

connections

PRICELESS

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June 2011

SAVE THE DATES

SAT, MAY 28
FOODBANK BIKE RIDE (P19)

SAT, JUNE 4
WALDOFEST (P 20)

TUE, JUNE 14
89.5 RADIO MEETING (P 19)

JUNE 24-26
PEACECAMP (P 20)

SAT, AUG 6
CONNECTIONS 25TH ANNIVERSARY

San Joaquin key to state budget solution

Jessica Rothhaar

The San Joaquin Valley has long stood at the geographic crossroad of California. Today, it stands at the economic and moral crossroad as well. California's future is at stake in the state's budget debate, and the San Joaquin Valley holds more power to shape that future than any other region of the state.

This is because three San Joaquin Valley legislators -- Senator Tom Berryhill, Assemblyman Bill Berryhill and

families and seniors, while killing public and private sector jobs:

- Education has absorbed \$18 billion in cuts in the last 3 years. As a result, schools have made deep cuts in every classroom.
- Health care for 7.7 million low-income Californians, including children, seniors and people with disabilities, has been cut, ending dental and podiatry coverage, limiting doctor visits to 7 per year, increasing co-payments, and

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to more than 1.1 million very low-income seniors and people with disabilities have been cut from \$845/month to \$830/month. This is the only source of income these people have to pay rent and buy food, medicine and all the other necessities of life.
- 60,000 children will lose the child care their families need in order to keep working, forcing working mothers to choose between their paychecks and their children's safety.

576-6470, 4641 Spynes, Suite 2, Modesto, CA 95356

Assemblyman Bill Berryhill, 209-473-6972, 4557 Quail Lakes Drive, Suite C-3, Stockton, CA 95207

2) Get a stack of postcards from the HHS Network that people can sign and send to the Berryhills at your next meeting, or at your workplace, bridge club, or even your house of worship. Postcards come pre-addressed and ready to mail, or you can return them to me and I'll pay the postage and mail them for you. Contact me at jessicar@health-access.org or 510-873-8787 ext. 107 and let me know how many postcards you'd like and where to send them.

3) Sign up for budget updates and action alerts from the statewide Health and Human Services Network; just go to www.hhsnetworkca.org and enter your name and email address.

These are terrible cuts, and they'll get much worse unless four GOP legislators have the courage to stand up to their party leaders by July 1. On that date, a scheduled drop in revenues will blow another \$9 billion hole in our state budget. If that happens, it means more lost jobs in Valley schools, colleges, health clinics, parks and libraries, and fewer cops on the beat. This would be a devastating setback for



Sen. Anthony Cannella — are among just 12 GOP legislators in California who declined to sign onto the GOP's so-called "Taxpayer Caucus," a highly partisan pledge aimed at blocking the Governor's modest revenue extensions. By doing so, they signaled at least some openness to negotiating a budget compromise that includes revenues to prevent further devastating cuts. No other region of the state is home to so many GOP members open to bipartisan compromise.

This year's budget fight, though it may look like more of the same, is actually a fight of historic significance between radically different visions of California's future.

Legislators have cut \$46 billion from the state budget over the past four years, and the cuts are hurting the San Joaquin Valley's children,

reducing access still further by cutting provider rates — already the lowest in the nation — by another 10%.

- 120,000 children will be dropped from California's Healthy Families program as a result of increased premiums.
- Tens of thousands of seniors with Alzheimers and people with developmental disabilities will lose the adult day health care that enables them to stay out of nursing homes.
- Services for 240,000 Californians with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, autism, and other developmental disabilities are being cut, including: employment training and support, infant development programs, respite care, nursing services, training in independent and supported living, behavior management training and transportation.

No other region of the state is home to so many GOP members open to bipartisan compromise.

the Valley's fragile economic recovery.

We can do better than this, and the San Joaquin Valley's choice will be decisive.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION TODAY!

1) Call, write and drop in on San Joaquin County's state legislators to tell them what your vision of California's future looks like, and what you want them to do about the budget.

State Senator Tom Berryhill, 209-

4) Join other San Joaquin County budget allies to organize a delegation to meet with the Berryhills or their staff, or do something to raise public awareness about the cuts that have already been made and what the Berryhills can do to maintaining existing revenues and prevent deeper cuts. Contact me at jessicar@health-access.org or 510-873-8787 ext. 107 to find out what others in San Joaquin County are doing in our budget campaign, or to brainstorm ideas for raising public awareness.

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There are alternatives

Bruce Giudici

If it were put to a vote today, the US would be moving out of Afghanistan. Bin Laden now dispatched (of course, in a way violating international law (p 4)), the American people are asking: what is the cost of perpetual war? There are now bills in Congress to ask just that question and more (p 7); consider calling your representative.

The on-going battle to change any entrenched corporate entitlement, however, remains the most important conflict we

face. The cost to protect oil profits - whether environmental (by the process of hydraulic fracturing - p 13) or social (crowding out investments in our kids - p 12) - is the tip of an iceberg of corruption and inequality (p 10). We are finding that increased inequity leaves us unable to purchase the goods we produce; it turns out sharing not only is "what Jesus would do," but it is also what makes the economy run. The empty promise of budget cuts creating jobs, however, still grips media reporting - as if repeating

a lie more often, makes it more true. We must fight for a more fair taxation system, if only to save our own economy - and then use those funds to invest in our future, rather than to protect the (oil) assets of the past.

