make tofu and a still to make okolehao (ti leaf liquor)."

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

Join the NW Energy Coalition for the Clean & Affordable Energy Conference!

Thursday, November 15th, 2018
8am – 5pm
World Forestry Center
4033 Southwest Canyon Road
Portland, OR 97221

We have one free registration available for PSARA – to be given out to the first PSARA member to contact Kat Plimpton at kat@nwenergy.org or (206) 621-0094 to request the free registration.

The conference will feature expert panels designed to help utilities and the communities they serve transition to cleaner, more equitable, and affordable energy systems. We'll explore:

- The role of new storage technologies in helping the Northwest transition to a cleaner energy system.
- The economic, energy, health, and quality of life benefits of making homes and buildings more energy efficient.

This conference will convene energy leaders from government, utilities, business, and advocacy organizations to explore the Northwest's most pressing energy and environmental challenges.

We expect nearly 200 attendees -- state and regional policymakers, utility officials, clean energy business leaders, state regulators, and advocates from the energy, environmental, and social justice communities.

That evening, following the conference, the Clean Energy Awards Reception will celebrate Coalition partners and allies whose efforts are significantly advancing our goal of achieving a clean and affordable energy future.



Register: nwenergy.org/nw-clean-affordable-energy-conference/

As I See It

By Barbara Flye



Is Metro Throwing Senior and Disabled Access Riders Under the Bus?

By Steve Marquardt

Metro Transit's "Access" paratransit service for disabled seniors and other people with disabilities is an unreliable, broken system. Access riders like me are picked up late and dropped off more than an hour early at their destination, or equally often, arrive late for appointments. Trips take excessively long, the call centers have incredibly long hold times, and they are next to impossible for non-English speakers to navigate.

As another Access rider told an interviewer for Crosscut: "I'm talking about being ridden around the bus for two hours. I've seen people on dialysis that are on the bus for two hours. They need to go straight home. They're hungry and cold."

Unlike Metro's bus system, Access service is contracted out. There's little disincentive for the contractors when they fail to meet guidelines and, because they're paid by the hour, there's even an incentive for making trips excessively long.

A recent report by Disability Rights Washington, Washington ADAPT West, and the Transit Riders Union (TRU) titled "Fostering Independence & Community Integration," documents the terrible quality of existing Access service alongside the increase in ridership. It points out the potential functionality in disabled peoples' lives that would be associated with a higher-quality level of service. The report finds little improvement since a damning King County audit of the program in 2017.

Last year, pressure from riders and community allies like PSARA and TRU forced Metro to promise improvements in new Access contracts. Unfortunately, Metro now appears to be headed toward a new 5-10 year contract for Access that makes only an incremental improvement: the Access budget in the Executive's Proposed Budget would likely only fund "Tier 1" quality service, which is the lowest level of service with the lowest performance standards.

o "Tier 1" allows 3,464 excessively



Steve Marquardt

long trips each month before any contractor penalty.

o "Tier 1" allows drop-offs after scheduled appointment times, with no contractor penalty.

o "Tier 1" allows 7,360 late, excessively late, or missed pick-ups and an additional 7,360 untimely drop-offs each month before any contractor penalty. Seniors and people with disabilities should not have to accept such unreliability.

The higher quality level of service called "Tier 3" in Metro's current request for proposals is a much better option to promote community integration of disabled and elderly folks. By Metro's own calculations, the dependability of Tier 3 service would expand ridership by 55 percent over Tier 1 quality service, since many seniors and people with disabilities now choose to stay home rather than take their chances with late rides and excessively long trips.

By some accounts, Tier 3 service will require an additional \$10 million. If the County has \$135 million to add to the profits of the \$1.4 billion Mariners, surely the County must be able to find an additional \$10 million to increase

the safety and reliability of our federally mandated paratransit service.

For many King County residents, Metro Transit's Access paratransit system is an unreliable but crucial lifeline. Without paratransit services, seniors and people with disabilities who have trouble navigating fixed-route buses have no practical way to independently get to work, school, medical appointments, stores, or social and community events. Moreover, reliable paratransit service is not just a desirable amenity; it is a federal requirement under the ADA. But as the recent report shows, the poor state of Access service flouts the ADA and keeps many people with disabilities at home instead of fully participating in their communities.

