

The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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PSARA EDUCATION FUND
“Uniting Generations for a Secure Future”

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July 2019

The Transition is
Inevitable, but Justice
Is Up to Us
By Jeff Johnson
Page 3

Let's Make a Federal Case Out of It!

Expand Social Security, Medicare for All

Saturday, August 3, 12:30 p.m., Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park

Help us make Social Security and Medicare issues in the 2020 election. Join us to celebrate the birthday of these vital programs and demand that they be strengthened and expanded.

Saturday, August 3, is the date. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, 2200 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S in Seattle, is the place. [This is a change of venue from what we announced in last month's Advocate.]

This will be an opportunity to celebrate the successes of Social Security and Medicare in providing a measure of retirement security for us and for our children and grandchildren. And there's plenty to celebrate.

Contrary to the lies being spread by Republicans in the other Washington, the 2019 Social Security Trustees Report shows that Social Security has a large accumulated surplus. In fact, with the program's cumulative surplus of \$2.9 trillion, Social Security is fully funded until 2035, 93 percent funded for the next 25 years, 87 percent funded over the next 50 years, and 84 percent funded over the next 75 years.

Social Security is also extremely affordable. In three-quarters of a century, in 2095, Social Security payouts will constitute just 6.07 percent of GDP. That is a smaller percentage of GDP than Germany, Austria, France, and most other industrialized countries spend on similar social insurance programs today.

In fact, the problem with Social Security is not that it pays out too much, it's that it pays out too little! The average annual benefit received by Social

Security's over 63 million beneficiaries is only about \$16,000 this year.

Over half (52 percent) of American households headed by someone of working age will not be able to maintain their standards of living in old age. This figure rises to roughly two-thirds when health and long-term care costs are also considered.

As defined benefit pension plans disappear, workers, at best, will have to rely on 401(k) and other retirement savings plans, which have proven inadequate.

The case for expanding Social Security is overwhelming. And as health care costs skyrocket, the case for providing

Medicare for All is just as compelling.

To help us celebrate, we've invited the three presidential candidates who have publicly embraced this logic: Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren. We'll also be joined by Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, sponsor of groundbreaking Medicare for All legislation.

Nancy Altman and Alex Lawson, from Social Security Works, will also join us, as will Larry Brown, President of the Washington State Labor Council, and April Sims, WSLC's Secretary-Treasurer.

Please join us too. For more information about the event, email organizer@psara.org

The Barbed Wire

By Barbara Flye

Medicare for All



The Retiree **ADVOCATE**

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PSARA Hits the Streets

PSARA takes the "action" part of our name seriously.

At right, PSARA members Robby Stern, Pam Lux, Karen Richter, and Tom Lux stand with grocery workers fighting for a fair contract. Our message: "We LOVE Our Grocery Workers!"

Below, PSARA's Co-Presidents, Jessica Bonebright and Tim Burns, staff PSARA's Burien Pride booth with Karen Richter. We gathered signatures in support of Rep. Pramila Jayapal's Medicare for All legislation.

Want to get involved? Check out the monthly events calendar on Page 12 of the *Advocate*, or email organizer@psara.org to get on our activist email list.



The Transition Is Inevitable, but Justice Is Up to Us

By Jeff Johnson

Editor's note: The Retiree Advocate is honored to feature this speech by PSARA member and labor leader Jeff Johnson, kicking off discussion at the third Labor Network for Sustainability Convergence gathering in Chicago, June 28, 29, and 30.

Good morning sisters, brothers, and friends. My name is Jeff Johnson, and I have been in the labor movement for 40 years – most recently as President of the Washington State AFL-CIO.

My job is to set the table, to frame the discussion for the next two days, following up on the great presentations by Presidents Nelson, Roberts, and Secretary-Treasurer Castaneda.

Our current economic paradigm and consequent climate change disaster have created an existential crisis. Who lives, how and where; what species survive; and how social and economic decisions get made and by whom are up for grabs. No exaggeration, we are in the eleventh hour, our future is on the line.