Single payer, Medi-care for all legislation has now been introduced (p 5) - it's time to step up and change course from waste to a more efficient allocation of the 20% of our economy taken up by health care. The information is available and people are starting to notice that these times are not

Bruce Giudici, editor



returning to normal. We have much to look forward to; there are alternatives available. Let's take them. And tell a friend.

Next season on Survivor - the classroom

Three businessmen and three businesswomen will be dropped in an elementary school classroom for 1 school year. Each business person will be provided with a copy of his/her school district's curriculum, and a class of 30-35 students.

Each class will have a minimum of five learning-disabled children, three with A.D.H.D., one gifted child, and two who speak limited English. Three students will be labeled with severe behavior problems.

Each business person must complete lesson plans at least 3 days in advance, with annotations for curriculum objectives and modify, organize, or create their materials accordingly. They will be required to teach students, handle misconduct, implement technology, document attendance, write referrals, correct homework, make bulletin boards, compute grades, complete report cards, document benchmarks, communicate with parents, and arrange parent conferences. They must also stand in their doorway between class changes to monitor the hallways.

In addition, they will complete fire drills, tornado drills, and [Code Red] drills for shooting attacks each month.

They must attend workshops, faculty meetings, and attend curriculum development meetings. They must also tutor students who are behind and strive to get their 2 non-English

speaking children proficient enough to take the SOLS tests. If they are sick or having a bad day they must not let it show.

Each day they must incorporate reading, writing, math, science, and social studies into the program. They must maintain discipline and provide an educationally stimulating environment to motivate students at all times. If all students do not wish to cooperate, work, or learn, the teacher will be held responsible.

The business people will only have access to the public golf course on the weekends, but with their new salary, they will not be able to afford it. There will be no access to vendors who want to take them out to lunch, and lunch will be limited to thirty minutes, which is not counted as part of their work day. The business people will be permitted to use a student restroom, as long as another survival candidate can supervise their class.

If the copier is operable, they may make copies of necessary materials before, or after, school. However, they cannot surpass their monthly limit of copies. The business people must continually advance their education, at their expense, and on their own time.

The winner of this Season of Survivor will be allowed to return to their job.

Submitted by Carole Green

How to:

Write letters to the editor

Elected officials carefully monitor newspapers to gauge local opinion. By mentioning your senators or representative by name and stating the specific legislative action you would like them to take, you can guarantee that your letter will catch the attention of your members of Congress.

Write a letter to your local newspaper today! You can use FCNL's Media Action Center <<http://capwiz.com/fconl/dbq/media/>> to send it, and these tips to help you get started.

KEEP IT SHORT

Try to limit your letter to 100-200 words or less, and focus on a single issue. In the first paragraph, state your main point and why the issue

is important to you. (What impact does the issue have on the local community? How are you personally invested in a particular policy or piece of legislation?) Provide facts, quotes, and numbers in the second. Use the last paragraph to restate your point and make your recommendation.

RESPOND TO A NEWS STORY

Open with a specific reference to a recent news story, editorial, or previous letter. "Recent" means no older than a few days. For national papers, no further back than 48 hours.



Make a local connection

Your letter will be of more interest to editors of your local paper if you highlight the local impact of a national or foreign policy issue.

DEMONSTRATE YOUR REACH

If you know that your opinion also represents that of others, be sure to mention it. However, if you want to submit a letter signed from representatives of more than one group, be aware that most newspapers limit signatures to two or three names.

CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

Submit letters to your local paper for the best chance of publication, though you may certainly submit to national publications as well. Other options include suburban or neighborhood papers, specialized magazines, ethnic press, religious publications, and college alumni magazines.

Source: FCNL notice <http://fcnl.org>

Connections

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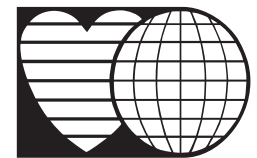
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Community Calendar: Vacant

Deadline: 7th of each month (except Aug & Dec)

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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."

Youth center decision railroaded

Javier Gardea

The city council voted unanimously on March 1 to award Fathers and Families of San Joaquin a contract to operate and maintain the Gary & Janice Podesto IMPACT Teen Center. This vote was preceded by a rigorous interview process which yielded a glowing resolution to the Council from the selection committee and City staff. The city council decided to "adopt a resolution authorizing an agreement between the City of Stockton and Fathers & Families of San Joaquin for the operation and maintenance of the Gary and Janice Podesto IMPACT Teen Center and authorizing the City Manager to execute the agreement and take all other actions appropriate to carry out the intent and purpose of the resolution."

A reading of the transcript of the City Council meeting on April 26th has statements made by City Attorney John Luebberke and Deputy City Manager Laurie Montes that reveal that this recommendation was not followed. Further, the claim that leadership of FFSJ was questionable is false, since the City contracts FFSJ were negotiated and executed by Sammy Nuñez, Executive Director and Board President of FFSJ and successfully completed by FFSJ staff. A public record search of California's Secretary of State website shows Samuel Nuñez to be the agent for the group.

So the questions are these: What is the purpose of having elected officials, when their informed decisions are negated by staff? And what was the decision making process that brought two months of negotiations to a sudden halt in April 2011?

