

# connections

PRICELESS

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## SAVE THE DATES

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**WALDO FEST .....20**

**JUNE 20**  
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## Rebuilding the American Dream

# Employee Free Choice Act

*Craig Hansen*

We Americans are experiencing the largest recession since the Great Depression. Currently, many are finding that the American dream is out of reach during this time of economic hardship. Families are losing their homes and workers their jobs, retirement funds have dropped with the stock market and many Americans don't have health care insurance. We need to rebuild the middle class in order to rebuild the American dream.

The Employee Free Choice Act—also known as the “card check” bill—is supported by President Obama along with Senator Barbara Boxer, 100% of California’s Democratic Congress delegation, 100% of our Democratic Assembly members, and 100% of our California Democratic State Senators.

President Obama said to the executive board of the AFL-CIO, America’s biggest union federation. “We need to level the playing field for workers and the unions that represent their interests.” The playing field that the president referred to is so uneven that one of the leading human rights organizations, Human Rights Watch, issued a report that concluded “a culture of near-impunity has taken shape in much of U.S. labor law and practice.” The report went on to explain that “many workers who try to organize are spied on,

harassed, pressured, threatened, suspended, fired, deported or otherwise victimized in reprisal for their exercise of the right to freedom of association.”

There are a variety of tactics that employers use, often with the assistance of expensive union-busting consultants. One common tactic used by employers is to hold workers hostage in required meetings where the employer delivers anti-union propaganda. Another tactic allows the employer to give union-busting consultants workers’ personal information, so the consultant can go visit the worker at home. One of the most sinister tactics is to illegally fire workers who are leaders in a union organization campaign. If firing workers who are trying to organize to form a union is illegal, why do employers do it 25% of the time? Because the penalties are so weak against it, that it is in employer’s economic interest to break the law—the cost of doing business. The Human Rights Watch says “Any employer intent on resisting workers self-organization can drag out legal proceedings for years, fearing little more than an order to post a written notice in the workplace promising not to repeat unlawful conduct and grant back pay to a worker fired for organizing”.

### Action

The Employee Free Choice Act



will do a number of things. First, it will create real penalties for employers that violate workers rights when they are trying to organize to form a union. Second, the act will let workers choose whether to decide on a union through a secret election or signing cards authorizing union representation. Third, the Act allows for a mechanism that will provide mediation and arbitration for first contract disputes between employers and workers.

One local supporter of the Employee Free Choice Act is Tom Aja, a member of the Operating Engineers Local No. 3, who says that “being a union member allowed me to live the American dream. I own my own home, my own cars, I will have a secure retirement and a healthcare plan—all thanks to my union.” Workers

in a union are nearly three times more likely to have guaranteed pensions and earn 28 percent more than non-union workers. Since workers in a union earn more, they can contribute to the economy and they do not depend on the government for support. In California, “three out of four unionized workers have health-care coverage; among nonunion works, it’s less than half.” With higher education being impractical or too expensive for some people, unions can help train these people and set them up in life-long careers. Unions also give people pride in their work and are social organizations that allow inclusion and political participation. Unions are a mechanism to allow the poor Americans to escape poverty.

(continued page 2)

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# Corruption on parade

Bruce Giudici

As the Vietnam War exposed American foreign policy to be less generous and humane than imagined in the aftermath of World War II, today's blatant corruption at the top of major American institutions should open a few eyes and will make change hard to resist. It's merely a matter of time.

We find repeated instances of our leaders greasing the same palms ("defense"), paying the same lobbyists (banking), and talking to the usual suspects (health care), attempting to create the illusion of change we voted for last November. Defense spending is still up, including one war in Iraq we thought was winding down and another in Afghanistan with no end in sight. The over-\$500 billion military budget (that's 500,000 million dollar bills) has so infiltrated our economy that there is no political voice in America

willing to cut military-related jobs (even if they accomplish nothing) in their district.

Of course, the banks merely (and literally) "own the place." Congress can't even get a first mortgage included in bankruptcy proceedings, as the subsequent foreclosure crisis widens and banks repossess our homes.

In short, here's what happens for those of us taking part in the "American Dream" (how's that for marketing?) of "buying" a house: we pay at an interest rate at least 3-4% above the banker's cost of money (ensuring their profit); we pay interest on the declining (amortized) balance of the loan—ensuring that for a 15 year, 6% \$200,000 loan we will pay \$230,487 to the bank in total interest (sounds like 115% to me); the interest is tax-deductible (making the loan affordable for most, helping the bank seal the

deal, while short-changing the government of needed tax revenues) and, finally, if we miss a few payments, we lose everything we have sunk into the house—interest, principal, improvements—the bank repossesses and re-sells the property, starting the process all over again.

In this way, the illusion of having "purchased the American Dream" has made the banking industry too powerful to fail. Want an alternative? What about really paying 6% simple interest for that \$200,000 loan—totalling \$12,000, split over 30 years, amounting to a low \$34/month in interest? I know that this would signal the end of the world as we know it. But on the bright side, we could say goodbye to million dollar bonuses.

And the final insult to we, the people: the shameful way the single payer health care option is continually ignored by corporate

Bruce Giudici, editor



Democrats in Washington. We are literally dying out here, with our overpriced, inefficient, and immoral health insurance system—forcing choices no one should ever be forced to make. We deserve better—now's the time to tell your representative as often as you can.

The past month has truly shown the work that needs to be done. It's not enough to have identified all the problems that were ignored for the past 28 years and longer; we now have to work against entrenched people who are getting rich off this system they have created. The economic weakness that hurts us all makes change possible. Keep informed.

## EFCA (continued from page 1)

A broad coalition of supporters has emerged to support the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. Indeed, a "group of 40 leading economists, including three Nobel laureates, Kenneth Arrow, Robert Solow and Joseph Stiglitz, have endorsed a statement published in the Washington Post backing Employee Free Choice, arguing that the lack of bargaining power of ordinary American workers had made the economic crisis worse."

The fact that such prominent economists, with 1,000 of their colleagues (according to a AFL-CIO blogger), have taken such a stance underscores how economically important it is that the Employee Free Choice Act be passed. Democrats of all stripes, as well as LGBT groups such as Stonewall Democrats (SharedAgenda.org), and traditional union supporters have joined the coalition. Trade unions all around the world have been supporting the Employee Free Choice Act, partly because America has the lowest union membership rate of any developed country—but also because anti-union tactics developed in America are increasingly being used abroad.

If more Americans are going to be able to have a chance to live the American dream, like Mr. Aja, the Employee Free Choice Act must be passed. The stakes are enormous, not only because millions of Americans might miss out on the American dream thanks to "big business groups [who] have reportedly spent tens of millions of dollars fighting the bill." The fight over the Employee Free Choice Act may well end up being the largest lobbying battle in the history of our nation.

**ACTION:** Senator Dianne Feinstein does not yet support the Employee Free Choice Act. You can help make rebuilding the American dream a reality by writing to Senator Feinstein expressing your support for the Employee Free Choice Act (for an example, see The most important letter: yours).

Craig Hansen is Chairman of the San Joaquin Young Democrats.



## The most important letter: yours

American workers need new laws that level the playing field and allow workers the opportunity to exercise their freedom to form unions and to bargain for better wages and benefits. Please take a minute and write a letter to Senator Dianne Feinstein asking her to support the Employee Free Choice Act. Thank you for helping working Americans and their families have a chance to form a union and live the American Dream.

Dear Senator Feinstein:

Please support the Employee Free Choice Act. This would give working people a fair chance to form unions and bargain collectively. The Employee Free Choice Act is crucial to turning around the economy and rebuilding America's middle class.

Nationally, union members are 52 percent more likely to have job-provided health care, nearly three times more likely to have guaranteed pensions and earn 28 percent more than nonunion workers. These statistics explain why almost 60 million Americans would form a union tomorrow, if given the chance. But few workers do form a union; because 25% of employers illegally fire organizing workers.

Most CEOs would not work for a day without contracts to protect their high pay and perks. But they routinely deny employees the same opportunity. Passing the Employee Free Choice Act, will give working Americans the right to have a voice on the job and levels that playing field so that workers can form a union by majority sign-up.

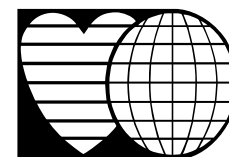
Sincerely,



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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."

# U.S. interrogators may have killed dozens of detainees

John Byrne

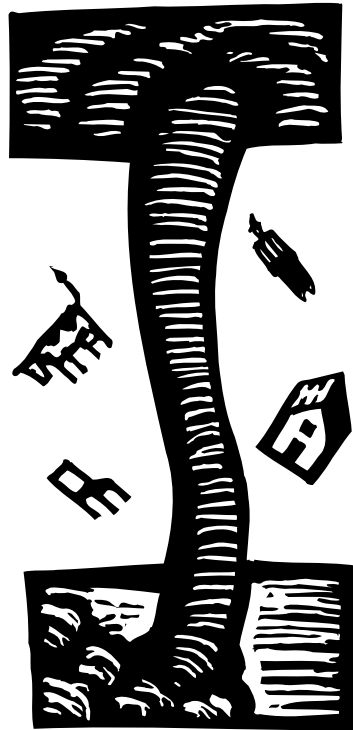
United States interrogators killed nearly four dozen detainees during or after their interrogations, according to a report published by a human rights researcher based on a Human Rights First report and followup investigations.

In all, 98 detainees have died while in U.S. hands.

Thirty-four homicides have been identified, with at least eight detainees—and as many as 12—having been tortured to death, according to a 2006 Human Rights First report that underwrites the researcher's posting. The causes of 48 more deaths remain uncertain. The researcher, John Sifton, worked for five years for Human Rights Watch. In a posting Tuesday, he documents myriad cases of detainees who died at the hands of their U.S. interrogators. Some of the instances he cites are graphic.

Most of those taken captive were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. They include at least one Afghani soldier, Jamal Naseer, who was mistakenly arrested in 2004. "Those arrested with Naseer later said that during interrogations U.S. personnel punched and kicked them, hung them upside down, and hit them with sticks or cables," Sifton writes. "Some said they were doused with cold water and forced to lie in the snow. Nasser collapsed about two weeks after the arrest, complaining of stomach pain, probably an internal hemorrhage." ...In a graphic instance, a former Iraqi general was beaten by U.S. forces and suffocated to death. The military officer charged in the death was given just 60 days house arrest....

Death from interrogation is hard to separate from simple detainee death while in U.S. custody. But



one particular case stands out that seems to have fallen by the wayside—the murder of CIA "ghost" detainee named Manadel al-Jamadi, who was tortured to death by a CIA team at Abu Ghraib in 2003.

"Pictures of Abu Ghraib guards Charles Graner and Sabrina Harman posing with al-Jamadi's dead body, the so-called Ice Man, were among the most notorious of the Abu Ghraib photographs published in April 2004," Sifton notes. "A CIA officer named Mark Swanner and an interpreter led the team that interrogated al-Jamadi. Nine Navy personnel were also implicated. An autopsy conducted by the U.S. military five days after al-Jamadi's death found that the cause: 'blunt force injuries complicated by compromised respiration.'"

"Reporting by *The New Yorker's* Jane Mayer and NPR's John McChesney revealed that al-Jamadi was strung up from handcuffs

behind his back, a torture tactic sometimes called a 'Palestinian hanging,'" he adds. "After an investigation, the CIA referred the case to the Department of Justice for possible criminal prosecution of the CIA personnel involved, but no charges were ever brought. Prosecutors accused 10 Navy personnel of the crime; nine were given nonjudicial punishments, such as rank reductions and letters of reprimand, and a 10th was acquitted."

Additionally, Sifton notes the CIA may have had some close calls with detainees nearly dying during interrogations: the May 10, 2005, Bush Administration torture memo by Steven Bradbury notes that doctors were nearby to perform a tracheotomy if during waterboarding the suspect is approaching death.

"Most seriously, for reasons of physical fatigue of psychological resignation, the subject may simply give up, allowing excessive filling of the airways and loss of consciousness," Bradbury wrote. "An unresponsive subject should be righted immediately, and the integrator should deliver a subxyphoid thrust to expel the water. If this fails to restore normal breathing, aggressive medical intervention is required. ..."

The report says CIA doctors were on hand with necessary equipment to perform a tracheotomy if necessary during waterboarding sessions: "[W]e are informed that the necessary emergency medical equipment is always present—although not visible to the detainee—during any application of the waterboard."

John Byrne is editor of *Raw Story*

Source: *Raw Story* 5/6/09 <http://rawstory.com>

# Obama: come clean on torture



Hours ago, the Obama administration disappointingly reversed its promise to make public photos depicting detainee abuse by U.S. personnel overseas. The Department of Defense recently told a federal judge that it would release a "substantial number" of photos in response to a court ruling in an ACLU Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.