In the face of this crisis, labor is presented with an existential opportunity. We can stay in our narrow lane and think about jobs and survival in a parochial and insular manner by focusing only on the wages, hours, and working conditions of our current members, or we can be part of organizing a movement with environmental justice warriors, communities of color, tribes and indigenous people, environmentalists, young people, and elders to change the rules of the game for the benefit of all people, all workers, and the commonwealth.

Participating in the Paris Climate Accords in 2015 was eye opening. While the goals of the historic climate accord were laudable, the carbon reduction commitments by nations fell far short of these goals. As is becoming increasingly clear, we fall short at our own peril.

Fortunately, the voices of young people and communities of color from around the world have sounded the clarion call for a revolution in the way we make decisions about fossil fuels, our planet, and our communities.

The climate study released by the United Nations this past October brought scientists to a common understanding that our youth and those most impacted by climate change have known for some time – time is not on our side. We must act with great urgency, and we must act, not at the edges, but at the center of this existential crisis.

At the Alternative People's talks on climate in Paris, a young transit worker named Clara said, "If the planet were a bank, we would have already saved it." Never were more profound words spoken. Clara identified an ugly truth. And that truth is that corporations and their political servants, with great hubris and in the name of profits, will do anything to protect their economic power, even if it spells out the end of the world as we know it.

Since the Paris Climate Agreement was signed in 2016, the world's 33 largest banks have financed another \$1.9 trillion in fossil fuel projects. Their goal is to profit from fossil fuel production as long as they can, to strand as few fossil fuel assets as possible, and to be compensated for those that are.

To succeed they have to keep people as divided as possible on the nature and extent of the problem, as well as on how quickly the transition away from fossil fuels can be practically accomplished. They continue to make obscene profits, when they pit building trades against public sector workers, pit white workers against workers of color, pit communities against immigrants and climate refugees, and when deindustrialized areas are pitted against more prosperous areas.



Jeff Johnson

Doubt, anger, confusion, and diversion are the tools of division created by those in power to prevent working people from understanding and acting on their common interests and building the power necessary to create a sustainable future and the commonwealth. With climate change, we are facing the ultimate divide-and-conquer historical moment. The question for labor is, do we fall for false divisions again or not. We need to call this question.

No student of history would question labor's strong history of struggling for the voice of workers to be heard. However, labor's history of participating in social movements has been uneven.

It is time for us to be honest and to recognize that labor is not strong enough or powerful enough to make the types of changes required to tackle climate change and structural economic inequality. Isolated bargaining table victories and limited promises from "electable politicians" won't deliver solutions and won't deliver justice.

Labor must join young people, communities of color, and indigenous groups, pivoting us towards building a mass social justice, economic justice, racial justice, and climate justice movement.

Continued on Page 11

Clallum Crowd Greet PSARA Forum on Security for Seniors, Disabled

By Tim Wheeler

A near-capacity crowd of 45 applauded PSARA's dynamic presenters, Linda Peterson and Steve Bauck, for their "Power Point" presentation that exposes the efforts of the Trump administration, its legislative and think tank allies, and predecessors to undermine Medicare and Social Security. They highlighted the failure of the President and lawmakers to enact pending legislation to raise or remove the income cap on Social Security.

The June 9 event "Making Retirement Security REAL for All," at the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship Hall was sponsored by the PSARA Education Fund and PSARA. Host of the event was Indivisible Sequim (IS), whose chair, Joan Cotta, welcomed the crowd. It was a regular monthly IS meeting, and during the business part of the meeting there was a spirited discussion focused on urging Congress to initiate an inquiry into whether President Trump should be impeached.

Steve Bauck, Chair of PSARA's Education Committee, told the crowd why Social Security and Medicare will be more important to his four grandsons. They will work in an economy that provides few defined pensions when they retire. "Social Security may be the only thing they have."

Linda and Steve stressed falsehoods being promoted, such as "Social Security causes federal deficits," a lie, since the program is self-funded and does not add a penny to the deficit. The media is stressing that in 2035, benefits may be cut by 20 percent when benefits exceed revenues and the surplus in the Social Security Trust Fund is drained. Linda noted, "That is what recipients will receive if Congress does nothing. But Congress can fix it without cutting benefits."

Congress, Peterson said, can lift or eliminate the income cap on Social Security withholding tax so that those people with an annual income of \$2 million pay at the same rate as average



wage earners instead of the 0.4 percent rate they pay now. It would wipe out the revenue shortfall and provide funds to actually increase benefits.

