

After the 2020 Election: Demands for a Better Society A PSARA Webinar Tuesday, October 6, Noon

Join us for this important webinar featuring Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal speaking about the issues she looks forward to taking up in 2021 with a new Congress and under a new administration.

Congresswoman Jayapal represents Washington's 7th Congressional District, co-chairs the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and is a member of PSARA.

Joining her on our panel will be Larry Brown, President of the Washington State Labor Council, and Alex Lawson, Executive Director of Social Security Works.

To attend this webinar you must register. If you get regular emails from PSARA you've already received the link to do that, and you'll get reminders in the near future.

If you're not on our email list, email organizer@psara.org to get the registration link.

We'd also like to thank our wonderful co-sponsors: 34th LD Democrats, 350 Seattle, Economic Opportunity Institute, NOW Seattle, Pass the Federal Green New Deal! coalition, Pride At Work King County, Seattle Anti-War Coalition, SEIU 775, Social Security Works, Transit Riders Union, Washington State Labor Council.

We hope to see you on Tuesday, October 6, at noon.



Panelists Alex Lawson (Social Security Works), Larry Brown (Washington State Labor Council), and Pramila Jayapal (Congresswoman, 7th District)

Vote Like Your Life Depends On It... Because It Might

Washington State ballots will be mailed on October 16, and should reach you soon after. You can mail them back anytime before Election Day, Tuesday, November 3.

You can also deposit your ballot in person at an official drop box anytime until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

If you received a postcard from USPS instructing you to make a special request for a mail-in ballot, or warning you that your ballot won't be counted unless you mail it in early, tear it up and toss it into recycling! This information is in error and may have been deliberately designed to keep you from voting.

This issue of the *Retiree Advocate* highlights some of the issues that depend on your vote -- the future of Social Security, the makeup of the federal court system, the health of our planet, even democracy itself.

PSARA does not endorse candidates for office, but we know our members, and we're confident that if you vote and get your friends and neighbors to do the same, our democracy will be secure.

The Retiree ADVOCATE

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Ruth Bader Ginsburg 1933-2020



Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the "Notorious RBG," died on September 18, at the age of 87.

As a Justice of the high court, she made a name as a tough dissenter from an increasingly conservative majority.

Before becoming a federal judge, when she was director of the ACLU's Women's Rights Project, she argued six gender discrimination cases before the Supreme Court and won five. She made legal history by persuading the courts that gender discrimination was a violation of the constitution's equal protection clause.

"How fortunate I was to be alive and a lawyer when, for the first time in United States history, it became possible to urge, successfully, before legislatures and courts, the equal-citizenship stature of women and men as a fundamental constitutional principle."



August 22: PSARA members and friends from Health Care is a Human Right Coalition hold up banners demanding Medicare for All on the I-5 overpass at NE 45th Street. We are determined to make universal health care an issue now and after the election. (Photo: Garet Munger)

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

Red Alert: Trump's Plan to Kill Social Security

By Nancy Altman

Donald Trump once bragged that he could shoot someone in broad daylight and not lose any supporters. He's now seeing whether the same is true if he kills Social Security.

His unilateral, unprecedented step of deferring the collection of Social Security's contributions (colloquially known as "payroll taxes"), the backbone of Social Security, is the murder weapon he would use.

Trump has already ordered the Treasury Department to stop collecting Social Security's dedicated payroll contributions for the next four months pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code, which permits deferrals of taxes when a disaster is declared. Once re-elected, if he keeps deferring Social Security's insurance contributions, all benefits will come to a screeching halt, with no Congressional involvement whatsoever.

According to the independent chief actuary of the Social Security Administration, if all Social Security contributions stopped on January 1, 2021, the nearly 10 million people today getting Social Security Disability Insurance benefits would see those benefits stop abruptly in the middle of 2021. Those 55 million receiving Social Security Old-Age and Survivors Insurance benefits, which average around \$1,440 a month, would see their benefits disappear two years later.

Section 7508A of the Internal Revenue Code allows deferrals for up to one year, long enough to stop the disability insurance payments. Killing off the rest of Social Security takes two years longer, but a newly elected President Trump could interpret the statute to permit an additional 12-month deferral with the declaration of a new disaster. All benefits could be stopped with just two new disaster declarations. Concerningly, the Supreme Court has found that President Trump has "broad discretion" in making findings.

With a presidential threat to have zero benefits paid whatsoever, congressional supporters of Social Security would effectively be held hostage, with little they could do but give in to the demands of a lame duck president. It is not hard to imagine, at that point, a backroom deal that fulfilled the long-standing right-wing goal of eliminating the features of Social Security that have made it so successful and so popular.

