

connections

PRICELESS

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SAVE THE DATE

SAT, JULY 17
89.5 RADIO MEETING
P&J CENTER, STOCKTON (P1)

SAT, JUL 30—AUG 1
ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE
TRAINING (P19)



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Let's not write our future in oil

Trip Van Noppen

"The tragedy unfolding on our coast is the most painful and powerful reminder yet that the time to embrace a clean energy future is now."

President Obama's words, delivered from the Oval Office, read like a clear call for national unity as we gather strength to turn the corner to a new, better America. But at this point, they are only words. What we need is action.

Americans are clamoring for it: 71 percent think President Obama and Congress should make the development of clean energy sources a high priority.

Based on his speech—"The one approach I will not accept is inaction"—the president appears to be among those numbers. But ultimately, Obama needs to follow his own decree.

The president must outline in far greater detail the clean energy future he says we must embrace, and then he needs to demand that Congress implement. Saying we need that future "even if we're unsure exactly what that looks like" and "even if we don't yet know precisely how we're going to get there" is merely mincing words.

In the clean energy future, we will turn to renewable energy technologies designed and produced by American labor to satisfy our energy needs, and leave behind dirty and dangerous-to-produce fossil fuels like oil and coal. We get there by organizing a national effort to combat global climate change, codified by a strong climate and energy bill, and on the order of the greatest of historical American initiatives.

It's past time to overcome the special interests and representatives of the status quo who tell us that clean energy will bankrupt the nation. Energy

security, economic prosperity and environmental safety aren't the sacrifices of a clean energy future. They are the rewards.

What Americans definitely don't want is more catastrophic side effects of our addiction to fossil fuels: oil and coal ash spills, deadly mine explosions, decapitated mountains, poisoned air and water, and unchecked global warming. If President Obama paints a clear vision of how a clean energy future will be markedly different from this dirty present and how we can achieve it, the line to sign-up will be very long indeed.

Every day of delay further exposes us to the costs of our fossil fuel addiction. Gulf residents were conscripted against their will into a battle against an out-of-control spill that is still invading our coasts, docking our fishing boats, and coating our wildlife in crude oil. Americans, and residents of the Gulf coast especially, have every right to be infuriated with BP's egregious disregard for safety and the government's asleep-at-the-wheel approach to regulation.

BP's recently established \$20 billion fund will aid the Gulf of Mexico as it rebuilds, but no presidential commission and no renewed interest in regulation can undo what has happened there, the effects of which will be felt for many years to come. And even though the president promised that he and his administration will work "to make sure that a catastrophe like [the Gulf oil spill] never happens again," minutes later he admitted that "no matter how much we improve our regulation of the industry, drilling for oil these days entails greater risk."

Dwindling reserves of crude oil are forcing the oil industry into mile-deep waters in the

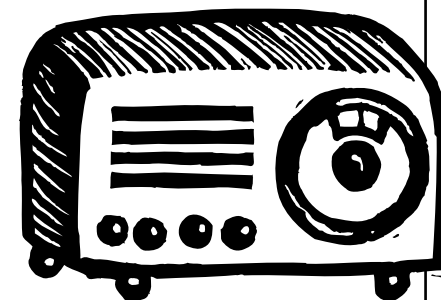
(continued on page 11)

89.5, VCR

Radio moves forward

Bruce Giudici

The faces at the table change, but the energy is constant. The month of June saw two meetings marking the emerging identity of 89.5, Valley Community Radio.



The first of two meetings brought activists from the foothills, working to establish their own stations. Catherine Lambie, Sean Krelitich and Laurel Lekteig shared their research into currently-operating stations, such as KVMR in Grass Valley, as well as their work in community organizing in Calaveras County's town of West Point, where the Blue Mountain Coalition serves as the sponsoring organization.

Working in developing a network of radio stations in Venezuela, Krelitich spoke of radio providing a voice to the voiceless, used as a platform for solution-oriented debate. Radio Bilingue, out of Fresno, was mentioned as an example of such a community-based radio. Connections with technical experts Common Frequency and Prometheus Radio will be furthered, as a decision on the \$45,000 matching grant is anticipated as early as September. A RadioFest will be held at the Peace & Justice Center in mid-October to present a film by Krelitich on the Venezuelan experience and to share the type of music and information the new station will provide.

A follow-up meeting with radio guru Todd Ulrich underlined the need to secure the transmitter site in the hills above Tracy, as well as raising funds for the part of the equipment not covered by the matching grant. He underlined the importance of recruiting individuals who have experience with operating a radio station, sharing his experience with stations that lost their collective identity amidst the needs of individual radio personalities. Asked what other stations are pending action in California, Ulrich listed potential radio stations in Eureka, Redding (2), Quincy, Susanville, Reno, Chico, Sonoma County, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, Newman, Amador County, West Point, Modesto, Atwater, Bakersfield, Tulare/Hanford/Visalia, Lancaster, San Diego County and Catalina Island.

Such a network of progressive stations, loosely coordinated, sharing content, is a goal well worth pursuing. Meetings continue, the station develops.

ACTION: Come to the next coordinating meeting: Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, July 17, 9 am.

If progressives were in charge...

Bruce Giudici

So, why hasn't the price of oil—and gasoline—skyrocketed since the oil blowout in the Gulf? Can it be that the amount of United States-produced oil is so tiny, that the loss of even its entire off-shore drilling capability has no effect on world supply? If so, what is behind the push for drilling every last pocket of suspected oil in this country? Hint: follow the money.

Being constantly reminded that BP has no experience with such an "accident," that they're in uncharted waters, as if this is a viable excuse, is nauseating. Companies that produce \$17 billion in 2009 profits, \$6 billion in 2010 first quarterly profits (this is what is left after paying huge salaries, royalties, and contracting costs) and have invested nothing towards a disaster plan must be punished severely. If this doesn't happen, expect more of these "accidents" in the future.

I think what is most interesting is the spin of the media, marginalizing voices of the left who—if the truth be told—generally get it right. Look at the general lay of the issues that most trouble us today—and how

the world might be different with some progressive decision making. For ease of reading—and for lack of space—let's start with the last 10 years, because going back to every government the US has undermined, every environmental law violated, and every human rights law broken would take volumes.

If progressives were in charge, would we be so dependent upon oil—be occupying Saudi Arabia—be elevating AlQueda—be ignoring reports on Clinton's desk warning of terrorist attack—be reacting to 9/11 with a war (rather than a police) response—be invading Iraq for no reason other than that it was possible—be continuing the war in Afghanistan when \$4 billion would buy the entire poppy crop?...

Would we be in bed with oil companies in raping our public lands—be working with BP in containing the gusher (BP most concerned with producing oil, the government with keeping the environment whole)—be supplying oil companies with the most expensive military on earth to protect their product, their profits while destroying our economy, nation and planet?...

What would have been the

progressive response to these disasters: self-serving lies of those who make millions from the profit-making side—or the voices of people making modest incomes more concerned with the general welfare of median-income people and our collective environment? (trick question).

Most annoying is that, when pitting left vs. right, the greed/profit motivation of the latter is never mentioned—as if the success of the profit-makers (generating a self-interested jackpot) is as beneficial to the general welfare as the preservation of our common environment. Sure, we like to think that both sides can co-exist—that the profit of individuals will never crowd out the commons we rely on to survive. If you believe that, ask folks on the coastlines of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. They all made their beds with big oil—and now are forced to sleep in it, just like any other third-world country. Crowded out. Ecuador and Alaska yesterday, the Gulf today, it's in our hands where we go tomorrow.

Like watching a horse in front of water—a dying-of-thirst horse—and seeing it not drink, here we are. What will it take,

Bruce Giudici, editor



fellow citizens? It's really quite simple, for the world's richest economy ever.

Problem: Oil wells a gushing, coal mines a crashing, clean air a memory...Answer: Green energy, Manhattan project style.

Problem: Wall Street earns record profits, investment bankers are taxed less than secretaries, there's no money for anything... Answer: Financial transactions tax, enacted retro to January.

Problem: Military spending doubles in a decade, homeland security and veterans spending up up up...Answer: Cut it now, invest in people and our environment.

Problem: California can't pass a budget...Answer: Majority vote wins.

But don't look for these solutions today...they'll roll out in 20 years, surprising all. Foresight turns out to be 20/20, just not now. Keep your eyes open—& happy summer.

Feedback

We've seen the past—we're not going back

As the old saying goes: the more things change, the more things stay the same. This certainly holds true for our nation in regards to progressing towards equality. When Barack Obama was elected as the first Black President of the United States in 2008, many tried, erroneously, to proclaim it the beginning of a post racial

society. They couldn't have been more wrong. I asked how much progress had been made when, although Obama was President, young Black men like Oscar Grant were still getting shot in the back while in handcuffs, by police, in public? Has "progress" been made since the Civil Rights movement, which really was an extension for equal rights fought for since our country's early history? I think one can make the argument that there has been some progress. Now instead of Mexicans and Blacks being segregated in parks, movie theatres, and schools, from whites, now they get to be segregated in prisons.

To say that we live in a post-racial society, where everyone is equal and has the opportunity to pull themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps, is a fallacy. Not only that, but it's a red herring to distract from the real issues

of inequality. I don't want my ethnic heritage to be denied or ignored—it's not what was being asked for: the point is not being held back as a result of it.

There are still serious issues regarding not only race but economic class, that need to be addressed and rectified in this great work-in-progress that is our nation. Perhaps as a result of the declining public education system (which I fear is by design as a way of the Republicans keeping the populus ignorant enough to support and vote for them against their own best interest) that we have lost sight of history and therefore are doomed to repeat it. From the blatantly racist laws of Arizona regarding racial profiling and the attack on ethnic studies, to the scapegoating of illegal immigrants in Californian politics, the Tea bagger movement, the attempt of Texas education officials to

cancel the truth in textbooks about slavery and civil rights, to the expansion of modern day slavery: prisons. All of the gains fought and paid for with lives to move this nation towards the principles it was founded on, are now under attack with a desperate zeal.

The more things are progressing, the more they are being attacked as an attempt to go back in time, an attempt to be blind to the truth that has been exposed through the struggle and sacrifice by those who sought to lead our nation towards the rhetoric it was founded upon. So it becomes necessary for us as a nation who truly value the vision of what this country is supposed to be, to fight now as before, perhaps even more, to make those dreams embedded in the conscience of our nation a reality. I've seen the past and I am not going back.

Moteczuma Sanchez

(Feedback continued p. 16)

Connections

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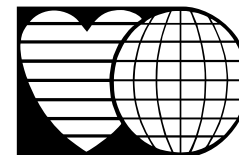
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Community Calendar: vacant

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"The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth's resources are shared responsibly for the well-being of all her inhabitants and all future generations."

Start planning for 10/10/10

October is coming up fast and you don't want to miss the Global Work Party.

On October 10, 2010, people all over the world will get to work to do something for the earth. Sponsored by 350.org and the 10:10 Campaign, the Global Work Day will demonstrate that we don't have to wait for our leaders, we can get to work right away to stop climate change. This will also help put pressure on our political leaders in time for the next big UN conference on climate change in Mexico in December.

It doesn't have to be a big complicated project. Join with a few friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates... When you've decided on a project, post it at 350.org to let the world know what you're doing. A few ideas:

#1 Organize a Tree Planting

Planting trees is fun, friendly, and a great way to engage the community. And each one you plant will be a little carbon-sequestering machine for years to come. Try to shoot for planting 350 trees or more in one day!

#2 Go Solar

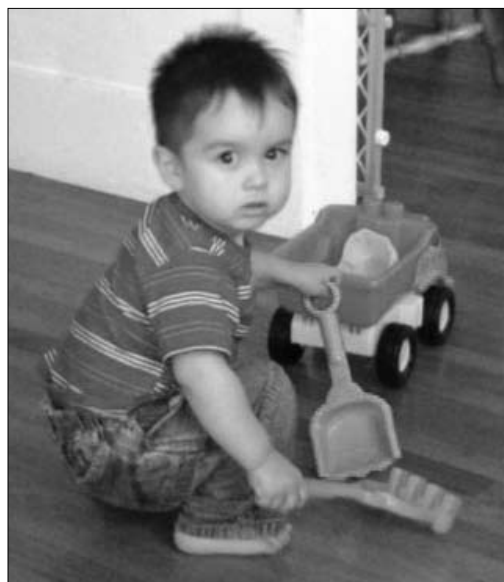
Working on a solar project is a great way to demonstrate the clean energy future right in your community. Whether its installing a solar panel on a local school, building a solar cooker for your community, or putting a solar hot water heater on your house—it is a great way to work with the planet, not against it.

#3 Work on a Community Garden or Organic Farm

To get to 350, we'll need to rethink the way we produce food on the planet—moving away from industrial agriculture powered by fossil fuels and towards small-scale, local, organic farming. Think about using your work party as a day to model this new system—maybe you can break ground on a new community garden. Or simply help out harvesting at a local farm. For more info, visit 350.org/foodandfarm

#4 Go For a Ride:

Biking is a great way to get out and be visible in your community. It also demonstrate the need for



Get ready to do some work on the ground to stop climate change with the Global Work Party on October 10, 2010. Start planning today.

improved infrastructure for our alternative modes of transportation. Think about setting up a bike repair workshop, or painting bike lanes in your community. Maybe an awareness ride of 350 miles (or kilometers) if you're feeling a bit more ambitious?

#5 Harness the Wind

A local wind project can show that you're serious about building the clean energy economy. Putting up a turbine is a big project though, so you'll want to start planning this one early...

#6 Get Efficient:

Energy efficiency is often considered "low hanging fruit" when it comes to reducing carbon emissions. It's often easier and cheaper than installing renewable energy, so why not start here? Whether it's installing more efficient LED or CFL lightbulbs in your MPs office, insulating your basement, weatherizing your church or temple, or doing an energy audit on your school, efficiency can help get us on the path to 350 as soon as humanly possible. (This is also likely one of the easiest ways to reduce emissions really fast—like 10% in 2010 as our friends at the 10:10 campaign are helping folks do).