The Social Security 2100 Act, sponsored by the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. John Larson (CT) makes important steps toward achieving that goal and has over 200 co-sponsors in the House, including all the Democratic representatives from Washington. In addition, legislation in the House and Senate has been introduced to completely eliminate the cap, supported by Reps. Jayapal and Smith.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal has also introduced the Improved Medicare for All legislation, which now has over 100 co-sponsors. This legislation would mandate that Medicare would cover dental, vision, hearing, and long-term care and would cover all residents of the U.S. The first hearings ever on Medicare for All have been held in three House congressional committees.

Bauck and Peterson also discussed the recent passage of the Long-Term Care Trust Act. The program, strongly supported by PSARA, will provide \$36,500 to cover long-term care of the elderly and infirm. Wage earners will

pay a 58 cents per \$100 withholding tax to cover the benefit.

Another issue discussed was the 60 percent reduction in Medicare reimbursements from \$114.00 to \$47.00 per patient visit to the Olympic Medical Center's "walk-in" clinic in Sequim and 50 other rural clinics across the nation. Tim Wheeler, a PSARA member who lives in Sequim, denounced the cut as Trump's "war" on senior citizens and the disabled in rural America. He thanked Rep. Derek Kilmer for introducing HR 2552 to block the cut.

Karen Richter, PSARA's Membership Co-Vice President, told the crowd that PSARA "is a regionwide, multi-generational, multi-racial organization." She invited everyone present to join PSARA. The more members we have, the more effective the organization will be in achieving our goals for a more economically secure and just state and country. A Clallam County chapter is in formation.

Other sponsors of the forum included Clallam County Democrats, 24th Legislative District Democrats, and Washington CAN.

Tim Wheeler is a PSARA member and a veteran journalist and activist.

Many Health Care Wins in Olympia in 2019

By Janet Varon

This year's Washington Legislature enacted many bills intended to improve access to health care – perhaps an unprecedented number – and much other health legislation. We saw improvements in access to care and affordability, including added coverage for immigrants and bills to advance health equity. For details, see the article "Washington Legislature moves health care forward, but Medicaid budget is at risk" on the Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA) website.

A few highlights:

Creating a first-in-the-nation program to pay for long-term services and supports.

Washington workers will pay for the program with payroll deductions starting in 2022. Workers regardless of income who paid in for specific numbers of years and need help with at least three "Activities of Daily Living" can begin receiving benefits (365 units of \$100 each) no earlier than 2025. PSARA actively lobbied for this bill for five years.

Work group for universal health care.

The Legislature created a work group on establishing a universal health care system in Washington, charged with making recommendations on how to create, maintain, and fund a system that is sustainable and affordable to all Washingtonians. Formation of the work group is underway. This wouldn't have made it without strong advocacy from the Health Care Is a Human Right - WA Campaign, of which PSARA is a proud member. HCHR will help to realize the work group's potential.

Protecting Washington from erosion of the ACA and other health equity provisions.

HB 1870 incorporates provisions of the federal Affordable Care Act into Washington law, including protection

of individuals with pre-existing conditions and those needing care from discrimination by insurers.

SB 6502 will enhance health equity by prohibiting discrimination that many transgender and gender-nonconforming people face in reproductive health care; and by requiring improvements in reproductive health care for people of color, immigrants and refugees, gender-based violence survivors, and people with disabilities.

SB 5415 establishes the Governor's Indian Health Advisory Council to improve Indian health, and the Indian Health Improvement Reinvestment Account to fund recommended programs from State savings due to federal reimbursement changes.

Apple Health expansions.

The state will invest in:

- Expanding Family Planning coverage to immigrants who are currently ineligible through existing programs.
- Removing barriers to Health Care for Workers with Disabilities Medicaid so individuals trying to work at maximum capacity don't lose it. The income limit and age limit (currently 65) are removed.
- Adding dental coverage for certain low-income immigrants who can't qualify for Medicaid: in 2020 for people who get Medical Care Services because they are either incapacitated from working or over 65, and in 2021 for citizens of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) Pacific Island nations of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau.

Individual health insurance.