FATHERS AND FAMILIES

Incorporated in March 2006, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin has been consistent in transforming lives: by mentoring, teaching, and inspiring young and old to be warriors for peace. Beginning in 2004, an action-research project was conducted using youth participatory action-research methods developed by Youth In Focus. Under guidance from Samuel Nuñez, a team of youth advocates from across

Stockton developed a survey tool and skills to conduct community-based research. The question that emerged as the focus of the investigation was: "Does Stockton Need a Youth Empowerment Center?" A Youth Empowerment Zone concept materialized after several years of numerous conferences, data collection, meetings, strategic planning sessions, and implementation of best practices. As a result, founder and FFSJ Executive Director Samuel Nuñez received the prestigious Architect of Peace award, one of three in the State recognizing efforts to make peace with the past, present, and future.

As San Joaquin County has one of the highest rates of incarceration per capita than any other county in California, FFSJ has worked on issues of education, equity and juvenile injustice in collaboration with local, regional and statewide efforts to bring change in lives. Due to a lack of funding, however, services are now being reduced, leaving a gap in services for those most in need.

YOUTH

Although youth are prosecuted as adults for crimes, they are not treated with the same respect when it comes to their rights as human beings. They are given few options, when more resources are allocated to incarcerating young people and fewer are applied to schools. Education is not equally accessible; juvenile injustice, on the other hand, is very readily available. Youth cannot find outlets for expression, so they are criminalized.

What we have needed is to see that we can all help change the situation that often seems so overwhelming. We all have an impact on youth, whether in positive or negative ways. It is our choice as a community to either teach children by guiding them to be active in a community, building peace, or by continuing to tolerate violence. It is with love and dignity for young people that we will truly change the miserable "outsiders" perspective of Stockton.

From my personal experience being raised in the southern Stockton metropolitan area, I have always been able to travel to any area of the city without fear. It is when people come from

isolated suburbs or pockets of gated communities in midtown or north Stockton that they come in fear, because of the history of the criminalization conveyed in the media. I always wondered why our school successes at Edison High School rarely received the coverage that regularly came to schools from more affluent areas of town.

ROSES FROM CONCRETE

I see myself and others from my community as roses growing in concrete. I have lived in the same neighborhood off and on since graduating in 2000 from Edison HS. There have been many losses of close friends in my life and many hardships, but there have also been lives I have seen transformed through mentoring and support provided by folks like those at FFSJ.

So why is Stockton miserable? When an opportunity for partnership emerges such as between the city of Stockton and FFSJ to cultivate a space for youth to develop leadership and to be empowered with the will to care about their community, it is railroaded: we must pause to evaluate the blessings we have.

Transformation can happen and is happening in Stockton. We have the ideas and the ambitions to create a more beautiful place for our future generations and seven generations onward, but do we have the will to struggle towards that vision of a community built on a foundation of unity and harmony? Or are we determined to undermine each other in disunity and fighting that is clearly based in intergenerational trauma, violence, oppression and injustice? We must come together to cultivate roses in every 'hood' and do so with honesty and love for each and everyone. We have the potential to change Stockton, but we must choose if a multi- and inter-cultural community is worth the pain it takes to realize and heal the fact that we live in a society built with a history of inequality. Stockton needs a youth empowerment center under the leadership and direction of Fathers and Families of San Joaquin County. Action: Please call your City Council representative and encourage them to move the City Managers office to abide by the resolution.



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

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

Firedoglake <http://firedoglake.com>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Think Progress <http://thinkprogress.com>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We're on the web too!

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

<http://www.pjnsjc.org>

Extrajudicial executions can never be justified

Marjorie Cohn

When he announced that Osama bin Laden had been killed by a Navy Seal team in Pakistan, President Barack Obama said, "Justice has been done." Mr. Obama misused the word, "justice" when he made that statement. He should have said, "Retaliation has been accomplished." A former professor of constitutional law should know the difference between those two concepts. The word "justice" implies an act of applying or upholding the law.

Targeted assassinations violate well-established principles of international law. Also called political assassinations, they are extrajudicial executions. These are unlawful and deliberate killings carried out by order of, or with the acquiescence of, a government, outside any judicial framework.

Extrajudicial executions are unlawful, even in armed conflict. In a 1998 report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions noted that "extrajudicial executions can never be justified under any circumstances, not even in time of war." The U.N. General Assembly and Human Rights Commission, as well as Amnesty International, have all condemned extrajudicial executions.

In spite of its illegality, the

Obama administration frequently uses targeted assassinations to accomplish its goals. Five days after executing Osama bin Laden, Mr. Obama tried to bring "justice" to U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, who has not been charged with any crime in the United States. The unmanned drone attack in Yemen missed al-Awlaki and killed two people "believed to be al Qaeda militants," according to a CBS/AP bulletin.

Two days before the Yemen attack, U.S. drones killed 15 people in Pakistan and wounded four. Since the March 17 drone attack that killed 44 people, also in Pakistan, there have been four drone strikes. In 2010, American drones carried out 111 strikes. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan says that 957 civilians were killed in 2010.

The United States disavowed the use of extrajudicial killings under President Gerald Ford. After the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence disclosed in 1975 that the CIA had been involved in several murders or attempted murders of foreign leaders, President Ford issued an executive order banning assassinations. Every succeeding president until George W. Bush renewed that order. However, the Clinton administration targeted Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan,



but narrowly missed him.

In July 2001, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel denounced Israel's policy of targeted killings, or "preemptive operations." He said "the United States government is very clearly on the record as against targeted assassinations. They are extrajudicial killings, and we do not support that."