There is no doubt that these photos would be disturbing. The day we are no longer upset by such repugnant acts would be a sad one. But, the outrage related to these photos shouldn't be about their release. It should be about the horrific crimes that they depict. And, we must demand accountability for the widespread abuse they document.

The very fact that these photos exist only underscores the need for accountability and for a full investigation of crimes committed. As President Obama said on his first full day in office, "A democracy requires accountability, and accountability requires transparency."

The ACLU pressed for the recent release of the long-secret Bush torture memos and is now calling for the release of the abuse photos because—as painful as it is—confronting the evidence of what was done is essential if we

are to live by the law. Those who turned a blind eye to abuse and those who put the despicable U.S. torture program in place had no right to ignore the rule of law.

And, no matter how hard some might try to turn us away from the facts, we also have no right to ignore the rule of law. We have to call to account those who did this and follow the evidence wherever it leads.

The debate about the release of these photos will continue in the courts, and the ACLU will be there to argue for transparency and to insist that a democracy thrives on the free flow of information.

**ACTION:** Tell President Obama you support transparency and accountability at the highest levels of government.

Source: *ACLU release 5/13/09. ACLU, 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10004* <http://action.aclu.org>

## Comment on courthouse draft EIR

We have the opportunity to influence the design and location of the new courthouse in downtown Stockton. This is one of the most important issues for Stockton in our time. Please take a moment to review the revised draft EIR and put your comments in writing. Comments are due by June 20. All the latest information about the new Stockton courthouse can be viewed at [http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects\\_sanjoaquin.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects_sanjoaquin.htm)

Interested parties who wish to submit comments regarding the Revised Draft EIR must submit comments no later than 5:00 PM on June 20, 2009 to:

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—Joy Neas

In all, 98 detainees  
have died while in  
U.S. hands.

# Actual bailout may exceed \$10 trillion

Matt Renner

A freshman congressman has elevated the stakes in an ongoing fight between Congress and the Federal Reserve over transparency in the massive bailout of the financial sector. Ask most people on the street how much money taxpayers are using to save banks and you will probably hear the number \$700 billion. The Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) passed by Congress at the urging of the Bush administration and then Treasury secretary Henry Paulson, allocated an unprecedented sum of taxpayer money for the sole purpose of propping up the financial sector in its darkest hour.

But the actual number is much bigger. The current block of taxpayer money that has been pledged by the US government and the Federal Reserve to prevent the system from collapsing, according to an analysis by Bloomberg News, is roughly \$12.8 trillion as of March 31. This money has been lent, spent or guaranteed to prevent a systemic collapse.

Critics have pointed out that the Federal Reserve, the public-private partnership that controls the supply of dollars on the world stage and in the United States, controls the majority of this emergency money—\$7.765 trillion—and is being secretive about where the money is going.

In an interview with Truthout, Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Florida), said the Federal Reserve is practicing "Enron accounting," and has "socialized Wall Street's bad bets." A lawyer with years of experience battling corruption on behalf of taxpayers and whistleblowers, Representative Grayson began a crusade to follow the bailout money after taking office in January 2009. As a member of the powerful House Financial Services Committee, Representative Grayson has been challenging bank executives and members of the Federal Reserve to disclose the terms of the massive hidden deals.

"The Federal Reserve likes to bill itself as an independent agency but what it really is is an agency that is entirely dependent on banks. When you look and see how it is structured, you see that Wall Street runs the show. This is something

**"Essentially what the Fed has done is to change Uncle Sam into Uncle Sap. We have become the saps for Wall Street"**

that people on the political right have been complaining about for decades. Everybody's worst nightmares are now taking place because we are seeing the transfer of literally trillions of dollars of wealth from the taxpayer to the bad banks," Grayson said.

Regarded by many as the most powerful institution in the world, the Federal Reserve operates in concert with the US government, but is not under public control. Set up to be free from political influence, the seven-member Federal Reserve board of governors is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate for a single 14-year term. Because the Federal Reserve system is a collaboration between public and private entities, the actions the 12 regional banks take can be hidden from public view.

The Federal Reserve has stepped in as the "lender of last resort," bailing out financial firms by lending them billions of dollars, directly purchasing their so-called "toxic assets" and guaranteeing or insuring some of the piles of risky assets. These actions have absorbed much of the risk for banks and financial institutions on behalf of the US taxpayer. Institutions such as American International Group (A.I.G.), Citigroup, Bear Sterns, Bank of America, and others have been thrown a lifeline by the Federal Reserve.

The balance sheet of the Federal Reserve has more than doubled as a result of its emergency lending and buying, and currently stands at \$2.06 trillion as of May 6. But the transactions which do not appear on the Federal Reserve's balance sheet are deeply concerning to Representative Grayson.

In a February 11 hearing, Representative Grayson grilled Vikram Pandit, the CEO of

Citigroup, and took the Federal Reserve to task for what he called a "heads I win, tails you loose" deal, under which the Federal Reserve agreed to absorb most of the possible losses on a \$300 billion pile of the Citi's "toxic" mortgaged-backed securities. Citi's Pandit called the deal "insurance."

"In the [Citigroup deal] there are billions upon billions of dollars of income on these assets even after they go bad because they [the underlying mortgages] don't all go bad. So these assets produce billions of dollars of income every year and Citigroup gets to keep the income as well as the appreciation on the assets and the government just takes the losses," Representative Grayson told Truthout.

The Citigroup deal was made public because it involved other government agencies including the US Treasury. According to Bloomberg and Representative Grayson, the Federal Reserve has been engaging in transactions which it has kept off of its publicly available balance sheet.

"The strange thing about this is that only two trillion of this activity has turned up on the Federal Reserve's balance sheet. In the case of the Citibank deal, it is on Citibank's balance sheet and off the Federal Reserve's balance sheet, which makes no sense whatsoever," Grayson said, adding "The Federal Reserve has adopted Enron book-keeping procedures at this point."

The off-balance sheet activities of the Federal Reserve may have helped sick banks clear out their books and pass the so-called bank "stress test," according to Grayson.

"Essentially what the Fed has done is to change Uncle Sam into Uncle Sap. We have become the

saps for Wall Street," Grayson said. Representative Grayson told Truthout that the Federal Reserve has not been responsive to requests for information from his office. He suggested that Congress may need to use its subpoena power to pry loose more information about where the money is going and what the Federal Reserve is taking as collateral to back up their loans. Bloomberg News is suing the Federal Reserve for this and other information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

In a May 6 hearing, Representative Grayson asked Elizabeth Coleman, the Federal Reserve inspector general—the institution's internal watchdog—if she was monitoring the institution's bailout activities. In her response, Coleman made clear that she does not believe she has oversight authority over the actions of the individual Federal Reserve banks, instead she only has authority to inspect the activities of the Federal Reserve board of governors. Under questioning, Coleman said that the Federal Reserve office of the inspector general was not aware of the Federal Reserve's specific bailout activities.

Representative Grayson: "Do you know who received that \$1 trillion plus that the Fed extended and put on its balance sheet since last September [2008]?"

Elizabeth Coleman: "I do not know, we have not looked at that specific area."

Later ...

Representative Grayson: "Have you done any investigation or auditing of off-balance sheet transactions conducted by the Federal Reserve?"

Elizabeth Coleman: "At this point, we are conducting our lending facilities project at a fairly high level and have not gotten



to a specific level of detail to be in a position to respond to your question."

Federal Reserve officials have said that releasing the names of the companies which have borrowed billions of dollars would signal weakness to the market and could cause a run on the banks.

Famed former Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee investigator and international finance expert Jack Blum told Truthout that this fear has some merit.

"The Federal Reserve takes the attitude that their job is to protect the banking system. You can't step out and start telling people which banks are troubled and where the crisis is because the consequence of that will be to have everybody desert the bank. That is the thorny problem that has led the Federal Reserve to keep quiet what they are doing. That has a degree of legitimacy," Blum said. But this situation cannot last forever, according to Blum.

"The question is how far do you let them carry it. At what point, when everybody now knows how screwed up things are, once you've gotten past the point where you've guaranteed everything, how much longer do you have to maintain secrecy to protect the institution?"

*Matt Renner is an editor and Washington reporter for Truthout.*

*Source: truthout | Report 5/13/09  
www.truthout.org*

# Obama's "major" health care announcement: 3 questions

David Sirota

So the big news today is President Obama's press conference with the health insurance industry touting the industry's "voluntary" commitment to slashing \$2 trillion off Americans' health care bills over the next decade. The New York Times reports that this voluntary announcement is motivated by the health insurance industry's "hope to stave off new government price constraints that might be imposed by Congress or a National Health Board of the kind favored by many Democrats."

My three questions are really simple:

1) If the health industry is saying it can lower costs by \$2 trillion over 10 years and remain highly profitable, isn't the industry admitting that it was planning to absolutely bilk consumers, and has been bilking consumers in the past? Put another way, isn't the industry admitting that its entire business model is based on outright profiteering?

2) Why should the American public believe the health industry is going to voluntarily do anything to cut into its profits? Health executives have a fiduciary responsibility to private shareholders to maximize profits. Voluntarily lowering those profits would violate that fiduciary responsibility. Are we really expected to believe these health executives will, out of the goodness of their hearts, violate their fiduciary responsibilities? What has actually changed to suggest that they will violate their fiduciary responsibilities and help health care consumers?

3) Isn't President Obama legitimizing voices that will use that added credibility later on to try to derail serious health care reform? Today's press conference has the President of the United States effectively saying that the health insurance industry should have a major seat at the health-

reform table—and that it should be trusted. But any serious health care reform will need to take on the health insurance industry in a way that will make that industry unhappy. When that eventually happens, won't the previous efforts to legitimize the health insurance industry's voice add credibility to its opposition to reform? I think so, and agree with Ezra Klein who says, "The fact that the White House is making a big deal of [the health industry's] support means" the White House is suggesting that it "would be a big deal if they lost it."

Look, I have no problem with the industry making voluntary commitments about lowering costs—and if it follows through, then that's great. But I also have no illusion about industries making voluntary commitments to reduce their profits—those commitments usually aren't worth the paper they're written on. And so I worry that promoting such commitments as "major" can be politically dangerous and, frankly, counterproductive.

Obama's political calculus throughout his life has been to avoid making enemies. He seems to believe that he can make lots of different interests happy—and on many issues, that's certainly possible. But on

some issues, like health care, it's a binary fight: Either you appease the health industry and preserve the status quo they are making big bucks off of, or you take on the health industry and make real change. Touting the industry's "voluntary" commitment to not rip off consumers seems more in the appeasing camp than in the "real change" camp.

Source: *The Campaign For America's Future* 5/11/09 [www.ourfuture.org](http://www.ourfuture.org)



# Single-payer health care myths and facts

## Myth: Single-payer would cost too much.

Fact: Because of our patchwork system of private insurance, more than 30% of every health care dollar is spent on administration rather than on care. This includes underwriting, marketing, billing, denying claims, profit and paper-pushing that is foisted on hospitals and physician offices. By eliminating private insurance, a single-payer system would reduce administrative spending by roughly half (nearly \$400 billion annually). These savings are enough to provide every American with comprehensive health insurance, without increasing total spending.

## Myth: Single-payer would cost businesses too much.

Fact: Because a single-payer system is more efficient than our current system, health care costs would be lower, and businesses that already provide health care benefits would save money. In Canada, the three major auto manufacturers (Ford, GM and Daimler-Chrysler) have all publicly endorsed Canada's single-payer health system from a business and financial standpoint. In the U.S., Ford pays more for its workers' health insurance than for the steel to make its cars.

## Myth: Lines for care would be extremely long.

Fact: In countries with single-payer, urgently needed care is always provided immediately. People in these countries may have to wait for some elective procedures like cataract removal or knee replacement for arthritis, but because the U.S. spends double what they do on health care—and would continue to spend this much under a single-payer system—access to care here would be better and our waits would be much shorter.

## Myth: People would overuse the system.

Fact: Most estimates do indicate that there would be some increased use of the system, mostly by the nearly 50 million people who currently do not have health insurance. However, the dramatic savings from a single-payer system would easily cover the increased use of some services. Remember, doctors would still control most health care utilization—patients don't typically receive prescriptions or tests just because they want them, but because their doctors have deemed them appropriate.

## Myth: Government programs are wasteful and inefficient.

Fact: Some are better than

others, just as some businesses are better than others. Just to name a few of the most successful and helpful: the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Social Security. Consider Medicare, which is national health insurance for the elderly; its overhead is approximately 3% of every health care dollar spent on administration, while overhead and profits for private insurance can add up to more than 15%.