Prior to running for president on the Republican ticket, Trump endorsed privatizing Social Security and raising its full retirement age to 70, asking, "How many times will you really want to take that trailer to the Grand Canyon?" Other longstanding right-wing goals are to means-test Social Security and adopt the technical but far-reaching change of price-indexing. Those are not only deeply unpopular, but would impose enormous cuts, while also ending Social Security as it has existed since its enactment 85 years ago.

Some pundits are giving Trump the benefit of the doubt, arguing that Congress would simply make up for the missing payroll contributions with general revenue. That, though, is highly unlikely. We are talking about general revenue of over \$1 trillion each and every year.

Importantly, even just substituting general revenue would fundamentally alter Social Security. Its dedicated revenue and inability to deficit-spend means that Social Security does not add a penny to the nation's federal debt. Social Security's creator, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, clearly understood the importance of those Social Security contributions, which, in his words, "give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their [Social Security] pensions."

Trump has shown himself willing to attack numerous fundamental institutions. He has attacked the US Postal



Nancy Altman

Service, which the Constitution explicitly lists as an enumerated power of Congress. He has attacked the free press and our elections. Does anyone believe he wouldn't take our Social Security system hostage to attain a radical reform?

Adding insult to injury, it is easy to imagine that Donald Trump will host a Rose Garden signing ceremony for legislation ending Social Security as we know it. He will use the occasion to brag about "saving" Social Security -- as he signs its destruction.

Nancy Altman is President of Social Security Works and a member of the federal Social Security Advisory Board. A longer version of this article appeared on the CNN Blog.

Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

By Bobby Righi

Right before midnight on Labor Day, the smell of wood smoke interrupted my sleep, and I awoke thinking that I had better check our house and the neighboring ones for fire. I should have taken that as a warning. I checked out what could be seen through the windows, then put on shoes and went outside where the smell of smoke was unmistakable. I walked up and down the deserted street looking for billowing smoke or the red glow of fire around each house. When I gave up and went back in, my husband, alarmed at my roaming the neighborhood in my PJs in the middle of the night, asked what I thought I was doing. He also looked around for a while before going back to bed.

The next morning we rose early to pack the car for our trip to the southern Oregon Coast to meet my sister. The high winds during Labor Day had stoked fires in Eastern Washington and blown smoke westward to us, so the air was hazy. I checked the fire reports for California and learned that fires were raging in Mendocino County and a firefighter had died. We headed south on Highway 99 and then to I-5 listening to NPR and wondering if my sister would encounter problems as she drove north on Highway 101 from Oakland. We didn't have a clue that Oregon was ablaze.

As we approached Vancouver, it became hard to see through the smoke, and the sky looked orange. We checked the fire reports and learned that high winds had stoked fires all over Oregon and that towns nearby were being told to evacuate. Heading south, the air around Salem was so dark it was hard to see cars and trucks on the freeway. We began to get loud emergency announcements on my cell phone telling some communities in Linn County to evacuate immediately.

I frantically looked for news on the radio and my cell phone. What the hell



Photo: Khaama Press News Agency

were we doing driving during these fires? The sky got darker and redder. As we got closer to Eugene, my phone went crazy with loud alerts – Level 2, prepare to leave, and Level 3, leave immediately and do not take time to gather anything! These were for communities along state Route 126 with directions to shelters. The air glowed a brilliant red, and it looked to me like a stage setting for an opera where everyone is either burned or poisoned or sent to the gallows all at once. I could hear the dramatic music in my head. We were headed into the inferno.

I called our son and asked for help looking for road closures and information about the spread of the fires. He sent me a link to an Oregon map of active fires. The radio news said that I-5 was now closed at Ashland and that there was a warning for Lincoln County along the coast. We felt boxed in.

Should we just turn around? Would we be able to drive west to the coast from I-5? My sister was not answering her cell phone, so I couldn't tell her we were turning back. This trip was planned as a way to see her during the COVID pandemic and still be safe. We

are all older, and she has lots of health issues that would make COVID-19 deadly. We had not seen each other for over a year, and meeting on the south Oregon Coast seemed like a good idea. Until today.

Through all of the worry and panic was the steady drumming in my brain of the words "tipping point, tipping point." This inferno is caused by climate change, and this doubling of disasters on top of one another is becoming a new normal. But wait, no, NOT a new normal! Things are going to get even worse!