#7 Start a Transition Town

"The Transition Towns" project is designed to equip communities for the dual challenges of climate change and peak oil. By raising awareness of sustainable living

and building local resilience in the near future, making your community a "transition town" can provide a solid framework for sustained action at the local level. There is even a whole existing network of communities working as Transition towns that you can connect with to learn what they are doing: <http://www.transitiontowns.org>.

#8 Faith Work

Connections between the world's diverse religions and

the issue of global warming are numerous and strike a strong moral chord. This is a great way to gather people together who already have a community in which they discuss the big questions—now is the chance to add global warming to the list and harness the network to start working on the solutions.

#9 Trash Clean Up

Sadly, some of our iconic places aren't as pristine as we'd like. Why not leave the place better than you found it? By recycling the garbage you find, you can ensure that the embedded energy in the products gets reused—instead of decomposing over the years and sending a steady stream of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

#10 Join the 10:10 Campaign

Our friends at 10:10 Global are working an ambitious project: uniting different sectors of society behind the simple idea that by working together we can achieve a 10% cut in carbon emissions in a single year, starting in 2010. Their focus is on immediate, practical action—350.org's focus is on uniting local actions for systemic change on a global level. 350.org and 10:10 are working hand in hand in 2010, and we couldn't be happier about the partnership—if you want to get plugged into the 10:10 Global Campaign, sign up at <http://www.1010global.org/>.

10:10 Diary for June

Laurie Litman

Dual-paned windows increase energy efficiency by insulating your house from heat and cold and also reduce noise and dust. Our family has talked about upgrading our windows for years. But vinyl isn't environmentally friendly, new wood windows are expensive, and the old windows would just go into the landfill so it's been hard to decide to do it. Happily, we just learned about a company that turns old wooden windows into dual-paned, energy-efficient windows while retaining their charm. Go to <http://www.artisansash.com/> for more information. I'll have more to say when we've upgraded our windows in a month or two.

It's summertime, the community

garden is thriving, and we find new giant squashes hiding in our plot just about every day. Most of the time they're invisible until suddenly they're overripe.

Making plans for a vacation trip to Portland...should we go by train or car? The train (along with our bicycles) is our preferred 10:10 solution. Portland is easy since it's so transit friendly, but actually leaving the car behind leaves us feeling a little vulnerable. Will report next month.

Good news!

The 10:10 Campaign just kicked off in Washington State—the first in the U.S. More at www.1010global.org/us



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Sen. Dianne Feinstein, One Post Street, Ste 2450, San Francisco, CA 94104. 415-249-0707; 331 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3841, senator@feinstein.senate.gov

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Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-445-2841

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A Gulf Restoration Plan

Rick Steiner

One of the only two new proposals in the President's Oval Office address was to establish a Gulf Coast Restoration Plan. This is appropriate and welcome news. In addition to the \$20 billion fund to cover economic claims of private parties, I would propose that there be a comparable fund established to pay for environmental restoration and recovery. Certainly, both people and the Gulf coast environment deserve prompt, comprehensive attention here.

As to the question of how to restore the Gulf ecosystems injured by the BP spill, we must first accept the fact that there is little that can be done to directly restore the environmental damage caused by large marine oil spills. We just cannot fix a broken ecosystem like we can a broken car engine. To paraphrase the old nursery rhyme:

All the kings' horses and all the kings' men can't put the Gulf of Mexico back together again.

But what we can, and must do, is everything humanly possible to give the Gulf of Mexico and its coastal ecosystems the best chance possible to recover. That must be the singular objective of the Gulf Restoration program.

The restoration program for the Gulf spill should focus on indirect restoration. That is, projects that might be environmentally beneficial to the Gulf coastal ecosystems should be identified and funded.

My initial list for the Gulf Restoration Plan is as follows:

1. Let the River Run—restore the periodic flood flow of the Mississippi river, so that sediment can flow down-river and begin rebuilding the Delta. The Mississippi Delta has been shrinking for over 100 years, due primarily to flood control up river, as well as sea level rise and more intense and frequent hurricanes. This shrinking / sinking delta has added risk from hurricane storm surge, such as we saw tragically in Hurricane Katrina. Reversing this trend is an essential component of any environmental and economic Restoration plan for the region. This will take cooperation with states and cities up-river, but we

all have to pitch in to save the Mississippi Delta.

2. Eliminate the Dead Zone—reduce the input of nutrients down the river, from the misuse / overuse of agricultural fertilizers in the Mississippi drainage. This high nutrient load flows into the Gulf of Mexico each spring, causes enormous blooms of phytoplankton, which respire oxygen at night and also die and decay and use oxygen from the water, and causes a huge anoxic dead zone along the coast each summer. This can and must be eliminated.

3. Reduce coastal degradation—better manage, reduce, or eliminate the amount of coastal channelization, wetlands loss, road building, etc.

4. Halt overfishing—to the extent that some fish populations had been overharvested in the past, harvest levels of these populations should be minimized for a time—a conservation moratorium for stock recovery. Harvests should be resumed only when the population, and the marine ecosystem, can be sustained. In particular, principles of ecosystem management must be front-and-center of any Gulf Restoration program, to dial harvests down enough to allow for needs of other predators in the ecosystem.

5. Establish additional protected areas—both marine and coastal—to reduce disturbance and degradation of coastal fish and wildlife populations.

6. Build artificial seabird nesting islands in inshore areas—as the coastal nesting islands have dramatically eroded over the past several decades—due to reduced sediment flow down-river, sea level rise, and more frequent and intense hurricanes—the birds are now forced to nest on smaller and smaller remnants of their original nesting island habitat. In addition, the oil has severely damaged the perimeter of many of these nesting islands. Many of the plants that provide stability to the island substrate will die due to direct oiling, and thus the spill will contribute to the acceleration of erosional processes that will eventually eliminate these small islands altogether. And when the first hurricane surge occurs across these tiny islands, the oil will cover

the entire island, and thus more vegetative loss will occur. Using Gulf Coast Restoration Fund to place rip-rap and fill to form new islands or add to existing ones would greatly enhance breeding habitat for the thousands of birds in the region.

7. Prevent other oil spills—this is an obvious one, but needs to be mentioned. If the Gulf can recover from one Deepwater Horizon disaster, and that is a big if, it almost certainly can't from another on top of this one.

Policy actions

If the Obama administration and the nation wish to lift their moratorium on deepwater drilling, which seems apparent, then they should only do so if they can assure the public that the operations are as safe as humanly possible. This will require Best Available Technology in all aspects of the drilling, including the newly developed Blowout Preventers with double shear-rams, acoustic triggers, and redundant sealing systems.

As well, the government should require that exploratory drilling in extreme or sensitive environments also include a companion emergency relief well be drilled along side. If the Deepwater Horizon had a companion relief well while they were drilling the Macondo well, then the relief well could have killed the failed well in a matter of weeks (perhaps by the end of April), not the many months we are now suffering. Senator Lautenberg has just introduced legislation into the U.S. Senate that would require precisely that, and it is a welcome and necessary step in reducing risk of these high-pressure, deepwater operations.

And of course, we are still waiting for the new push for clean, efficient, low-carbon, sustainable energy due to the recognition of the costs of oil, seen so clearly in the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Rick Steiner is a marine conservation biologist from Anchorage who has been advising in the Gulf. Follow his discussions at <http://firedoglake.com/author/ricksteiner/>

Source: abridged from <http://firedoglake.com/2010/06/21/the-largest-accidental-oil-spill-in-history-lessons-of-bps-deepwater-horizon-disaster-day-60/>

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Key health reform bills pass in Sacramento

Early June, key legislation to implement and improve health reform passed floor votes in the California Assembly and Senate. The measures, largely supported by consumer advocates including Health Access California, would provide new benefits and patient protections to Californians.

In combination with federal health reform, these bills would provide even stronger oversight and accountability on the insurance industry, empowering consumers to make more informed choices about their health care, allowing for apples-to-apples comparisons, and helping to ensure that basic benefits are provided. Among the bills that passed included:

- AB1602 (Perez) and SB900 (Alquist/Steinberg) to implement health reform and set up a health insurance exchange;
- SB890 (Alquist/Steinberg) to reform the insurance market, standardizing benefits and providing a range of consumer protections;
- AB2244 (Feuer) to allow access to coverage and limit health insurance premiums for children with pre-existing conditions; and
- AB1600 (Beall) to provide for mental health parity in health coverage

In some cases, the federal law requires states to act; other bills would implement some aspects of health reform early, and in other cases would build on federal health reform but go further. The bills are now halfway through the legislative process, having passed one of the two legislative houses. They next go to be heard in the Health Committee of the second legislative bod.

Health exchanges move forward

In floor votes, two flagship bills, AB1602 (Perez) and SB900 (Alquist/Steinberg), both authored by legislative leadership, passed the Assembly and Senate, respectively. Both contain multiple elements of implementing health reform, including the central task of creating a new exchange that would make it easier for consumers to get health insurance. By 2014, many families

would get subsidies through the exchange. Under these bills, a new exchange could also use its purchasing power to negotiate for the best price and value.

Consumer advocates suggest that even before the subsidies kick in, such a new purchasing pool can dramatically improve the way Californians buy coverage as individuals and small businesses, given the problems that individual consumers face now at the mercy of the big insurers, without any purchasing power, in a complex and confusing marketplace.

Making sense of health care

SB890 (Alquist/Steinberg) passed the Senate. It standardizes and simplifies the individual insurance market, so that consumers can understand their coverage choices, make apples-to-apples comparisons, and have the security that coverage does not have hidden loopholes, or lifetime and/or annual caps on coverage. Consistent with federal reform, the bill sets standards for basic health care services for products at both the Department of Insurance as well as the Department of Managed Health Care products. The bill is broadly supported by consumer, doctor, hospital and other health stakeholders, with different insurers in both support and opposition.

The legislation would help Californians who now find buying coverage complex and confusing, with consumers having little ability to know what a plan covers and doesn't. The bill implements many of health reform's consumer protections early, from a strong medical loss ratio so premium dollars go to patient care rather than administration and profit, to basic benefit standards, including maternity coverage. And by standardizing the benefits in the insurance market, consumers can make real apples-to-apples comparisons, forcing insurers to compete on price and quality rather

than on avoiding sick people.

Covering kids with pre-existing conditions

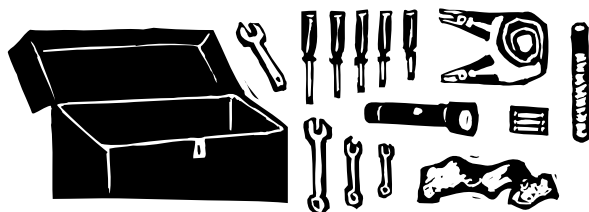
AB2244 (Feuer) also passed the Assembly. It requires that children under 19 are able to get coverage on a "guaranteed issue" basis, regardless of pre-existing conditions, and that any differences for the premiums because of health status are limited and eventually phased out. Starting this year, federal reform prohibits insurers from denying coverage to children with pre-existing conditions. (A policy of "guaranteed issue" for adults doesn't kick in until 2014 along with the requirement for individuals to have coverage and corresponding affordability subsidies.) Supporters, including sponsor Health Access California, say that the bill will limit how much insurers can charge children with pre-existing conditions, and provide a smoother glide path for our market's transition in California to health reform.

Mental health parity

AB1600 (Beall) passed the Assembly. The bill would require most health plans to provide coverage for the diagnoses and medically necessary treatment of a mental illness. Federal reform includes mental health parity, but supporters suggest early adoption of these basic benefit standards would not just provide a more graceful transition to health reform, but more quickly prevent discrimination between physical versus mental health issues, and also prevent further cost-shifting of these treatments from private insurers onto public programs.

ACTION: A broad list of pending legislation to "implement and improve" health reform is available on the Health Access California website. Contact your legislator to support health care reform implementation.

Source: Health Access Update 6/20/10
<http://www.health-access.org>



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Mirror, Mirror on the Wall 2010

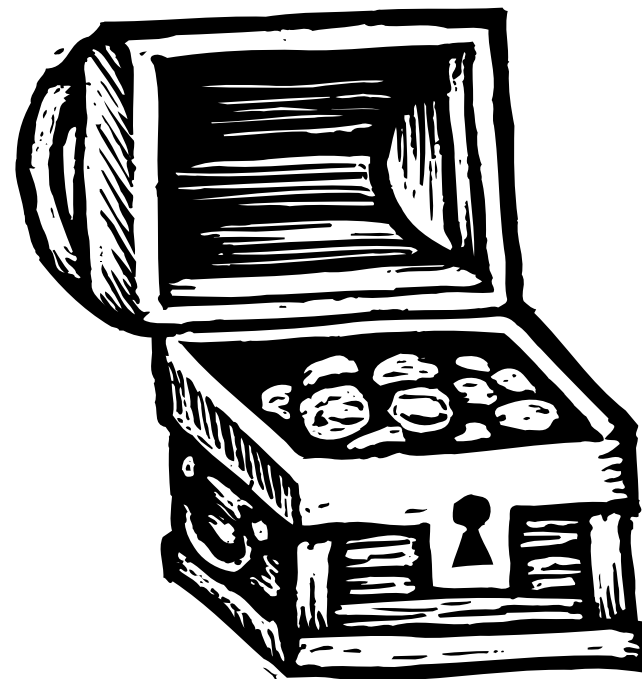
U.S. health care vs. the world

Despite having the most costly health system in the world, the United States consistently underperforms on most dimensions of performance, relative to other countries. The report "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" — an update to three earlier editions — includes data from seven countries and incorporates patients' and physicians' survey results on care experiences and ratings on dimensions of care.

Compared with six other nations — Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom — the U.S. health care system ranks last or next-to-last on five dimensions of a high performance health system: quality, access, efficiency, equity, and healthy lives. Newly enacted health reform legislation in the U.S. will start to address these problems by extending coverage to those without and helping to close gaps in coverage — leading to improved disease management, care coordination, and better outcomes over time.

