

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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

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January 2021

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Now?**
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Disadvantaged: How the Medicare Private Option Fails Us and Sabotages Medicare for All

Join Us for a Webinar, Tuesday, February 2, 5:00 p.m. PT

Featuring:

Wendell Potter – President, Center for Health and Democracy, and insurance industry whistleblower. The Center for Health and Democracy works to transform America's system of health coverage. The organization's core belief is that health care should be driven not by industry profits and greed, but by the needs and rights of every American to get the quality care they need without concern for cost.

Diane Archer – Founder of Just Care, a website and newsletter that provides helpful and trustworthy health advice for boomers, older adults, and care providers. Diane was formerly the founder and president of the Medicare Rights Center. She now serves as a senior adviser to Social Security Works on Medicare policy and as a member of the Board of the Center for Health and Democracy.

Mark Dudzic – National Coordinator, Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care. The Labor Campaign organizes and coordinates grassroots labor support for a Single-Payer Medicare-for-All health care system in America based on health care as a fundamental human right. The Labor Campaign advocates for the labor movement to take a leading role in the fight for health care justice.



Mark Dudzic



Wendell Potter



Diane Archer

PSARA Happy Hour

Wednesday, January 13, 3:00 p.m.

By Vanetta Molson and Bobby Righi

Join Vanetta, Bobby, and other PSARA members for our second conversational "Happy Hour" on Wednesday, January 13, at 3:00 p.m.

We will focus on three articles from recent *Retiree Advocates*: In the October issue "The Thrive Act" by Jeff Johnson and "We Need a Just Recovery. Now" by Michael Righi. These fit well with the article in this issue (January 2021) by Mike Andrew, "The Election Is Over. What Do We Do Now?"

Sign in to our Zoom meeting and sit down for a thoughtful conversation about these three articles and your ideas about what we should be doing now. Mindi Lee called our first Happy Hour in November "historical" and remarked about how we shared our ideas and listened respectfully to each other and learned from each other. All PSARA members and their opinions are welcome.

If you get regular emails from PSARA, you'll receive the Zoom link via email. If you don't, contact Mike Andrew at organizer@psara.org for the link. See you on the 13th.

Vanetta Molson is PSARA's Co-VP for Outreach and Co-Chair of our Race and Gender Equity Committee. Bobby Righi is Co-Chair of PSARA's Climate and Environmental Justice Committee.

The Retiree ADVOCATE

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www.psara.org
or visit PSARA on Facebook

We Remember Ellen Fawcett

Long-time PSARA member Ellen Fawcett passed away on November 21 at the age of 97. She was the mother of another long-time PSARA member, Nancy Corr. We extend our sympathies to Nancy and all of Ellen's family.

Those of us who are active in PSARA's Southend Committee remember Ellen as a regular attendee at meetings, until the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from meeting in person.

Throughout her life Ellen worked for the welfare of children, social justice, peace, and human rights. In addition to PSARA, she was a member of National Organization of Women, Seattle Women Act for Peace, Congress on Racial Equality, Crones – Seattle, and ACLU. She was a lifetime honorary member of Evergreen Democratic Women's Club.

Ellen loved bird watching and was a member of the Audubon Society.



Ellen Fawcett

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2021

Workshops, January 12 -16

This year, workshops will take place virtually, using Zoom. Instead of preceding the rally and march on Monday, January 18th, workshops will take place over a series of days during the week preceding MLK Day.

This year's workshops will focus on the following topics:

- White Supremacy
- Racism
- Anti-Racism
- Police Brutality

Youth Event, January 17

Rally, January 18, 11:00 a.m., Garfield High School, 23rd & Jefferson

March, January 18, 12:30 p.m., Garfield High School

Social distancing and mask-wearing required for all in-person events.

For more information including workshop schedules,
visit www.seattlemlkcoalition.org

The 2020 Election is Over. What Do We Do Now?

By Mike Andrew

The 2020 election is over. What do we do now?