Yet after September 11, 2001, former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer invited the killing of Saddam Hussein: "The cost of one bullet, if the Iraqi people take it on themselves, is substantially less" than the cost of war. Shortly thereafter, Bush issued a secret directive, which authorized the CIA to target suspected terrorists for assassination when it would be impractical to

capture them and when large-scale civilian casualties could be avoided.

In November 2002, Bush reportedly authorized the CIA to assassinate a suspected Al Qaeda leader in Yemen. He and five traveling companions were killed in the hit, which Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz described as a "very successful tactical operation."

After the Holocaust, Winston Churchill wanted to execute the Nazi leaders without trials. But the U.S. government opposed the extrajudicial executions of Nazi officials who had committed genocide against millions of people. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, who served as chief prosecutor at the

Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, told President Harry Truman: "We could execute or otherwise punish [the Nazi leaders] without a hearing. But indiscriminating executions or punishments without definite findings of guilt, fairly arrived at, would not set easily on the American conscience or be remembered by children with pride."

Osama bin Laden and the "suspected militants" targeted in drone attacks should have been arrested and tried in U.S. courts or an international tribunal. Obama cannot serve as judge, jury and executioner. These assassinations are not only illegal; they create a dangerous precedent, which could be used to justify the targeted killings of U.S. leaders.

Marjorie Cohn is the immediate past president of the National Lawyers Guild and a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law. She lectures throughout the world on human rights and US foreign policy. Her latest book is "The United States and Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration, and Abuse."

Marjorie Cohn, Source: Marjorie Cohn's Blog 5/10/11 <http://www.marjoriecohn.com/2011/05/targeted-assassination-of-osama-bin.html>.

Stop funding for nuclear weapons

Some in Congress are talking about privatizing Medicare because "we can't afford it." But Congress manages to find billions to spend on nuclear weapons every single year. Take action now to change those priorities. Tell Congress to block wasteful spending on nuclear bombs and new bomb factories in 2012.

Even though we have fewer nuclear bombs in the US than we did at the height of the Cold War, we continue to spend more and more money on them every year. If we cut just a fraction of what we spend on these horrific weapons, we'd still have plenty left over to take care of our most vulnerable communities.

Current plans would spend \$85 billion over the next 10 years to build new bomb plants and \$100 billion to "modernize" existing nuclear arsenal. These projects don't make sense if we

are working to rid the world of all nuclear weapons. And meanwhile, efforts to lock up loose bomb-grade material, and to dismantle the weapons we already have, are chronically underfunded. It is time to tell Congress it's time to fix our priorities.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- (1) Write a letter to the editor.
- (2) Write a letter to Congress.
- (3) Donate to Tri-Valley CAREs.

THE MOST IMPORTANT LETTER - YOURS

Representative/Senator _____:

I urge you to support a forward-looking federal budget that reflects America's commitment to eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons. While Congress is slashing important domestic

programs, the proposal to increase nuclear weapons spending by almost 20% over 2010 levels to pay for new bomb factories and risky projects is unacceptable.

I strongly encourage you to:

- Stop funding projects that would increase the US capacity to produce new nuclear weapons. Planned new facilities at Los Alamos, NM (CMRR) and Oak Ridge, TN (UPF) are now projected to cost taxpayers many billions in the coming years.

- Stop funding the multi-billion Life Extension Program for the B61 gravity bomb.

- Suspend construction of the mixed-oxide (MOX) plutonium fuel fabrication plant and its risky processing activities.

- Move the funds to nonproliferation programs that track down and secure nuclear material around the world, and to clean up the toxic and

radioactive wastes caused by nuclear development.

- Increase funds for dismantlement and require increased dismantlement rates for nuclear warheads.

As you consider the FY2012 federal budget, please direct funding away from nuclear weapons activities and bomb plants, and toward securing dangerous nuclear material, cleanup & irreversible dismantlement or retired nuclear weapons. Please write to tell me what action you will take on this issue.

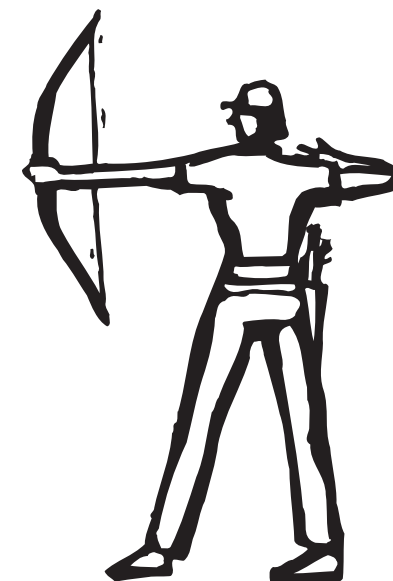
Sincerely,

Your name:

Your address:

Your email:

Source: Tri-Valley Cares action alert 5/16/11, www.trivalleycares.org



Federal single-payer, Medicare-for-All legislation introduced

Following on the passage of a single-payer healthcare system in Vermont (awaiting the governor's signature), Bernie Sanders and Jim McDermott issued a news release announcing their Medicare-for-All bill:

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) announced early May that he introduced legislation to provide health care for every American through a Medicare-for-all type single-payer system. Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) filed a companion bill in the House to provide better care for more patients at less cost by eliminating the middle-man role played by private insurance companies that rake off billions of dollars in profits.

The twin measures, both called the American Health Security Act of 2011, would provide federal guidelines and strong minimum standards for states to

administer single-payer health care programs.