The U.S. health system is the most expensive in the world, but comparative analyses consistently show the United States underperforms relative to other countries on most dimensions of performance. This report, which includes information from the most recent three Commonwealth Fund surveys of patients and primary care physicians about medical practices and views of their countries' health systems (2007–2009), confirms findings discussed in previous editions of "Mirror, Mirror". It also includes information on health care outcomes that were featured in the most recent (2008) U.S. health system scorecard issued by the Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health System.

Among the seven nations studied — Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States — the U.S. ranks last overall, as it did in the 2007, 2006, and 2004 editions of "Mirror, Mirror". Most troubling,



the U.S. fails to achieve better health outcomes than the other countries, and as shown in the earlier editions, the U.S. is last on dimensions of access, patient safety, coordination, efficiency, and equity. The Netherlands ranks first, followed closely by the U.K. and Australia.

The most notable way the U.S. differs from other countries is the absence of universal health insurance coverage. Health reform legislation recently signed into law by President Barack Obama should begin to improve the affordability of insurance and access to care when fully implemented in 2014. Other nations ensure the accessibility of care through universal health insurance systems and through better ties between patients and the physician practices that serve as their long-term "medical homes." Without reform, it is not surprising that the U.S. currently underperforms relative to other countries on measures of access to care and equity in health care between populations with above-average and below-average incomes.

Rankings


But even when access and equity measures are not considered, the U.S. ranks behind most of the other countries on most measures. With the inclusion of primary

care physician survey data in the analysis, it is apparent that the U.S. is lagging in adoption of national policies that promote primary care, quality improvement, and information technology. Health reform legislation addresses these deficiencies; for instance, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act signed by President Obama in February 2009 included approximately \$19 billion to expand the use of health information technology. The Patient Protection and Affordable

Care Act of 2010 also will work toward realigning providers' financial incentives, encouraging more efficient organization and delivery of health care, and investing in preventive and population health.

For all countries, responses indicate room for improvement. Yet, the other six countries spend considerably less on health care per person and as a percent of gross domestic product than does the United States. These findings indicate that, from the perspectives of both physicians and patients, the U.S. health care system could do much better in achieving value for the nation's substantial investment in health.

Source: *The Commonwealth Fund* release 6/23/10 1150 17th Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, D.C., 20036; www.cmwf.org



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Losing hearts and minds

Charles Withuhn

A quick review of the Democracy Now headlines over the last three months reveals the apparent, and yet startling, trend towards the murders of many more civilians by US or US-backed troops being confirmed. Looking at headlines over the last three months I found these examples:

4/13/10

As many as five Afghan civilians have been killed and another eighteen wounded in a US attack in Afghanistan. Witnesses say US forces opened fire on a passenger bus near the Afghan city of Kandahar earlier today. The bus driver and a passenger told the New York Times a US convoy opened fire just as the bus began pulling over to the side of the road to allow another military convoy to pass. The bus was said to be full of civilian passengers when US troops opened fire.

4/12/10

Journalists from the investigative team in Iceland that released the now-infamous US military video on Wiki Leaks traveled to Baghdad recently to meet with the family members of some of the twelve people killed in the 2007 attack. Ahlam Abdelhussain, the widow of Saleh Mutashar who was killed when the gunship opened fire on a van, asks, "Why was he shot with his children in the car? They did nothing wrong. He was helping

a journalist. What was his crime? What was the crime of our children who are left with no father and no support?

4/6/10

The chilling video footage taken from the US military helicopter shows US forces indiscriminately firing on Iraqis in the New Baghdad neighborhood of the Iraqi capital. The dead included two employees of the Reuters news agency.

4/6/10

US-led forces have admitted for the first time to killing two pregnant Afghan women and a teenage girl during a nighttime raid in eastern Afghanistan on February 12th. One of the women killed was a pregnant mother of ten. Another was a pregnant mother of six. Afghan investigators told the *Times of London* US Special Forces soldiers tried to cover up the killings. US forces reportedly dug the bullets out of their victims bodies, then washed the wounds with alcohol, before lying to their superiors about what happened.

3/24/10

In Indonesia, investigative journalist Allan Nairn is facing possible arrest for exposing that US-backed Indonesian armed forces assassinated a series of civilian activists last year.

2/23/10

Afghanistan, the number of civilian casualties continues to rise. Afghanistan's government

has condemned a NATO air strike on a convoy on Sunday that killed twenty-seven civilians, including four women and a child. NATO commander General Stanley McChrystal went on Afghan television to apologize for the attack.

2/16/10

In Afghanistan, thousands of US and NATO forces have entered the fourth day of a major offensive in Marjah in southern Helmand province. At least nineteen civilians have been killed so far, including six children who died when a missile struck their house on the outskirts of the city.

The most shocking, of course, is the video of the US helicopter gunship, crew's attack on obviously unarmed civilians. And more shocking still is the excuses offered by Secretary of Defense Gates for such abhorrent conduct, instead of a call for justice.

Surely, it is obvious that when we kill innocent civilians, that only recruits more terrorists against us. Truly, our current militaristic foreign policy is really making us less safe, not more. It has become apparent to this writer that the time has come for the Peace Movement to get even more activated. Letter writing campaigns are good. Nonviolent demonstrations are in order. But it is time to rethink our appeal to new members. I am sure that there is a great untapped desire in a majority of people in our community to play a part in a movement for a more peaceful tomorrow. An effective campaign can involve thousands. Let's get involved: at the Stockton Peace and Justice Center!; attend the Stockton peace vigil Thursday 5-6 PM, on Pacific Avenue at the edge of the Delta Campus. As the great Howard Zinn said, Join a peace group; it may be small at first, but that's how great movements get started. Maybe in Stockton we are only talking hundreds, but let us have it as a goal to fill the downtown City Plaza two or three times a year with hundreds of people asking for Peace. What more honorable occupation can you imagine?

Charles Withuhn writes a regular column for Peaceful Action in Chico.



MSM = truth? Check out the alternatives & decide for yourself

If you tap in to some of the alternative media, you will get a very different perspective on events. Especially now, when the mainstream media often acts as a cheerleader for whatever the administration does, it's necessary to go a little further to get your news. An internet connection is helpful.

Firedoglake <http://firedoglake.com>

Daily Kos <http://www.dailykos.com>

Emptywheel <http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/>

Calitics <http://www.calitics.com/>

Eschaton <http://www.eschatonblog.com/>

Huffington Post <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

Hullabaloo <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com>

Talking Points Memo <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com>

TPM Muckraker <http://www.tpmuckraker.com/>

FiveThirtyEight.com <http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/>

Congress Matters <http://www.congressmatters.com>

Think Progress <http://thinkprogress.com>

Down With Tyranny <http://downwithtyranny.blogspot.com/>

Crooks and Liars <http://www.crooksandliars.com>

Media Matters <http://mediamatters.org/>

Common Dreams: <http://www.commondreams.org/>

Truth Out: <http://www.truthout.org/>

Raw Story <http://www.rawstory.com>

Open Left <http://www.openleft.com/>

AlterNet <http://www.alternet.org/>

Independent Media Center <http://www.indymedia.org>

The Nation <http://www.thenation.com/>

Hightower News <http://www.webactive.com/hightower/>

Mother Jones <http://www.motherjones.com/>

In These Times <http://inthesetimes.com/>

The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/latest/>

Corporate Watch <http://www.corpwatch.org/home/PHH.jsp>

KPFA (94.1 FM) provides excellent coverage on many issues. You can listen on the internet at <http://www.kpfa.org>

Democracy Now! on KPFA, 94.1 FM and KVMR, 89.5 FM or on the web at: <http://www.democracynow.org>

We're on the web too!

The Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County (pjnsjc) website has information, calendar, media links, and more. Under construction and growing. Share your ideas on how the website should evolve.

<http://www.pjnsjc.org>

Surely it is obvious that when we kill innocent civilians, it



only recruits more terrorists against us. Truly, our current militaristic foreign policy is

really making us less safe, not more.

Organized labor and immigration

Richard Trumka
AFL-CIO President

Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here with you in the great city of Cleveland. I want to talk to you about the grave economic challenges we face today—and the labor movement's vision for where we need to go.

There is no better place to have a discussion about our economic challenges than Cleveland—where business and labor built the American middle class. Cleveland embodies both the consequences of our failed economic policies of the last three decades—and our hope for a different future.

The economic crisis has hit hard here—116,000 lost jobs in the last decade in Cuyahoga County. Eighty-six thousand home foreclosures last year alone. A self-defeating attempt to address budget shortfalls by attacking school budgets and teachers.

But we can also see a glimpse of a better future in the Lake Erie wind turbine project—with turbines built here in Ohio, in the OneCommunity Project fiber optic network, and in Cleveland's role as a global center of fuel cell development.

We're at a turning point today. The economic course our nation started on in 1980—the effort to have a low-wage, high-consumption society that imports more and more of what it consumes—has hit the wall. We cannot afford to stay this course—of letting the private sector and the financial markets run amok, of outsourcing everything that's not nailed to the floor, and of pushing down workers every chance we get. And last night's vote by Republicans in the United States Senate to block a simple extension of unemployment benefits for the most hard-pressed people without jobs is just the latest shame. At some point, there is nobody left to buy the junk that we import from everywhere but here.

We now face a future of prolonged high unemployment and stagnant or falling wages—unless we do something different.

Today I am going to talk about doing something different.

We need a new national economic strategy for a global economy.

...Did an immigrant move your plant overseas? Did an immigrant take away your pension? Or cut your health care? Did an immigrant destroy American workers' right to organize? Or crash the financial system? Did immigrant workers write the trade laws that have done so much harm?

Immigration

At the heart of our strategy must be a workforce with world class skills and world class rights and trade policies that serve the interests of the American people. But today I also want to talk to you about what may seem like a strange subject—immigration—because it is patently clear that we cannot talk about our national workforce strategy unless we face head-on our own contradictions, hypocrisy and history on immigration.

The truth is that in a dynamic global economy in the 21st century, we simply cannot afford to have millions of hard-working people without legal protections, without meaningful access to higher education, shut off from the high-wage, high-productivity economy. It is just too costly to waste all that talent and strength and drive.

But immigration reform is not just an economic issue. The way we as a nation treat the immigrants among us is about more than economic strategy—it is about who we are as a nation.

I grew up in a small town in Southwestern Pennsylvania, not that far from here. The immigrant path led from the coalmines to Pittsburgh to Cleveland.

And if you look around Cleveland at the ethnic clubs and the churches, you see a city that immigrants built—Hungarians and Poles, Irish and Italians, Serbs and Croats and Jews, as well as African Americans. Cleveland is a city where the traditions of the places we came from are the very foundation of our community.

It was not easy when my family came to this country. My parents fled poverty and war from different corners of Europe. When I was a kid, there was an ugly name for every one of us in all twelve languages spoken in Nemaocolin, PA—wop and hunkie and polack and kike. We were the last hired and first fired, the people who did the hardest and most dangerous work, the people whose pay got shorted because we didn't know the language and were afraid to complain.

We got to the mines and the mills, and the people already there said we were taking their jobs, ruining their country. Yet in the end the immigrants of my parents' and grandparents' generation prevailed, and built America. This is the history of my family, and this is the story of Cleveland and Pittsburgh and Detroit and Chicago and Baltimore and a thousand cities and towns across America.

And yet today I hear from working people who should know better, some in my own family—that those immigrants are taking our jobs, ruining our country. Haven't we been here before?

When I hear that kind of talk, I want to say, did an immigrant move your plant overseas? Did an immigrant take away your pension? Or cut your health care? Did an immigrant destroy American workers' right to organize? Or crash the financial system? Did immigrant workers write the trade laws that have done so much harm to Ohio?

My friends, we are most of us the children of immigrants.

But there was no labor movement in America until workers learned to look at each other and see not immigrants and native born, not white and black, not different last names, but our common fate as workers.

The American dream

The labor movement believes that our goal as a nation should be a future of shared prosperity—not stubborn unemployment and a lost generation. That our economic strategy must bring us together instead of driving us apart. Our strategy must help us be the kind of country we want our children to thrive in—the country our history tells us we can be. The home of the American Dream.

So exactly what is the American Dream? Some will tell you the American Dream is the idea that in America anyone can become rich. And the fact that the upper reaches of our society are relatively open is a good thing about our country—but it is not the American Dream.

The American Dream is not that a few of us will get to be rich, but that all of us will have a fair portion of the good things in life. Time to be with our families. The chance for our children to get an education and the opportunity to make their own way in the world. Laws that protect us, not oppress us.

The American labor movement is all about the pursuit and the defense of this idea of America. And we have learned through our history that it is only when working people stand together—in the workplace and at the polling place—that the American Dream is secure.

Recently, the American Dream brought a man my age named Elvino and his son Ramon to America from Mexico. They are experienced bricklayers and were hired to work on a large mixed-use housing development—a public project. They and thirty others worked for five weeks, and the contractor just never paid them.

For too many immigrants seeking the American Dream, this is the American reality. Hard work rewarded with ripoffs. And then no way to seek justice. That's why I am so proud to be able to say that Elvino, Ramon and their co-workers are taking this injustice to the U.S. Department of Labor, thanks to the efforts of Bricklayers Union Local 18 in Cincinnati and the Interfaith Worker Rights Center—whose members understand that truly an injury to one is an injury to all.

Globalization—wrong

Immigration to the United States is part of a larger picture—the picture of how we are getting globalization wrong. There is no better way to understand that than to look at what has happened between the United States and Mexico since NAFTA was implemented in 1994.

NAFTA was sold to the American public on the idea that increasing trade with Mexico would create good jobs in both countries and slow the flow of undocumented workers coming to the U.S. from Mexico.

Instead, inequality has grown and workers' rights have eroded in both the U.S. and Mexico since NAFTA's passage. And illegal immigration flows have tripled.

Today we treat our relationship with Mexico as if it were a national security problem—solvable with military aid and a militarized border. And that is a dangerous mistake. The failures of our relationship with Mexico represent a failed economic strategy. They cannot be solved with guns and soldiers and fences. They must be addressed through an economic strategy for shared prosperity based on rising wages in both countries.