This article, the ones that accompany it in this month's *Retiree Advocate*, and many articles that we'll publish in the following months deal with that question.

We invite all PSARA members to think and talk about this question. If you have something to say about it, send it to us at organizer@psara.org

Let's get started...

Joe Biden will be sworn in as the next President of the United States on January 23. He won the popular vote by seven million votes. As Trump's legal shenanigans fall flat, it's clear Biden's electoral vote total will be exactly the same as Trump's winning total in 2016.

We have reason to celebrate. We also have reasons to worry.

COVID-19 ravaged an economy that had still not fully recovered from the Great Recession of 2008. This was on top of the long-term suffering inflicted on the country's industrial heartland by massive exports of capital and the consequent deindustrialization of America.

The huge uprisings that followed the murder of George Floyd showed that the election of Barack Obama in 2008 did not, in fact, herald a post-racial America. And the violent police response to Black-led protests proved that "unbiased, non-political law enforcement" is a myth.

Business Insider columnist Josh Barro recently wrote a piece celebrating "a return to normal" with "a normal person as president." But what is "normal," and do we really want to go back there?

Biden has promised to "heal" the country's social divisions, "work across the aisle," and "bring the country together."

We'd like to take those words at face value. We dream about passing the



Green New Deal or getting universal health care. But even many Democrats – including Biden himself – are not there yet.

In the last weeks of the presidential campaign, Wall Street money flowed freely into Democratic campaign funds. Having gotten what they wanted from Trump – huge tax cuts and a slew of business-friendly judges – Wall Street was ready to kick him to the curb. What strings came with the money?

Do we really want Democrats and Republicans to join hands around common goals? And if so, what compromises are we willing to tolerate to make that happen?

Austerity? More tax cuts for Wall Street? Cuts to vital social safety net programs?

Many of us see "working across the aisle" as a threat, not a promise. And what we see when we look "across the aisle" does not reassure us.

Seventy-four million people voted for Trump, including more than half the white people in the country. AFL-CIO polling on Election Day showed that even 37 percent of union members were voting for Trump in spite of constant pro-Biden messaging from organized labor.

A new Marist Poll shows that only 24 percent of Republicans trust that the election results are honest and accurate. Will they accept Biden as president? We don't know.

Millions of Americans fervently believe that the Democratic Party is led by a cabal of Satanist pedophile cannibals. (Really. I'm not making that up!) Most of these people are armed. Thousands of them have already mobbed state houses and government buildings in attempts to force government officials to do their bidding at gun point.

What do we do about them?

No question about it, a Green New Deal could help revive US industry. Universal health care could improve the lives of millions of exurban and rural poor people who voted for Trump.

Would that progressive agenda win them away from white nationalism? Or are they trapped in the backwaters of US history?

On our side, what political organizations do we have to work with?

Bernie Sanders' strategy of taking over the Democratic Party and using it as the organizational vehicle for systemic change has fallen short twice. We have to ask: Is this still a viable approach?

If not, what is? Absent charismatic figureheads like Teddy Roosevelt or Bob LaFollette, progressive third parties have failed to gain traction in the US. Even then, they were marred by a legacy of racism and nationalism. TR was, after all, the granddaddy of US imperialism. Fightin' Bob flirted with eugenics.

And if a progressive national political organization is not on the agenda at this time, would it be productive to focus more on state and local organizing?

So many questions. Join us to seek answers.

2020: What Do We Do Now?

By Jeff Johnson

Mike Andrew poses some of the most poignant and serious questions we need to address going forward in a world enmeshed in stark contradictions.

At a time when the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of law enforcement have raised the level of awareness about how deeply racism and white supremacy is woven into the fabric of America; at a time when a global health pandemic kills millions and at the same time lays bare the economic fragility, insecurity, and inequality of most workers; at a time when climate disaster is an existential threat to human, animal, and plant life, a Black, Brown, Red, and Green New Deal offers hope and opportunity. We can't afford to go backwards, nor can we afford to stand still.