"The United States is the only major nation in the industrialized world that does not guarantee health care as right to its people," Sanders said at a press conference on Capitol Hill. "Meanwhile, we spend about twice as much per capita on health care with worse results than others that spend far less. It is time that we bring about a fundamental transformation of the American health care system. It is time for us to end private, for-profit participation in delivering basic coverage. It is time for the United States to provide a Medicare-for-all single-payer health coverage program."

McDermott said, "The new health care law made big progress towards covering many more people and finding ways to lower cost. However, I think the best way to reduce costs and guarantee coverage for all is

through a single-payer system like Medicare. This bill does just that - it builds on the new health care law by giving states the flexibility they need to go to a single-payer system of their own. It will also reduce costs, and Americans will be healthier."

Sanders and McDermott were joined at the press conference by leaders of organizations supporting the measure, including Arlene Baker-Holt, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO; Jean Ross, co-president of the National Nurses United; and Greg Junemann, president of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers.

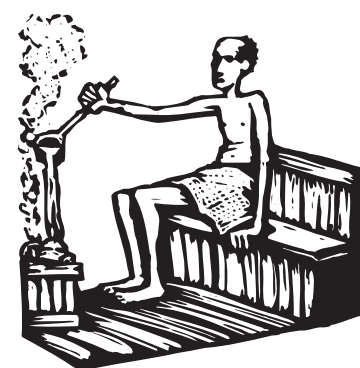
While making the case for a single-payer system nationwide, Sanders applauded the Vermont Legislature which earlier this month voted to put the state on the path toward a single-payer system. Vermont, Sanders

said, could become a model for the nation.

Last year's health reform law is projected to cover 32 million more Americans. Despite that important step forward, however, 23 million people living in the United States will remain uninsured by the end of this decade while health care costs continue to skyrocket. Some 60 million Americans, both insured and uninsured, have inadequate access to primary care due to a shortage of physicians and other like providers in their community.

Under the current health care system, 45,000 Americans a year die because they delay seeking care they cannot afford. Health care eats up one-fifth of the U.S. economy, but we rank 26th among major, developed nations on life expectancy and 31st on infant mortality.

Drug companies charge Americans twice as much or



more for the exact same drugs manufactured by the exact same companies than citizens of Canada or Europe. Some insurers that gouge policy holders spend 40 cents of every premium dollar on administration and profits while lavishing multimillion dollar payouts on their CEOs.

"This is unacceptable," Sanders said. "Until we put patients over profits, our system will not work for ordinary Americans."

Source: Buzzflash/Truthout news alert, 5/10/11. <http://www.buzzflash.com>.

Five Republican myths about Medicare

Mark Karlin

There are more than five assertions that the right wing gets wrong about Medicare, but five is a start.

As with many embedded falsehoods in the corporate/wealthy choir book, the Medicare claims by the right are often inconsistent and even contradictory, depending upon which demographic group is parroting them. It is imperative that the US discuss public policy issues based on facts, not "factoids" that have no basis in fact.

1) "Medicare is socialist" (often asserted by pre-Medicare age Tea Party members and the vestige of the John Birch Society right wing). Medicare is not socialist. It is a government insurance program that cuts the cost of senior health care by cutting out the profit of private insurers. No health care providers are employed by the federal government for Medicare, as is the case in England, where health care is socialized.

2) "Medicare is not run by the government, so it is not socialized" (sometimes

claimed by Republican seniors, who then can argue against "socialized medicine" for the rest of Americans). Medicare is an insurance program administered by the American government through a fund paid into by workers and employers. There are private supplementary insurance policies available for gaps in coverage.

3) "Members of Congress receive the same benefits as Medicare recipients" (occasionally used by supporters of Paul Ryan's Medicare voucher program to "prove" that Republicans in Congress will receive the same care that they are proposing for seniors). Members of Congress receive generous health care insurance through private providers and most of the coverage is paid for by the taxpayer. It is similar to being an employee in a company that provides private health care insurance. It has nothing to do with Medicare coverage.

4) "Medicare is a waste of taxpayer dollars on the poor" (at times used by "poorly informed" Republicans, who don't know the difference between Medicare and Medicaid.)

Medicaid is a government insurance program for the very poor; it has nothing to do with Medicare and is funded through the general federal budget, not through employee/employer contributions.

5) "Medicare costs can only be reduced through a voucher program" (frequently used by advocates of Ryan's budget). As Eric Cantor recently admitted, any savings that a voucher program would have would come from rationing care through private insurance. Medicare is not currently rationed. Medicare costs can be reduced through eliminating supplementary private insurance (thus saving seniors money); cutting payments to providers, hospitals, medical equipment vendors and pharmaceutical companies (big pharma is making billions from taxpayers because the Bush Administration ensured that Medicare could not negotiate for prescription costs in Medicare Part D); reducing Medicare fraud; raising employer and or employee premium contributions; and raising taxes on for-profit health corporations among other possibilities. None of these would likely lead to rationing,

but a voucher program would, according to Cantor, as a result of the inability of less wealthy seniors to pay for supplemental insurance (because the vouchers would cover only a small portion of private insurance premium costs for an elderly person) and, thus, be denied needed care.

These are only five of the Republican message points on Medicare that are factually wrong or misleading. Imagine if Congress and Americans were debating Medicare and health care as a whole based on fact instead of manufactured partisan "factoids."