The best solution to Access' deficiencies would be for Metro to bring the service in-house, but barring that, riders and their supporters must demand that King County make real improvements in the subcontracted system.

Please email the King County Council to insist that the County budget fund Tier 3 Access service: council@kingcounty.gov

Steve Marquardt is a member of PSARA.

The Trump Administration's Latest Attack on Social Security

By Alex Lawson

The Trump Administration and Republican leaders in Congress, along with their billionaire paymasters, are waging a war on the American people's earned Social Security benefits. The latest attack is the nomination of Andrew Saul as Commissioner of the Social Security Administration.

With no background at all in Social Security, Andrew Saul is blatantly unqualified to oversee the system. His other experience is hardly reassuring. Saul previously served on the board of the right-wing Manhattan Institute, an organization which has released articles calling for the privatization of Social Security.

Saul's record of personal conduct is equally troubling. In November, 2007, he was forced to quit a race for a Congressional seat in New York because of unethical campaign contributions. In April, 2012, Saul got pulled over for trespassing and tried to lie his way out by falsely identifying himself as a police commissioner. Like Trump and so many of Trump's appointees, Saul appears to believe that his wealth and privilege should make him above the law.

During a nomination hearing before the Senate, when pressed by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), Saul refused to rule out closing Social Security field offices. With 10 thousand Baby Boomers retiring daily, it is imperative that people who have paid into Social Security their whole lives have far more access, not less, to trusted sources for answers about their earned Social Security benefits. At the same hearing, Saul repeatedly assured Senators that he would leave policy decisions to people at "Treasury" and in the Trump Administration.

Let's remember that current Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin served for years on the corporate board of Sears, which declared bankruptcy this past week. For years, Wall Street hedge funds loaded the company up with debt, under the watchful eye of Mnuchin. Straight from the horse's mouth, this is who Saul is comfortable deferring to when it comes time to make policy decisions about Social Security. How is Saul going to fight back against Wall Street-led attacks on

workers' retirement savings if he is already planning to take his marching orders from people who spent their careers in the pocket of Wall Street?

If Steve Mnuchin's philosophies destroyed Sears, imagine what they could do to Social Security.

Trump's Budget Director, Mick Mulvaney, has repeatedly attacked Social Security. Mulvaney opined that Social Security disability insurance is not truly part of Social Security. Mulvaney bragged that he tricked President Trump into breaking his promise to avoid proposing any cuts to Social Security.

Is Saul going to defer to Mick Mulvaney, as well?

Beyond his non-ideological posturing, if confirmed, would Saul absolutely be on the same page as the rest of the Trump Administration? Suffice it to say, the evidence simply isn't there to claim that he wouldn't be. Saul certainly hasn't gone out of his way to rebut negative statements made about Social Security by other officials in the Trump Administration. His lack of a track record on Social Security – apart from serving on the board of a think tank that wants to destroy Social Security via privatization – indicates that he will follow their lead in attacking seniors and Americans with disabilities.

Recently, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell lied that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid were the "biggest drivers of the debt," and called for lawmakers to "adjust" the benefits Americans have earned, which is Washington, D.C. insider-speak for renewed cuts and decreased benefits. In fact, Social Security does not contribute a single penny to the deficit, unlike the \$2 trillion Republican tax handout to billionaires.

What is sorely needed is a Commissioner of the Social Security Administration who has the appropriate background and experience to aggressively fight back against the attacks coming repeatedly



Alex Lawson speaking to PSARA last year
Photo: Garet Munger

from McConnell, Mulvaney, and a multitude of others. Andrew Saul is not even remotely close to being that person.

Over 60 million Americans and their families rely on Social Security as an essential lifeline. Without relevant experience or qualifications or any willingness to provide substantive answers to questions about Social Security, he may appear to be an empty vessel. Far from that, Saul's nomination is a Trojan Horse for a dangerous agenda of cuts and privatizations, one that his associates from the Manhattan Institute and multiple members of the Trump administration are on record supporting.