We must organize for a just, equitable, and sustainable economy.

Which Path(s) Do We Take?

Trump's schizophrenic path of racism, misogyny, business hubris, and "Only I Know Best and Only I Can Fix It" was aimed at recreating some semblance of the economic security White America enjoyed in the 1950s.

While this path led to an economy in shambles, millions of workers unemployed, and the largest federal deficit and debt in history, we have to remember that 74 million voters said yes.

The extremists amongst them need to be monitored, resisted, and locked up when they violate the law. I have to think that there are some that are reachable when people feel in a concrete sense, as opposed to abstract, that there are job opportunities for them and real economic security.

And while I have no doubt that President-elect Biden would like to offer people this concrete sense of economic security, he has an institutional Democratic Party mindset as well as policy limitations and a staggering set of external obstacles.



Jeff Johnson

No President-elect has had to face a raging pandemic, an economy run aground, staggering inequality, severe state and local fiscal crises, ravaging climate disaster, a heightened awareness of and yet unresolved racial injustice. He has a precarious US Senate regardless of the outcome in Georgia. And there is unchecked Trumpism.

To quote an ancient Greek saying, "Sisyphus had it easy compared to this."

There is little doubt that Democrats and Republicans will come together at the margins on some issues and that Biden's demeanor and presence will help, but Congress is no longer a collegial place. Remember the Affordable Care Act passed without a single Republican vote in the Senate – thus Obamacare.

So, What Do We Do?

Mike Andrew asks whether the Bernie Sanders approach to taking over the Democratic Party is still a viable option and if not whether we should focus more on state and local organizing.

I think that the answer is yes to organizing on both levels.

AOC, the Squad, and the House Democratic Progressive Caucus picked up two new Democratic seats with the election of Jamaal Bowman (NY) and Cori Bush (St. Louis). Medicare for All and the Green New Deal resonated with their constituents and resonated particularly with younger voters and voters of color. We need to rally around the "Justice Democrats" – those leaders who have carried on Bernie Sanders' signature issues on health care, climate, and student debt. Whether they take over the Democratic Party or not, they are becoming a force to be reckoned with.

We also need to increase our organizing efforts at the state and local levels. Amazing work is being done at the local level all around the country on issues of race, immigrant rights, housing and homelessness, LGBTQ rights, worker justice, transportation, indigenous rights, retirement issues, climate organizing, etc.

Tables need to be created to bring together these groups to better understand common intersections of this work, to build trust and relationships, and to bring together our voices for equitable, just, and sustainable change. Organizing in solidarity for the common good, for the common wealth of society, is how we will be able to exercise power and redefine a new economic paradigm.

When we organize across sectors and work for common purpose, we get to reframe the issues that we care about. When people understand Medicare for All as health care as a human right rather than socialized medicine, things start to make sense.

I am reminded of an article I read during the presidential primaries where a woman from Michigan, along with

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Biden's Economic Team

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By Michael Righi

Biden is appointing folks to top government posts who "look like America." It's true, they do. They also look like the Obama administration, sometimes even the Clinton administration. They are a restoration of the Democratic establishment.

There is much talk of the return of competence, of adults back in charge. Also true, but there is also much "back to normal" commentary mixed in. We cannot have "normal." Normal has given us staggering inequality, a climate crisis, and Trump.

I am focusing on just a few of the key economics appointments. Let's start with Agriculture. Farm policy is economics; it's about food supply, rural and small town jobs, hunger and poverty, racial discrimination, and climate change. Biden's appointment, Tom Vilsack, is both bad and ugly.

As Agriculture Secretary under Obama, Vilsack supported faster line speeds at Tyson and other chicken processors. He delayed anti-monopoly rules for giant meatpackers and agricultural chemical companies until they were watered down. He did nothing about discrimination against Black farmers. Biden announced Vilsack's appointment hours after a meeting with Black civil rights leaders, who were angered by Vilsack's 2010 firing of Georgia rural development director, Shirley Sherrod, who is Black, because of a phony report in Breitbart News.