Source: Buzzflash at Truthout, <http://www.buzzflash.com> 5/6/11

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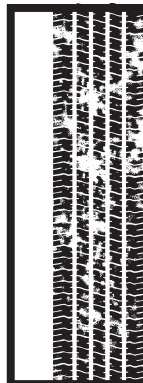
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Pentagon Afghan withdrawal plan: a bad joke

Robert Greenwald
& Derrick Crowe

The Pentagon is working the press again, this time in support of a so-called withdrawal plan that would break a promise made to the American people by their president. According to The Wall Street Journal:

“US military officers in Afghanistan have drawn up preliminary proposals to withdraw as many as 5,000 troops from the country in July and as many as 5,000 more by the year’s end ...”

This joke of a “withdrawal” plan isn’t anything remotely approaching a real drawdown. It’s less than a 10 percent reduction in US forces in Afghanistan over 6 months. It puts the Pentagon squarely at odds both with the stated desires of the White House and the very clearly articulated will of the American people.

First, let’s remember what the White House said on this:

“After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home.... [O]ur troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended - because the nation that I’m most interested in building is our own.” - President Barack Obama, Dec. 1, 2009.

“I’m confident that the withdrawal will be significant. People will say this is a real process of transition; this is not just a token gesture.” - President Barack Obama, April 15, 2011.

“In July of 2011, you’re going to see a whole lot of people moving out, bet on it.” - Vice President Joe Biden, qtd. in Jonathan Alter’s *The Promise*.

The American people are and have been crystal-clear about their expectations for a drawdown for months now.

• Rasmussen Reports’ latest polling (5/9/11) shows that 56 percent of likely voters want troops brought home within a year, and more than half of those want all troops withdrawn immediately. The number of likely voters who want troops home within a year has increased by four percentage points since the beginning of March.

• A Pew Research poll taken

May 5-8 shows that 49 percent of Americans want troops removed from Afghanistan “ASAP.”

• An NBC News poll taken May 5-7 shows that 56 percent of Americans disapprove of leaving some troops in Afghanistan until 2014.

These are not ambiguous numbers. Heading into a presidential election season, likely voters and Americans in general are telling pollsters and their elected representatives that they expect a real troop withdrawal, with most of them wanting troops out within a year. The Pentagon’s draft plan isn’t remotely in the ballpark of what the American people want.

Bringing home 5,000 people in July and maybe another 5,000 people by the end of the year is an insignificant, token withdrawal from a force of well over 100,000 US forces in Afghanistan. It’s less than a 10 percent adjustment of the American personnel on the ground. The Pentagon is telling the White House and the American people to take a hike.

Osama Bin Laden is dead. Al Qaeda has been driven from Afghanistan. The last plausible excuse for keeping troops in Afghanistan is gone. Yet, the military continues to fight a counterinsurgency campaign with tens of thousands of US troops, a campaign that’s failed to blunt the ever-growing level of insurgent attacks across Afghanistan. Civilian casualties are at an all-time high. Troop injuries and acute stress are at an all-time high in the war. Costs are at an all-time high. There’s no rational reason left to continue this farce.

The Pentagon’s token troop adjustment would break a promise made to the American people by their president, and it would blatantly flout the will of the voters. The “plan” is laughable and should be rejected by the White House. President Obama and Congress must demand a real plan to get the troops home as swiftly and safely as possible.

If you’re fed up with this war that’s not making us safer and that’s not worth the costs, sign our

Permanent, unending war on terror in GOP plan

Nadia Prupis

House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-Michigan) and 32 other House Democrats called on their Republican colleagues this week to rescind a section of the 2012 defense authorization bill that they say would declare war permanently against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, *The Hill* writes. In a letter released Tuesday, Democrats said that indefinitely continuing war against terror gives too much authority to the president without allowing consideration within Congress first. “[The] Detainee Security Act would appear to grant the President near unfettered authority to initiate military action around the world without further congressional approval,” the Democrats wrote, referring to a section of the bill that “includes the authority to address the continuing and evolving threat posed by” the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The letter also asked House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon (R-California) to hold hearings on these proposals before including them in the National Defense Authorization Act, but Republicans are expected to hold a markup to grant committee approval of the bill.

ACTION:

Contact your representative.

Nadia Prupis is *Truthout’s* Media Policy Reporting Fellow.

Source: *Truthout News in Brief* 5/11/11, www.truthout.org

petition to get troops home <<http://rethinkafghanistan.com>>.

Source: *Reader Supported News* 5/10/11, <http://readersupportednews.org>

Time to end war in Afghanistan

Robert Naiman

Following the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, the floodgates opened in Washington this week for reconsideration of U.S. plans to continue the open-ended war in Afghanistan. Now Representatives Jim McGovern and Walter Jones have introduced the "Afghanistan Exit and Accountability Act," bipartisan legislation that would require the President present to Congress a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and a clear end date for the war. It would require the President to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the progress of troop withdrawal, as well as the human and financial costs of continuing the war. The President would also have to report how much money U.S. taxpayers would save if the war were brought to an end in six months, instead of five, ten, or twenty years.

Other Members of Congress have spoken out this week against indefinite continuation of the war, including Senators Dick Dur-

bin, Richard Lugar, and Robert Menendez; Representatives Lee, Ellison, Grijalva, Woolsey, and Waters; Representative Barney Frank; and Representative Cliff Stearns.

But among all this, the intervention of McGovern and Jones is unique in that it carries with it the prospect of a roll call, in which every Member of the House will have to choose a side: open-ended war in Afghanistan, or a clear plan for military withdrawal.