Senate Bill 5526, "Cascade Care," was a highly-publicized bill intended to address affordability of individual insurance. The bill requires:

- The state Exchange must define standardized gold, silver, and bronze level plans so that consumers can better compare plans.
- Beginning in 2021, the state will



Janet Varon

contract directly with at least one carrier for plans that meet new affordability, care coordination, and other criteria, including limits on reimbursement to health care providers and facilities. It is hoped that these plans will rein in premiums by 5-10 percent.

- By November 2020, health care agencies must develop a plan to subsidize premiums and reduce cost-sharing for Washingtonians with income up to 500 percent of the federal poverty level.

Eliminating surprise medical bills.

After years of effort, legislation made it across the finish line to protect Washingtonians who rely on private health insurance from surprise (often shocking) medical bills. Thanks to House Bill 1065, patients will now be protected from being billed for out-of-network care during an emergency hospitalization or when receiving care at a facility within their insurance plan's network.

Continued on Page 11

PSARA's Summer Potluck and Membership Meeting

Photos by Garet Munger



Thanks to PSARA Executive Board member Steve Bauck and the Seattle Peace Chorus for making our Summer Potluck and membership meeting joyful.



As always, our 2019 Summer Potluck and Membership Meeting featured plenty of lively discussion and delicious food.

Thanks to our featured speakers, Rep. Nicole Macri (D-43) and Harry Katz, from the Sunrise Movement.

Thanks also to the team that made the event run so smoothly: Angie Bartels, Jessica Bonebright, Tim Burns, Amy Davis, Mindi Lee, Pam Lux, Karen Richter, and Bobby Righi.

A special thank you to all our members, the ones who attended as well as the ones who couldn't attend. Your support and activism makes PSARA run. Without you, none of our many successes would be possible.

Fo' Real: Fixing the Broken

By Bob Shimabukuro

The workshop:

How many of the white people in the audience have seen a POC colleague leave a meeting looking visibly frustrated, uncomfortable, or upset? (Lots of hands go up.)

How many of you wondered if you had something to do with causing this discomfort? (Fewer hands go up.)

Well you can stop wondering because the answer is, "Yes, you did." (Laughter.)

A brief explanation along the lines of: "All white people do things all the time in meetings that make POC uncomfortable." ---Judy Smith de Barros

* * *

Holistically or Broken Down in Parts:

I've taken some flack about some of the things I've written about white folks who think that they can help POC with their insight. I've generally shrugged it off, because to me we really miss the point when we attack the problem this way. We try to strip the "problem" into little boxes, so that we can analyze each one carefully, whether the 'equity' is based on education, income, intelligence, kindness, art, opportunity, language, diet, or history, etc."

But as a few RaGE (Race and Gender Equity Committee) members put it, we can't look at it that way. We need to look at it holistically, because this gap is about culture. And culture involves everything.

The phrase "we are going to be doing what we want to be doing when we get to the place we want to go" (or something close to that) brought a lot of huh???? responses. It's not too difficult to understand. If we want people to feel a part of the group, we let people be part of the group. If we want to be inviting, then we should be inviting. If we want the group to be exclusive, we should act exclusive. Pretty simple.

What does the end game look like for PSARA as we reach for equity in



Bob Shimabukuro

the group? What does equity look like? When will we know that we have reached our goal(s)?

The early discussions have been about POC and women feeling uncomfortable a lot of the time. And about white folks talking a little too much.

* * *

We don't want POC to feel uncomfortable all the time. But we do.

"Why?" folks ask.

"Because," we answer.

* * *

Freezing Up:

My brother Sam and I are at a tavern bar on 52nd & Woodstock in Portland for a bite and a beer. He has just told me he was gay about an hour prior. We watch a guy enter the tavern, who then looks around, sees nobody else, sneers and sits next to Sam on his right.

The guy tries to start a conversation with him, and I'm saying to myself, "Say something, Sam, please say something," but of course, Sam is far, far away.

"Hey you," the guy says, "I said 'the bartender makes a damn good sand-

wich, doesn't she?'"

I lean across Sam and say, "Yes, she does, the best in town!"

"YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT! What the hell's wrong with him?" he asks about Sam.