There has never been a fire season like this on the West Coast – California, Oregon, and Washington are all engulfed in huge rapidly-moving flames and smoke. Before the fires, people in California were already dying from the excessive heat. This heat and year-after-year drought conditions made fires inevitable. It took very little to start a wildfire - a downed electrical pole or a chain hitting the pavement as a car was being towed. Thousands have

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Olympic Peninsula Fights Right-Wing Extremism

By Lisa Dekker and Tim Wheeler

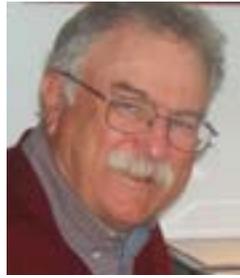
Turmoil, fear, and the threat of violence is rife in the nation right now, and not only in large metro areas. It is also happening in small rural towns like Sequim and Forks on the Olympic Peninsula. But PSARA members and our allies are fighting back. Most recently, on August 22, PSARA members initiated a protest with more than 50 community members waving signs outside the Port Angeles Post Office. Greeted by supportive honks, the group was demanding an end to Trump's attempts to destroy confidence in mail-in voting, by blocking emergency funding and hobbling the US Postal Service.

We last wrote in the *Advocate* about the ugly and racist push-back against the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's plans for a state-of-the-art medical clinic, to treat opioid addiction on the North Peninsula. SOS (Save Our Sequim) is presently in litigation seeking to block the clinic. The outcome is yet to be determined, but many here have spoken up in support for the clinic and against the efforts of SOS.

But our community is experiencing new threats. Two incidents, one in Sequim and one in Forks, 75 miles west, were a chilling reminder that our rural area is not immune to the national turmoil.

On June 3, a peaceful march for Black Lives Matter in Sequim was joined by 500 people on a beautiful sunny day. Organized by Courtney Thomas, leader of Sequim Protests Against Racism, Etc. (SPARE), it was a multi-racial, age-diverse group of students, families with children, and seniors. Signs urged folks to vote November 3, to remove Trump, save Black Lives like George Floyd's, and curb COVID-19. Courtney, a young mother of three, was especially concerned for what a future of heightened racism might hold for her oldest son.

That same day, Seth Larson, owner of Fred's Guns, received a fraudulent tweet that "busloads of Antifa" were headed to rural towns like Sequim, in-



Tim Wheeler



Lisa Dekker

tent on breaking windows and destroying downtown businesses. Twitter had announced that the tweet was false, a forgery by "Identity Evropa," a white supremacist, pro-Trump group. Larson still sent out a message asking his followers to bring their guns and head to Sequim.

Carrying their firearms, they found only peaceful protesters at Sequim's main intersection. Parents with children were frightened at the sight of men with guns, and many fled. Larson strutted up to Courtney Thomas and questioned her about Antifa, saying "I know they're here." She informed Larson he had no right to interrogate her.

Meanwhile, with zero authority to do so, his fellow gunmen were accosting citizen protesters, demanding to see their ID's. In addition, there is evidence pointing to a too-cozy relationship between Larson and some members of local law enforcement.

As far as is known, law enforcement failed to challenge the gun-toters, or even request their ID's or open-carry permits. This despite a law on the books in Sequim outlawing carrying firearms for the intent of intimidation.

Larson's "call to arms" also went out to his friends in Forks. So when a multi-racial Spokane family in a converted school bus drove into town, they were surrounded in a parking lot, with locals repeatedly demanding to know if they were "Antifa." The family finally drove to their campsite, where they were followed, harassed, and their exit road blocked by trees cut down by their tormentors. Nine hours later they got a

safe escort out of Forks by law enforcement. The incident was so shameful and harmful to this tourist-dependent community that \$2,000 was raised and sent to the Spokane family by way of an apology. The following week, a street protest in Forks joined by PSARA members and members of the Hoh and Quileute tribes, demanded prosecution of the vigilantes. An investigation into the Forks incident is ongoing, but so far a wall of silence has prevented identification of the perpetrators.

In response to the two incidents in Sequim and Forks, an online petition, "Zero Tolerance for Vigilante Rambos" has garnered over 1,600 signatures. The petitioners, including the authors of this article, have an appointment September 17 to meet on Zoom with Sequim's Chief of Police, City Manager, and Legal Counsel to demand protection of our First Amendment and voting rights as well as public safety. We need to know that law enforcement is paying attention to gun-shop owner Seth Larson and his incendiary social media posts. Just last week, Larson posted that if Joe Biden and Kamala Harris win election November 3, gun owners should join him in a nationwide "war" by armed extremists to keep Trump in office. We need assurances that local officials have a solid plan to prevent right-wing intimidation. And we need our leaders to firmly and publicly state that our community will not tolerate any of these tactics.