Better

Biden has done much better with his Council of Economic Advisers appointments – Heather Boushey and Jared Bernstein. Both come out of the Institute for Policy Studies, which is a crucial source for all of us for analysis and data on conditions for workers.

With Janet Yellen at Treasury, and a willingness to admit that the Obama

stimulus plans during the 2008 economic crisis were much too timid, we will hopefully not return to post-2008 austerity. Corporations and banks were bailed out then, while homeowners, workers, public health, and education bore the brunt of federal and local cutbacks. Yellen, et al., will be focused on jobs and economic growth.

But we are in this situation of inequality, joblessness, poverty, criminal justice, and climate crisis at least partly because the Democratic Party has participated in 40 years of market fundamentalism, business deregulation, and enhancing the power of business and financial elites over our economic and political system.

Supporting businesses, with some help for workers, during a crisis does not confront entrenched inequality and power. Heather Boushey does call

for taxes on wealth, major government health care investments in underserved communities, and banning corporate stock buybacks.

That is a start. What about a government job guarantee program, mandatory patent pools for critical medicines, and workers on boards of directors? How about the Federal Reserve bankrolling regional green development banks that will fund small businesses developing climate solutions? Or nationalizing Facebook and other tech companies as public utilities?

Corporate Insiders

Then there are the revolving door folks. Brian Deese is Biden's nominee to head the National Economic Council,

Continued on Page 11

The Barbed Wire

By Barbara Flye



PSARA Is Ready for 2021

PSARA held its winter membership meeting on December 17 in a spirit of optimism for the future.

2020 was certainly a year of crisis. We all know the challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic. The nationwide uprisings after the murder of George Floyd. A contentious election marked by sporadic violence and quasi-legal shenanigans.

Now we greet a new administration, but one that is not united behind a progressive agenda.

PSARA not only responded to these challenges, but we emerged stronger in many ways.

One sign of PSARA's strength is the remarkable work of our officers and our committees – all of them volunteers – and their plans for 2021.

- The Fundraising Committee will focus on more of its very successful community building events as well as fundraising events in 2021.

- The Education Committee is developing a new series of webinars, building on its successful 2020 presentations.

- The Government Relations Committee drafted our 2021 Legislative Agenda, and is figuring out how we will advocate for our agenda when we can't have face-to-face contact with legislators.

- The Race and Gender Equity Committee organized a socially distanced vigil in support of BLM, wrote a strong letter supporting BLM's demands to the Seattle City Council and Mayor, and is drafting a position paper on reparations.

- The Climate and Environmental Justice Committee supplied the leadership in forming the Pass the Federal Green New Deal Coalition to advocate for a just transition to a carbon-free economy.

PSARA's membership has been holding steady at about 1,300 members. The ambitious plans we made at the beginning of 2020 to increase membership were sidetracked by COVID-19. Nevertheless, we're still building in new areas around the state – Clallam County and Whidbey Island for example.

PSARA is economically stable in spite of the pandemic, and we'll be in a strong position through 2020 and into 2021 thanks to our Fundraising Committee, our generous members, and a strong relationship with Washington CAN and the PSARA Education Fund.

PSARA also elected officers and Board members for new terms. All our existing officers decided to stand for reelection, except for Co-Secretary Andrea Sawczuk, who moved back to Canada. In her place, Susan Levy will join Mike Warren as Co-Secretary.

Other officers elected were: Maureen Bo, Co-Administrative VP; Karen Richter, Membership VP; Vanetta Molson, Co-Outreach VP; Mike Warren, Co-Secretary; Tom Lux, Treasurer.

The Board members reelected were: Kristen Beifus, Frank Irigon, Garry Owens, and Robby Stern.