Andrew Saul's confirmation would open the gates for far more attacks on our earned benefits. The marauders waiting to shred the Social Security system with a thousand cuts are ready and willing to act immediately after the 2018 elections, and Saul has completely and totally failed to demonstrate that he will do a single thing to stop any of this from happening. For that reason, Saul must not be confirmed as the next Commissioner of the Social Security Administration.

Alex Lawson is Executive Director of Social Security Works.

Public Charge Proposal Threatens Legal Immigrants and Their Families

By Janet Varon and Huma Zarif, Northwest Health Law Advocates

The Trump administration is proposing rules designed to impede and reduce legal immigration while threatening immigrants who use health care, nutrition, and housing benefits for which they qualify. These “public charge” proposed rules were published in the *Federal Register* on October 10, and public comments are due by December 10. The rules signal a shift in legal immigration policy in the U.S. that is worrisome to advocates, immigrants, and employers. The uncertainty about how these rules will play out is already resulting in immigrants foregoing benefits legally available to them and their families. If someone is deemed a public charge by immigration officials, they may be denied lawful permanent resident status (a “green card”). The chilling effects are expected to be significant in Washington State – with over 535,000 non-citizens and their family members potentially impacted. In King County alone, over 177,500 non-citizens and their family members would be impacted.

The current public charge policies have been in place for many decades – limited to consideration of government-funded institutional long-term care and cash assistance programs – allowing non-citizens to access health and nutrition benefits without fear of immigration consequences. The proposed rule is clear that the following programs, essential to seniors and their families, would be considered in making a public charge determination:

- Non-Emergency Medicaid, including home & community based services (HCBS) and Medicare Savings Programs
- Medicare Part D Low-Income Subsidy (also known as “Extra Help”)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Housing programs, including Section 202 housing with Project-Based Rental Assistance, Section 8 housing vouchers, and Public Housing.

The Department of Homeland Security

recognizes the potential negative health outcomes and increased poverty that can result from their proposed rules, but they are proposing them anyway. As pointed out by Dr. Goleen Samari in a *Washington Post* op-ed, more than 26 million people reside in families receiving benefits with at least one immigrant member. The fear of being denied legal permanent residency could cause millions of legal immigrants to withdraw from all public programs. In fact, scaring vulnerable populations off public assistance and blocking use of public programs could cost much more in the long run, because neglecting preventive health care and basic medical problems creates chronic and complex medical problems, making patients more expensive to treat down the road.

California’s Rep. Judy Chu introduced legislation preventing any federal funds from being used to implement President Trump’s public charge rule. A group of 90 bipartisan mayors, including the Mayors of Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, Redmond, and Tukwila, sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security requesting that the “misguided rule” be abandoned.

Members of Washington State’s Protecting Immigrant Families Coalition (PIF-WA) condemned the public charge rule when it was published in the *Federal Register*. They urge families

to sign up and use the benefits they are currently eligible for, since they will not be penalized for benefits received legally before the rule changes. NoHLA’s Huma Zarif said, “Using SNAP, Medicaid, or other benefits can help you and your family members become healthier, stronger, and more financially stable in the future.” The National Immigration Law Center has helpful messaging for talking to immigrant families.

The public charge rule is not final yet—but the clock is ticking. We have until December 10 to post a public comment. Take a few minutes now to post a public comment decrying this inhumane attack on the health and wellbeing of countless families, communities, and older adults.

Under federal law, the government is required to read and respond to every unique comment before issuing a final rule. That’s why we need you to submit yours now. A flood of comments can slow down the process, shape the administration’s decisions, and show how many people care. <https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/#take-action>

Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA) is a public interest law organization that aims to improve access to health care for all Washington residents in furtherance of health as a human right.

Janet Varon is Executive Director of NoHLA and a member of PSARA. Huma Zarif is a staff attorney at NoHLA.



Not So Random Thoughts

Continued from Page 5

voters to vote Yes. Their motive, pure and simple, is to protect their corporate profits. I-1634 does not open the door to taxation of food.