## Myth: The government would make health care decisions for patients and dictate how physicians practice medicine.

Fact: In countries with a national health insurance system, physicians are rarely questioned about their medical practice, and usually only in cases of suspected fraud. Compare this to our system, where patients and doctors routinely must ask insurance companies for permission for certain procedures, tests and treatments.

\*Information compiled from Physicians for a National Health Program, part of the Leadership Conference for Guaranteed Health Care

Source: *Public Citizen* 5/5/09, [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org)

# Private Medicare Advantage plans get extra \$11.4 billion

Private health insurance plans serving Medicare beneficiaries will be paid \$11.4 billion more in 2009 than what the same beneficiaries would have cost if covered by the traditional Medicare fee-for-service program, a new Commonwealth Fund study finds. The new analysis, conducted by researchers at George Washington University and the Fund, estimates that since the program was enacted in 2004, a total of \$43 billion in extra payments have been made to private plans. The bulk of these

extra payments were mandated by the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, which was intended to expand the role of private plans in Medicare in an effort to reduce growth in Medicare spending. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that bringing payments to private Medicare Advantage (MA) plans in line with fee-for-service Medicare would save \$157 billion over the next 10 years.

*The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation that aims to*

*promote a high performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency.*

Source: *The Commonwealth Fund* release 5/4/09 [www.commonwealthfund.org](http://www.commonwealthfund.org)





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# Turning the corner on military spending: 5 ways

## 1. Prevent wars

Modern wars are different from the conflicts of past decades. They are more likely to be triggered by violent outbreaks in weak and failing states over scarce resources. Between 80 and 90 percent of the victims of wars in this century are civilians, and fighting intensifies more and more often to the level of genocide and ethnic cleansing. By helping to prevent deadly conflict, using diplomatic and development tools in the early stages of instability and violent conflict, the United States and other nations could save lives and reduce the need for military intervention.

Unfortunately, the United States has stocked its civilian toolbox inadequately, and it has allowed some of those tools to rust from neglect. Only about 6 percent of what this country spends to engage with the rest of the world supports nonmilitary engagement. Even Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has pointed out the disparity between the Pentagon and State Department budgets, urging increased funding for nonmilitary foreign affairs programs.

Members of Congress have already taken some practical positive steps to restock the diplomatic toolbox, such as approving funds to fill 500 empty diplomatic posts in the State Department. President Barack Obama proposes—and Congress should support—doubling the foreign aid budget over several years. Taking these steps would strengthen the ability of the United States to prevent wars and save the lives and dollars that wars claim.

## 2. Reduce U.S. oil dependence

Securing access to petroleum supplies from countries around the globe makes heavy demands on the U.S. military budget. According to a 2008 report from the National Priorities Project, "The Military Cost of

Securing Energy", the U.S. military will spend \$103.5 billion in 2009 to secure U.S. access to energy supplies, not counting the cost



of the war in Iraq. Investment in renewable energy could reduce U.S. dependence on fossil fuels and reduce the need for military protection of this resource.

The United States has a long way to go. While U.S. energy use per person has grown by 57 percent since the 1950s, we draw less than 4 percent of that energy from renewable sources, according to the National Priorities Project report. Nearly all cars in the United States (96%) run on petroleum, and the country imports nearly 60 percent of its petroleum supplies.

## 3. Introduce accountability and transparency to Pentagon spending

The Pentagon is the only federal department that doesn't have to meet audit standards and report regularly to the Office of Management and Budget and Congress on its programs' efficiency and effectiveness.

The Pentagon has never passed an audit. Its chief financial officer has told Congress that a complete audit is still several years in the future. Meanwhile, the Pentagon has been unable to account for billions spent in Iraq, and it continues to pay premium prices on "no-bid" and "cost-plus" contracts with inadequate oversight of quality and performance.

Sens. Carl Levin (MI) and John McCain (AZ), the chair and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, respectively, have introduced the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act (S. 454) to tighten performance requirements for weapons producers. In a recent Armed Services Committee hearing, Levin said that the Pentagon's 95 largest acquisition

programs are "an average of two years behind schedule and have exceeded their initial budgets by a combined total of almost \$300 billion." The House Armed Services Committee, led by Rep. Ike Skelton (MO), has announced the formation of the Panel on Defense Acquisition Reform. The president has directed his staff to look into federal contracts that do not provide enough value for taxpayers, and he has appointed Ashton B. Carter, a leading expert on arms control and critic of Pentagon spending, as the undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics. Everyone involved expects change, but military contractors are still very powerful and will press their case with Congress.

## 4. Cut outdated programs and weapons

Any weapon used when a nonmilitary approach could have resolved the conflict is a useless weapon. Among the weapons in the U.S. arsenal, however, some are even more useless, with virtually no possible use in modern warfare. Some were designed for Cold War-era missions, some have never passed basic operational tests, and some are far too expensive and complex for the missions for which they are being designed. The "Unified Security Budget," released by the Institute for Policy Studies, identifies \$49 billion that could be saved by scaling back the U.S. nuclear arsenal to 1,000 warheads.

## 5. Reduce the number of U.S. bases overseas

In addition to the more than 900,000 troops based in the United States, this country maintains and staffs approximately 1,000 bases around the world. This number includes 268 bases in Germany, 124 in Japan, and 87 in South Korea, according to David Vine, a professor at American University in Washington, DC.

(continued next page)

# U.S. advances new priorities

Already many of the policy solutions that you have worked for with FCNL are gaining momentum or have become law. We still have a long way to go, but change is already coming to Washington.

## Filling the "peaceful prevention" tool box

Congress has approved funding to fill 500 empty diplomatic desks in the State Department. The Civilian Response Corps, which will give the United States a team of civilians that can help to prevent war in unstable and developing countries, has received significant additional funding. President Barack Obama's proposed budget for fiscal year 2010 would significantly increase funding for diplomacy and international development aid, increase nonmilitary aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and fund programs that promote sustainable agriculture and address the effects of global climate change. The House reduced this funding in its budget resolution, but the increases may be restored in conference committee. <http://www.fcnl.org/ppdc/>



## Closing down the nuclear weapons threat

Congress has refused to fund a new generation of nuclear weapons, the Reliable Replacement Warhead, and Obama also zeroed out all funding for this weapon in his budget proposal. In early March Congress significantly increased funding to secure the tons of nuclear weapons materials stored in inadequately secured facilities around the world. Obama has pledged to secure all loose nuclear materials in the next four years. <http://www.fcnl.org/nuclear/>



## Ending child hunger



Obama and Congress are taking steps to end child hunger in the United States by 2015. The economic recovery package substantially increased funding for the food stamp program (now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP), food aid for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Emergency Food Assistance Program. The recovery package also extended the reach of the Child Tax Credit to very low-income families.

## Investing in renewable energy and green jobs

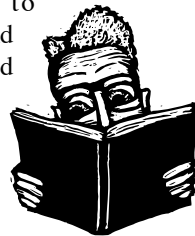
As part of the economic recovery package, Congress invested in a green economy, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs to build a more efficient power grid and develop renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. The legislation also invested in renewable energy research to help the United States become a world leader in green energy innovation.



The president's budget proposal includes significant investments in these areas and sets up a fund to support more "green jobs." <http://www.fcnl.org/energy/>

## Expanding access to education and health care

As part of the economic recovery legislation, Congress allocated \$44 billion to help states fund preschool and elementary school programs, improve teacher quality, and update school facilities, as well as \$87 billion to help states keep their Medicaid programs running. This legislation also provided a 65 percent health insurance subsidy for people who have been laid off recently.



Source: FCNL Washington Newsletter 4/09 FCNL, 245 Second St NE, Washington, DC 20002 800-630-1330 <http://www.fcnl.org>

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Source: FCNL Washington Newsletter 4/09, FCNL, 245 Second St NE, Washington, DC 20002 800-630-1330 <http://www.fcnl.org>

## 5 ways (continued from page 6)

In these three countries alone, the United States supports more than 113,000 troops; the total number of active duty troops deployed overseas is more than 288,000 (not including contractors and civilian personnel).

The military face of the U.S. presence abroad has a price. As Gordon Adams, a professor of foreign policy at American University's School of International Service notes, "Nations around the world now look at the face of U.S. engagement and see a uniform, sending a potentially self-defeating message about our intentions."

In 2004, Defense Secretary

Donald Rumsfeld calculated that this country could save about \$12 billion by closing a third of its overseas bases and moving 70,000 troops and their families back to the United States. Another option, given the increasing per-soldier cost to the military budget (up 43% since the Korean War, according to Steve Daggett of the Congressional Research Service), would be to close some overseas bases, reducing the overall number of U.S. military personnel supported by U.S. taxpayers.



## 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.

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

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

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

## 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>

# Corruption: dangerous to your health

Robert Borosage

"And the banks—hard to believe in a time when we're facing a banking crisis that many of the banks created—are still the most powerful lobby on Capitol Hill. And they frankly own the place." That was Sen Richard Durbin, the powerful Senate Democratic whip, irate as the banking lobby, with foreclosures soaring across the nation, blocked a core reform for beleaguered homeowners that would give judges the right to modify mortgages in bankruptcy court.

But it isn't just the banks. Agribusiness is protecting its obscene subsidies. The insurance companies are deploying legions of lobbyists to gut the public plan in health care reform, the heart of President Obama's plan. The utilities are carving out exceptions for coal plants. Multinationals are clearly on the way to disemboweling Obama tax proposals. The military industrial lobby is a good bet to frustrate Defense Secretary Bill Gates' modest procurement reforms.

This isn't about America being a "center-right country," the myth that pundits still peddle about the American people. This is about Congress being bought and sold, pure and simple. Each night, Washington slurps on political fund-raisers. Each day, the deals get cut; the favors get done. Now with Republicans lining up lemming-like to obstruct anything Obama, Congress can be bought on the cheap. The lobbies have only to enlist (suborn, bribe, seduce, finance) a few of what the press

insists on describing as "moderate Democrats" in the Senate to stop any reform they don't like.

What's often forgotten in this squalid exchange is that the very Americans the legislators preen to represent are the victims of their various corruptions.

For example, with the swine flu alert sweeping the country, President Obama and the Centers for Disease Control urged people with flu symptoms to stay home. This is a common-sense measure to limit the spread of what might be a dangerous virus. Only one problem, as *The New York Times* reminds us in an editorial early May.

About 60 million Americans don't have paid sick leave. Many can be fired if they stay home. And if not fired, many simply can't afford to lose the hours. 43 percent of private-sector American workers have no paid sick days at all. And needless to say, the most vulnerable have the least protection.

A 2007 Economic Policy Institute study showed that workers at the bottom of the wage scale, those making less than \$7.38 an hour, are five times less likely to have sick days than workers at the top of the scale, those making greater than \$29.47 an hour. Only 16 percent of low-wage workers have access to paid sick days. This is a barbarity that is dangerous to your health. Women—who tend still to be disproportionately in part-time and low wage work—are particularly at risk. More than 160 countries, the *Times* tells us, have laws that ensure all their citizens

receive paid sick leave and more than 110 of them guarantee paid leave from the first day of illness. The U.S. does not. The reason goes no further than the influence of money on politics.

We once provided much of our social contract through the corporation rather than the Congress. Strong unions could negotiate a family wage, health care, overtime pay, paid sick leave, paid vacations, and pensions.

Many nonunion employers offered benefits similar to those provided by union companies. But over the last decades of this conservative era, as unions grew weaker under attack, more and more corporations simply shredded those agreements. Now we'll have to enact these basic guarantees central to what Franklin Roosevelt called the Economic Bill of Rights into law. But each reform will have to overcome the resistance of entrenched lobbies, buying the protection of compromised legislators.

In 2005, Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy and Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro introduced the Healthy Families Act, which would mandate up to seven paid sick days for employees in firms with more than 15 employees (and pro-rated leave for part-time employees).

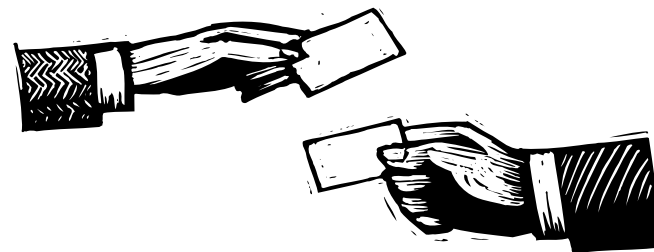
You'd think this would be a no-brainer. It never came to a vote in the Senate. Obama pledged to support seven-day paid sick leave in his campaign. Many Democratic lobbyists will dine well off of that pledge.