Lisa Dekker and Tim Wheeler are members of PSARA's Executive Board.

Tell Congress: Protect our Public Postal Service Now and Forever

By Beth Brunton

In these times of anxiety and uncertainty, what is one of the most popular, reliable, and essential public services? It is our constitutionally-created Post Office. No matter what the weather, not even orders to stay inside due to smoky, unhealthy air stops our mail carriers from delivering mail to every address, from city apartments to spacious suburbs to rural farms, at an affordable, universal price.

Please pause and think: What's your favorite mail? Do you like to skim this, your monthly newsletter, looking for photos, stories, and invitations from your friends at PSARA? Do you most appreciate receiving your medical prescriptions? Or do you savor surprise letters from long-lost friends? Now consider the nearly unthinkable. Can you imagine life without our public postal service? How will we vote by mail?

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the US Postal Service with mail volume down by one third due to reduced advertising and solicitations. The Postal Service has warned Congress that it's on the verge of collapse. It may soon run out of cash, with as many as 630,000 family-wage jobs at risk, without Congressional relief. But more than COVID-19 has attacked the postal service.

As you may have heard, the President has appointed one of his campaign contributors with no experience, interest, or commitment to leading the agency effectively. In fact, the new Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, has deliberately directed delay of mail delivery by removing sorting machines and ordering workers to leave unsorted mail behind. Former employees have accused DeJoy of paying them bonuses to reimburse them for contributing to GOP candidates.

The Post Office just mailed out deliberately misleading vote-by-mail information.

The President has threatened to veto

any stimulus bill that includes postal funding. Why would the President and others attack and diminish such a popular, essential service? This is about more than money. Remember the big picture. Attacks on the quality and reliability of the postal service are just the latest tactic of the long-term neoliberal strategy to try to privatize public services, including retirement, health care, and schools.

Fortunately, there has been widespread outrage about this crisis. The American Postal Workers, the APWU, has been leading the fight. Postal workers and their union have sounded the alarm and resisted removing machines. They have reached out to community and national allies to rally, march, and write letters, including a national day of protest with rallies across the country including several in Seattle. Recently, Bob Barnes and other PSARA members joined the diverse group on Rainier Ave. (See photo)

Also, the House Democrats, led by Nancy Pelosi, have insisted that postal service funding be part of any stimulus package. However, the Senate Republicans have been equally adamant to reject it. We need to keep the pressure on to ensure that the Senate Democrats stay committed to demanding postal funding.

So what can you do now to protect our postal service?

1. **Write and call your US Senators and Representatives:** Demand they insist on postal support for any future bills, to include at least \$25 billion now to the Postal Service. Demand they



PSARA members at Rainier Avenue Post office.

investigate and remove Postmaster DeJoy, revise rules that undermine postal service funding, and allow creative new initiatives such as postal banking.

2. **Buy, use, and give postage stamps:** Use it or lose it. Write letters to friends and family about the elections. Join with one of the national campaigns to write letters and postcards to encourage voters in swing states to vote.

3. **Build our public power movement:** Join marches, make and post signs, post on social media, talk about it with your friends, family, and other groups.

The stamps we buy now may say "Forever." But it's up to us to help make sure we keep that promise to our next generations. If you value our public postal service, now is the time to speak up to protect it. As they say, "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." But our mail carriers could be stopped by deliberate corruption, mismanagement, and deliberate attacks unless we speak up now.

Beth Brunton is a member of PSARA.

The THRIVE Act

By Jeff Johnson

On Thursday, September 10, the next iteration of the Green New Deal was introduced into Congress by a broad coalition of climate justice advocates and, to date, 82 Congress members. The congressional resolution is called the THRIVE Act. THRIVE stands for Transform, Heal, and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy.

THRIVE represents two major steps forward in climate justice. Embedded in THRIVE are the democratic values of self-determination articulated in the historic work of decades of climate justice thought, from the Jimenez Principles to the values written into Washington State's Climate Justice Initiative 1631. THRIVE recognizes that the multiple existential crises we face – climate, racism, inequality, and democracy – are interrelated and must be solved together.

The second major step forward is the breadth of the coalition that brought THRIVE forward. Among the 150 plus organizations are the Indigenous Environmental Network, Greenpeace, Sunrise, Service Employees International Union, the Movement for Black Lives, 350.org, Sierra Club, and American Federation of Teachers.

Senators Schumer, Warren, and Markey and Representatives Haaland, Omar, and Washington State's Pramila Jayapal and Adam Smith were among the many federal elected officials praising THRIVE as a way to establish a "just" economic recovery from the global health pandemic and the underlying economic crisis, and to systemically attack climate change.