ALEC's connection to this policy of preempting the local jurisdictions' ability to pass public health legislation is bad for democracy. I will vote No on this initiative.

I-1639 would impose significant restrictions on gun ownership. These include enhanced background checks, raising the purchase age for semi-automatic firearms from 18 to 21, requiring firearms training before a semi-automatic rifle can be purchased, and a 10-day waiting period after the purchase of a semi-automatic rifle. It would add a Class C felony to the books for gun owners whose firearm is accessed by a person prohibited from having a firearm. This initiative makes a lot of sense. I will vote Yes.

I-940 concerns law enforcement. This measure would require law enforcement to receive violence de-escalation, mental health, and first-aid training. It would change standards for use of deadly force, adding a "good faith" standard and independent investigation. Requiring a "good faith" standard, given the history of police shootings, is a good idea. I urge a Yes vote!

Robby Stern is President of the PSARA Education Fund.



Medicare Advantage Insurers Found to Improperly Deny Claims

By Robby Stern

An article in the Sunday, October 14, *New York Times* caught my attention. I will quote from it extensively. Medicare annual enrollment began on October 15. Medicare enrollees need this information.

Daniel R. Levinson, the Inspector General at the Department of Health and Human Services, found that private insurers who provide Medicare Advantage plans are "improperly denying many medical claims to patients and physicians alike." These plans now cover 20 million Medicare recipients. Their incentive to deny claims according to the report is "an attempt to increase profits."

At the same time, there are policy initiatives coming from the Center for Medicare Services to increase enrollment in Medicare Advantage plans. According to the article, "Some experts predict that the share of Medicare patients in the private plans could grow to one-half in a few years."

The Inspector General's report found "widespread and persistent problems related to denials of care and payment in Medicare Advantage." According to the NYT article by Robert Pear, "Relatively few people appeal the denial of claims, leaving insurers free to avoid payment."

Medicare recipients are drawn to Medicare Advantage plans because of the additional benefits they can offer. Three new factors were cited in the article for the potential likely growth in Medicare Advantage over the next several years.

"The Trump administration approved a big increase in payments to private insurers for 2019, saying it was 'committed to unleashing and strengthening the Medicare Advantage program.'"

"In addition to the general business tax cuts enacted last year, Congress provided additional tax relief to health insurers for 2019, suspending a fee imposed on them by the Affordable Care Act.

"Medicare Advantage plans will be able to offer extra benefits, which could include transportation to the doctor's office, home delivery of hot meals, and safety features in the home like wheel chair ramps and bathroom grab bars."

These benefits are, for the most part, not available under traditional Medicare coverage.

Medicare beneficiaries should be aware of the Inspector General's report and the effort of the Trump administration and Congress to push us into private plans.

To Renew or Donate

PSARA Education Fund

321 16th Avenue S, Seattle WA 98144

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Meetings and Events

PSARA Climate and Environmental Justice Committee: 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, November 1, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Avenue S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, November 1, 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, November 7, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Avenue SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). Topic: *Health Care Information Session: Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) (Medicare made simple)*. Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Southend Committee: 1 p.m., Thursday, November 8, Burien Library, 400 SW 152nd Street, Burien. All are welcome as we plan PSARA events in South King County.

PSARA Post-Election Sing-Along: 2:30-4:30 p.m., Sunday, November 11. See Page 1 for details.

PSARA Fundraising Committee: 10:30 a.m. - Noon, Monday, November 12, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave. S. All are welcome.

PSARA Education Committee: 2 p.m., Tuesday, November 13, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Avenue S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Race/Gender Equity Committee: 11 a.m.–Noon, Thursday, November 15, Seattle office Washington State Labor Council, 321 16 Avenue S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, November 15, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Avenue S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Legislative Conference: 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Monday, November 19, UFCW 21, 5030 1st Avenue S, Seattle. See article on Page 1.

Save the Date! PSARA Membership Meeting: Thursday, December 13, UFCW 21, 5030 1st Avenue S, Seattle. Look for details in the December Retiree Advocate.