In area after area, Americans are

suffering from the accumulated corruptions of our moneyed politics. In the fifth labor of Hercules, an arrogant king tries to demean the hero by hiring him to clean out the Augean stables in a day. The stables, containing the largest herd of cattle in civilization, had never been cleaned. Hercules, with a little help from Athena, changes the path of two rivers and quickly washes out the accumulated filth. But no one is about to change the

course of the Potomac to cleanse the backrooms and lobbies of Capitol Hill. The only current strong enough to do that is an aroused public angry enough to sweep away those who stand in the way. Despite rumblings, despite growing awareness of the damage wrought by a sordid and selfish era, we aren't there yet.

Source: *The Campaign For America's Future*, 5/6/09 <http://www.ourfuture.org/blog-entry/2009051906/corruption-dangerous-your-health>



## Keep America's families healthy

Thanks to the near-constant media coverage, we've all heard the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the best way to stop the spread of the swine flu and other contagious germs: if you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others. However, millions of Americans still do not have the option of taking a sick day to care for family members or themselves without putting their jobs, their healthcare benefits, or their family stability at risk. Urge your senators to support the Healthy Families Act, which is being reintroduced in the House and Senate this Thursday, to ensure America's workplaces protect workers and the public, and are more productive as well.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly half of American private-sector workers, roughly 86 million Americans, have no paid sick days. Low-wage workers are especially hard hit, with 79 percent having no paid sick time. Food service, hotel, child care, retail, and nursing home workers are all less likely to have paid sick days, even while their jobs require a higher frequency of contact with the public. In fact,

94 million working people don't have paid sick days to care for an ill child.

The Healthy Families Act would provide full-time employees with seven paid sick days a year to be used for their own medical needs or to tend to the medical needs of a family member. It would also allow workers to use paid sick time to recover from or seek assistance related to an incidence of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault. Part-time employees would receive a pro-rated share of paid sick days.

In these tough economic times, the decision to stay home without pay is a very difficult one. Workers who lack paid sick days are forced to put not only their health and the health of their families on the line, but their jobs and financial security as well. With more than a third of Americans already experiencing significant elder care responsibilities, coupled with the aging of the baby boomers, the problem is likely to worsen in the years ahead.

Action: Urge your senators to cosponsor the Healthy Families Act.

Source: AAUW Washington Update 5/13/09, [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org)

**This isn't about America being a "center-right country," the myth that pundits still peddle about the American people. This is about Congress being bought and sold, pure and simple.**

# US clash brewing over global Rights of Child pact

A global children's rights treaty, ratified by every U.N. member except the United States and Somalia, has so alarmed its American critics that some are now pushing to add a parental rights amendment to the Constitution as a buffer against it. The result is a feisty new twist to a long-running saga over the U.N. Convention on the Rights of The Child. The nearly 20-year-old treaty has ardent supporters and opponents in the United States, and both sides agree that its chances of ratification—while still uncertain—are better under the Obama administration than at any point in the past.

Opponents of the treaty contend it would enable government officials and a Geneva-based U.N. committee of experts to interfere with parental authority. Its supporters view the treaty as a valuable guidepost for children's basic rights—including education, health care and protection from abuse—and say its global goals are undermined by the refusal of the world's lone superpower to ratify it. "No U.N. treaty will ever usurp the national sovereignty of this country," said Meg Gardinier, chair of a national coalition backing the treaty. "Ratification would boost our credibility globally." Gardinier says her coalition—with scores of partners ranging from Amnesty International to the Girl Scouts of the USA—has learned to be patient, and hopes an all-out push for Senate ratification will be mounted by the third year of Barack Obama's presidency. The treaty's opponents say they will be ready to fight back, and the proposed parental rights amendment is a key part of their strategy.

Introduced this spring by Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., the amendment now has 80 of his fellow Republicans as co-sponsors in the House. Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., says he plans to introduce it in the Senate. Hoekstra acknowledges that they are far short of the needed two-thirds support in both chambers of Congress to forward the amendment to the states, but says the dynamics could change if the children's rights treaty advances to a Senate vote. "We better lay the groundwork," Hoekstra said in a telephone interview. "The last

thing you want to be is unprepared if something pops up on the radar screen." Hoekstra said he and his allies have been concerned by some recent U.S. court rulings that they view as erosions of parental rights, but the U.N. treaty is their paramount concern. His brief amendment opens by declaring: "The liberty of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children is a fundamental right." It says the federal government and the states cannot infringe on that right without clear justification, and then concludes: "No treaty may be adopted nor shall any source of international law be employed to supersede, modify, interpret, or apply to the rights guaranteed by this article."

Ratification of any international treaty requires two-thirds support in the 100-member Senate, a potentially high hurdle that would—in the chamber's current makeup—require more than a half-dozen Republicans to join majority Democrats. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who chairs a Foreign Relations subcommittee handling human rights issues, has declared her strong support for ratifying the children's rights treaty. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, as first lady back in 1995, also advocated on behalf of the treaty, while Obama, during his election campaign, suggested that U.S. failure to ratify was "embarrassing" and promised to review the treaty. But since Obama took office, there has been no public statement from the administration or Democratic leaders in the Senate spelling out a timetable for that review and a possible Senate vote.

In the meantime, critics of the treaty hope to intensify public opposition. "If the American public is informed on this, there's no chance it will be ratified," said Michael Farris, a conservative lawyer who founded the Home School Legal Defense Association and helped draft the parental rights amendment. Farris recently wrote a detailed critique of the Rights of the Child treaty, contending that it potentially could bar U.S. parents from spanking their children and empower young people to have abortions and choose a religion without parental consent. Even if the treaty did not overrule the U.S. Constitution, Farris contends,

it would trump all forms of state law.

Supporters of the U.N. treaty say such warnings are vastly overstated. "The reality is that no country that is a party to the convention has seen parental rights encroached," said Jonathan Todres, a law professor at Georgia State University who has worked with Gardinier's coalition. Todres also noted that while U.N.'s expert committee monitoring the treaty can make recommendations to governments that have ratified the pact, there are no enforcement mechanisms or penalties. The treaty "has the potential to be a great tool for parents," Todres said. "It's something the parents could use to say, 'My child has the right to freedom of religion and the state

cannot encroach on that. My child has education rights, health care rights, and the state cannot ignore that."

The effectiveness of the treaty is the subject of vigorous debate. Supporters say it has prompted dozens of countries to improve their laws dealing with children in realms ranging from education to criminal justice. For example, South Africa abolished the widespread practice of whipping juvenile offenders; Lebanon, Sri Lanka and South Korea raised the minimum age for child labor. Critics note that various standards of the treaty have been ignored by many countries, but they worry that the United States would take its commitments more seriously and thus go too far in trying to

follow recommendations of the U.N. expert committee.

A treaty supporter, professor Linda Elrod of Washburn University School of Law, said critics ignore the treaty's strong support for the role of families and parents. "What makes me the most mad is the assumption that to give children rights takes away somebody else's rights," she said. "It should be three-pronged: Parents have a right to raise their child, the state has a right to protect the child, and in some instances the child might have an independent right. ... Why can't a child have a voice?"

Source: *The Huffington Post*, 5/12/09 [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)

## Waterboarding didn't work

Sam Stein

A CIA inspector general's report from May 2004 that is set to be declassified by the Obama White House will almost certainly disprove claims that waterboarding was only used in controlled circumstances with effective results.

On Monday, the Washington Post reported the impending release of a May 7, 2004 IG report that, the paper added, would show that in several circumstances the techniques used to interrogate terrorist suspects "appeared to violate the U.N. Convention Against Torture" and did not produce desired results. It is difficult, the report will conclude, "to determine conclusively whether interrogations have provided information critical to interdicting specific imminent attacks."

A fury of speculation ensued among a host of reporter-bloggers, who viewed the forthcoming information as the strongest proof to date that proclamations of waterboarding's usefulness were overblown.

But there is no need to wait for the report's declassification. Information from its pages was already made public in the footnotes of the Office of Legal

Counsel memos written by Steven Bradbury in 2005 and released by the current administration less than one month ago.

And the conclusion seems pretty clear: Not only did interrogators, for a period of time, use waterboarding that was deemed by U.S. officials to be more frequent and intense than was medically safe, it did so to apparently limited results.

As the Huffington Post reported back in mid-April, on a footnote on Page 41 of the Bradbury memo, it is written that "Agency interrogator[s]" had "in some cases" used the waterboard in a manner different than the way "used in the [the Marine Corps' Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape] SERE training."

"The difference was in the manner in which the detainee's breathing was obstructed," read the footnote, citing the IG report. "At the SERE school and in the DoJ opinion, the subject's airflow is disrupted by the firm application of a damp cloth over the air passages; the interrogator applies a small amount of water to the cloth in a controlled manner. By contrast, the Agency interrogator... applied large volumes of water to a cloth that covered the detainee's mouth and nose."

Medical personnel at the detention facility protested the use of the waterboard in that form, stressing that "there was no a priori reason to believe that applying the waterboard with the frequency and intensity with which it was used by the psychologist/interrogators was either efficacious or medically safe."

The important things to take away from the footnote seem clear: for a period of time interrogators were using the waterboard with a "frequency and cumulative use" that had to be toned down. Moreover, they were doing it in a way that was determined to not be "efficacious."

The officials tasked with crafting and implementing the interrogation methods adjusted the techniques to fit within the legal parameters set forth by the Bush Department of Justice. But for a period of time, they were operating in excess and outside those bounds.

Sam Stein is a Political Reporter at the Huffington Post, based in Washington, D.C.

Source: *Huffington Post* 5/11/09 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

# Analysis of Pentagon spending 2010

On March 2, 2009, the Obama Administration released the initial details of its proposed Fiscal Year 2010 budget for the federal government. As part of this budget, the Administration is seeking \$533.8 billion in funding for the Department of Defense, not including funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan or the nuclear weapons related activities of the Department of Energy. Adjusted for inflation, the \$534 billion request is \$9 billion, or 1.7 percent, more than Congress approved for the Defense Department for FY 2009.

On April 6, 2009, Defense Secretary Robert Gates released some additional details on the Pentagon's FY 2010 budget request including announcing the termination of a number of major weapons systems. These included: the F-22 Fighter; the C-17 Transport Aircraft; the Presidential Helicopter; the Air Force's Combat Search and Rescue X (CSAR-X) helicopter; the DDG-1000 "Zumwalt" class destroyer; the vehicle component

of the Future Combat System (FCS); the Airborne Laser; the Transformational Satellite (TSAT) program; and the Missile Defense Agency's Multiple Kill Vehicle (MKV) program.

Today's budget release also includes an additional \$130.0 billion to support "Overseas Contingency Operations" (i.e. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan). Until now, the government has funded military operations through special supplemental appropriations packages. The Obama Administration, however, when it released its request for supplemental war funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2009 on April 9 stated that that would be the final supplemental request for Iraq and Afghanistan, and that starting in Fiscal Year 2010, these costs would be included as part of the White House's annual budget request.

## "Top line" funding

The Obama Administration is requesting \$533.8 billion for

the Department of Defense in Fiscal Year 2010, which begins on October 1, 2009. This is \$20.5 billion more than the current levels, an increase of 4 percent, and inflation-adjust ("real") increase of 1.7 percent. This figure does not include funding for the nuclear weapons activities of the Department of Energy, which is considered part of total Defense Department spending. Nor does this figure include the costs of ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Funding for contingency operations (supplemental appropriations)

In addition to its annual budget request, the Pentagon is also requesting \$130 billion for combat operations for Fiscal Year 2010. Congress has already approved \$814 billion in supplemental funding for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and an additional \$75.5 billion in FY'09 war funding is still pending before the House and Senate.

## Missile defense

The Administration is requesting \$9.3 billion for the Missile Defense Agency in FY'10, down roughly \$1.6 billion from the current \$10.9 billion. This total does not include \$1 billion for the SBIRS-High satellite. The request calls for the termination of the Multiple Kill Vehicle (MKV), and cancels the second airborne laser (ABL) prototype aircraft, keeping the existing aircraft as part of a restructured R&D program.

## Shipbuilding

The request includes funding for the continued development of the Aircraft Carrier Replacement Program (\$1.4 billion) the Littoral Combat Ship (\$1.9 billion for three vessels), and \$4.2 billion for the purchase of one SSN-774 "Virginia" class nuclear attack submarine. It also includes \$2.2 billion to restart production of the DDG-51 "Arleigh Burke" destroyer class and purchase one vessel, and includes \$1.6 billion to complete the funding for the third and final DDG-1000 [DD(x)] "Zumwalt" class destroyer program.