Instead, at the heart of the

(continued next page)

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failure of our immigration policy is an unpleasant fact, one that you almost never hear talked about openly: Too many U.S. employers actually like the current state of the immigration system—a system where immigrants are both plentiful and undocumented—afraid and available. Too many employers like a system where our borders are closed and open at the same time—closed enough to turn immigrants into second-class citizens, open enough to ensure an endless supply of socially and legally powerless cheap labor.

Our immigration system makes a mockery of the American dream. The people doing the hardest work for the least money have no legal protections, no ability to send their children to college, no real right to form a union, no economic or legal security—no way to turn their contributions—their years of hard work—into the most fundamental right of all, the right to vote. That is intolerable for a democracy.

Recently, I met a young woman named Fabiola, who came to the United States when she was two years old. Her parents have worked in the United States for twenty-two years. Fifteen years ago, her father became a U.S. citizen, so all her younger siblings who were born here also are citizens. But Fabiola fell through the legal cracks and is now too old to become a citizen under current immigration law.

But that has not stopped her from working hard to live the American Dream. Recently, she graduated from the University of California with a degree in international development. But she cannot find a job in her field because she is undocumented.

How does Fabiola's story make any sense in economic or human terms? Her talents and her education are being squandered because our immigration system is simply not working.

Path to legalization

That is why the AFL-CIO is fighting to fix this broken immigration system as a crucial element of our broader economic strategy. Because we stand for the American Dream for all who work in our country. Because we are for ending our two-tiered workforce and our two-tiered society. And because an underclass

of disenfranchised workers ends up hurting all workers.

But we are not for any kind of immigration reform. We will not support the return to outdated guest worker programs that give immigrants no security, no future here in the United States, no rights and no hope of being part of the American Dream.

Immigration reform must begin with the principle that workers in the United States deserve to enjoy a fair share of the wealth we create—that wages should move up with productivity. The labor movement and a broad coalition of faith-based and immigrants' rights groups have worked with former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall to put together such a program for comprehensive immigration reform.

The AFL-CIO is for a fair path toward legalization for all undocumented workers who are working to realize the American Dream. We are for the DREAM Act, that gives young people like Fabiola a future in the only country they know.

We need an independent commission to determine our society's genuine need for more immigrants, and then we need to build a pathway that allows immigrants to be securely part of our country from day one—able to assert their legal rights, including the right to organize, without fear of retaliation.

And together with this commission, going forward we are for establishing real penalties for employers who break the law. We must focus enforcement not on those who come here seeking the American Dream, but on those who would exploit them.

This is the reform the labor movement is fighting for.

But instead, we see today a dangerous drift toward a politics of hate. Last month, I went to Arizona to stand with working people who were the target of a hate campaign—a campaign for racial profiling waged by the state legislature and signed into law by the governor. A campaign to make anyone who might look like an immigrant live in fear of the police. All of us should fear such a system: In the end, don't all of us who aren't Native Americans look

AAUW Action Network

American dream: take action

For millions of students who were raised in the United States, the American dream they seek is simply the opportunity to pursue higher education. The DREAM Act (S. 729) would allow them to do just that, and would benefit our country and our economy at the same time. Urge your senators to support this important legislation.

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act (S. 729) would allow undocumented students who were raised in the U.S. and have graduated from American high schools the chance to go to college, contribute to the nation's economy, and start on their path to citizenship. Currently, undocumented students wishing to attend college are unable to access state financial aid in most states, are ineligible for federal student loans, and are unable to legally work to pay for tuition and the other costs associated

with college. Without the funds to pay for higher education, their hands are tied.

Under the DREAM Act, undocumented students who entered the U.S. before they were 16 and have lived here for at least five years could gain permanent legal status and eventually citizenship if they attend college or join the military for at least two years and display good moral character. States would be allowed to offer these students in-state tuition, and the students could receive federal loans upon adjustment of their legal status. The legislation would provide a path to citizenship for an estimated 65,000 immigrants annually who were brought to this country as children and essentially know no other home.

The DREAM Act benefits not only these students, but our nation as well. On average, a worker's earnings double with a college degree compared to a high school degree. Increased education and

earnings lead to increased tax revenue, decreased reliance on public assistance programs, lower unemployment rates, and increased voting, volunteering, and other civic activities. A well-educated society is a stronger society.

AAUW is committed to making the dream of higher education a reality for all students. Without the DREAM Act, hard-working students who consider the United States their home and had no say in the decision to come here in the first place will continue to be punished, and the cycle of poverty will continue to be propagated by condemning these students to low-wage jobs.

ACTION: Urge your senators to cosponsor and support the DREAM Act.

Source: AAUW Action Network 6/18/10 <http://www.capwiz.com/aauw/issues>

like the immigrants and children of immigrants that we are?

As President of the AFL-CIO, my message to working people is that we all are bound together by our lives as workers, our dreams for our families, and our hopes for this country's future. The labor movement stands for giving all workers in America the right to dream the American Dream.

Unfortunately, the American Dream is slipping away.

Today, as in any economic crisis, there are people who offer hatred and divisiveness as the solution to the crisis. If our political leaders do not lead, if they do not offer help in the present and a clear strategy for prosperity in the future—starting with good jobs—those voices of hate will grow, they will become more powerful, and they will feed on the public's anger and pain and desperation.

President Obama has laid out in broad terms the approach we need to take. He has spoken out for creating good jobs, rebuilding

manufacturing, taking on the challenge of climate change and energy independence, growing exports and investing in our infrastructure, including our education infrastructure.

If we are truly going to build a world class workforce, we need to restore workers' fundamental human right to organize and bargain with their employers. And we need to make sure every worker in America—documented or undocumented—is protected by our labor laws. That is why it is so urgent that we reform our immigration system.

The President's strategy also requires that we invest in rebuilding our country. Consider this fact—as a result of the economic recovery act, we are now in the process of planning approximately 500 miles of high-speed rail, including lines here in Ohio. Sounds good, until you realize that China, a country about the same size as the United States, is in the process of constructing 5,000 miles of high-speed rail.

Restoring workers' rights and building workers' skills. Creating the infrastructure of the 21st century. Thinking strategically when it comes to trade policy. These are the strategies for making the American Dream as real for our children as it was for my parents.

But that will not be enough. We as a nation must be true to our better selves—employers must not make a buck on the backs of workers who live in fear of deportation, and workers must stand together in the workplace for good jobs, safe jobs, health care for all, and retirement security we can count on. And so when we talk about making the American Dream real, the labor movement stands for making it real for all of us who do the work of our country. All of us—no matter what we look like, who we choose to love, or where we come from. Surely there we can find common ground.

Source: AFL-CIO 6/19/10 speech in Cleveland OH. MichaelMoore.com 6/19/10

Interest tax deduction benefits rich

The mortgage interest deduction (MID) is the largest single federal subsidy for owner-occupied housing, but the benefits are not evenly distributed among taxpayers. Only individuals who itemize deductions can benefit from the MID, and the value of the deduction increases with the marginal tax rate. If the government wishes to promote homeownership, a refundable tax credit available to all taxpayers would be more effective.

The mortgage interest deduction (MID) is one of the oldest and largest tax expenditures in the federal income tax and is the largest single federal subsidy for owner-occupied housing. The president's fiscal year 2010 budget reports that, in 2012, the MID will cost the federal Treasury an estimated \$131 billion, much more than the total of all outlays by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (\$48 billion). Homeowners also benefit from other federal tax preferences, including deductibility of residential property taxes on owner-occupied homes (\$31 billion), and exclusion of tax on the first \$250,000 (\$500,000 for joint returns) of capital gains on housing (\$50 billion).

The MID was not originally placed in income tax law to subsidize home ownership. When the modern federal income tax was enacted in 1913 shortly after ratification of the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, all interest payments were made deductible on the grounds that interest payments were an expense of earning business and investment income. Congress made no distinction, however, between interest incurred for the production of taxable income (such as interest on business loans) and interest incurred to generate non-taxable "imputed" returns from homes and consumer durables. The deduction had little effect on housing investment before World War II because only the very highest-income individuals paid any income tax.

The conversion of the income tax from a "class" to a "mass" tax during World War II, followed by



a large postwar growth in home ownership rates fueled by the increased availability of long-term mortgage finance, converted the mortgage interest deduction from a provision used by only a few taxpayers into a major subsidy for middle- and upper-middle-income homeowners. By the time the Treasury and congressional agencies began publishing annual lists of tax expenditures in the 1970s, the mortgage interest deduction had become one of the largest single preferences in the tax law.

The 1986 Tax Reform Act (TRA 86) eliminated many tax preferences in the federal income tax to finance lower marginal tax rates and higher personal exemptions, but left the deductibility of mortgage interest largely intact. TRA 86 eliminated the deductibility of all consumer interest, including credit card debt and loans to finance cars, furniture, and other consumer durable items. But TRA retained the deductibility of mortgage interest on loans up to \$1 million. In addition to the deduction on new (and re-financed) mortgage loans, taxpayers may deduct up to \$100,000 of interest on home equity loans (i.e., additional housing debt incurred subsequent to the initial home purchase).

Although the mortgage interest deduction rivals Social Security benefits as a "third rail" provision that elected officials would tamper with at their peril, many analysts have nonetheless raised concerns about it. The Congressional Budget Office

usually includes proposals to eliminate or scale back the MID in its list of budget reduction options. The MID disproportionately benefits taxpayers in the top fifth of the income distribution (Toder, Harris, and Lim 2009). Those who do not itemize deductions on their tax returns receive no benefit and the subsidy rate is larger for individuals in higher marginal tax rate brackets. Because most who benefit would own homes without the deduction, it mostly provides an incentive to live in more expensive homes, not to own instead of rent. Other countries without an MID have similar homeownership rates. If the government wishes to promote homeownership, a refundable tax credit available to all taxpayers, not just itemizers or those with positive tax liability, would be more effective. Given the large and growing projected federal budget deficits, it is worth reexamining the effectiveness of all federal spending programs, including those embodied in the federal income tax.

ACTION: Read the entire report, which briefly reviews issues and findings from previous research. We then present new estimates of the deduction's distributional benefits by income group, family type, and race/ethnicity as well as the distributional effects of proposals to eliminate, scale back, or replace the MID with more broad-based tax incentives.

Source: Urban Institute, 2100 M Street NW Washington, DC 20037 4/1/10 <http://www.urban.org>

Toward a recessionary era

Robert Reich

Double-dip watch: Retail sales in May took their biggest nose-dive in eight months, according to the most recent report from the Commerce Department. Remember: Consumers account for 70 percent of the nation's economic activity.

American Corporations are sitting on huge piles of cash but they're not investing, and they're creating only a measly number of new jobs. And they won't invest and create jobs until they know there are customers out there to buy what they sell.

For three decades, starting in the late 1970s, the biggest economic problem America faced on an ongoing basis was inflation. Demand always seemed to be on the verge of outrunning the productive capacity of the nation. The Fed had to be ready to raise interest rates to stop the party, as it did on several occasions.

During this era of inflation economics, it appeared that John Maynard Keynes—and his Depression-era concern about chronically inadequate demand—was dead. So-called "supply siders" told policy makers that if they cut taxes on corporations and the wealthy, they'd unleash a torrent of investment and innovation—thereby increasing the productive capacity of the nation. The benefits would trickle down to everyone else.

But the pendulum may now

be swinging back to the earlier era in which demand always seems on the verge of trailing the nation's productive capacity. The biggest ongoing threats are chronic recession or even deflation, because consumers don't have enough money to what the economy is capable of selling at full or near-full employment. Despite gains in productivity, little has trickled down to America's middle class.

John Maynard Keynes is being exhumed because his Depression-era worry about inadequate demand is once again the nation's central economic problem.

Keynes prescribed two remedies—both of which are now necessary: Government spending to "prime the pump" and get businesses to invest and hire once again. And, as Keynes wrote, "measures for the redistribution of incomes in a way likely to raise the propensity to consume." Translated: Instead of big tax cuts for corporations and the rich, tax cuts and income supplements for the middle class.

Robert Reich is Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written twelve books, including "The Work of Nations," "Locked in the Cabinet," and his most recent book, "Supercapitalism."

Source: Robert Reich's Blog, 6/12/10 www.readersupportednews.org/

As Keynes wrote, "measures for the redistribution of incomes in a way likely to raise the propensity to consume." Translation: Instead of big tax cuts for corporations and the rich, tax cuts and income supplements for the middle class.

Stop \$9 billion in new nuke taxpayer loans

The Obama Administration is attempting to get \$9 billion more in loans for new nuclear reactor construction. They're trying to sneak this money on to an emergency supplemental funding bill intended to provide funds for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and to provide additional disaster relief money.

But there is no emergency requiring new nuclear loans. The Department of Energy is playing sleazy politics by asking for this money on an emergency basis. To try to appease clean energy advocates, the administration is tying the nuclear loans to an equal amount of loans for renewable energy projects—but renewable energy projects have barely begun to tap their existing loan authority. Unlike for nuclear projects, which are extraordinarily expensive, there is currently plenty of money available for renewables loans.

The House Appropriations Committee was scheduled to meet on May 27 to consider this bill but postponed the meeting at the last moment. It now isn't clear when or if the meeting will be rescheduled. One possibility is that the House will simply take up a similar Senate emergency funding bill—one that does not include taxpayer loans for dirty new nuclear reactors.

Background

Earlier this year, the Department of Energy awarded \$8.3 billion in loan "guarantees" to Southern Company to help build two new nuclear reactors in Georgia (Southern Co. is expected to accept this "guarantee" by Friday, June 18). It soon became clear that this was not just a guarantee—it, and apparently all such guarantees for new reactors are direct loans from the U.S. Treasury, with the money coming from the little-known Federal Financing Bank.