Special thanks to our Board members who stepped down this year: Brent McFarlane, Andrea Sawczuk, Bob Shimabukuro, and Frieda Takamura.

We honor the memory of our dear Board member and friend Imogene Williams who passed away in 2020.

There are still open spots on the Executive Board. PSARA members who wish to serve can contact Executive Director Mike Andrew at organizer@psara.org

Members who want to get more involved in PSARA's work should attend a committee meeting. The times and days are all listed on Page 12 of the *Retiree Advocate*.

Meetings are virtual for now. To get the link to a committee meeting that interests you, just email organizer@psara.org

Facing the Facts

"We got to face some facts. That the masses are poor, that the masses belong to what you call the lower class, and when I talk about the masses, I'm talking about the white masses, I'm talking about the black masses, and the brown masses, and the yellow masses, too. We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity."

Fred Hampton, former Chair of Illinois Black Panther Party, assassinated by Chicago police December 4, 1969. He was 21 years old.



Call for President Biden to Take Climate Justice Action Now

By Beth Brunton

Remember that toxic smoke engulfing our region last summer? We first heard about huge wildfires raging in California, then in Oregon, then suddenly that health-threatening smoke spread all over our state, forcing us all to stay inside for days. Climate catastrophes don't stop at state borders. So last year, PSARA's Climate and Environmental Justice Committee helped create a coalition of local labor, faith, and environmental groups and leaders to win national policies to protect all of us and our planet.

At our November Pass the Federal Green New Deal Coalition (PTFGND) meeting, we celebrated our presidential election victory: that more than 81 million of us voted, not only for a better president, but also for more progressive public policies to protect our climate and people. In his speeches, Biden has committed to immediate, bold climate leadership.

"With every bout of nature's fury, caused by our own inaction, we see and feel devastation happening everywhere. The impacts of climate change don't pick and choose," Biden said in a September speech. We can make "concrete, actionable policies that create jobs, mitigate climate change, and put our nation on the road to net-zero emissions by no later than 2050," he said. "We can invest in our infrastructure to make it stronger and more resilient, while at the same time tackling the root causes of climate change."

Such good news. Now we don't need to wait for Congress to win Green New Deal policies. The election of President Biden means new possibilities for the Executive Branch to take climate action. 350.org Seattle leader, Selden Prentice, gathered and shared a list of examples of immediate actions to undo executive orders and regulations the Trump Administration used to ease pollution rules and ignore climate change.

Of course, good intentions are not enough. As FDR said to justice advo-



This will be our future if we don't act now

cates: You've persuaded me, now go out and organize to make me do it. So, our coalition decided to send a letter to President-elect Biden, along with a copy to our Democratic Congressional delegation, asking him to: declare a Climate Emergency under the National Emergency Act to stop fossil fuel exports and infrastructure approvals. Use the Clean Air Act to set a science-based national pollution cap for greenhouse pollutants, and to drive emissions towards zero, economy-wide; and create an Office of Climate Mobilization.

Although these Executive Branch options could be reversed by future administrations, the public support for climate resilience is growing due to longer hurricane seasons in the gulf, prolonged droughts and floods in the Midwest, and devastating wildfires in the West. We cannot be complacent and must sustain and build to win and keep taking bold action.

We cannot rely only on the President. No matter what happens in the Georgia US Senate elections, Congress will remain an essential focus for climate justice funding and policies. Starting with the economic stimulus and pandemic relief funding, our tax dollars can be invested to "Build Back Better" to protect our planet, create millions of good jobs, and overcome racial disparities.

To do that, last September, the PTFGND Coalition endorsed the THRIVE resolution (Transform, Heal, Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy). The THRIVE framework evaluates any revival plan to ensure it includes racial, economic, and environmental justice.

Now we invite you to amplify our call for rapid, bold, national climate action, starting with the THRIVE agenda. Let's all hold our new President, all elected representatives, and federal agencies accountable to fund, create, and maintain Green New Deal policies and programs.