## Aircraft

As previously announced by Secretary Gates, the request includes no funding for additional F-22 or C-17 aircraft. The request includes \$1.2 billion for 9 of the Navy's F/A-18E/F "Super Hornet," \$2.7 billion for procurement of 35 V-22 "Osprey" tilt-rotor aircraft, and \$10.4 billion for 30 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters. It also includes \$440 million for the Air Force's KC-X new aerial re-fueling tanker program, with the intent to solicit bids this summer.

## Army ground systems

On April 6 Secretary Gates announced a major restructuring of the Future Combat System (FCS), including termination of the current \$87 billion manned vehicle, but the request includes nearly \$3 billion for other aspects of the program. The request funds \$5.5 billion for procurement of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) and \$1.7 billion for HMMWV "Humvee" vehicles, plus \$479 million support funding for the "Stryker" armored vehicle program.

## Military personnel

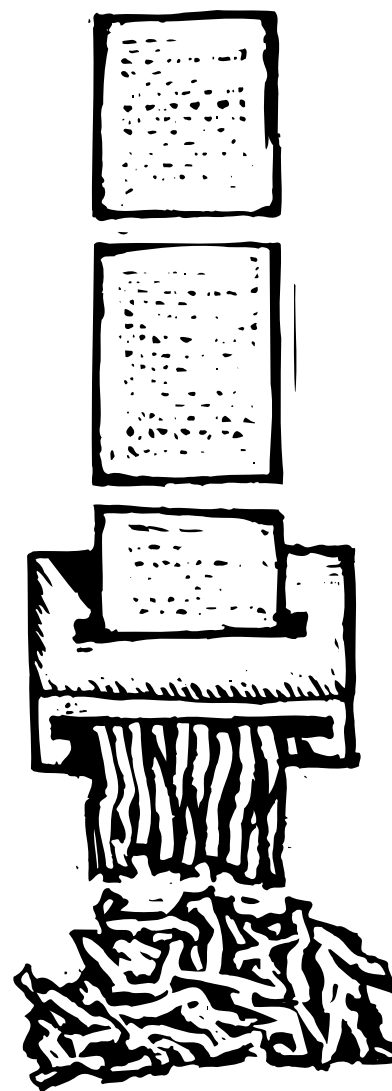
The request includes an increase in base pay of 2.9 percent. According to the Pentagon, base pay has risen over 35 percent since 2001.

## Army/Marine Corps end strengths

The budget request reflects the fact that the Army and Marine Corps have reached their end strength goals of 547,400 and 202,100 active duty personnel respectively sooner than planned. In addition, the budget calls for reducing the number of planned Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) from 45 to 48 while maintaining the planned increase in end strength of 547,000. The decision is intended to ensure that the remaining BCTs will be fully manned when deployed and reduces the Army's use of its "stop loss" program.

## Nuclear and strategic forces

Begins the replacement of the Navy's "Ohio" class ballistic



missile submarines in FY 2010, and delays the development of the next generation Air Force bomber program.

## Cooperative threat reduction (CTR)

The Administration is requesting \$404.1 million for the CTR (also known as "Nunn-Lugar") program, 6.9 percent below the current level of \$434.1 million. The CTR program assists Russia and the former Soviet republics safeguard weapons of mass destruction and related technologies.

## Department of Energy activities

The request includes \$6.384 billion for the nuclear weapons activities of the Department of Energy (a \$4.4 million increase), and \$2.137 billion for DoE's nuclear nonproliferation work (a \$654 million increase, or 44 percent above current levels). It also includes \$5.496 billion for Defense Environmental Cleanup, \$161 million (or 2.9 percent) below current levels. [SOURCE: The Department of Energy's Fiscal Year 2010 request]

## Funding provisions

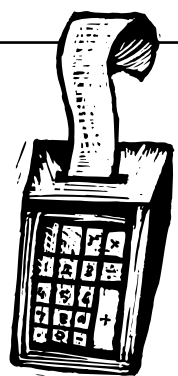
### FY'10 funding by function

- \$136.0 billion—Military Personnel (up \$11.1 billion)
- \$185.7 billion—Operations & Maintenance (up \$8.4 billion)
- \$107.4 billion—Procurement (up \$5.7 billion)
- \$78.6 billion—RDT&E (down \$0.9 billion)
- \$21.0 billion—Military Construction (down \$0.9 billion)
- \$2.0 billion—Family Housing (down \$1.2 billion)
- \$3.1 billion—Other (down \$0.1 billion)
- \$533.8 billion—Total (up \$20.5 billion)

### FY'10 funding by service

- \$142.1 billion—Army (up \$2.9 billion)
- \$156.4 billion—Navy/Marine Corps (up \$9.0 billion)
- \$144.5 billion—Air Force (up \$3.3 billion)
- \$90.8 billion—Defense Wide (up \$5.3 billion)
- \$533.8 billion—Total (up \$20.5 billion)

Source: National Priorities Project report 5/8/09, [http://www.nationalpriorities.org/publications/NPP\\_243\\_King\\_St\\_Suite\\_239\\_Northampton\\_MA\\_MA\\_01060\\_United\\_States](http://www.nationalpriorities.org/publications/NPP_243_King_St_Suite_239_Northampton_MA_MA_01060_United_States)



# The connection between energy and military spending

The federal budget has been called a moral document by Congresswoman Barbara Lee. Its spending priorities reflect these morals. The release of President Obama's full fiscal year 2010 budget begins to show us his administration's national priorities. Our job as citizens is to reconcile the President's budget numbers with his words.

At his inauguration, Barack Obama said, "...each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet." To the degree these values are reflected in his first federal budget, there should be qualitative and quantitative changes in his discretionary spending proposals regarding renewable and nonrenewable sources of energy.

Relative to the final Bush administration budget, funding requests for renewable energy-related research and development and for smart grid development and expansion have increased. The Department of Energy sees a 4% increase\* in funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy to \$2.3 billion. Funding for electricity delivery and energy reliability increases a robust 48% to \$208 million. The President requests an additional \$10 million to help move scientific discoveries into energy technology innovations. To support the nation's turn to renewable energy, the Department of Labor's Green Jobs Initiative receives \$28 million to train workers.

While increased spending related to renewable energy is a crucial step in liberating our nation's dependence on oil, an equally critical step is reducing our spending to prop up our oil habit. About 85% of US energy consumption is in the form of fossil fuel while a mere 7% comes from renewable sources. Our need for oil is so great that we have insufficient resources to meet these needs and must import nearly 60% of the petroleum we use.



Decreased funding is a necessary incentive to wean us from fossil fuel-derived energy sources. In fact, we see a 31% decrease in President Obama's funding for the Department of Energy's fossil energy research and development, although there is a 9% increase for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Caution is warranted in any enabling of our petroleum habit as that may slow our motivation to shift to renewable sources of energy.

Another often unseen anchor impeding the movement towards a renewable energy-based economy is the military funding which supports access to foreign sources of oil. While this spending is not represented by any single line item or functional area of the budget, it nevertheless represents an agenda woven throughout the funding for the Department of Defense. Yet the US is not the only country importing petroleum to meet its needs. China and India have significant projected growth for oil use in the next 20 years that will add pressure to world reserves. Thus, access to these fossil fuels is considered a "vital interest" to the security of the nation, and towards those ends, the Department of Defense expends resources to ensure its access.

In an October 2008 report, National Priorities Project

estimated that approximately 18.8% of the Department of Defense's \$516.9 billion budget obligations were spent in the service of defending access to these foreign sources of oil. In President Obama's 2010 budget, the Department of Defense has the authority to spend \$533.8 billion suggesting that approximately \$100 billion will be used to maintain our nation's petroleum habit. To send the appropriate economic and political signals, these funds need to be reduced to encourage and fund our shift to energy independence through the use of renewable resources. Of course, shifting our nation's reliance from oil will require more than just changes in spending priorities. We should all look to see what energy-related military priorities are outlined in the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review as well. Our brief glimpse into the Obama administration's budget shows that first steps are being taken to shift the nation's energy-related values and redefine what it means to be energy secure. After the administration releases additional budget information next Thursday, look for NPP's analysis of the complete picture of federal spending priorities and impacts on state-level programs. \*All comparisons in text are adjusted for inflation.

*The National Priorities Project (NPP) is a 501(c)(3) research organization that analyzes and clarifies federal data so that people can understand and influence how their tax dollars are spent. Located in Northampton, MA, since 1983, NPP focuses on the impact of federal spending and other policies at the national, state, congressional district and local levels. For more information, go to <http://nationalpriorities.org>.*

*Source: National Priorities Project release 5/8/09, NPP, 243 King St Suite 239 Northampton, MA, MA 01060*

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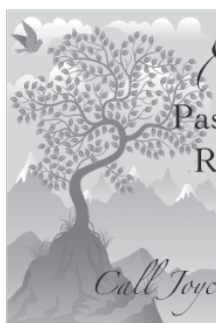
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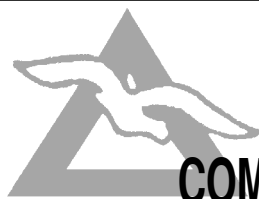
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## Failure to Yield

# Evaluating genetically engineered crops

For years the biotechnology industry has trumpeted that it will feed the world, promising that its genetically engineered crops will produce higher yields. That promise has proven to be empty, according to Failure to Yield, a report by UCS expert Doug Gurian-Sherman released in March 2009. Despite 20 years of research and 13 years of commercialization, genetic engineering has failed to significantly increase U.S. crop yields.

Failure to Yield is the first report to closely evaluate the overall effect genetic engineering has had on crop yields in relation to other agricultural technologies. It reviewed two dozen academic studies of corn and soybeans, the two primary genetically engineered food and feed crops grown in the United States. Based on those studies, the UCS report concluded that genetically engineering herbicide-tolerant soybeans and herbicide-tolerant corn has not increased yields. Insect-resistant corn, meanwhile, has improved yields only marginally. The increase in yields for both crops over the last 13 years, the report found, was largely due to traditional breeding or improvements in agricultural practices.

The UCS report comes at a time when food price spikes and localized shortages worldwide have prompted calls to boost agricultural productivity, or yield — the amount of a crop produced per unit of land over a specified amount of time. Biotechnology companies maintain that genetic engineering is essential to meeting this goal. Monsanto, for example, is currently running an advertising campaign warning of an exploding world population and claiming that its “advanced seeds... significantly increase crop yields...” The UCS report debunks that claim, concluding that genetic engineering is unlikely to play a significant role in increasing food production in the foreseeable future.

The biotechnology industry has been promising better yields since the mid-1990s, but Failure to Yield documents that the industry has been carrying out gene field trials to increase yields for 20 years without significant results.

Failure to Yield makes a critical distinction between potential — or intrinsic — yield and operational yield, concepts that are often conflated by the industry and misunderstood by others. Intrinsic yield refers to a crop’s ultimate production potential under the best possible conditions. Operational yield refers to production levels after losses due to pests, drought and other environmental factors.

The study reviewed the intrinsic and operational yield achievements of the three most common genetically altered food and feed crops in the United States: herbicide-tolerant soybeans, herbicide-tolerant corn, and insect-resistant corn (known as Bt corn, after the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*, whose genes enable the corn to resist several kinds of insects).

Herbicide-tolerant soybeans, herbicide-tolerant corn, and Bt corn have failed to increase intrinsic yields, the report found. Herbicide-tolerant soybeans and herbicide-tolerant corn also have failed to increase operational yields, compared with conventional methods.

Meanwhile, the report found that Bt corn likely provides a marginal operational yield advantage of 3 to 4 percent over typical conventional practices. Since Bt corn became commercially available in 1996, its yield advantage averages out to a 0.2 to 0.3 percent yield increase per year. To put that figure in context, overall U.S. corn yields over the last several decades have annually averaged an increase of approximately one percent, which is considerably more than what Bt traits have provided.

In addition to evaluating genetic engineering’s record, Failure to Yield considers the technology’s potential role in increasing food



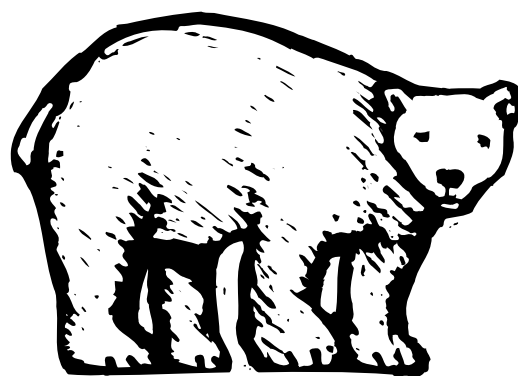
production over the next few decades. The report does not discount the possibility of genetic engineering eventually contributing to increase crop yields. It does, however, suggest that it makes little sense to support genetic engineering at the expense of technologies that have proven to substantially increase yields, especially in many developing countries. In addition, recent studies have shown that organic and similar farming methods that minimize the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers can more than double crop yields at little cost to poor farmers in such developing regions as Sub-Saharan Africa.