Now THRIVE is still in the form of a framework for change, similar to the Green New Deal. It clearly articulates a vision for evaluating any plan for economic revival and a value base for policies leading to real transformative change. THRIVE is based on eight fundamental principles of thought.

For the rest of this article I will summarize these eight principles with more



Jeff Johnson

detail to follow as the Resolution/Legislation matures and develops. In future articles I will also lay out the tenets of the Biden Plan and the Moniz Plan, supported by the AFL-CIO.

Two points of interest before discussing the principles are that the Labor Network for Sustainability (LNS) has been working on winning labor support for THRIVE. So far seven unions have signed on – SEIU, AFT, Flight Attendants, CWA, United Electrical, American Postal Workers Union, and the Amalgamated Transit Union. As well, LNS has been asked to help develop the Just Transition sections of THRIVE.

Secondly, PSARA's good friend Robert Pollin, Co-Director of the PERI Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, did the economic analysis of THRIVE and estimates that when implemented it will create over 16 million family-wage jobs.

The Principles

1. Creating millions of good safe jobs:

The emphasis in this principle is to invest in essential work and workers and

to expand our definition of essential by investing in public health and care, sustainable food systems, modernizing and retrofitting millions of homes, schools, and commercial buildings, building a clean, domestic manufacturing base, dramatically investing in clean green infrastructure, and bringing historically unpaid or underpaid work – child care, elder care, family care – into the fully paid workforce. All of these jobs must pay family-sustaining wages and benefits including child care, pensions, and sick days and must ensure safe workplaces and protect the right to organize.

2. **Build Worker Power:** Create a real path to union jobs including passing the PRO (Protecting the Right to Organize) Act, repealing the ban on secondary boycotts, requiring employer neutrality in organizing efforts, advancing sectoral bargaining, eliminating misclassification of workers as independent contractors and extending union representation for all workers.

3. **Invest in Black, Brown, and Indigenous Communities:** Overcoming a long history of racism and gender and economic injustice, as well as disproportionate impacts of climate disaster and industrial pollution, at least 40 percent of investments in our economy need to be made in disproportionately impacted communities. And most importantly these communities need to be able to have both voice and the ability to implement the changes in their communities that will impact their daily lives.

4. **Strengthen and Heal the Historic Nation-to-Nation Relationship with Indigenous People:** As embodied in Initiative 1631 we must codify FPIC, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent with Indigenous Nations. True tribal sovereignty and justice requires that indigenous nations have the authority to

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Inside the 2020 Census: Everyone Should Count

By Steven Beck

This past month I participated as a temporary “Enumerator” for the 2020 Census, planned for April 1, 2020. I had applied over a year ago, but then came the COVID-19 crisis, so orientation and training was delayed until mid-July.

According to Census Bureau releases they had projected hiring a half million temps, but by early August only 288,204 were officially on payroll.

Many older applicants understandably dropped out in fear of infection. Being over 70 myself, I tentatively chose to give it a try, while exercising every precaution. In this regard the Census Bureau has acted dutifully, providing masks, sanitizer, and copious safety training and alerts. The sanctity of the data collected during interviews was emphasized, and nothing that follows violates my pledge in that regard.

The bureau-issued smartphone and its apps are indeed technical marvels, able to transmit field data from anywhere, input data and time records, assign cases on the fly, and warn you of hazardous locations. But any massive undertaking using new technology inevitably has flaws.

First, my training modules wouldn't work on my MacBook's Safari browser, so I installed Chrome and got to work. Suddenly these disappeared from my portal. Thankfully a tech from their Decennial Service Center (with a Louisiana number, not from tech-proud Seattle) unearthed them in a hidden archive. Finally, after completing my training, evaluations, and a group-chat review I was ready to hit the streets and start knocking on doors.

I have enjoyed the work and the opportunity for a street-level view of Seattle, and found most residents cooperative, despite the “citizenship” controversy created by Trump. But I don't own a car, and within less than a month my cases were all in suburban locations that I couldn't effectively reach by transit and on foot. Alternatives, such as pairing up with another enumerator

with a car or working by phone didn't meet with their approval. Seeing no alternative, I called it quits August 26 and returned my equipment to the Federal Center South on East Marginal Way.

Census top brass seemed strangely eager to shed temp staff they'd only just finished training. Forgetting to log in hours the same day became grounds for dismissal. So was working too many hours (unauthorized overtime), or working too few. Even after resigning I was repeatedly called and told I might be fired for inactivity.