That left DOE with \$10.2 billion to give out for other new reactor projects. This is money that was approved by Congress back in 2007. Because new reactor construction cost estimates have soared in recent years, DOE realized that \$10.2 billion would only cover one more new project, and they want to give out more money for new reactors. So the Administration has proposed tripling the money for the nuclear loan program to \$54.5 billion, beginning in the next fiscal year. But apparently that's not soon enough for DOE—so now they're trying to get \$9 billion of that money now so they can give loans for two new reactor projects in the next few weeks. Of course, no reactor project (the most likely to receive the loans are Calvert Cliffs, MD and South Texas) will



even receive a license from the NRC for at least another two years. And the utilities can't actually get any loans until after they receive a license. No emergency here, except the DOE's desire to score points with the nuclear power industry.

Stopping this \$9 billion deal would send two clear messages: 1) emergency funding bills should not be used for non-emergency pet projects, especially not dirty and dangerous new nuclear reactors; 2) not only is the \$9 billion unacceptable, so is the full \$54.5 billion the administration wants next year.

ACTION: Your actions can stop this unnecessary nuclear bailout: Tell your Representative to pass a "clean" emergency funding bill—one that provides funding only for actual emergencies, not for unnecessary and polluting nuclear reactors.

Source: Nuclear Information and Resource Service alert 6/16/10 <http://www.nirs.org>

Oil Future (continued from front page)

Gulf of Mexico, and we are all witnesses now to the economic and environmental shock wave that results when accidents happen in such high-risk places, where the industry doesn't know how to plug a gusher.

The possibility of catastrophic accidents and the ensuing environmental and economic damage aren't exclusive to the deepwater Gulf of Mexico. Shell Oil has been pushing for years to drill in remote regions of America's Arctic Ocean, where an oil spill would be infinitely more difficult to contain and clean than in the Gulf. And oil operations in Canada's Alberta tar sands, where oil companies mine a thick, tar-

like substance that is far dirtier than conventional crude oil, are an environmental disaster in and of themselves.

Fortunately, Earthjustice was able to help block Shell oil's plans to drill in America's Arctic Ocean this summer, which had been approved in cursory fashion by the same disgraced MMS agency that rubberstamped BP's plans to drill in the Gulf. And we are challenging pipelines that would deliver dirty tar sands crude oil to the United States in efforts to curtail the environmental catastrophe occurring in Canada's boreal forests. But the only foolproof way to reduce the risks of drilling in these frontiers of oil

production is to not take them at all.

What we need instead is comprehensive climate and energy legislation that increases development of renewable energy, decreases our reliance on fossil fuels and preserves the integrity of landmark laws like the Clean Air Act as a means to cut down on global warming pollution.

Sadly, Obama didn't outline a bold, detailed plan in his speech on Tuesday night. The kid gloves need to come off.

Source: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/earthjustice/unearthed> Join Earthjustice on Facebook <<http://www.facebook.com/Earthjustice>>

If America is addicted to oil...

Mark Sumner

Then shouldn't the next step be a plan for breaking that addiction?

How about a "12-step plan" on the AA model...

1. Admit that America is powerless over oil—and our position has become unmanageable.
2. Confess that if we are to have power, it must come from a sane, renewable source.
3. Decide to turn our national will toward a better, cleaner future for ourselves and our children.
4. Make a searching and fearless inventory of our energy options.
5. Admit the exact nature of our unsustainable energy policy.
6. Declare our nation entirely ready to commit to changing our ways.
7. Humbly acknowledge that we have made mistakes and false starts in the past.
8. Make a list of all the ways in which our policy continues to promote a failed position.
9. Take direct action, wherever possible, if those actions can reduce our demand for oil.
10. Continue to take inventory of our results and promptly change policies that aren't working.
11. Seek to improve our knowledge, policies, and actions in building a cleaner future.
12. As we enjoy the benefits of these decisions, to pass these benefits to others.

Or we might try something more pragmatic...

1. Admit that the United States is currently dependent on imported oil.
2. Educate the public that no amount of domestic drilling will significantly impact this demand.
3. Place a national, significant sales tax on oil that would immediately reduce our demand.
4. Channel all funds generated toward technologies that would break the link between oil and transportation.
5. Expand support for electric vehicles to bring these cars into reach of more consumers.
6. Provide additional funding for local and national rail travel and transport.
7. Implement strict new guidelines for oil consumption by large vehicles.
8. Provide additional investments in R & D for both battery and fuel cell development.
9. Provide funding that encourages reductions in commuting through mixed-use development.
10. Increase the cost of drilling leases to better reflect actual value of resources.
11. Announce a permanent ban on drilling at depths below 2,000'.
12. Promote the use of natural gas and ethanol as alternative transportation fuels until such time as electrical vehicles are broadly available.

What about it? What steps would you add / change / replace to bring America through Oil Addicts Not-So-Anonymous?

Source: 5/27/10 <http://mark-sumner-aka-devilstower.dailykos.com>

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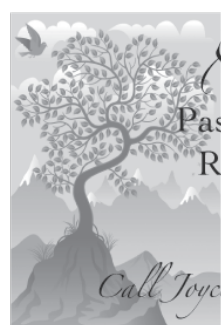
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How to cut the deficit by \$960B

Mid June, Rep. Barney Frank (MA) presented a detailed plan to cut \$960 billion from the Pentagon budget over the next 10 years. These cuts would reduce U.S. military spending by almost 20 percent and strengthen U.S. security. In addition to Rep. Frank, influential members of Congress, including Senators Chuck Grassley (IA) and Tom Coburn (OK), have said that Congress should not rule out cuts in military spending to help reduce the budget deficit and fund essential government services.

In a report "Debt, Deficits, & Defense: A Way Forward," the Cato Institute, Taxpayers for Common Sense, and other groups detail specific cuts in military spending. The report is different from other reports that list unneeded weapons and recommend efficiencies. A core recommendation of the report is that the U.S. should rethink and reset its expanded concept of the U.S. military mission in the world. Echoing President Eisenhower,

the report asserts, "We should spend as much as necessary on national defense, but not one penny more." The authors identify specific reductions, including:

* More than \$113 billion in savings by reducing the U.S. nuclear arsenal to 1,050 total warheads deployed on 450 land-based missiles and seven Ohio-class submarines;

* More than \$200 billion in savings by reducing U.S. military presence in Europe and Asia to 100,000 while reducing total uniformed military personnel to 1.3 million;

* More than \$138 billion in savings by replacing costly and unworkable weapons systems with more practical, affordable alternatives. Suggested cuts would include the F-35 combat aircraft, the MV-22 Osprey, and the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle; and

* More than \$60 billion in savings by reforming military health care.

The authors emphasize that, even if all of the recommendations are adopted, the military budget five years from now will still be higher than it was at any time since World War II.

ACTION: Urge your representative to sign a bipartisan letter circulated by Representatives Frank, Ron Paul (TX), and Walter Jones (NC). The letter, addressed to President Obama's deficit reduction commission, commits the signers not to vote for deficit reduction legislation unless it includes substantial reductions in military spending "of the order of magnitude" recommended in the report. Ask your representative to read a copy of the report, "Debt, Deficits, & Defense: A Way Forward," and to consider each of the recommendations for restraint in military spending.

Source: FCNL Action Alert, 6/11/10
Friends Committee on National
Legislation, 245 2nd St NE Washington,
DC 20002 800-630-1330. www.fcnl.org

NASA: easily the hottest spring in temperature record

Last month tied May 1998 as the hottest on record in the NASA dataset. More significantly, following fast on the heels of easily the hottest April—and hottest Jan-April—on record, it's also the hottest Jan-May on record. Also, the combined land-surface air and sea-surface water temperature anomaly for March-April-May was 0.73°C above the 1951-1980 mean, blowing out the old record of 0.65°C set in 2002.

*The record temperatures we're seeing now are especially impressive because we've been in "the deepest solar minimum in nearly a century." It's just hard to stop the march of manmade global warming, well, other than by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, that is.

Most significantly, the 12-month global temperature grew to 0.66°C—easily the highest on record.

NASA's recent draft paper reported: "We conclude that

global temperature continued to rise rapidly in the past decade" and "that there has been no reduction in the global warming trend of 0.15-0.20°C/decade that began in the late 1970s."

For the record, it was the second hottest April in both satellite records (UAH and RSS), which are more sensitive to the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) than the land records and have biases of their own.

Although I'm sure it's just another coincidence, but just as NOAA noted "North American snow cover for April 2010 was the smallest on record," Rutgers University's Global Snow Lab again reports a record low snow cover in the entire northern hemisphere for the month of May (what appears to be a long term trend):

And in one of those compounded coincidences that drive the anti-science crowd into a frenzy of conspiracy theories and pseudo-analysis, the extent of Arctic sea

ice continues to drop below the record lows of recent years:

And, of course, the bottom continues to drop out of the most important measure of long-term Arctic sea ice survivability—volume (see Arctic death spiral: Naval Postgrad School's Maslowski "projects ice-free* fall by 2016 (+/- 3 yrs)").

Indeed, we appear to have been disintegrating volume records over the past several months according to the Polar Science Center: Note: "Anomalies for each day are calculated relative to the average over the 1979-2009 period for that day to remove the annual cycle."

If only someone had a theory to explain all this coincidental warming and melting—and how to stop it before it really messed up our livable climate.

Source: *Climate Progress: An insider's view of climate science, politics, and solutions* 6/10/10 <http://climateprogress.org>

Can Congress pass climate legislation in 2010?

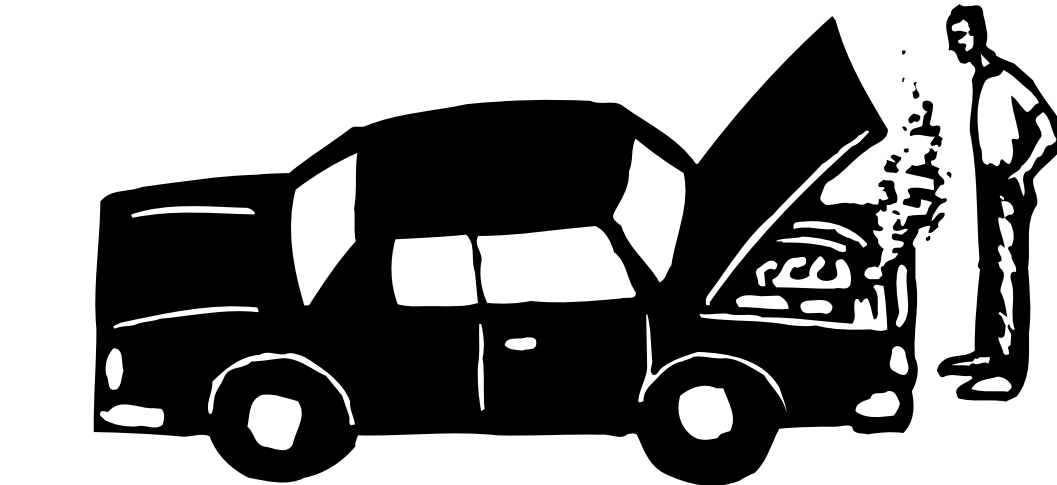
It is hard to keep up with all of the congressional maneuverings on climate change legislation in Washington, DC. After the House passed its 1,400-page climate and energy bill, H.R. 2454 back in June 2009, many thought the Senate would follow suit and possibly approve a bill in time to bring to the international climate treaty conference last November in Copenhagen.

That was not to be. Hardly had the dust from the House vote settled before many in the Senate rushed to pronounce the House-passed climate bill dead on arrival. Even with all of the cash giveaways to the fossil fuel industry, the House legislation was not "business-friendly" enough for the architects of the Senate's inchoate climate and energy bill. Thus, instead of completing one of President Obama's top legislative priorities in his first year of office, the climate bill ship ran into an iceberg called the U.S. Senate.

For the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and other like-minded organizations and people who consider H.R. 2454 a step in the wrong direction, the ignominious end of a House-type cap-and-trade bill was cause for conflicted celebration; the House bill had been rejected by the Senate, but for many of the wrong reasons—influential Senators were calling for something even weaker or no action on global warming.

In the long congressional chill that followed Copenhagen (minus a short-lived attempt by Sen. Barbara Boxer (CA) to push her climate legislation), Senators John Kerry (MA) and Joe Lieberman (CT) spun a plan (KL) in many ways similar to the House-passed cap-and-trade bill, but in addition includes new incentives for nuclear power and offshore oil drilling—even as the worst oil spill catastrophe the United States has ever experienced continued to destroy life and livelihoods in the Gulf of Mexico.

Some organizations may be content holding their noses again (after the House ordeal) and give unqualified support to any legislation that the Senate labels a climate bill. Many proponents of the KL process assure that even a very unpleasant bill is better than nothing and that a Senate-



passed KL bill can be fixed down the road. First and foremost, FCNL is not confident that a cap-and-trade bill can ever pass the Senate, and second, in the chance a cap-and-trade bill were to pass, we are not as sanguine that a bill structured around offsets, industry giveaways, and Wall Street trading can be changed to responsibly address climate change, especially when amending the legislation in the future would involve revoking its newly minted and permanent cash handouts to assorted powerful industries.

Reason for hope

Two senators working across the aisle recently introduced a simple, polluter-pay and industry-neutral bill to decarbonize the U.S. economy while compensating consumers for the inevitable increase in energy costs.

The Carbon Limits and Energy for America's Renewal Act (CLEAR) was introduced by Sen. Maria Cantwell (WA) and Sen. Susan Collins (ME) in December 2009, and has since begun to make a bigger and bigger splash in Washington, and across the country. As bipartisan legislation from two Senators whose votes will be needed to pass any climate legislation, the bill immediately became a serious addition to the Senate climate conversation. Sen. Graham of the KGL trio has himself concluded that the CLEAR Act's consumer dividends "make sense."

From FCNL's perspective the Cantwell-Collins climate bill is a real step forward that can be built upon in the future. The CLEAR Act meets most of FCNL's principles for fair and effective climate legislation and in our estimation

represents the strongest type of legislation that the Senate can pass. And while the CLEAR Act is not perfect, the legislation sets up a sustainable structure for curbing greenhouse gases that can be turned up when the political will is present.

How the CLEAR Act works

1. 100 percent auction of pollution permits. Following the "polluter pays" principle, Cantwell-Collins has no free giveaways to industry; every company selling a ton of fossil carbon dioxide into the economy for combustion is charged an equal price.