The report recommends that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, state agricultural agencies, and universities increase research and development for proven approaches to boost crop yields. Those approaches should include modern conventional plant breeding methods, sustainable and organic farming, and other sophisticated farming practices that do not require farmers to pay significant upfront costs. The report also recommends that U.S. food aid organizations make these more promising and affordable alternatives available to farmers in developing countries.

“If we are going to make headway in combating hunger due to overpopulation and climate change, we will need to increase crop yields,” said Gurian-Sherman. “Traditional breeding outperforms genetic engineering hands down.”

*Source: Union of Concerned Scientists release April 2009, [http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food\\_and\\_agriculture/failure-to-yield.pdf](http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/failure-to-yield.pdf). UCS, 2 Brattle Square, Cambridge, MA 02238-9105 [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org)*

# Obama leaves polar bear in deep water



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced Friday that he will not rescind a "special rule" created by the Bush administration that sharply limits protections for the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act.

"For Salazar to adopt Bush's polar bear extinction plan is confirming the worst fears of his tenure as Secretary of the Interior," said Noah Greenwald, biodiversity program director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Secretary Salazar would apparently prefer to please Sarah Palin than to protect polar bears."

Congress passed legislation on March 10 giving Secretary Salazar power until May 9 to rescind with the stroke of a pen both the special rule for the polar bear and a rule that exempted thousands of federal activities, including those that generate greenhouse gas emissions, from review by expert scientists in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries services. This latter "consultation" rule was revoked by the Obama administration last week, but Secretary Salazar has stated he will allow Bush's rule eliminating protections for polar

bears to stand.

"It makes little sense for Salazar to rescind Bush's national policy barring consideration of global warming impacts to endangered species in general, but keep that exact policy in place for the one species most endangered by global warming — the polar bear," said Greenwald.

Salazar ignored strong criticism of the rule and requests to revoke it from more than 1,300 scientists, more than 50 prominent legal experts, dozens of lawmakers, more than 130 conservation organizations and hundreds of thousands of members of the public. The rule severely undermines protection for the polar bear by exempting all activities that occur outside of the polar bears range from review. The polar bear, however, is endangered precisely because of activities occurring outside the Arctic, namely emission of greenhouse gases and resulting warming that is leading to the rapid disappearance of summer sea ice.

"As part of comprehensive efforts to address greenhouse gas emissions, we should take measures to ensure that we're not unduly harming polar bears and other species threatened by climate change," said Greenwald. "With its sea-ice habitat rapidly disappearing, the polar bear needs the full protection of the Endangered Species Act." The special rule also reduces the protections the bear would otherwise receive in Alaska from oil industry activities in its habitat.

"Salazar's decision is a gift to Big Oil and an affirmation of the pro-industry/anti-environmental policies of the Bush administration," said Greenwald. "This is not the change Obama promised."

Source: Center for Biological Diversity release 5/11/09, [www.biologicaldiversity.org](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org)

## Take action to protect the Rockies

Secretary Ken Salazar, Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

Thank you for suspending any new leasing of public lands for oil shale research, development and demonstration while you consider public input. I support your efforts to take a fresh look at oil shale production on some of the wildest lands in the Rocky Mountain region. I am opposed to any more leasing for oil shale research, development and demonstration at this time. The current regulations, finalized by the Bush administration, do not have anywhere near the appropriate environmental or financial standards needed to protect taxpayers, our climate, the

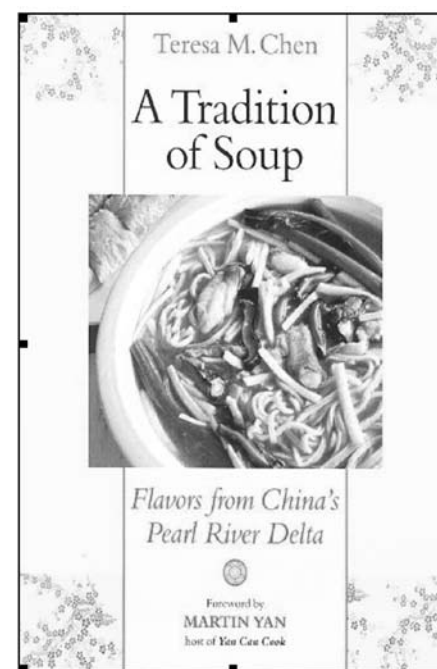
Rockies' precious water resources or the two million acres of wildlife habitat that provide some of the best hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation areas in the West. In addition, industry has not even begun research on the ground where it already has public land under lease. More than three million acres of lands that are rich in oil shale in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming are already in private hands.

Private investment should occur with private resources. Leasing more public land to companies while they are not using the public lands they currently have available, and while they have private lands for research, would just be a giveaway of public resources. Tar sands production in Canada, whose impacts are

similar in nature to oil shale development, has destroyed vast expanses of wildlands, displaced wildlife, produced substantially more global warming pollution than conventional fuel and used up enormous amounts of clean water. We don't want this type of energy development on American public lands. Instead, I urge you to protect these sensitive areas for future generations and focus federal resources on promoting cleaner sources of energy.

Sincerely,

Source: NRDC biogems release, 5/11/09 <http://www.savebiogems.org/yellowstone/>



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# US Afghan bibles confiscated

The US military has confiscated bibles that Christian US soldiers in Afghanistan had apparently intended to give to local Muslims, a U.S. military spokesman has said. Al Jazeera broadcast footage on Monday that showed troops apparently preparing to convert Afghans to their faith. Some of the soldiers who appeared in the video have also been reprimanded, US government and military officials told Al Jazeera's James Bays. The video, shot about a year ago, appeared to show military chaplains stationed in the US air base at Bagram discussing how to distribute copies of the bible printed in the country's main Pashto and Dari languages. Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest ranking officer in the US military, told Al Jazeera he was not aware of the details of the footage but that the US army was not involved in promoting religion.

"From the United States' military's perspective, it is not our position to push any specific kind of religion," he said at a Pentagon briefing in Washington on Monday May 4. In one recorded sermon, Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Hensley, the chief of the US military chaplains in Afghanistan, tells soldiers that, as followers of Jesus Christ, they all have a responsibility "to be witnesses for him".

"The special forces guys—they hunt men basically. We do the same things as Christians, we hunt people for Jesus. We do, we hunt them down," he says. "Get the hound of heaven after them, so we get them into the kingdom. That's what we do, that's our business."

Questioned about the footage, Greg Julian, a US colonel in Afghanistan, told Al Jazeera:



"Most of this is taken out of context ... this is irresponsible and inappropriate journalism. This footage was taken a year ago ... the bibles were taken into custody and not distributed. There is no effort to go out and proselytize to Afghans."

## 'Very damaging'

Under the US military code of conduct, armed forces on active duty are prohibited from trying to convert a person's faith. Ahmed Shah Ahmedzai, a former Afghan prime minister, told Al Jazeera from Kabul on Monday: "This is a complete deviation from what they [the US military] are supposed to be doing. I don't think even the US Constitution would allow what they are doing ... it is completely against all regulations. This is very damaging for diplomatic relations between the two countries ... everyone knows people are very conservative here, very faithful to Islam. They will never accept any other religion. Someone who leaves Islam is sentenced very severely—the death penalty [is imposed]. There must be a serious investigation now that it has come out into the public and [into the]

press," he said.

Sayed Aalam Uddin Asser of the Islamic Front for Peace and Understanding in Kabul told Al Jazeera: "It's a national security issue ... our constitution says nothing can take place in Afghanistan against Islam. If people come and propagate other religions which have no followers in Afghanistan [then] it creates problems for the people, for peace, for stability."

## Guidelines

Regulations by the US military's Central Command expressly forbid "proselytizing of any religion, faith or practice". But in another piece of footage, the chaplains appear to understand their actions were in breach of a regulation known as General Order Number One. "Do we know what it means to proselytize?" Captain Emmitt Furner, a military chaplain, says to the gathering. "It is General Order Number One," an unidentified soldier replies. But Watt says "you can't proselytize, but you can give gifts". The footage also suggests US soldiers gave out bibles in Iraq.

In an address at Bagram, Watt is recorded as saying: "I bought a carpet and then I gave the guy a bible after I conducted my business. "... the expressions that I got from the people in Iraq [were] just phenomenal, they were hungry for the Word." The video has surfaced as Barack Obama, the US president, prepared to host Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's president, at a summit on Tuesday and Wednesday focusing on how to tackle the al-Qaeda and Taliban along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Source: AlJazeera English 5/4/09 <http://english.aljazeera.net>

"... the expressions that I got from the people in Iraq were just phenomenal, they were hungry for the Word."



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# Get behind California youth prison reform

Seth Sandronsky

As a teen, Melvin Fields received an 11-month sentence in California's Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), its youth prison system, for being an accessory to a burglary. Later, in custody, he broke some DJJ rules and was punished with the policy of "time adds." As a result, Fields is now in a third year of imprisonment, said Toshi Priest, his mother and a Sacramento resident.

Priest joined other California mothers such as Sharon James of Merced and the Books Not Bars campaign of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, based in Oakland, for a press conference at the state Capitol on May 7. Speakers called for ending the policy of time-adds for youths (ages 14 to 25) in DJJ facilities. To this end, Assemblymember Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley) and Books Not Bars support passage of Assembly Bill 999 (AB 999), which she introduced February 27. "Punishment should not be the only tool in the DJJ toolbox," Skinner said. "Positive incentives are worth pursuing for youth to earn earlier parole consideration hearings through satisfactory completion of rehabilitation programs."

AB 999 would prohibit time adds and replace them with time credits for youths who finish programs of anger management, drug treatment, education and rehabilitation. The DJJ would retain the power to forfeit program time credits for "sustained serious misconduct." The DJJ, part of California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), has yet to take a position on AB 999, said spokesman Bill Sessa. That is the standard CDCR approach with such new bills, according to him.

Skinner's interest in reforming the DJJ is twofold, said Frank Russo, her chief of staff. First is DJJ's failure to deter youths from criminality. According to Books Not Bars, the rate of recidivism (rearrest) for DJJ parolees was 72 percent five years ago. The CDCR does not keep data on rates of rearrest and reincarceration for DJJ parolees currently, Sessa said, noting a commitment to provide that information to the Legislature

in mid-June. DJJ youth parolees were rearrested between 1997 and 2000 at a rate of 68 percent, according to Drew Soderborg, a fiscal and policy analyst with the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office.

Skinner's second reason for introducing AB 999 is the state's projected \$8 billion budget deficit for 2009 to 2010, Russo said. California's cash crunch from the housing crash has sharply cut tax revenue. In turn, the state faces deep spending cuts for health care, public safety and schools. The California constitution requires a balanced budget, unlike the federal government, which can run deficits. Ending time adds could reduce the extent of cuts to vital public services.

Currently, the DJJ incarcerates about 1,500 youth, down from 5,000 prisoners five years ago. The reason for that decline is partly due to the Farrell v. Allen case filed by a team of San Francisco Bay Area law firms against the DJJ for its substandard conditions in the state's youth prisons. The conditions ranged from staff assaults on youths to their inferior educational and mental health services and overcrowded prisons.

Though the DJJ has fewer youths in custody, the cost per youth is \$234,000 annually. That figure compares with \$52,000 per adult inmate, according to the CDCR. The higher cost for youth versus adult incarceration is due to the DJJ's treatment approaches, which range from educational and medical to psychological services, Sessa said. The incarceration of a single youth in a DJJ facility for a year equals the annual student fees of \$3,849 for 61 people in the California State University system for 2008 to 2009. Time adds are a "dirty little secret of DJJ," said Jakada, executive director of Books Not Bars. According to a campaign statement, DJJ imprisons youths for an average of three years, "the longest average" nationally.

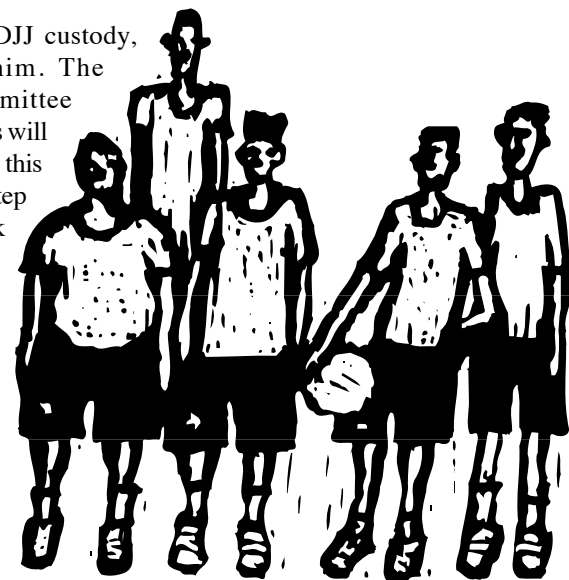
At the May 7 rally, mothers and family members of youths in DJJ handcuffed themselves to a prop of a shoulder-high clock to show the negative impacts of time adds. Deandre Lewis of the San Francisco Bay Area, a DJJ parolee,

spoke of time adds lengthening his three-year sentence for robbery at age 16 to six years. "We deserve a better chance than that," he said. Sharon James spoke about her son Andre, in DJJ since July 2007, during which time he has received five time adds. By phone, Caron Vaughn of Sacramento said her son Shariffe received time adds in multiple DJJ facilities, which nearly doubled his 18-month burglary sentence.