As an individual or representing your group, you can write letters, make phone calls to your US Senators and/or Congress member to support or oppose bills and budget items. Meet with your Congressional staff. Attend Town Halls to ask questions. Write letters to the editors of your local paper.

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." Fredrick Douglass

Yes, we can win and maintain sustainable environmental, economic, and social practices. Thanks to PSARA and PTFGND Coalition, now you too can be part of this campaign.

Beth Brunton, a PSARA member, is on the steering committee of the Pass the Federal Green New Deal Coalition.

Pramila Jayapal Teams Up with Elizabeth Warren to Ban Stock Trading by Lawmakers

By Mike Andrew

Seattle-area Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren would make a formidable team whatever they decided to do.

They announced on December 18 that they're joining forces to reintroduce legislation to bar lawmakers from trading stocks.

"After nearly four years of the most corrupt president in American history and with US Senators brazenly trading stocks to profit off a raging pandemic, the Anti-Corruption and Public Integrity Act is more urgent than ever in order to rein in corruption, strengthen ethics, end lobbying as we know it, improve the integrity of our judiciary, reform campaign finance laws, and finally ensure that we put people over profits and communities over corporations," Warren and Jayapal said in a joint statement.

Their proposal is part of a wider anti-corruption effort they are pushing that would include a Warren proposal for a lifetime ban on lobbying for former members of Congress. It also would forbid lobbyists from fundraising for political candidates.

Members of Congress are legally allowed to buy and sell individual stocks with few restrictions. Many use tools such as blind trusts to avoid the perception of conflicts of interest.

However, recent stock trades by Senators Loeffler and Perdue of Georgia – now locked in special elections that will determine control of the US Senate – have raised eyebrows. Loeffler and Perdue are accused of using inside knowledge to profit off the COVID-19 pandemic by buying and selling pharmaceutical stocks.



Elizabeth Warren



Pramila Jayapal

Are You on a Medicare Advantage Plan?

If you're on a Medicare Advantage plan – as opposed to traditional Medicare – and you've had problems getting treatment or the provider you needed was not in your insurance plan's network, we want to hear your story.

On Page 1, we've announced an upcoming webinar on how privatized Medicare Advantage plans fail people who need care and sabotage the fight for improved Medicare for All.

We need your stories to help us explain the big picture to a national audience. For this purpose, we hope to use brief videos of our members sharing their experiences with Medicare Advantage plans.

You needn't share information about which plan you're on or details about your health, although such details might be helpful. But we do want to know how your problems getting necessary treatment made you feel.

If you can help us with personal stories, or stories of relatives and friends, contact PSARA Executive Director Mike Andrew at organizer@psara.org

Building a Better SSA

By Steve Kofahl

We have endured four years of Trump noise, four years in which his appointees have quietly subverted the missions of numerous federal agencies, the Social Security Administration (SSA) sadly among them. Commissioner Andrew Saul and Deputy Commissioner David Black have spoiled the Agency's relationships with its employees and their unions. They jumped to implement a series of Trump's destructive executive orders that gutted civil service protections and contracts, and their representatives engaged in bad-faith bargaining.

Disabled Americans are finding it much harder to obtain and retain the income support and health care benefits that they have earned, as mean-spirited and biased rules and regulations continue to be promulgated by SSA. For instance, effective April 27, limited English-speaking ability is no longer considered in deciding whether an applicant with a medical condition can be expected to find employment.

Fortunately, some of the worst damage has now been uncovered through a pair of compelling opinion pieces that were recently published in *The Hill*.