2. "Energy security dividend." Although putting a price on carbon will increase consumers' energy prices in the short-term, the majority of the public will actually feel a positive net financial impact from the CLEAR Act, according to a University of Massachusetts, Amherst report. These progressive energy dividend benefits occur because 75 percent of the pollution revenue collected from industry is returned equally every month to every legal resident of the United States.

3. Protection from market manipulation. The CLEAR Act limits participation in the carbon market to those companies who must turn in carbon permits for compliance. This and other provisions in the CLEAR Act address concerns that Wall Street traders will drive up and down the price of carbon permits to attain greater profits at the expense of consumers and clean energy investments. Volatile energy prices have shown to decrease investor confidence and reduce low-carbon investments. Extreme or prolonged price spikes can jeopardize the

entire pollution-reduction system due to the politically untenable increased energy costs to consumers (as occurred in the Los Angeles RECLAIM cap-and-trade program according to the Congressional Budget Office).

4. No offsets. The CLEAR Act does not contain carbon offsets. Offsets are used in other climate legislation to substitute for U.S. industry pollution reductions, but the Government Accountability Office concludes that offsets are impossible to consistently verify as real emission reductions. Offsets also delay the decarbonization of the U.S. economy, making the inevitable transition more abrupt and potentially more costly than necessary.

5. Does not pick technology winners and losers. CLEAR does not subsidize coal, nuclear power, or renewable energy. Instead it deposits 25 percent of the carbon revenue that the government collects from polluters into a fund to be used in the annual congressional appropriations process. This approach avoids the lock-in of 40-year dedicated government funding streams to specific technologies that may not end up becoming effective low-carbon solutions. Instead, the CLEAR Act allows congressional appropriators to re-allocate funding as technological realities change.

6. "Upstream cap." CLEAR requires compliance as high up in the economy as possible—at the wellhead, coal mine, or import point. This reduces the administrative burden to only 2 to 3 thousand producers and importers and ensures catching the vast majority of fossil carbon that enters the U.S. economy. Thus, the upstream approach is a

much simpler and less bureaucratic system for capping carbon dioxide.

7. Keeps Clean Air Act protections. The ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to set minimum standards for the largest greenhouse gas emitters is left intact. Find out more about the CLEAR Act: the 40-page bill and supporting documents can be found on Sen. Cantwell's website.

The CLEAR Act is not perfect and if a bill with the CLEAR Act's structure is signed into law, our work to avoid catastrophic climate change will only have begun. Particularly, the emissions targets are well below the levels that FCNL believes are the United States' fair share based on historical emissions. In addition, funding will need to be directed to those nations most vulnerable and least able to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

However, if any climate legislation is signed into law in 2010, it is apparent that it will not put the United States and the world on a path to meet the Copenhagen Accord's goal of keeping global warming under 2 degrees Celsius. Legislation, if passed, will instead be in the range of a 17 percent reduction from 2005 emission levels by the year 2020, matching President Obama's conditional commitment in Copenhagen.

Thus, even with passage of any bill to cap carbon emissions, FCNL and other like-minded organizations will not stop building the popular movement to create the political space for stronger global warming action. When world and domestic events combine to allow Congress to commit the United States to additional reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, we believe a cap and dividend structure will be best suited and politically resilient enough to meet the challenge.

ACTION: Please contact your senators and ask them to support the simple and equitable climate energy security approach—the Cantwell-Collins CLEAR Act, S.2877.

Source: The Friends Committee on National Legislation, updated June 2010, original March 2010 5. www.fcnl.org

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California voters pass open primary proposition, defeat big money measures

Kim Alexander

California voters spoke and the results are in. Prop. 14, which sets up a new open primary election system in California, passed by a wide margin. This kind of surprised me, given that it was a Primary election and by definition more likely to attract partisans and less likely to draw out independents, who would benefit most from a change that would allow them to vote for any candidate of any primary. But I guess partisan voters want that kind of flexibility, too.

Frankly I was also surprised that California's minor parties came out so strongly against Prop. 14—seems to me it is likely to boost their registration numbers because voters registered with a minor party, like the Green Party or Libertarian Party, could do so without having to sit out competitive primary elections in other parties.

Prop. 16 was defeated, which was something of a relief. If it passed I would be forced to revise my personal conventional wisdom about the initiative process in California. As a twenty-year observer of California elections, I've long said that you can't win an initiative campaign without money, but you can't win with only money, either. PG&E spent over \$46 million getting Prop. 16 on the ballot and attempting to get this measure passed to change state law to benefit a single corporation. Opponents raised less than \$100,000. It was truly a "David vs. Goliath" type of battle.

A lot of people I know, people who are smart and thoughtful and read the paper and listen to NPR, were unsure of how to vote on Prop. 16. The commercials were so seductive—who doesn't want to protect their right to vote? PG&E bought one of the best campaigns I have ever seen in this state. And yet in the end voters defeated Prop. 16, and Prop. 17 as well, which also represented a single company's (Mercury General Insurance Corp.) attempt to bend

Disclosure made a difference—not just disclosure about the millions spent by private companies, but also laws covering television ads and campaign committee names that require top donors be identified.

California law in its favor.

I believe disclosure made a difference—not just timely and robust campaign finance disclosure, which enabled CVF and the news media to inform the voting public about the millions being spent by private companies to promote these measures, but also disclosure laws covering television ads and

campaign committee names that require top donors to be identified. Such laws help level the political playing field, especially in high-stakes initiative battles such as we saw on this ballot.

Source: CVF-NEWS 6/9/10—Newsletter of the California Voter Foundation, CVF, P.O. Box 189277, Sacramento, CA 95818 (916) 441-2494 <http://www.calvoter.org>

Peace with Honor

"Peace with Honor" that's what Richard Nixon said
"Peace with Honor" leaving tens of thousands dead
"Peace with Honor" is the way to end a war
"Peace with Honor" is the way up off the floor
"Peace with Honor" is the way we ended Nam
"Peace with Honor" was the title of the scam
"Peace with Honor" is a clever little label
"Peace with Honor" is really nothing but a fable
"Peace with Honor" a most insidious ruse
"Peace with Honor" neatly coded subterfuge
"Peace with Honor" as if it ever could exist
"Peace with Honor" if you hear it something's amiss
"Peace with Honor" is euphemistic for defeat
"Peace with Honor" is meant to cover our retreat
"Peace with Honor" devised by those removed from battle
"Peace with Honor" designating human beings as cattle
"Peace with Honor" a metaphor for ending war
"Peace with Honor" debated while we kill some more
"Peace with Honor" is now Obama's own decision
"Peace with Honor" will be viewed with much derision
For "Peace with Honor" is nothing but a lie
There is no honor prolonging war for some to die
While callous men and women take home bags of riches
Creating arms, exporting harm, exploitative sons of bitches
"Peace with Honor" will soon be recycled once again
"Peace with Honor" another "war" we could not win

—David Waldon

We have lost our way

Julia Chaitin Ph.D.

I have been trying to get my head around what happened on the Gaza flotilla, with no success.

When I turned on the Israeli news at 6:40 am on Monday morning, knowing that the flotilla must be nearing our shores, the broadcaster's first words were a knife to the heart: "Something very bad has happened. The commanders knew ahead of time that this was a lose-lose situation ..." I could not help but wonder why the naval commanders (and obviously the higher-ups in the government) would knowingly go into a situation that was "lose-lose." I could not help but wonder why, once again, we had thrust ourselves into an impossible situation, endangered so many lives, perpetuated violence and severely damaged our relations with the world community in a nonsensical effort to enforce the unjustifiable blockade of the Gaza Strip.

I can turn off the radio and television and Internet, but I cannot turn off my thoughts about all that has happened this week. My thoughts revolve around the steady stream of disturbing news and articles, interviews, photos and videos broadcast on the radio, television, Internet, and Youtubes. Each new photo, video, interview and article purports to give the "facts" of what happened in the dark, early morning hours of Monday. Each new photo, video, interview and article from outside of Israel puts the blame on my country. Each new piece of news from inside of Israel puts the blame on the "terrorists" on the boats, on the Hamas, on Iran, and on the Turkish government. Each new "fact" widens the chasm between Israel and the rest of the world.

Over night, our world has turned into one angry and volatile demonstration. It is impossible to count how many people from how many countries are marching, shouting and demanding Israel's blood for the attack on the "peace ships." I cannot count how many Israelis are draped in the Israeli flag, portraying the citizens on the boats as terrorists, calling Hanin Zuabi—an Arab Knesset

member who was on board the Mavi Marmara—a traitor and calling for her blood. We cannot measure how much anger and hatred has resulted from this terribly destructive fiasco. And we do not know how long it will take to dissipate, if it will ever really dissipate.

The attack on the flotilla, and all that ensued (whether or not the citizens on board attacked first, second, or later is of no importance) has shown us, once again, how the blind perspective that force can solve the problem has made the problem uglier, deeper, more senseless.

With all this darkness, the attack on the flotilla has had one good effect: It brought the blockade of the forgotten Gaza Strip, from the land, the sea and the air, into the homes of millions of people around the world. More importantly, it brought this immoral and inhumane blockade into the homes of millions of Israelis, who, for the last three years, have chosen to ignore this destructive act that our government has inflicted on an innocent population. This may be the light at the end of the tunnel(s). This might be the beginning of the end of a government and military policy that was borne in vengeance, and has been carried out with a vengeance.

Lost

In these dark days, I have tried to understand how my country has so terribly lost its way. From my perspective, for the last number of years, but most especially since the Gaza War, we have rushed to stumble in the darkness because:

We (Israelis) constantly push ourselves deeper and deeper into this black hole called "the conflict." It consumes us, shutting out any other way to see our relations with the Palestinians.

We can no longer see any option but the military option.

Anyone who does not agree with the government or military policy is perceived as a traitor. Democracy is to be feared and freedom of speech has become profanity.

Any call for human rights is seen as a call against Israel.

We are obsessed with the quality

of our "hasbara" (information/explanations) to the rest of the world concerning our actions. We are obsessed with trying to understand why our "hasbara" is ineffectual. We are obsessed with explaining our unexplainable behaviors, instead of being passionate about changing them. We spend our resources on embarrassing "hasbara" instead of using our energies to look for ways to end the conflict that offer the promise of peace, justice and security to Israelis (and Palestinians).

We are alienating country after country. We are isolating ourselves in the world, creating new enemies everyday, forgetting that we belong to the world, and that we cannot survive in this world on our own, without friends.

We are so obsessed with our own victimhood, that we do

not see how we are victimizing others. We see threats and dangers at every turn, and dismiss our actions as self defense against the evil forces that would destroy us. We are militarily strong, but psychologically very, very weak.

We have become so indifferent and blind to the suffering of the Palestinians that our hearts have turned to stone.

I search for the magic wand (knowing this to be a childish fantasy) that would make my fellow Israelis (ordinary citizens and "leaders") soften the stone, open the borders, gather in the friends, embrace our Palestinian cousins, spread the rights. I unsuccessfully and naively search in the darkness for this wand, only to realize that if it ever existed, it has fallen into the depths of the black hole of guns and warships and airplanes and helicopters and

rockets.

From my home near the Gaza border, I hear the drone of the Army helicopters, the booms of the artillery, the sirens from the Qassam rockets. I try to remember what life was like when the borders between our two regions were open and we Israelis and Palestinians traveled freely between the two. I vainly search the horizon for Israeli peace trucks and ships that herald the end of the blockade and for the beginning of a new era that offers us a life of peace and security that we Gazans and Israelis need and deserve so desperately.

Julia Chaitin Ph.D., teaches in the Department of Social Work, Sapir Academic College, and lives on Kibbutz Urim, Hanegev, Israel.

*Source: truthout | Op-Ed 6/18/10
www.truthout.org*

Become a PEACE PAL!

Please consider giving to PJN month by month. It will give us stable, predictable funding to continue providing our services. It's easy for you and cost-effective for us. Our website online donation is recommended for ease and convenience. Your monthly donation can be automatically withdrawn from your bank account.

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Automatic Bank Transfer

I've enclosed a check for my first contribution. Arrangements will be made by me with my bank for future pledges.

Mail checks to: Peace and Justice Network, P.O. Box 4123, Stockton CA 95204

The Peace and Justice Network is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational corporation. Contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Letter to a transgender kid

Dear One,

It was so good to meet you today at the coffee shop. I was very pleasantly surprised at how much thought you have given to the idea of transitioning from your assigned sex to the gender you know yourself to be. You have taken an important step already.

I believe that no one should transition unless there is no other alternative. By that, I mean you should not transition just because you think it is a good thing to do, or because you think you will feel better about yourself. Transitioning is not for the curious. Once you do it there is no turning back. You should transition only if you would rather die than continue living as you are. It should be your last resort, and nothing short of that.

If you transition in California, there will be benefits for you that you will not enjoy if you transition elsewhere. Here you will be able to use the restroom that represents your true gender identity, a benefit that is extended to us in only three states. And you will be protected from losing your job. In the vast majority of the states, you can be fired just for being transgender because Congress has not passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. California has already done so at the state level.

You will lose loved ones who will not understand why you are doing this. Some will call you names and mistreat you. Strangers will be rude, and you will increase your chances of being murdered by over 300 percent. It is not easy and you will be much less safe than those who were born and live cisgender.

There will be medical costs that can run into the thousands of dollars. There are a very few insurance companies that will cover your expenses. Most companies take the position that your needs are cosmetic, not vital to your healthy functioning as a member of society. You may have to incur a large debt that could take years to repay. You will have to take hormones for the rest of your life, and they are not cheap, especially without insurance.

I know you are afraid of telling your parents and friends that you

are transgender. That is certainly a normal feeling. My guess is that many people in your circle of acquaintances already have an idea that you are transgender, even if they don't know what it is called. Many of our family and friends are not surprised when we share that we need to transition. And you will need all the loving support you can get.

There are a lot of people who will think you have a sickness. Even the medical profession requires a diagnosis of "gender identity disorder" by a licensed psychologist before you can begin to receive transition treatment. Society has not come to the place where we can be accepted as normal people in a diverse world. But you are no more sick than a child born with a cleft palate or other birth anomaly.