Cory Salzillo is the director of legislation for the California District Attorneys Association. He testified against AB 999 in the Assembly's Public Safety Committee, where the bill passed in a 5 to 2 vote along party lines on April 28. The reasons to eliminate time adds as a sanction are "not good enough," Salzillo said. The current policy should remain as a "meaningful sanction" for the "hard

core youth" in DJJ custody, according to him. The Assembly Committee on Appropriations will deliberate AB 999 this month. Its final step could be the desk of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for him to sign into law. To help build lawmakers' support towards that gubernatorial moment, Fields entered the Capitol to speak with staff of Assemblymember Alyson Huber (D-El Dorado Hills) about the bill to reform California's youth prisons.

**ACTION:** Contact your State Assembly member.



Seth Sandronsky lives and writes in Sacramento. Contact him at [ssandronsky@yahoo.com](mailto:ssandronsky@yahoo.com) <<mailto:ssandronsky@yahoo.com>>.

Source: *truthout* Report 5/13/09. [www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org)

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## The T is not silent

# Hate crimes, personal safety

Elena Kelly

There are many minority groups in Stockton, and that's why I love living here. Diversity is a wonderful blessing in any community, but as with any grouping of human beings there will be times when we can't all get along.

On April 2, 2009, Rep. John Conyers of Michigan introduced HR 1913 into the US House of Representatives. It is a bill that would amend the Hate Crimes Bill of 2007 to include two additional prejudices aimed at minority groups that constitute hate crime status: sexual orientation and gender identity.

There were 42 initial co-sponsors in the House. I worked with the National Center for Transgender Equality to get the word out about this landmark legislation. This is the first time that Federal legislation has included "gender identity" in laws protecting members of at risk minority groups.

I called my Congressman, Jerry McNerney, as well as sending him an email asking him to join with the 42 in co-sponsoring this bill. He never answered. I called and emailed again, and still no response. I made up slips of paper with a brief summary of the bill and a message to call Rep. McNerney to urge him to sponsor this bill. Many of you did.

There were 120 co-sponsors when it finally reached the full House for a vote. There were 18 co-sponsors from California, but none of them were from the Central Valley. Why do Central Valley politicians refuse to stand clearly for equality for all? In this case there were 8 Republicans that signed on as co-sponsors, but Representatives McNerney and Cardoza could not bring themselves to do so.

When the floor vote came, Rep. McNerney did vote in favor of the bill. It passed by a vote of

249-175. Can you imagine that 175 representatives think that race and religion should be protected by Hate Crime legislation, but not gay, lesbian, and transgender people? I am not foolish to believe that this bill alone will stop the violence. But it is a very important first step.

Twenty days after Rep. Conyers introduced HR 1913, the murder trial for a man who beat Angie Zapata to death with a fire extinguisher began. In 2005, Colorado was the first state in the nation to widen the hate crimes definition to include gender identity. The murder of Angie Zapata was the first time a transgender murder was tried under a hate crimes statute. The attacker was convicted of murder and special circumstances of being a hate crime. The trial lasted for two weeks. The jury deliberated two hours. He was given life without the possibility of parole.

That trial sent a clear message to the people of Colorado. That message is that you are free to believe what you will about LGBT folks. But when you act in anger and violence against them, you will be dealt with swiftly and powerfully under the Hate Crimes law.

We as a society have determined that when members of certain minority groups are targeted for violence simply because they are a member of that group, we believe they should receive a more severe punishment. These are usually defined as racial group, religion, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, gender identity, or political affiliation.

Politicians will come and go, but those minority group members who live in places with great diversity have to live every day with the politician's decisions. I just wish that for once we could get Central Valley politicians who are proud to represent the diversity we have, instead of always seeking to please the majority. Someone like Rep. John Conyers.

*Elena Kelly is a Chapter Leader for marriage Equality USA, San Joaquin Chapter. Elena.kelly@comcast.net.*

## DAY OF DECISION

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The California Supreme Court will soon rule on the challenge to Prop 8, the November ballot initiative that stripped the freedom to marry from same-sex couples....

# WIN or LOSE

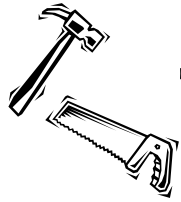
## We unite for Equality in Stockton

When: The day the court rules on prop 8  
Where: Steps of Stockton City Hall  
425 N. El Dorado St.  
Time: 4:30 - 7:00 (Rally and March)

With everyday, every conversation, every march, every win, and even with every loss we are closer to winning this fight.



Marriage Equality USA, is an all-volunteer, national non-profit organization whose mission is to secure legally recognized civil marriage equality for all, at the federal and state level, without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation.



## Sawznhammers

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

# Light reading

John Morearty

We all need a break. The dying dragon of empire lashes its tail, and the birth pangs of our planetary species are hard. Bicycling and meditation sustain me, and playing flute and dulcimer; so does light reading. Here are some of my favorites. Most are available at our public library, which (so far) is still open.

### *The Secret Life of Bees*

By Sue Monk Kidd, this is a sweet adventure novel set in the South in the fifties about a fifteen year old white girl who runs away from home with her older black woman friend. They find refuge, and oh yes! Kidd's *The Mermaid Chair* is also tasty.

### *Three Cups of Tea*

A harrowing and hopeful true story of Greg Mortenson, who is an American mountaineer who has built some eighty schools for Muslim girls, with Muslim curriculum, in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Taliban don't burn these schools, because villagers and imams defend them passionately. In a time when U.S. soldiers pass out bibles in Afghanistan, Mortenson (son of Lutheran missionaries) is a blessing from Allah.

### *Dreams from My Father*

Barack Obama's memoir written at the age of thirty. Who am I? Who is my community? an unpretentious and inspiring story. He convinced me he's a decent man, despite some of his scary policies.

### *Clan of the Cave Bear*

By Jean Auel, along with four sequels, this is a prehistoric thriller with deep heart, a page-turner based on deep archeological research. Five year old orphan girl grows up in a strange tribe, some of whom accept her warmly. Wait till you get to the second book, with the lion and the gorgeous boy friend! (I suspect the promised sixth volume will be about the reconciliation of vastly different tribes.)

### *The God of Small Things*

By Arundhati Roy, this is delicious, tragic, beautiful and funny. Set in India, won the British Booker Prize for novel of the year. The Indian government tried to ban it. World best seller. To get the flavor try reading it slowly, in your best Indian accent.

### *The Lord of the Rings*

By J.R.R. Tolkien, this is a great story. The books are richer than the movie-long rolling prose, songs heroic and goofy, mythic characters. Indeed, I read the whole Rings out loud to my nine year old sons the summer of my divorce, sitting on the sofa Wednesday evenings, giving special voices to Gollum and Treebeard; it was true father and son bonding. The fatal Ring itself is a parable of the Bomb-immensely tempting power which must never be used, because it corrupts every user. (The prequel, *The Hobbit*, written earlier, charms children.)

### *The Children*

This is journalist David Halberstam's final book based on newspaper reportage he did of the Sixties Civil Rights movement in the South; thirty-five years later he went back and interviewed the leaders again. The most vivid account I've read of those times in Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi; inspiring life stories, above all Rev. Jim Lawson and Congressman John Lewis.

### *Novels of Sherlock Holmes and Mary Russell.*

Laurie R. King's novels are wry and tasty, better than Conan Doyle. In the first, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, a brilliant fifteen year old orphan girl, nose in a book as she walks the Sussex Downs, stumbles across *The Great Detective*, who is now retired to keeping bees. Adventures ensue. Of several books in the series; my favorites are *A Letter of Mary* (Magdalene, that is) and *O Jerusalem*, in which Holmes and Russell, in disguise, spy out



murder in Palestine just after the British takeover in the 1920s. Ends with one of the great last paragraphs in literature.

### *Anna Karenina*

By Leo Tolstoy, in the vivid new translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. I'd never read Tolstoy, but I'm hooked. 1870s Russian soap opera, princes and peasants, great agonizing love stories, an astonishing chapter on the zen of mowing hay in the meadows. Just when I've decided I detest one character or another, they turn out to be oh so human. A thousand pages of intricate delight. (I began with P and V's translation of *War and Peace*, the vast world of Napoleonic Russia; soldiers and lovers shiver the heart.)

### *A Persistent Peace: One Man's Struggle for a Nonviolent World*

By Jesuit priest John Dear, who is truly a dear-modest, charming, funny, full of stories of his own inflated self-image and of the good people he's met along the way, like the "criminally insane" and Salvadoran peasants. He quotes the deathbed words of his mentor and music teacher, jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams: "The secret of life is to love everyone." Unlike most memoirs, this man doesn't make me feel inadequate, just inspired. If you can't buy his books, a lot of his writing is free on his website, [www.johndear.org](http://www.johndear.org). (I videotaped him for my TV show a few years ago; contact me to borrow a copy.)

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## Contact Your Reps

Pres. Barack H. Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington DC 20500. 202-456-1414; [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

Sen. Barbara Boxer, 1700 Montgomery St, Ste 240, San Francisco, CA 94111. 415-403-0100; 112 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3553, [senator@boxer.senate.gov](mailto:senator@boxer.senate.gov)

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](mailto:senator@feinstein.senate.gov)

Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-11th District) 2222 Grand Canal Blvd #7, Stockton, CA 95207. 209-476-8552. Fax 209-476-8587. 312 Cannon House Office Bldg., Washington DC 20515; [info@jerrymcnerney.org](mailto:info@jerrymcnerney.org), 925-833-0643, <http://www.JerryMcNerney.org>

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-District 18) 137 E. Weber Ave, Stockton, CA 95203. 209-946-0361, 503 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-6131.

Rep. Dan Lungren (R-District 3), 2262 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515. 202-225-5716. Local office: 2334 Gold Meadow Way, Ste 220, Gold River, CA 95670. 916-859-9906.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 2201 C St, NW Washington, DC 20520

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

State Sen. Lois Wolk (District 5), 31 E Channel St, Room 440, Stockton, CA 95202. 209-948-7930; State Capitol, Rm 4032, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-651-4005

Assemblyperson Kathleen Galgiani (District 17), 31 E. Channel St., Rm. 306, Stockton CA 95202, 209-948-7479

## Creative summer learning at Delta

Kids College will be offering over 110 academic and enrichment workshops for children at teens this summer on the Delta College campus. Kids College workshops provide a stimulating learning environment where students can learn a new skill, develop a new interest or hobby, and have the opportunity to explore possible careers.

A large variety of fun workshops

are offered under the following headings: Academic Skills & Creative Learning, Arts & Crafts, Computers & Photography, Cooking, Dance & Movement, Foreign, Language, Personal Pursuits, Science & Engineering, Baby Sign Language, Sports & Games, and Theatre & Acting.

Kids College will offer over 30 NEW workshopr, including: Mental & Smarty Math, Painting,

Street Photography, Website Design, Beginning Chinese, Beginning Wood Working, Fashion Inspiration Design, Introduction to AutoCAD, Rocket Electronics, and Intermediate Chess.

For information about the Kids College summer schedule, registration, and fees, visit the web: [kids.deltacollege.edu](http://kids.deltacollege.edu) or call Beverley Dierking, Kids College Coordinator at 209-954-5015.

## Oak Grove Regional Park and Nature Center

On Saturday, May 30, the Oak Grove Nature Center and the Stockton Astronomical Society (SAS) will be hosting a Star Party from 7:30—10:30 pm. Meet inside the Nature Center at 7:30 pm for astronomy themed activities and crafts. SAS volunteers will provide telescopes for stargazing starting at 8:45pm. Activities are free and open to people of all ages. Park entrance fee of \$5 is required per vehicle. Stargazing will be cancelled if it is cloudy or raining, but inside activities will happen rain or shine. Call (209) 953-8814 or visit [www.mgzoo.com](http://www.mgzoo.com) for more information on upcoming OGNC programs.