David A. Weaver, Ph.D., is an economist who worked for SSA in increasingly responsible research and policy analysis positions from July 1992 - October 2016. He then led the Congressional Budget Office division analyzing Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Affordable Care Act subsidies before retiring in January 2020. His November 26 opinion piece "Tens of thousands of Americans are not getting the Social Security benefits they should" is disturbing. SSA's 2016 Agency Financial Report noted that more than 20,000 eligible children per year were not paid benefits due to a long-standing computer error. The same Financial Report revealed that 80 categories of individu-



Steve Kofahl

als are not receiving benefits they are due. The author points out that SSA is doing little to remedy these errors, and notes that the Agency (including the Office of Inspector General) directs increasing attention and scarce resources for disability reviews, while failing the core mission to pay benefits to those who are due them. There is too little Congressional oversight. Dr. Weaver suggests that Congress consider establishing a Beneficiary Advocate office to inform the public and Congress about problems, and to add balance to internal Agency discussions.

His December 7 contribution is titled "Social Security Administration is preparing to bar 500,000 Americans from getting benefits." I bet that title got your attention! SSA has just sent a proposed regulation to Trump's Office

of Management and Budget that would make it harder for older workers to receive disability benefits. While medical evidence is the primary basis for making disability determinations, the SSA is required by law to consider age, education, and work experience. The new regulation would make it harder for many workers in their 50's to qualify. It would particularly disadvantage racial minorities and the poor.

He explains that, when SSA denies a disability claim, it must cite available jobs in the national economy that the denied applicant could perform. One big problem is that their Dictionary of Occupational Titles largely utilizes data from the 1970's, listing many jobs that no longer exist in significant numbers, and some that don't exist at all.

I worked as an SSA Claims Representative for 42 years before retiring in 2015, so I was pleased that Dr. Weaver generously spent nearly an hour on the phone with me on December 10. We talked about many SSA policy and program administration issues, and I came away impressed with his understanding of what's going on at the Agency, and optimistic about the prospects for building a better SSA, starting early next year. I thanked him, and urged him to continue writing the opinion pieces.

In next month's *Retiree Advocate*, I will cover some key recommendations contained in the 35-page "Social Security Transition Report for the Biden Administration." It was prepared in November by Social Security Works, including the call for a change in SSA leadership and for increases in benefit payments.

Steve Kofahl is a retired President of AFGE 3937, representing Social Security employees, and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

PSARA Signs On to Letter on Financing Long-Term Care

Dear Governor Inslee,

We, the Long-Term Care Coalition, a diverse coalition of long-term care advocates, have been monitoring the proposed budget austerity measures and working together to prevent cuts to the long-term care services that seniors and people with disabilities depend on. We write to you today to thank you for your dedication to protecting Washington's most vulnerable by preserving funding to the long-term care system in your recently released budget.

For years, Washington has been recognized as one of the leading states in long-term services and supports. The State of Washington and the organizations represented in our coalition spent decades building a person-centered system that promotes choice and flexibility, allowing our most vulnerable to select the type of care that works best for their situation.

Our statewide system costs far less than the majority of states because we successfully care for clients in settings that meet their individual needs: 2 out of 3 clients receive care in their homes and in the community, and nursing homes and other facilities care for people with more complex medical conditions who need constant assistance.

Washington is facing an age wave that will crest in the coming years. To cut the services this population will depend on is untenable -- instead, we must maintain the choice and flexibility of this system and find additional ways to invest in it. Particularly, we encourage the office to increase reimbursement rates and focus on strategies to build the long-term care workforce, including increasing wages, benefits and career opportunities for the people providing this critical care. Together, we can ensure that it's there for us when we need it, and has the durability to withstand future crises.

Thank you again for your commitment to protecting Washington's most

vulnerable and maintaining funding for long-term services and support. The Long-Term Care Coalition stands ready to assist your office and the State of Washington in making our long-term care system a model for the rest of the nation.

Sincerely,

AARP Washington State
 The Arc of Washington
 Adult Family Home Council
 All Ways Caring Washington
 Alzheimer's Association Washington State Chapter
 Casa Latina
 Catholic Community Services
 Community Residential Services Association
 Consumer Direct Care Network Washington

First Choice In-Home Care
 Full Life Care
 Korean Women's Association
 LeadingAge Washington
 Office of Developmental Disabilities Ombuds
 Office of Professional Employees International Union Local 8
 Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action
 SEIU 775
 Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging
 Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council
 Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
 Washington State Senior Citizen's Lobby
 Washington Health Care Association
 Washington Home Care Coalition

One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words...