"He doesn't talk very much, and his ears aren't very good either."

I nudge Sam, "Let's go, time to go, Sam."

I leave a tip, and then we left. Sam never looked at the guy. Just stonewalled him.

I thought we did well getting to leave without further altercation.

* * *

False Narratives:

MV: Bob, have you read the "Chrysanthemum and the Sword"?

BS: No, why would I?

MV: It's by Ruth Benedict. She's an anthropologist. Wrote a book about Japanese culture for the US government in 1946. Because we didn't know anything about the culture. Since we were going to occupy the country, we thought we better know more about their culture.

BS: Ruth Benedict is a fraud, she made the whole thing up. Didn't do any research, didn't talk to any Japanese folks. Figured out the scheme and the metaphor for her research. Pure fiction.

MV: No, all the Japanese friends I've talked to say that's a good book.

BS: That's because the ones you've talked to don't know jack shit either. Don't get me going. They read the translated book. It was a best seller. They read it as, "Oh, this is how we should act. We better act like this." After losing a lot of folks on Okinawa and two unnecessary A-bombs, well, you do what they think.

MV: You don't know what you're talking about.

BS: Well, neither did Ruth.

Continued on Page 10

Who Is Behind the Ads Challenging the Amazon Smile Program?

By Mike Andrew

If you read the *Seattle Times* or use Facebook, you've probably seen ads paid for by an outfit called "Citizens for Corporate Accountability" criticizing Amazon for excluding some non-profits from the Amazon Smile program.

Corporate accountability sounds pretty good, exclusion sounds pretty bad, and Amazon is the mega-corporation we love to hate, so are these ads from the good guys?

No, not at all. In fact, they're from very bad guys.

First, some explanation. Amazon Smile is a website operated by Amazon, with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on Amazon Smile, the Amazon Smile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price to the charitable organization of your choice.

Of course, there's a catch. Two, in fact. The first catch is you're still buying from Amazon instead of a unionized retailer or a local small business. The second catch – Amazon's nod to corporate respectability – is that they will not give money to organizations on the Southern Poverty Law Center's list of hate groups.

And that's the point of the ads. Citizens for Corporate Accountability (CCA) is a front group representing organizations on SPLC's list of hate groups. We don't know which groups because CCA is a "dark money" organization that isn't required to disclose its donors.

We do know who the boss is, and we also know some of his prior business connections.

CCA is run by Brian Glicklich, a California public affairs and crisis management consultant best known for representing conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh when he was losing advertisers over racist comments. Glicklich also represented Scott Baio when the washed-up actor was accused of raping a 14-year-old girl.

As if those clients weren't revolting enough, Glicklich registered as a foreign agent in August 2017, and signed a \$240,000 retainer agreement with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The DRC government has committed well-known human rights abuses, including jailing journalists and protesters, killing civilians, and allowing child slave labor.

According to Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) filings, Glicklich also contracted with an Israeli firm, MER Security and Communications, which had a \$1.5 million contract with DRC to lobby the Trump administration.

As part of his efforts, Glicklich paid the right-wing *Washington Times* newspaper to insert pro-DRC opinion articles along with those meant to discredit DRC opposition leader Moïse Katumbi. One of the articles is attributed to Bill Meierling, ALEC's chief marketing officer.

Glicklich formally terminated his contract with the DRC in March, 2018. He said the Congo was "just one of hundreds of clients I have handled over two decades."

We may never know who pays CCA, but we do know that its messaging aligns with several right-wing groups that share hatred for SPLC.

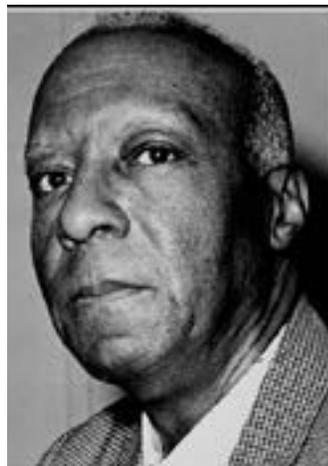


Brian Glicklich
(Huffington Post)

For example, the Family Research Council and American Family Association – anti-LGBT hate groups – launched their own anti-SPLC website. The group took out an ad in the *Wall Street Journal* urging tech companies and media outlets to disown SPLC.