On Thursday, June 4, at 7:00 pm, J.D. Wikert from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will present a talk titled, "The Decline and Current Status of Central Valley Salmon and Steelhead." Mr. Wikert is a habitat restoration coordinator with the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program. He will be discussing why salmon populations have collapsed in recent years and what's being done to help improve their status. Nature Nights programs are free and open to the public. Park entrance fee of \$3 is required per vehicle. Talk will be inside the Nature Center in Oak Grove Regional Park. Call (209) 953-8814 or visit [www.mgzoo.com](http://www.mgzoo.com) for more information on upcoming OGNC programs.

On Thursday, June 18 starting at 7:00 pm. Call (209) 953-8814 or visit [www.mgzoo.com](http://www.mgzoo.com) for more details on this evening of crafty and creative fun.

## Arts awards recipients

The Stockton Arts Commission is pleased to announce the recipients of the City's 2009 arts awards. Award recipients include: Nick Elliott, STAR Award; David and Tasha Stadtner, Patron Award; Outstanding Achievement in Arts Education, Val Acoba and Beverly Dierking; Outstanding Achievement in Music, Frank Wiens and Max Simoncic; Outstanding Achievement in Visual Arts, Steve Pereira, Outstanding Achievement in the Performing Arts, Coraleta Rogers. The Mayor's Award will be presented to the Friends of the Fox/Bob Hope Theatre and the Career Achievement Award will honor the Dave Brubeck family.

Recipients will be honored September 11 at the Lexington Plaza Waterfront Hotel. Tickets are \$35 per person and will go on sale in August. Wine tasting, food catered by local restaurants and entertainment by some of the community's fine artists will also highlight the evening. For information contact the Stockton Arts Commission at 209-937-7488 or by email [deenaheath@ci.stockton.ca.us](mailto:deenaheath@ci.stockton.ca.us).

## Veteran Feminists of America nominations

The San Joaquin County Commission on the Status of Women will sponsor a luncheon on Wednesday, August 26, Women's Equality Day, to honor "Veteran Feminists of America"—women active in the Women's Movement between 1963 and 1985.

Nominations are being accepted for this distinguished award. It is preferred that nominees be currently residing in or working in San Joaquin County. A one-page typewritten document explaining what the activist did to transform the role of women must accompany the nomination. Nominations are due by July 6 and may be mailed to the Commission at 215 West Stadium Drive, Stockton 95204.

For information please contact Beverly Fitch McCarthy, Commission Chair, 463-6957.

*For those 50 and older:*

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# June Calendar

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

## Apr 15—Aug 16

Sing Me Your Story, Dance Me Home: Art & Poetry from Native America, San Joaquin County Historical Museum, Micke Grove Regional Park, 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd, Wed-Sun. \$2-\$5 953-3460.

## Apr 26—July 19

Art of Africa exhibition, Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. Wed-Sun 1:30—5 pm, 1st & 3rd Thurs until 9 pm. \$5 adult, \$2.50 or 65, 10-17, students; free under 10. 1st Sat free. 940-6312.

## Apr 29—May 24

The Children's Hour, Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rose Marie Lane, Stockton \$12—\$23. 473-2424.

## May 5—May 30

Dan Peterson, watercolorist. M-F 10-5, Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. 463-4033

## Mon, May 25

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.

## Tue, May 26

Candlelight vigil for peace, 7PM sharp, Annunciation Cathedral, Lincoln/Rose in Stockton. All are welcome, "church-folk" or not. Candles provided. "We pray to become people of peace, so wars will end." Ria deGroot, 462-3340.

## Sat, May 30

Second annual Waldo Music Festival benefitting the Waldo Holt San Joaquin Wildlife Conservancy, 12—6 pm. Calaveras River Bank, 3536 Rainier Ave, Stockton. \$25. (see p 20)

Stargazing at Oak Grove Regional Park, 7:30—10:30, hosted by the Stockton Astronomical Society. Free admission, parking \$5 per vehicle. 953-8814.

## June 2—July 3

"Disturbing" exhibit by John Nagle. M-F 10-5, Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. Reception June 12, 5-8 pm. 463-4033

## Thu, June 4

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

Nature nights at Oak Grove Nature Center, featuring J.D. Wikert from US Fish & Wildlife Service discussing "The decline and current status of Central Valley salmon and steelhead." 7 pm. \$3 parking fee. 953-8814.

## Fri, June 5

Rockers Blue Turtle Seduction & Stockton folk rock band Odessa, 8:30 pm. Valley Brewing Company, 157 W Adams St, Stockton. \$10. 464-2739.

Stringin' Along plays Borra Vineyards, 5—7:30 pm, 1301 E Armstrong Rd., Lodi. \$10 includes wine tasting, appetizers and wine glass. 368-2446

## Sat-Sun, June 6-7

Pasos Vineyards Summer Art Show 2009, 12—5 pm, Vino Piazza, 12740 Locke Rd, Lockeford. Free. 727-3153.

## Sat, June 6

36th annual Jewish Food Festival, Temple Israel, 5105 N El Dorado St, Stockton. Admission free, \$10 brunch. 477-9306.

## Sat, June 13

Peig Fairbrook & Cliff Johnston artist reception, Stockton Art League, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 4—7 pm. Free. Exhibit on display throughout June. 466-6604.

Juneteenth National Freedom Day celebration, 10 am—4 pm. Taft Park, 389 W Downing Ave, Stockton. 468-4168.

## Thu, Jun 18

Peace Tales Circle, telling our peacemaker stories. Free at Peace and Justice Center, 231 Bedford, 7 PM. Info: John Morearty, 464-3326.

## Sat, June 20

FatherFest 2009, 11 am—5 pm. Caldwell Park, Pacific & Alpine St, Stockton. Free admission. 444-5511. (see p 20)

## Second Tuesdays

Slam-Or-Stage Open Mic poetry, music, acting. 6:30 pm. Espresso Coffeehouse, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free admission.

## Second Wednesdays

Marriage Equality USA San Joaquin Chapter Meeting, 6:30 pm—7:30 pm. Peace Center, 231 Bedford Road, Stockton (209)518-9102

## Second Fridays

Poetry as a Life open mic and workshop. 3:30—5:30 pm. Admin conference room, Chavez Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 209-405-4041.

Downtown Stockton Art Walk, Culinary Arts & Harvest Festival theme. 5—8 pm. 464-5246.

## Thursdays

Peace demonstration, edge of Delta campus along Pacific Avenue just north of bus stop/light at Yokuts. Free parking at Sherwood Mall. Signs provided, or bring your own! Info John Morearty, 464-3326

## Fridays

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

## Saturdays

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

## S.O.S. (Slam-Or-Stage) Open Mic

Poets, spoken word artists, actors, musicians from audience participate on the 2nd Tuesday of every month starting May 12 from 6:30pm. at Espresso Coffeehouse, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free.

Fathers & Families of San Joaquin & The Miracle Mile Improvement District

# FatherFEST 2009

*"Celebrating Healthy Men, Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"*

WHEN: Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> 2009 11am-5pm

WHERE: CALDWELL PARK  
Pacific and Alpine, Stockton

## FREE!!

Please join us as we celebrate the centennial anniversary of Fathers Day and pay tribute to responsible fatherhood. Come honor your dad and enjoy music, children's fun house jumpers, games, food and receive men's health information and health screenings.

FATHER AT WORK

FATHERS & FAMILIES OF SAN JOAQUIN  
"Nurturing the hearts of fathers"

CITY OF STOCKTON

Step, Dive & Enjoy THE MIRACLE MILE  
Stockton, California

## FatherFEST 2009: Celebrating healthy men, families, communities

This year Fathers & Families of San Joaquin and the Miracle Mile Improvement District will be holding Father FEST 2009: "Celebrating Healthy Men, Families, Communities." The Celebration serves to:

1. Increase awareness of a healthy lifestyle and encourage early detection & treatment of various diseases among men & boys.
2. Educate men and their families about the importance of positive health attitudes and preventative health practices.
3. Strengthen overall family wellness by promoting healthy behaviors among fathers.
4. Create awareness of the importance of father involvement in supporting children's growth and development.
5. Celebrate and provide a tribute to Responsible Fatherhood and showcase the existing and developing programs, initiatives and services for men and their families in our community.

Despite advances in medical technology and research, men continue to live an average of six years less than women. This event will undoubtedly enhance the quality of life for families and residents in Stockton and the surrounding community. This year's event is scheduled for Saturday, June 20, 2009 from 11am—5pm at Caldwell Park located on the Miracle Mile on the corner of Pacific and Alpine. To participate, call Sammy Nunez at (209) 444-5511.

## Stand for Peace

Some members of the Peace Center of Nevada County have made the commitment to create a more peaceful planet by devoting 2 minutes each day to peace. Make peace a priority in your life with this simple but powerful act of unity: Stand for Peace for 2 minutes at 4pm. Every Day • Everyone • Everywhere. It may just change your life and the world!

## Talking It Through

Talking It Through is now two half-hour shows.

The Real Show hosted by Margee Ensign is on Monday at 6pm

Talking It Through is hosted by Adrian Nichols and Sammy Nunez every Monday evening at 6:30pm

SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

Sponsored by the Peace & Justice Network, InterFaith Council of San Joaquin County, Pacific Complementary Medicine Center

Check the TV page of Wednesday's Record for latest info.

**Studio volunteers wanted! All ages...we'll train. Call 467-4455.**

# Peace is Happening

## Fran Abbott Environmental Teacher Grants

Congratulations to the following teachers, who won \$250 grants to further environmental education in their schools. Awarded at Earth Day Fest 2009.

Julia Khade, Stagg High, SUSD  
Eight hands-on labs and games for expanding study of ecology

Shirley Cook, Kohl Elem, SUSD  
Solar oven, cookpot and food to cook as a follow-up to solar exploration activities

Nicole Dickinson, Mosher Elem, Lodi USD  
Field Trip to Lodi Lake Nature Area to follow-up classroom study of trees, ½ bus cost and materials for activities

Elizabeth Coffey, Fremont Elem, SUSD

Build planters and add drought tolerant plants to beautify school

Dianna Tracy, Mosher Elem, Lodi USD

Field Trip to Lodi Lake Nature Area to follow up classroom study of trees, bus cost and docent fees

Christyn Simpkins, Stockton Elem, SUSD

Establish a school garden to grow snacks for students

Kathleen Jackson, Banta Elem, Tracy USD

Establish a native plant garden with each classroom contributing a different plant

## Peace Tales: Telling our Peacemaker Stories

a circle convened by John Morearty at the Peace and Justice Center, 231 Bedford. Thursdays--May 21 and June 18, 7pm. Free, All are welcome! info John, 464-3326

So many of us are committing acts of courage & compassionate love. Small acts, maybe-but when we tell the stories to each other, we see the jeweled net we are creating. The Peace Tales circle is a chance for us to share those stories. Each jewel reflects the others, and the net encircles the earth. It's about time.

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The Waldo Holt San Joaquin Wildlife Conservancy \* Presents:

The Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment has set up a special fund to help the Waldo Holt Conservancy raise tax-deductible contributions to preserve sensitive habitat in San Joaquin County. Donations to this fund are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Make your check payable to: Rose Foundation/Waldo Holt Fund. For more info about Rose Foundation and its programs, visit [www.rosefdn.org](http://www.rosefdn.org).

## Second annual Waldo Music Fest

An afternoon of music, food and a silent auction will raise funds for the Waldo Holt San Joaquin Wildlife Conservancy, which preserves the wildlands of SJ County for future generations.

Three bands: Dirk Hamilton, Stringin' Along, and the Water Brothers, will play the afternoon away on Saturday, May 30, at 3536 Rainier Ave., Stockton, on the south bank of the Calaveras River. The event begins at noon and will feature good food and beverages as well as a silent auction. All proceeds go to the Waldo Holt

Conservancy to procure land in the name of Stockton conservationist and environmentalist Waldo Holt, who died in 2007.

Tickets are \$25 from the Empresso Coffeehouse in the Empire Theater on Pacific Ave, the Blackwater Café, 912 N. Yosemite St., Stockton, or at the gate.

The Waldo Holt Conservancy is committed to protecting the many places where wild animals and native plants still thrive in San Joaquin County. "Ironically, many of those moving into new subdivisions here do so partly

because of the beautiful river-delta, grassland and habitat friendly farmland we hope to preserve," said Marj Fries, the "chief" of the board of directors for the group.

"We are currently working to acquire a lovely 4.65-acre piece of riparian habitat land on the Mokelumne River, which will be open for hiking, bird-watching and fishing. We have earmarked this property to be publicly dedicated to Waldo Holt," she said.

For more information about the Conservancy, go to [www.waldoconservancy.org](http://www.waldoconservancy.org).