I cannot speak to the motivations of political appointees atop the Commerce Department or Census Bureau, but I've come to admire the dedicated professionals within them. Even at this late date they should be given the time, staff, and resources to complete their work, as demanded by our Constitution.

“Census Bureau data will be used to decide how federal relief dollars are spent in our communities for the next 10 years,” according to Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County, which has partnered with labor and civil rights groups at wecountwashington.org to “demand we be counted.” Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson, along with our city and county attorneys, are working on federal lawsuits challenging Trump's curtailed schedule and his plan to exclude undocumented immigrants from being counted.

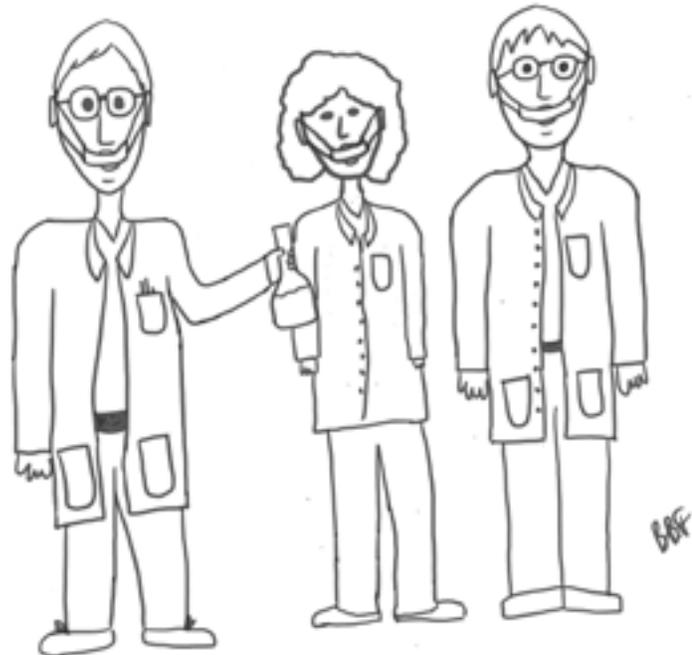
If your household hasn't participated in the Census yet, I urge you to call 844-330-2020 or go to 2020Census.gov

Steven Beck is a member of PSARA.

The Barbed Wire

By Barbara Flye

Trump endorses using face masks



Trump: “Greatest Economy Ever” We Need a Just Recovery

By Michael Righi

A lie is what happens when Trump says (or tweets) something. But stock markets are near record highs, right? GDP is set to grow strongly in the third quarter. And we added 1.4 million jobs in August. So maybe he’s right this time?

Hmmmm, and I have a (partially-completed) wall I would like to sell you. Start with the “great jobs numbers.” The economy added 1.4 million jobs in August. But that is still 11 million jobs below what we had in February. Or, really, closer to 20 million, since many workers are not counted.

Yes, some jobs are coming back. Many workers have been forced back to work by the end of the CARES Act \$600 weekly supplemental unemployment benefits. McConnell and company don’t want any more support for families out of work. They also want us to get used to our present levels of 40,000 new virus cases, and nearly 1,000 deaths a day, as they encourage states to reopen. We certainly would not want the economy to look bad for the election, would we?

Wealth for the 1%

Ah, yes, the stock market. How can stocks be doing so well, when workers are worrying about food and rent? Simply put, because of the Federal Reserve (Fed). Back in the 2008 Great Recession, the Fed bailed out the big banks. The reason Republicans supported the CARES Act was that it gave the Fed the ability, for the first time, to bail out nonfinancial corporations as well. The Fed was allowed to make about \$5 trillion worth of almost free loans to our biggest firms, from Exxon to Coca-Cola to Boeing to the major airlines.

Only Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in Congress came out against what she correctly called a corporate bailout. Amazon certainly doesn’t need the

money, but took \$10 billion at 0.4% interest anyway.

This is not “stimulus;” it’s a gift to corporations to pay dividends and buy their own stock back to pump up stock prices for the 1% who own 52% of it. This is predatory financial corporate capitalism – that money is no more going to real investment in capital or equipment than the windfall they got from Trump’s tax cut a couple years ago.

In any rational system, those firms would have had to keep or create good jobs, invest in climate solutions, stop moving jobs and profits overseas, or stop avoiding taxation. Or the government could take ownership positions in fossil fuel companies in order to wind them down. But no, the Fed mainly keeps the stock market humming.

Do we have to talk about GDP?