If you still believe that transitioning is for you, I can tell you it is the greatest gift you can ever know to wake up in a body that matches what you know yourself to be. The joy of having no deep, dark secret from the world, the relief of no longer having to pretend you are something that you are not, all of that is priceless beyond compare.

You will have a lot to learn that cisgender people take for granted because they were raised to learn these things. But with time they will come naturally for you, and

you will develop your own style and tastes. You will have a harder time finding love, but you will find it if you persist and never settle for less than you deserve as the beautiful human being that you are.

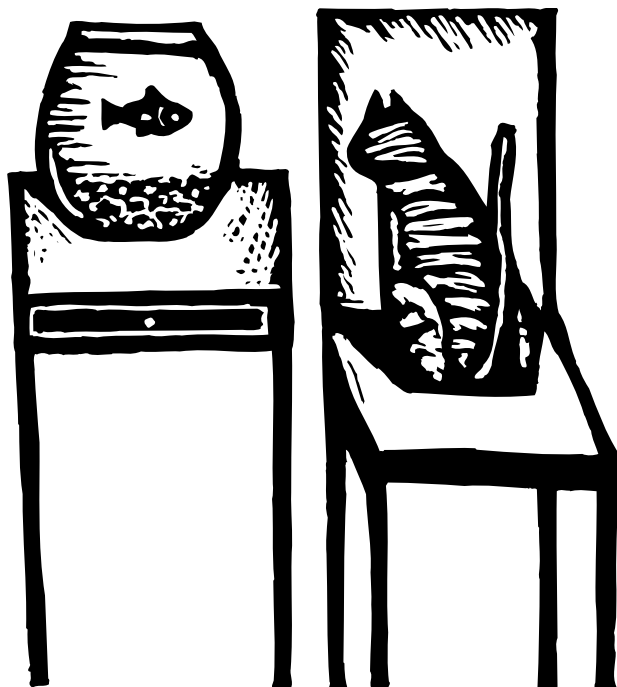
It is exciting and scary to cross that line between hiding in silence and walking proudly in the light of day. But many have done it before you and many will do it after you. Someday I suppose you will be writing a letter to one who trusted you with their secret, just as you trusted me. Be a friend and a source of support to them when that happens. We all can use another friend.

It is your life and your decision alone. I sincerely hope that you will know what is best for you and will pursue it with passion and pride. And I will be here to support you on your path which ever decision you may make.

With love from your sister,

Elena J. Kelly

Rev. Elena Kelly is a co-chapter leader of Marriage Equality San Joaquin, Vice Chair of the Peace and Justice Network, Director of the Stockton Transgender Alliance, and is Deputy Field Organizer for Courage Campaign San Joaquin. She can be reached at elena.kelly@comcast.net



Feedback (continued from page 2)

Bass Ackwards

Editor,

What America needs, perhaps more than anything, is a good strong dose of reality. So in the spirit of that thought, I suggest we elect all the tea bag and wannabe tea bag candidates we can get our oil-soaked, blood-stained, xenophobic, credit card-calloused hands on. To hell with the environment and all this anti-American hogwash about not drilling for more oil in waters off our shores.

We're Americans and we deserve the right to drive pick-ups you need a ladder to get into. We've already killed a couple hundred thousand Iraqis for this stuff. What's the big deal about a few shrimp? In fact, let's end government regulation or interference of all kinds. After all, it was incessant meddling by the government that got us into the financial and mortgage meltdowns—not greedy buffoons wearing flag lapel pins to church on Sunday. Right? To hell with imposing higher taxes on the wealthiest Americans. Our schools are going to seed, along with our parks, our streets and highways, our police, our libraries and other publicly-funded extravagances but the yachting class deserve to bathe in asses' milk and we ordinary jokers can just do with less.

Meanwhile, let's all arm ourselves with handguns and automatic weapons, because, after all, if the criminals want to shoot it out we've got to be ready. And if the government wants a piece of us, we'll show 'em what the second amendment is all about. Social Security, Medicare, Welfare? They're all just big government bailouts. We've got a right to be a third world country if we want to, by God. Let's declare war on illegal immigrants and stand united as we pay five times what we do now for produce in the grocery store.

Let's vote for Meg in November. She's a billionaire, so we know right away she prays to the same God as the rest of \$U.S. She never bothers to vote—another point in her favor. While we're at it, let's follow the lead of legislators in the great state of Arizona and abolish all ethnic studies in public schools. What part of "white folks' country" do some people not understand? And when a little Mexican child comes staggering in to an emergency clinic with a broken arm, or worse, Meg will

send the little beggar back across the border where he belongs. Sometimes you gotta hit bottom before you can look up. What have we got to lose besides our humanity, dignity, honor and compassion?

Dave Waldon

Conquering the planet starts with Mexico

The two articles regarding the recent Arizona immigration law published in the June Issue of *Connections* were excellent. However, while Greg Palast

argued that the real issue is not so much xenophobia as it is disenfranchisement of Arizona's non-white population & Roger Werner provided details on the havoc NAFTA has wreaked on the Mexican population, both articles did not mention imperialism.

Central to the matter is not an 'immigration issue,' but the fact that the U.S. has been trying to conquer every centimeter of this planet, and nowhere is this more closely felt than Mexico, from the very beginning of its independence from the Spanish empire until this very day. From genetically modified seeds polluting Mexican heirloom varieties and destroying the very basis of a food system,... from the outright support & prodding of various dictators who have at one time or another butchered the social justice movement of Mexico,... from the CIA colluding with drug cartels in Latin America to fund its various covert operations seeking to eliminate any dissent to the power elite,... from the codification of the untrammelled freedom to exploit another economy (commonly known as 'free trade'): these are all forms of U.S. imperialism of which Mexico has been a most unfortunate recipient.

Thus, the Arizona law represents not only disenfranchisement and corporate dominance, but also the long and brutal exploitation of a nation. Instead of the U.S. telling Mexicans to leave, is it not more fitting that Mexico tells the U.S. to GET OUT? Instead of blaming 'illegal' immigrants for the ills of U.S. society, it behooves us to discuss and rectify the imperialistic mentality of the States, a mentality that will ultimately implode, as the history of all empires clearly shows.

Vinh Pham



Sawznhammers

"Saw": a tool for analysis, taking things apart; a proverb, often trite
"Hammer": a tool for synthesis, putting things together; to pound away

Gandhi in Chico, India, Colombia, Stockton

"Would Gandhi's nonviolence work today?"

John Morearty

In Chico the other weekend, I joined the Saturday peace vigil down at 3rd and Main. Eight or nine of us stood with our signs, chatting, waving to friendly honks. Gerda and Dave, sixty-ish, had me sign the book; "This vigil has been going for fifty years, we like to keep a record." I mentioned that I've taught about Gandhi, and Gerda turned to me:

"Yes, but would Gandhi's nonviolence work today?"

"Well, sure," I stammered, "it's working now, all over the world...."

Just then a lean, unshaven young guy on a bicycle rolled up and stopped. He glared at us.

"Why don't you people quit your whining and sniveling? If you had any f-ing guts you'd go out and kill the people who attacked our country. I was an Air Force pilot, and I dropped stuff on them you wouldn't even want to talk about. I say, Kill 'em all, and let God sort 'em out. Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan. Nuke 'em all, and quit your whining!"

Gerda and I took a few deep breaths. "We're not whining," she said. I asked if he knew about nuclear winter. After a few minutes, he rode off: "Have a great time whining!"

Gerda, Dave and I congratulated ourselves on not losing our tempers. "This was only the second person that angry in 17 years," she said.

I crossed the corner and said hello to a man about forty who was just rising from his black meditation cushion, next to a sign that read "Buddhist Peace Fellowship."

"I'm a Soto zen teacher," he said. "I sat on the sidewalk every day for two and a half years, during this Iraq war, and then I wrote a book about it called Sidewalk."

I told him about the Asian Buddhist monk we once protested with at McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento. He'd been fasting on water for a month, and he sat by the roadside for an hour or two, taking abuse from workers going in to the base. I asked how he endured that. "Oh," he replied softly, "our teacher taught us

to bow to the Buddha in every being."

The sidewalk sitter replied, "We would say, that fellow you were talking to was the Buddha; he came to test the steadiness of your practice."

Ria later told me, "It sounds like he was suffering from post-traumatic stress. Try just repeating a phrase or two, in his exact words. That will show you're giving him your full attention."

In his new book *Put Down Your Sword*, John Dear tells two stories of creative nonviolence. In India he spoke with Dr. Vandana Shiva, scientist and anti-globalization and environmental activist. She told him, "Environmentalists here started to do with forests what Gandhi did with salt. A huge forest satyagraha campaign was started. Thirty-nine people were killed, but there are forest satyagrahas around the world now. Why? Unjust laws are not meant to be obeyed. We must have the courage to break them nonviolently to protect humanity and the earth."

"When the new world order called 'globalization' was laid out,

they wanted to create a monopoly on seeds, control all the farms, and claim patents for every seed. Five companies could control all the food in the world, and so all health. Gandhi opposed England with the spinning wheel by getting people to make their own clothes. So we grow every crop, save all the seeds, and build model farming villages so that we can take care of our own lives.

"The WTO is wrecking the world's agriculture. So this is war, and we are a peace movement, protecting the species and farmers and all people."

John Dear also tells a story from Colombia.

"We drove from the beautiful town of Popayan out into the countryside to visit 'La Laguna,' where half of the Alto Naya community eventually settled after the Holy Week massacre of 2001. (Within six months that year, over 350 mountain people had been killed by the paramilitaries, who are sponsored by the Colombian army.) The people found lawyers, sued the government, and somehow won the right to a new plot of land, which they eventually claimed. Over 250 survivors now live together in a communal cooperative. They walked us through the glorious fields, surrounded by mountains in the distance, showed us their crops and animals, served us a delicious lunch.

"We have been together here for several years now," one of the leaders said. "Back on the mountain, they have no schools or teachers, but here we have three teachers. For the first three years, we lived in a bullfighting ring in Santander. When the government finally relented and gave us land after the lawsuit, they said only twenty families could come, but we all came and immediately started building our community. Now we grow organic coffee, corn, beans, other vegetables, and fruit, plus we raise cattle.

"We are trying to teach our young people not to give in to feelings of revenge or join the guerrillas. We want to provide new horizons for them, so we started a radio station where they could host their own radio programs."

Meanwhile in Stockton, the local nonprofit Puentes has planted an organic community garden at the county fairgrounds, and is planning more. And the Peace and Justice Network is creating Valley Community Radio, 89.5 FM. Gandhi is alive and working.

John Dear is a Jesuit priest, Gandhi scholar and war resister who was head of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and leader of the interfaith chaplains' corps in New York City after September 11. His book is called Put Down Your Sword: Answering the Gospel Call to Creative Nonviolence. Eerdman's Publishing, Grand Rapids Michigan, 2008.

Death threats against peace communities in Colombia

Peace Communities like San Jose de Apartado continue to receive a growing number of threats from paramilitaries. Last year Somos Defensores registered 125 cases of threats against human rights defenders, 32 of whom were subsequently assassinated. A fourth paramilitary chief confirmed that his forces supported President Uribe's 2002 election. More than 10,000 Colombian soldiers have received training at the

School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, at Fort Benning, Georgia. The Colombian army has the worst human rights record in the hemisphere and consistently collaborates with the paramilitaries. Nearly five million people been internally displaced by the conflict in Colombia that is funded by U.S. policy.

Source: Summer issue of Present!, published by School of Americas Watch. www.SOAW.org.

"Why don't you people quit your whining and sniveling? If you had any guts you'd go out and kill the people who attacked our country. I was an Air Force pilot, and I dropped stuff on them you wouldn't even want to talk about. I say, Kill 'em all, and let God sort 'em out. Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan. Nuke 'em all, and quit your whining!"



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Lawn signs, mugs, T-shirts

“War is NOT the answer” lawn signs come from the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). We are requesting a \$5 donation to cover costs (sorry, we can't ship lawn signs). We also have elegant pins made of pewter in the shape of the peace symbol for \$10. Also, handsome PJN T-shirts in many colors, and more. Come by the P&J Center to see these items, plus buttons and bumperstickers galore, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton CA 95204. Call 467-4455.



The Mediation Center of San Joaquin Summer Training - 2010

TRAINING OVERVIEW

The Basic Mediator Skills Training is an interactive course designed to give the participant a basic knowledge of the mediation process, through presentation, role play, and large group discussions. The ratio of trainers to trainees is high and the training is participatory in nature.

The classes are limited in size, so register today!

Mediation is a process in which a trained and neutral third party facilitates voluntary negotiation between parties to help them reach a mutually acceptable solution (win-win!)

Mediation focuses on mutual benefits and calls for the disputants to shift from the traditional oppositional approach to one of cooperation.

With the help of the mediator, the parties discuss their conflict in a safe and confidential environment. They identify the issues to better understand the situation from each other's perspectives. They talk it out rather than fight it out.

Through mediation, the parties involved can control the decisions that affect them.

Mediation is an effective alternative conflict resolution method for many situations:

- Neighbor—Neighbor Disputes
- Consumer—Merchant Disputes
- Victim—Offender Reconciliation
- Student Absenteeism and Behavior
- Employer—Employee Disputes
- Business Contract Disputes
- Landlord/Tenant Disputes
- Money & Property Transactions
- Small Claims & Unlawful Detainer

40 Hour Basic Mediator Skills Training

July 22-25th, 2010
 Thursday 1:00 pm—5:00pm
 Friday, Saturday, Sunday
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 and
 12 hours in real cases as your schedule permits.

This training meets the standards set by the Dispute Resolution Programs Act

Only \$500
 (\$12.50 per hour)
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Mediation certification also adds to your resume and gives you the ability to handle your own disputes on personal and professional levels, enhances your listening skills, and gives you the tools to objectively draw out the issues.