The FY 2012 defense authorizations bill is expected to come before the House in late May or June. It is expected that Reps. McGovern and Jones will then offer their bill as amendment.

Ask your Rep to co-sponsor

Introducing the bill now gives Americans the opportunity to talk to their Representatives about this legislation, and to ask them to co-sponsor it.

In a sense, when you are asking your Representative to co-sponsor the bill, you are asking them to vote for the amendment.

But few people know much in advance exactly when legislation is going to be on the floor; often, many interested people find out that an amendment is going to be voted on less than 24 hours before the actual vote takes place. That's not much time to have a meaningful interaction with your Representative, given that for most people

most of the time, interacting with your Representative means interacting with a staff person, who then talks to the Representative. You want to allow some time for those conversations, and meaningful consideration, to take place. That's why you want to have a conversation with your Representative's office now, asking them to co-sponsor the bill, rather than waiting for the amendment. Also, getting co-sponsors on the bill allows you to build momentum; it allows Members of Congress to see what other Members of Congress are doing, something that they take into account when they decide their position. If you can say, this bill has 100 co-sponsors, that's going to help you move people who are on the fence.

The current high-water mark in the House for requiring a real timetable for withdrawal is the 162 Members who voted on July 1 last year for the McGovern amendment requiring a timetable for withdrawal. Much has changed since then.

**Every Member of the House
will have to choose a side:
open-ended war in Afghanistan,
or a clear plan for
military withdrawal.**

The President put forward 2014 as a date when a "transition to Afghan lead" - not necessarily a withdrawal of U.S. forces - would take place. Public opinion has further soured on the war, including Republican opinion: before Sunday's news, two-thirds of voters said the war was not worth it, including nearly half of Republicans and the majority of independents, and three-quarters of voters wanted to see a substantial withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan this

summer, including the majority of Republicans and independents. And then came Sunday's news.

Senator Durbin said this week he voted for the 2001 resolution authorizing the war "to go after" al Qaeda and bin Laden: "Now here we are, 10 years later," Durbin said. "If you asked me if I was signing up for the longest war in U.S. history, with no end in sight, even with the killing of Osama bin Laden, that was not the bargain, that is not what I was signing up for."

Durbin asked: "If you believe that resolution of this conflict by military means is highly unlikely and not a realistic basis for US policy, how can we send one more American soldier to fight and die in Afghanistan?"

Another significant change is that debate among Republicans about the war is getting more prominent with the start of the Republican presidential primary campaign. Two of the candidates - Gary Johnson and Ron Paul - want to end the war. When the question came up in last night's Republican debate, the Republican audience cheered when Gary Johnson and Ron Paul said that they wanted to end the war.

If you look at that roll call from last July, a fact that immediately jumps out at you is that of those 162 who voted for the McGovern amendment, 153 of them were Democrats and 9 of



tion now says it is "seeking to use the killing of Osama bin Laden to accelerate a negotiated settlement with the Taliban and hasten the end of the Afghanistan war," on the other hand, the Administration is pressing the government of Afghanistan for a "Permanent Bases Agreement" that would keep U.S. troops and bases in Afghanistan past 2014. The problem with that demand - in addition to the fact that it keeps U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan much longer than they need to be - is that the demand for an indefinite U.S. military presence in Afghanistan is likely to sabotage the peace talks in Afghanistan necessary to end the war.

ACTION:

So, if you don't want to see the indefinite continuation of war in Afghanistan, you know what to do. You can write to your Representative or you can call your Representative via the Capitol Switchboard, 202-225-3121. Ask your Representative to stand up for a real exit plan that has an end date, to start an irreversible process of bringing our troops home. Tell them to co-sponsor H.R. 1735 and end the longest war in U.S. history

Robert Naiman is policy director at Just Foreign Policy <<http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/>>.

Source: Truthout 5/6/11 www.truthout.org

Contact Your Reps



Pres. Barack H. Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington DC 20500. 202-456-1414; 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

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

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, 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. Jerry Brown, 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

Playing with fire: the Federal debt ceiling

Robert Reich

The real battle for the soul of the GOP started today with a speech on Wall Street by Speaker of the House John Boehner. Wall Street and big business fear Tea Partiers won't allow House Republicans to raise the debt ceiling without major spending cuts - and without tax increases on the wealthy. Wall Street and big business know this would be unacceptable to the White House and congressional Democrats.

If the debt ceiling isn't raised and the financial system begins to collapse, everyone loses.

The Street and big business want to tame the budget deficit but they don't want to play games with the debt ceiling. Credit markets are fine at the moment, but if the debt ceiling isn't raised within the month - weeks before August 2, when the Treasury predicts the nation will run out of money to pay its creditors and its other bills - credit markets could go into free fall. The full faith and credit of the United States would be jeopardized. Interest

rates would skyrocket. The dollar could plummet.

The Tea Partiers don't care about the debt ceiling. To them, it's a giant bargaining chip to shrink government. Nor do they worry about credit markets. If the full faith and credit of the US government is no longer honored, so much the better.

You see, Tea Partiers hate government more than they hate the national debt. They refuse to reduce that debt with tax

increases, even with tax increases on the wealthy, because a tax increase doesn't reduce the size of government. The Tea Partiers' real aim is to shrink the government.