GDP is a measure of what this economy values: total output or total incomes. What isn’t measured is how many friends or relatives have gotten COVID-19, whether your city is underwater from storms, your air is unbreathable because of wildfires, or your sons and daughters are being killed by the police.

GDP does measure a lot of essential goods, and it does measure overall incomes. But it pays no attention to distribution of the incomes created. GDP and incomes fell at a Depression rate last quarter, and this mainly hurt low-income families whose insecurity has already been rising since the early 1980’s. A Fed survey reported that 40% of families cannot manage an unexpected \$400 expense without resorting to credit cards or payday lenders.

Inequality is not news. A recent study, though, gives us some helpful numbers. If the income distribution had stayed as it was in 1975, a worker today making \$33,000 a year would be



Michael Righi

making \$61,000. Since 1975 about \$50 trillion, yes trillion, has been redistributed to the wealthy because of economic policies.

Back to next month. Trump will be bleating about the “great GDP numbers,” since they will show that the economy has bounced back a bit. They will still be well below 2019 levels. They will mask the underlying rot in the economy, the national misery most of us are feeling.

So, yes, we need to get rid of the liar-in-chief. But that does not solve the underlying crisis. We cannot go back to business as usual. We have to break some of the links that the system imposes. A basic income for everyone should not have to depend on workers begging Walmart or Amazon for a job. Goods such as health care, housing, and education need to be available for everyone, not dependent on whether some bank or insurance company or developer can make a profit from it.

A “just recovery” means that the 1% bear the brunt of this crisis, and those at the bottom bear none. The Right has power, but they are discredited. Corporate Democrats are out of ideas. We have the ideas and the energy.

Michael Righi is a retired economics professor and a member of PSARA.

2020 Election v. Federal Judicial System

By Burton Weston

I read the article titled "The Trump Attack" by Robby Stern in the September issue of the *Advocate* and agreed completely. I concur with his call to get out the vote. The result of 2020 election will have major consequences including an impact on the Federal Judicial System.

For the last four years the Supreme Court has been comprised of five conservative and four liberal justices. There are many issues where the justices find agreement. Since 2000 the most frequent ruling has been a unanimous 9 to 0. In cases concerning issues which defined the differences between the political parties, rulings are decided along ideological lines, that is, 5 to 4 conservative. There are exceptions. For example, in the civil rights case regarding same sex marriage, a similarly constituted 5 to 4 court struck down bans on same-sex marriages when Justice Kennedy, a President Reagan nominee, joined the four liberal justices as a swing vote.

Justice Roberts is the most likely conservative to establish swing vote coalitions. He has done so several times in some controversial cases.

Now that Justice Ginsburg's seat has become vacant, the President will have an opportunity to nominate a Supreme Court Justice.

President Trump will nominate a young conservative judge, and he wants his nominee confirmed before the election or during the lame duck session if he loses. Rulings on cases decided along ideological lines would be 6 to 3 and it would take two conservative justices to join the remaining liberal justices to form a swing vote.

Circuit Courts are responsible for reviewing appeals of decisions from trial-level courts. Circuit Courts are considered to be possibly the most influential component in the Federal System

since they might decide as many as 35,000 cases a year. In the last 13 years, the Supreme Court has heard an average of 77 cases per year. Each year the Supreme Court receives requests for review of Circuit and State Court decisions. Those cases the Supreme Court refuses to hear stand with no further review. The Supreme Court serves as the final arbiter for about 77 cases a year. Circuit Courts serve as the final arbiter for upwards of 30,000 cases in that same year. Supreme Court justice Elena Kagan has said she believes the Circuit Courts are the most influential mechanism for setting policy.

Judges for Circuit Courts are nominated and confirmed using the same processes used for Supreme Court Justices, and they also have lifetime tenures. Presidents routinely have double-digit opportunities to nominate judges for Circuit Courts. Each of the last three presidents has averaged placing 57 judges, which represents almost one-third of all judges, during their term. Such a large influx of judges changes the conservative/liberal ideology of the entire system to be in sync with that President's ideology.

When a vacancy occurs on the Supreme Court, the confirmation process receives extensive media coverage, which provides the public with general knowledge and encourages discussion and input. The same process for Circuit Court vacancies occurs with little or no media coverage. Cases heard by the Supreme Court also receive extensive media review, while cases heard by Circuit Courts occur with little or no media coverage. Circuit Court decisions occur with little or no public knowledge, discussion, or input.

If President Trump is reelected, he will fill Circuit Court vacancies with conservative judges, increasing the conservative ideology. His nomination

of a Supreme Court justice will increase the court's conservative ideology which would deter swing vote coalitions. The Supreme Court would have little motivation to hear appeals from the Circuit Courts since it would be ideologically in tune with the Circuit Courts. His policy of nominating younger judges would leave a long-term legacy which will assure this conservative ideology in the Supreme and Circuit Court Systems for many years into the future.