Alliance Defending Freedom, another anti-LGBT group, was one of several charities to express outrage over being removed from Amazon Smile.

Other groups, such as the Proud Boys and Center for Immigration Studies have filed lawsuits against SPLC over the hate group designation.



Look for the enemies of Medicare, of higher minimum wages, of Social Security, of federal aid to education and there you will find the enemy of the Negro, the coalition of Dixiecrats and reactionary Republicans that seek to dominate the Congress.

— A. Philip Randolph —

AZ QUOTES

Chained CPI vs. CPI-E

How Statistics Can Take Money Right Out of Your Pocket

By Mike Andrew

When you hear the word “statistics” what do you think of?

“Numbers! Boring! Stop reading right now!” If you’re like most people, that’s your reaction. But don’t turn the page yet, I’m going to explain how statistics can take money right out of your pocket.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration announced it would change the way it calculated poverty, so that fewer people would qualify for federal assistance. They wouldn’t have any more money, mind you, they just wouldn’t meet the newly defined standards for “poverty.”

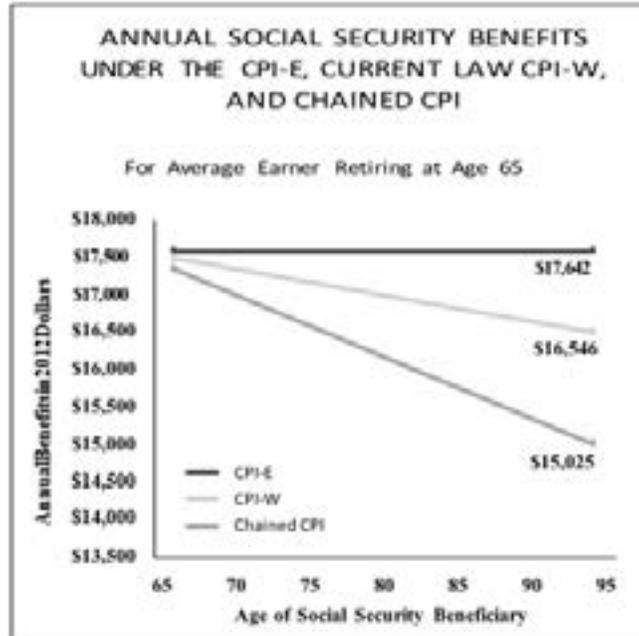
The way they propose to do it is to substitute a statistical construct called “Chained CPI” for what they previously used to calculate cost of living, the CPI-W.

“CPI” means Consumer Price Index, the amount that the everyday stuff we buy increases or decreases in price. The “W” stands for Wage Earners. Sometimes we also talk about the CPI-E, where the “E” stands for elderly.

The point behind having different statistical measures is that different people spend money on different things, and therefore the prices of those things impact their lives in different ways.

For example, a wage earner who drives to work might spend a lot of money on gasoline. Retired people, who don’t drive as much, would find that their lives are affected much less by fluctuations in the price of gas. On the other hand, seniors are impacted much more by the price of medical care and drugs than younger and healthier people might be.

All these statistical constructs rely on a number of assumptions. The assump-



Source: Nancy J. Altman and Eric R. Kingon. *Social Security Works! Why Social Security Isn't Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help Us All* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2015) Page 112

tion behind the Chained CPI is called “substitution across categories.”

To some extent, the idea of substitution makes sense. If the price of beef goes up, for example, maybe you buy pork, or chicken. If meat in general is too expensive, maybe you go to a different category of protein – beans and rice.

But some products are not substitutable. If your doctor tells you to take Lipitor, you can’t take Ibuprofen instead. If you need a hip replacement, you can’t ask the doctor for a knee brace just because it’s cheaper. So the assumptions behind the Chained CPI just don’t work very well for seniors, whose high cost items are often health care-related.

Housing also represents a bigger chunk of seniors’ budgets than it does for wage earners. And yes, seniors can move to cheaper places, but that often means moving farther from doctors, grocery stores, and public transit hubs.

Currently, the CPI-W is what determines the annual COLA for Social Security recipients. The average CPI-W reading from the third quarter of the previous year serves as the baseline, while the average CPI-W reading from the third quarter of the current year is the basis for change.