So here's a picture of the "K-shaped" recovery you've heard so much about:



2020 What do We Do Now?

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others, joined Bernie Sanders on a bus trip into Canada to buy prescription drugs. Though she didn't know much about Bernie Sanders, and she didn't know anything about Medicare for All, she had a full-on "Ah-Ha" moment when she purchased three months of the prescription drugs she needed for her son in Canada for the price of one month's supply in the US.

When you get to reframe the issues and then speak with one voice across a wide cross section of the community, you make change at the state and local level as well as the national level.

PSARA has begun this work with the formation of the Pass the Federal Green New Deal Coalition. This coalition has brought together organizations from different sectors to work on climate change – in particular organizing and educating around the need to convince our Congressional delegation to sign on to and pass the Green New Deal. This cross-sectoral work is critical and needs to be supported.

I want to thank PSARA and Mike Andrew for raising these questions. And I am interested to know what you think we need to do.

Jeff Johnson is a retired President of the Washington State Labor Council and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

Albert Einstein

Biden's Economic Team

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a crucial position for coordinating economic policy across the federal government. Deese was a former staffer for Obama; he is now at BlackRock, heading its "sustainable investing" team.

BlackRock is one of the money trusts, a huge financial operation that owns over 5 percent of the stock of 97 percent of the companies on the S&P 500. Multi-billionaire owner Larry Fink is a major Democratic donor. BlackRock channels money to fossil fuel companies, including coal, and to agricultural corporations that are deforesting the Amazon.

Under Obama, Deese endorsed the rise in US fossil fuels, defended oil drilling in Alaska, and supported fracking on public lands. Deese is one of 80-plus government officials hired by BlackRock across the world.

After the 2008 crisis, Deese was Obama's point man on the auto bailout plan. Huge loans were made to GM and Chrysler, with very little in the way of conditions. They did agree to raise mileage standards eventually to 54 mpg, but have reneged on that under Trump.

Meanwhile, autoworkers bore the costs -- with "efficiencies" (plant closings and job restructuring), and a two-tier wage system where new workers are paid half of the former starting union wage. There were no restrictions on dividends or executive pay, on offshoring plants to Mexico, or requirements to invest in electric cars and infrastructure. Our crises demand much more public control over corporate profit-making decisions.

Where does Deese stand? Will he oppose any securities legislation that will affect BlackRock? Does it matter that BlackRock still holds huge quantities of coal company stock? Has he just been "greenwashing" BlackRock investments?

Where are appointments of leaders and activists and thinkers who are challenging the status quo, not trying to reestablish "normal"? Where are the advisers to Bernie or Elizabeth Warren, the climate justice and Black Lives Matter activists? We have to stop tinkering with the economic system; more basic change is needed.

Michael Righi is a retired economics professor and a member of the Retiree Advocate Editorial Board.

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Meetings and Events

For the health and safety of our members, all PSARA events will be virtual until further notice. For the Zoom links, email organizer@PSARA.org

PSARA Climate and Environmental Justice Committee: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, January 7.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: Noon – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, January 7.

PSARA Fundraising Committee: 11:00 a.m. - Noon, Monday, January 11.

PSARA Education Committee: 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 12.

PSARA Happy Hour: 3:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 13. See Page 1 for details.

PSARA Southend Committee: 1:00 – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, January 14.

PSARA Race and Gender Equity Committee: 11:00 a.m.– Noon, Thursday, January 21.

PSARA Executive Board: 12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., Thursday, January 21.

Webinar: 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, February 2, *Disadvantaged: How the Medicare Private Option Fails Us and Sabotages Medicare for All*. See Page 1 for details.

We look forward to seeing you online until it's safe to meet in person once again.