If Candidate Biden is elected he will fill Circuit Court vacancies with moderate to liberal judges increasing the liberal ideology. This would enhance the possibility of appeals to the Supreme Court where media coverage would encourage public knowledge, discussion, and input. If Trump is unsuccessful in getting his nominee confirmed, Candidate Biden will have the opportunity to nominate a replacement for one of the conservative Supreme Court Justices that would change the Court's ideology from 5 to 4 conservative to 5 to 4 liberal.

If Trump is unsuccessful, the result of the 2020 election could change the Supreme Court's present 5 to 3 conservative majority to 5 to 4 conservative majority. Since presidents have the opportunity to replace one-third of all the judges in the Circuit Court System, that system's conservative/liberal ideology could be changed.

The election results will have a profound impact on the Federal Judicial System and its decisions on conservative/liberal issues for many years into the future. Of immediate concern is court cases involving access to health care.

Burton Weston is President of AFT-WA Retiree Chapter and a member of PSARA.

The THRIVE Act

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direct economic development on their ancestral lands.

5. Combat Environmental Injustices and Ensure Healthy Lives: Black, brown, and Indigenous communities have disproportionately suffered from industrial pollution and climate change. These front-line communities have suffered the adverse health impacts of polluted air, water, and land at rates significantly higher than white communities – these disparities continue to be exposed in higher rates of COVID-19 illness and deaths.

6. Avert Climate and Environmental Catastrophe: Invest in a clean, renewable energy economy at a scale which would prevent the planet warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

7. Ensure Fairness for Working People and Communities: Create a just, equitable, and sustainable transition away from fossil fuels where no worker or community is left behind.

8. Reinvest in the Public Sector and establish Public Institutions to get the Job Done: Decades of attack on our social safety net has left Americans vulnerable and unprotected. We have an opportunity to build the common good to ensure that food security, housing, health care, education, transportation, vital services, etc. are human rights and not commodities.

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

"The law, in its majestic equality, forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."

Anatole France

Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

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been burned out of their homes and dozens of people are missing. I looked at other people driving along the Interstate and wondered if they thought they were just leading their normal lives and going on vacation. And wasn't that what we thought we were doing?

About 30 miles south of Eugene, we turned onto state Route 38 and headed west to the coast -- beautiful stretch along the Umpqua and Elk Rivers with picturesque towns and beautiful forests. The air was still smokey but clearer. But then our views were cruelly disrupted by another disaster -- way too many "Trump" signs. One is too many, but there were several out in this corner of southern Oregon. The incongruity made me scream -- the very land is on fire and they love the guy who works to make it even worse and says climate change is a hoax.

We made it to Gold Beach. It was dark, smokey, red skies, cold, no sign of the sun through the murk; It felt like dusk all day long. My sister did not get here on Hw101 because it was closed at Willets, California. She had to take a long detour and arrived at 4 a.m. the next day.

We cut short our time in southern Oregon and headed home up Highway 101. It had been closed at Lincoln City because of the Echo Mountain fire along state Highway 18 but was now open. Lincoln City was a ghost town as people had been forced to evacuate or were hunkered down inside to escape the smoke.

Now, as I sit here back in Seattle and wonder where my next breath is coming from, I know that we really don't have a choice. We have to wrest power from the fossil fuel "oiligarchs" who are willing to let the country burn and people roast if that is what keeps their profits up. Time to wake up and smell the smoke!

Bobby Righi is Co-Chair of PSARA's Climate and Environmental Justice Committee and a member of PSARA's Executive Board.

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PSARA Education Fund

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- Basic contribution: \$20
- Limited income/living lightly: \$15 or whatever you can afford
- Supporting: \$50 New contributor
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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 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday, October 1.

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

After the 2020 Election: Demands for a Better Society: Noon, Tuesday, October

6. Webinar with Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Washington State Labor Council President Larry Brown, and Social Security Works Executive Director Alex Lawson. Details on Page 1.

West Seattle Hot Topics for Seniors & Senior Wannabes: Noon – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, October 7.

PSARA Southend Committee: 1:00 – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, October 8.

PSARA Fundraising Committee: 11:00 a.m. - Noon, Monday, October 12.

PSARA Education Committee: 2 p.m., Tuesday, October 13.

PSARA Race and Gender Equity Committee: 11 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Thursday, October 15.

PSARA Executive Board: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, October 15.

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