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 Ask us about
**C.E.U.s for Attorneys,
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- VORP—Victim-Offender Reconciliation
- Pre-Trauma Hearing Mediations
- Group Problem Solving
- Workplace CPR, Mediation for a Productive Workplace
- Individual Conflict Coaching

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- ASAM/PP—Adult Stress and Anger Management and Positive Parenting
- T4C—Thinking for a Change (Juvenile Justice, Probation)
- FST—Fresh Start Thinking (Teen Students)
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- Small Claims Advisory Line

TRAININGS AND MENTORING

- The Mediation Message
- Mediation Skills
- Basic Mediator Skills Training
- Conflict Resolution Skills
- Group Facilitations



Mediation Center of San Joaquin
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 Phone: 209-474-8794 Fax: 209-473-6464
www.MediatorsRus.org or Mediators@MediatorsRus.org

Progressive Secretary: Motivate, participate, advocate

Jim Harris

The Radical Right and the Tea Party movement are doing their best to muddy political waters and progressives are losing the battle for political power and access. Electronic lobbying, such as that offered by Progressive Secretary is only one kind of political activism. It should be used in addition to, not instead of, other political involvement. Even if you belong to dozens of lists and send all the letters from all of those lists, it may still not be what is needed. The coalition that put Obama in office is being out-performed

by the worst of the Radical Right and Tea Party reactionaries. They have learned a few things, and they know that they can change the political landscape. We must remain active. Go to a meeting, make phone calls, knock on front doors, participate a vigil, agitate, demonstrate against the backlash, and be sure to vote in the upcoming midterm elections. "The last hope of human liberty... rests on us." Thomas Jefferson.

Sending letters to the executive branch

Are you a member who can speak for, and could approve,

sending letters for a political action committee? An advocacy group? An interest group? Or a professional association? Can you contact the person who is?

President Obama has a special website dedicated to organizations communicating to him and we would love to send Progressive Secretary letters to that website <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/organizations>. This would be in addition to President Obama's website for individual communication: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact> Vice President Biden's website for individual communication is <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact-vp>.

Individual communication goes to the Office of Public Engagement <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ope/contact/>

Letters do reach Congress

An 8-year member of Progressive Secretary, Tom Smith, was recently stunned to receive an actual telephone call from Senator Burr's (R-NC) office. The call caught Tom completely by surprise. The conversation was the result of letters sent by Progressive Secretary on Tom's behalf concerning the recent West Virginia coal mining disaster and

the continual rise of pharmaceutical drug prices. Tom has become even more involved in Progressive Secretary as a result.

Tell your friends

Progressive Secretary keeps members informed about important political and social issues plus it sends email letters to Congress, the President, and other officials on peace, ecology, civil rights and other issues. There is no charge for this. There are no advertisements or other annoyances.

ACTION: Make your voice heard. Enroll in <http://ProgressiveSecretary.Org>

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July Calendar

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send all copy to: bgudici@caltel.com by the 7th of every month.

June 23—July 18

I Remember Mama, a Richard Rodgers musical, Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton \$15-\$25. 473-2424.

Mon, June 28

Delta Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm. Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 7 pm program with social time following. All welcome.

Sat, July 3

Taste of San Joaquin, 11 am—7:30 pm. Weber Point Event Center, 221 N Center St, Stockton. \$2, kids under 13 free. 464-5246.

The Riot Before at The Plea for Peace Center, 8 pm. 630 E Weber Ave, Stockton. \$5. 981-2311.

Sun, July 4

The Foreign Resort at The Plea for Peace Center, 8 pm. 630 E Weber Ave, Stockton. \$5. 981-2311.

Mon, July 5

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm, Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. ccgmemb@gmail.com

July 6—July 30

San Joaquin Potters' Guild show. Reception July 9, 5-8 pm. M-F 10-5. Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. 463-4033

July 8

Artist reception—Chella, 7-9 pm. Stockton Art League Goodwin Gallery, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 466-6604.

Single Payer San Joaquin meeting, 6:30 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. bailey_hcasj@sbcglobal.net

July 10

Artist reception—Bria Maria Valdez, 4-7 pm. Stockton Art League Goodwin Gallery, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 466-6604.

Destruction of a Rose at The Plea for Peace Center, 8 pm. 630 E Weber Ave, Stockton. \$5. 981-2311.

Sun, July 11

World Cup Final Viewing Party, 10:30 am University Center, UOP. 472-1676.

Sat, July 17

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting (see p 1), 9-11 am, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

Courage Campaign Progressive Coalition meeting. Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd. 8 am. Free. Contact Elena, 649-0396

Astronomy in the Park, Oak Grove Nature Center, telescopes available between 9 & 11 pm. Oak Grove Regional Park, 4520 W Eight Mile Rd, Stockton. \$5 park fee per vehicle. 953-8814.

First Mondays

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm, Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. ccgmemb@gmail.com

Fourth Mondays

Delta Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm. Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 7 pm program with social time following. All welcome.

Second Thursdays

Single Payer San Joaquin meeting, 6:30 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. bailey_hcasj@sbcglobal.net

Thursdays

Stand up and speak out! Demonstrate for peace. Plenty of happy honks! Pacific Avenue north of Delta stoplight, every Thursday 5-6 pm. Signs provided, or bring your own. Free parking at Sherwood Mall. Info John 464-3326 or Ria 462-3340.

Fridays

Downtown Stockton Certified Farmers' Market, Main Street in front of the Fox Theatre, Stockton. 9 am-2 pm. Free. 464-5246.

Third Saturdays

Courage Campaign Progressive Coalition meetings. Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd. 8:00 am. Free. Contact Elena, 649-0396

Saturdays

Crosstown Freeway Farmers Market, under the freeway between El Dorado & San Joaquin, Stockton. 7-11, or when sold out. 943-1830

Volunteers needed to distribute Connections to well-established routes. About two hours per month. Easy and fun! Call Dean or Marcia Savage, 209-339-1599.

Alternatives to Violence Project

Learn a new way to make a real difference in our community...take a Conflict Resolution Workshop

ENJOY a hands-on experiential workshop where you'll connect deeply with others, laugh, share, listen while learning ways to reduce conflict in you world, your family or at work.

- Take no notes. Come prepared to discover new ways of approaching disagreement.
- Treat yourself to this workshop purely for personal growth or as a first step toward facilitating ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT (AVP) workshops in prisons, community or classroom. AVP began in 1975 and is active worldwide.
- This workshop is led by experienced volunteers who facilitate workshops at California prisons and in the community.
- Receive a certificate useful in job applications/resume.
- Participants MUST attend ALL three days.
- See www.avpcalifornia.org for details.

REGISTER NOW!

When: July 30–August 1, 2010 (3-Day Workshop)

Friday: 6–9 p.m., Saturday: 9 a.m.–9 p.m., and Sunday: 1–5 pm

Where: First Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton, 2737 Pacific Avenue, Stockton

How: For more information/to reserve a spot, please contact: Joyce Banzhaf at 530.477.7455 or joycebanzhaf@yahoo.com, or Martina Virrey at 209.830.3891 or Martina.Virrey@cdcr.ca.gov

Donation: \$25-100 sliding scale. No one turned away for lack of funds. Workshop includes materials, Saturday dinner, coffee and snacks. Bring a bag lunch Saturday or a dish to share. (AVP is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit. Your donation is tax deductible.)

Registration Deadline: July 23, 2010. Space is limited.



"One prophetic practice is greater than the atom bomb"

—Goolam Hooren Patel (1915-2010), grandfather of Dr. Marood Cajee, Stockton

Walking to Omega: Tales of a Peacenik Carpenter by John Morearty; signed copies, \$20
John at 464-3326, john@morearty.com

Talking It Through

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

Peace & Justice Network sponsors two half-hour shows:

"Let's Talk" hosted by Margee Ensign features speakers at University of the Pacific and elsewhere documentaries of important community meetings and events. Mondays 6 pm

"Talking It Through" hosted by Sammy Nunez features live discussions of important community issues, especially with young people. Mondays at 6:30 pm.

Both shows are produced by Peace and Justice volunteer Vince Kotecki on SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26.

For up to the minute listings of current shows, see our website: www.pjnsjc.org, click on Talking It Through.

connections

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Open Letter to the San Joaquin Board of Supervisors

Close San Joaquin General

Ruth Aguila, RN

Where we are

As you know, we are in a period of economic stagnation and contraction which is devastating our local economy. San Joaquin County is at an all time budget low, forced to cut:

- * Vital health care services
- * Services promoting public safety
- * Services throughout the judicial system
- * Educational opportunities
- * Library services
- * Maintenance of public works

For the last two years we have been making hard choices and we are not done. We must fortify ourselves for tough choices yet to come if we are to strengthen our community for the future.

San Joaquin General Hospital hard facts

San Joaquin General Hospital has operated at a deficit for decades. The SJC 10/11 fiscal budget estimates \$9 million at the least will be required to keep the hospital operating. Not long ago, it seemed perfectly acceptable to subsidize our County hospital with millions of dollars from county general funds. It was a "teaching" hospital and served the underserved, we told ourselves. It was a beacon of compassion and service.

But, in light of our current budget deficit, can we still afford our attachment to one prized program? Is it reasonable to place this one point of service over all others? In fact, the continued county sponsorship of San Joaquin General Hospital is bankrupting this county. Let's open our eyes to the obvious conclusion: San Joaquin General Hospital must be allowed to close. Only 16 counties out of 58 run hospitals

Can it be saved?

It has been suggested by consultants that Ambulatory Care Services (ACS—the only

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significant revenue source for the hospital for decades), obtain Federal Qualified Health Center (FQHC) certification, in order to draw down additional federal funding. Perhaps, if begun 5 years ago, this idea could have been a part of a solution, but it takes several years to establish regulatory requirements. Stanislaus County did achieve certification for their county-run clinics. Four years later, they have yet to be reimbursed. The Federal government initially agreed that it owed Stanislaus County \$6.4M. That amount has been reduced to \$4M still not received per Stanislaus County Budget 10/11. How much did San Joaquin County pay these consultants to provide us with this "solution"?

The physician training program (residency program) has been showcased as a solution to physician shortages (particularly specialists) in the central valley. In fact, few graduates have stayed in the community and fewer still have continued to serve the uninsured & underserved. For the most part, those who stayed in the area work within the closed Kaiser system or in private practice. A significant portion of the physicians in residency at SJGH are foreign-born graduates required to meet additional oversight requirements, costing the county even more (one additional year of supervised training means two paid physicians overseeing each patient throughout their lengthy training). In a nutshell, San Joaquin County has run a costly program that has benefited the medical private sector. And

we still have a significant shortage of primary care and specialty physicians. Is our prized program such a prize?

We can do better

Our community is served by 5 area hospitals and a Kaiser facility. It is time for these community partners to divide up the services performed by San Joaquin General Hospital.

We must keep in mind that Medi-Cal is run by the State of California. If reimbursement rates are insufficient to run services in our communities, that must be addressed at the State level. Counties are not responsible to subsidize care for the Medi-Cal population. Counties are responsible for services to the medically indigent in their communities. The county-run Medical Assistance Program (MAP) serving the medically indigent could move to an independent insurance plan model, with pay- negotiated rates for inpatient hospital care and contracts to provide outpatient services, labs and the like.

Ultimately, closing San Joaquin General Hospital and beginning the task of creating other avenues of service is a hard choice, but it is the best choice before us. We can follow our present course and continue to gut other aspects of community life, while shoring up the County Hospital—or we can courageously take this vitally necessary action for the health of all our community.

Ruth Aguila, RN, is an 18-year veteran of San Joaquin County Health Care Services.

SEIU: SJ County sabotages contract settlement

San Joaquin County administrators, on June 10, escalated their confrontation with county workers by rejecting out of hand a union proposal to save the County an estimated \$11 million next year. Instead, they put forth a last-minute list of demands they've known for months that workers would find unacceptable.

The latest escalation erases nearly all the gains made in recent weeks between the County and the 4,500 county workers represented by SEIU Local 1021. The union's proposal to save \$11 million or more was offered in response to the County's request for \$8.7 million in savings.

"We thought we were so close to an agreement we didn't even want to leave the bargaining table, but stay there until we had something we could take back to the membership with our recommendation," said Dale Naasz, a member of the union's bargaining team, who said that he and the rest of the team were stunned by the County's unexplained backpedaling. They were hoping to take an agreement to members for a vote as early as June 21.

"Management's latest proposal takes us farther from that goal than ever," he said. "It's regressive back to 2009, when the County demanded 26 furlough days and our cost-of-living increase and wouldn't consider our proposals at that time either."

The County's June 10 proposal is just the latest attempt to escalate the conflict with its workforce during the past several months of bargaining. To the Board of Supervisors, Lopez says, "we're willing to listen to the union and work with them," but at the bargaining table, Labor Relations Director John Bertke says, "it's our way or the highway."

Management is also engaging in unethical regressive bargaining. County negotiators had already

agreed in principle to accept Voluntary Time Off (VTO) and a widely applicable Early Retirement Incentive. This week, they abruptly refused to consider VTO at all and severely restricted the retirement incentive in a way that will virtually ensure a reduction in county services.

In addition to VTO and early retirement, union members are offering to take eight mandatory furlough days, and all savings from the proposals would go toward preserving county services by keeping people employed. County administrators refused to respond to the union's June 9 proposal, but only increased their demands that employees unilaterally give back a cost-of-living increase and step increases in their current contract (this is not new contract bargaining). The County proposal offers no guarantee that savings would go back into providing services to county residents.

If current practice is any indication, the money will instead be spent on expensive secret contracts with outside vendors to perform the same jobs county workers are doing now for less. Last month, the union was forced to sue the County to obtain information about those contracts. And County administrators have already shown their numbers cannot be trusted. Barely a month after outsourcing medical transcriptionists at San Joaquin General Hospital to save the County money, they asked for an additional \$50,000 for private transcriptionists.

Over the past two years, the County has already cut 641 line staff positions (about 10 percent) while the number of executive management positions has increased by 10 percent. The County's current proposal is to lay off 94 more workers.

Source: SEIU release 6/10/10 randy.lyman@seiu1021.org