That’s not a good thing for seniors, because, as we’ve just seen, seniors don’t spend money on the same things wage earners buy. Retirees receiving Social Security benefits have suffered through three years since 2009 where there’s been no COLA at all, even though costs of key items keep going up and up.

Using the Chained CPI would be even worse, because many items that seniors buy just can’t be substituted for something

cheaper.

On the other hand, using the CPI-E would result in a higher average monthly payout for beneficiaries. The graph on this page shows that an average person retiring at 65 would get more than \$1,000 more per year if COLAs were calculated with the CPI-E than under the current system, and more than \$2,000 more per year than under the Chained CPI.

According to The Senior Citizens League, if the CPI-E were used in place of the CPI-W over the past 25 years, Social Security recipients would have averaged an increased payout of 8.9 percent, or nearly \$30,000.

That’s a lot of money to lose just over a statistical measure. But the Chained CPI isn’t just an innocent statistical construct. No, it’s a policy measure designed to cut Social Security benefits!

All the more reason to demand that Social Security benefits be expanded, not cut.

Fo' Real...

Continued From Page 7

* * *

False Narrative, Terrible Sensitivity, and 'plenny da kine':

Cathie (Mira's mother) and I are at a parent teacher conference. We notice the walls are covered with kids' drawings of "Thanksgiving and Indians."

Cathie notices that most of the Indians have feathers. She points out that there was no real Thanksgiving, just pure white fantasy and besides, the North Atlantic Indians did not wear feathers.

The teacher answers Cathie, "But some of them did, didn't they?"

Then for the first time in this parent/teacher conference she looks at me, horrified, turns back to Cathie and asks, "Uh, is Mira's dad Native American???"

Cathie is speechless, I was about to laugh, thought better of it, then angry, then managed to reply to her coolly and calmly (I think), "No, but she has uncles that are."

* * *

If you still don't understand what POC are driving at, you should just do this: Stop talking and listen. Because then you'll probably do what most of us do: Listen carefully to what is being said, what is not being said, and try to learn the language and culture. That's pretty much what I do. It's a lot less embarrassing that way.

Remember, all members are invited to our RaGE meetings.

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

Senate Confirms Andrew Saul as SSA Commissioner

By Steve Kofahl

Andrew M. Saul, President Trump's choice to lead the Social Security Administration (SSA), was featured in the October 2018 *Retiree Advocate*. Included was a draft of the letter sent to Senators by Nancy Altman, Chair of the Strengthen Social Security Coalition, detailing the reasons why Saul is unqualified to run our most important domestic agency and programs. From that point on, Social Security Works WA pressed staff of our Senators' D.C. Offices, during our monthly conference calls with them, to oppose Saul in the Finance Committee and, if necessary, on the Senate floor.

Unfortunately, Saul breezed through the Finance Committee confirmation hearing with little or no resistance, and unanimous support. That led to his 77-16 confirmation by the Senate on June 4 for a six-year term. As the *Seattle Times* reported on June 8, the Senators who voted against him did so due to concerns about how Saul would handle troubled labor-management-employee relations at the Agency. Senator Murray voted No, but Senator Cantwell voted Yes. We will, respectively, be saying "Thanks!" and asking "Why?"

Adding insult to injury, the vote came just six days after Trump's Federal Service Impasses Panel imposed a horrible seven-year contract on SSA employees and their American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) representatives. It evicts AFGE from all of its offices in Agency facilities, cuts time allowed for AFGE to represent employees by 80 percent, and substantially reduces employee rights and benefits.

It's not over. Senator McConnell will decide when to schedule votes on four more Trump nominees. David Black, who would be SSA Principle Deputy Commissioner, also received unanimous support from the Finance Committee. As SSA General Counsel, he effectively outlawed AFGE representation of employees forced to work without pay during the October 2013 government shutdown. George W. Bush's anti-union SSA Commissioner, Michael J. Astrue, has been nominated along with Jason J. Fichtner to join the independent Social Security Advisory Board. Astrue, and his Principle Deputy, James Lockhart, led Bush's Social Security privatization campaign at SSA, misusing Trust Fund dollars to promote a political agenda. I testified about their misdeeds at a January 2005 Senate Democratic Policy Committee hearing. Lockhart is Trump's pick to be a public trustee on the Social Security Board of Trustees, which publicly reports every year on Social Security's financial condition.

Steve Kofahl is the retired President of AFGE 3937, representing SSA workers, and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.



Steve Kofahl

Many Health Care Wins...

Continued from Page 5

Behavioral health.

New laws address the opioid crisis, implement recommendations of the state children's mental health work group, address behavioral health workforce issues, provide for completing integration of behavioral Medicaid managed care, expand and create new community-based treatment facilities, and reform evaluation and restoration of competency for people charged with crimes, as required by a federal court order.

Budget cloud on the horizon.

Unfortunately, the operating budget assumes that the Health Care Authority (HCA) can save over \$350 million in the Medicaid program by implementing "program integrity" recommendations from the federal Medicaid agency. The HCA and a broad coalition including NoHLA told the Legislature those projected savings are entirely unrealistic. NoHLA and advocacy partners will have to be vigilant that the state does not pursue eligibility or service cuts to fill the gap.

For more information on health care access in the 2019 legislative session, see <https://nohla.org/index.php/2019/05/22/washington-legislature-moves-health-care-forward-but-medicaid-budget-is-at-risk/>

Janet Varon is Executive Director of Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA) and a PSARA member.

The Transition Is Inevitable...

Continued from Page 3

In a 1965 speech on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol, Dr. King answered the question how long will it take to bring about justice by saying, "Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

This metaphor is not about the laws of physics but rather the belief and optimism of building power through building a movement. The moral arc bends because we bend it together. We bend it together because we only have power together. We only have power together when we build a movement that creates a vision of justice based on a common core of values, an articulated set of policies that reflect those values, and are relentless in organizing for these changes.

When labor complains that we have never seen a "just transition," this is not surprising -- there hasn't been one. We will have to build it.

To build it, we need to develop authentic relationships between community and labor and define our values and vision together. While this is hard work, it is not rocket science. People know how to rebuild their communities. And it is in our common interest that we rebuild with good jobs, fair wages and benefits, strong labor standards, and comprehensive social insurance policies. No worker and no community should be left behind in this economic transition.

It is through the climate justice movement, making political and economic demands at every level -- from the bargaining table to legislative floors -- that we can best represent our current and future members.

Labor shouldn't oppose the Green New Deal. Opposing the GND puts us at odds with young people and allies all around the world and fundamentally misses the point. The GND is a framework, a starting point, from which to build in our own expertise about jobs and labor standards. Labor and community together will breathe life into the Green New Deal and make it real.

We have a choice: either we build the economic transition together for the benefit of us all, or the banks and fossil fuel industry build the transition in their image. The transition is inevitable, but justice is up to us.

Jeff Johnson is a retired president of the Washington State Labor Council, and a member of PSARA.

To Renew or Donate

PSARA Education Fund

321 16th Avenue S, Seattle WA 98144

- Basic contribution: \$20
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Meetings and Events

PSARA Government Relations Committee: Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 3 (on a Wednesday for this month only), Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave S, Seattle. All are welcome.

West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes: Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 3, Southwest Library, 9010 35th Ave SW, Seattle, (35th & Henderson). Topic: *Public Confidence in the US Supreme Court*. Brown bag lunch.

PSARA Climate and Environmental Justice Committee: 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, July 4 (Yes, really, July 4), Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Education Committee: 2 p.m., Tuesday, July 9, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave S, Seattle. All are welcome.

PSARA Southend Committee: 1 p.m., Thursday, July 11, White Center Library, 1409 SW 107th St, Seattle. All are welcome as we plan PSARA events in South King County.

PSARA Race and Gender Equity Committee: 11 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Thursday, July 18, Washington State Labor Council office, 321 16th Ave S, Seattle. All are welcome.

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

Celebrate Social Security & Medicare. 12:30 p.m. Saturday, August 3, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, 2200 Martin Luther King Jr. Way S, Seattle.

Save the Date: PSARA Birthday Party & BBQ. 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday, September 14, Beaumont Room, 2821 2nd Ave, Seattle. All are welcome.