But the Street and big business dislike the national debt more than they dislike government. And they wouldn't even mind a small tax increase on wealthy people like themselves in order to cinch a deal on raising the national debt. They have so much money they'd scarcely notice.

In truth, government has been good to Wall Street and big business. It bailed out the Street. It saved GM, Chrysler, and AIG. And most government spending improves the profits of big businesses - military contractors, big agriculture, giant health-care insurers, Big Pharma, large construction companies.

Tea Partiers have almost as much contempt for big business and the Street as they do for government. After all, the Tea Party was born in anger over the Wall Street bailout. This is the heart of the civil war in the GOP.

House Speaker John Boehner, appearing today at the Economic Club of New York, tried to placate both wings, but he was far more in the Tea Party camp than with his audience. He said "everything is on the table" in order to reduce the nation's debt - a bow to Wall Street and big business pragmatists. But in the next breath he ruled out tax increases.

Boehner says he won't allow the US to default on its obligations - exactly what the Street wants to hear. But then he insists on tying the debt-ceiling vote to a deficit-reduction deal. "The cuts should be greater than the accompanying increase in debt authority the president has given. We should be talking about cuts of trillions, not just millions."



Boehner knows the only way to get cuts of this magnitude without increasing taxes on the rich (or cutting defense - something else the GOP wouldn't think of) is to make mincemeat out of Medicare and Medicaid, slash education and infrastructure, and kill off most of everything else people of moderate means depend on.

In other words, Boehner's conditions are just another version of the Paul Ryan plan House Republicans approved last month - the same plan that brought howls at recent Republican town meetings. Democrats will never agree to it, nor should they. Nor will the rest of America. And that means no agreement to increase the debt ceiling.

Boehner is siding with the Tea Partiers. Wall Street and big business hold the purse strings in

the GOP but the Tea Partiers are now the ground troops. Boehner and his GOP colleagues figure Wall Street and big business will stake them in any event. They need Tea Partiers to get out the vote in 2012. And they're afraid angry Tea Partiers will get out the vote against them in their own primaries.

But Boehner is playing with fire. If the debt ceiling isn't raised and the financial system begins to collapse, the GOP loses not only Wall Street and big business. It loses everyone who's still sane.

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley.

Source: Robert Reich's Blog 5/10/11 <http://robertreich.org/post/5343634212>

Some numbers: profits grow, wages stagnate

Max Wolff

The real battle for the soul of those still weak

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the strongest non-farm payrolls numbers in a year and the highest private sector growth number in 5 years.

- Payrolls increased by 244,000 in April with 268,000 private sector jobs added and 24,000 job losses in the public sector.

UNEMPLOYMENT

- The unemployment rate increased to 9%, and February and March payroll numbers were revised upward.

- Long term unemployment edged down but remains very high with over 43% of the unemployed out of work for over 27 weeks.

- Long term unemployment declined on a seasonally adjusted basis but, increased on a non-

seasonally adjusted basis.

- The U-6 inclusive measure of unemployment (including involuntary part-time and marginally attached workers) edged up to 15.9% from 15.7%.

- Average work week, and hours worked numbers remained unchanged.

INCOME

- Compensation remains stagnant. April saw average compensation increased by .1%, or 3 cents.

- The average private sector hourly income has increased by 39 cents an hour, 2%, over the last year.

- The average 1-year increase in weekly earnings was \$16.90, 2.6%.

- Wage growth continues to lag productivity and price increases, supporting higher profits and

dissatisfaction with the economy for most.

GOVERNMENT

- All levels of government remain weak.

- Across April, we saw net job losses at every public sector level: Federal cut 2,000 jobs, states cut 8,000 jobs, locals cut 14,000 jobs.

PRICES

- Inflation is running at a higher rate than wage increases and public sector services are being cut.

- Energy and food costs have risen rapidly: gas is up over 30% year-to-date.

PRODUCTIVITY

- First quarter 2011 labor productivity increased by 1.6%, at an annual rate.

- Unit labor costs rose by 1% as productivity increased more quickly than wages.

- Wages and productivity are failing to keep pace with rising prices.

- In the year Q1 2010 to Q1 2011, prices increased by over 2%.

- Over the same time period, the median weekly wages of 98 million Americans increased by .1% to \$755.

- Thus, real- adjusted for price change- hourly compensation fell by 2.5% across Q1 2011. This has been the pattern for over a year now.

- Manufacturing and durable goods productivity is rising very strongly.

- Hours worked and employee compensation have begun to creep up.

These patterns are visible in

the national economy as well. Productivity is rising, particularly in manufacturing and durable goods. Wages and hours worked are increasingly very slightly and with a long delay. Prices have risen more than compensation. Thus, output and profits have recovered much more strongly than employment or wages. All of this aligns with difficulty creating jobs, corporate profit increases and stagnant-to-falling wages.

Max Fraad Wolff teaches economics in the New School University Graduate Program in International Affairs. Max's work can be seen at the BBC, NPR, Al Jazeera English, Bloomberg TV, The Wall Street Journal and many other outlets.

Source: BuzzFlash at Truthout <http://www.buzzflash.com> 5/6/11

Forget the rich: tax the poor and middle class

Michael Winship

Nothing is certain but death and taxes, it used to be said, but in the madcap times we live in, even they're up for grabs.

No matter what proof the White House provides that Osama bin Laden indeed has had his bucket kicked - and at this point even al-Qaeda admits he's dead - there still will be uncertainty. Whether they ever release those damned photos or not, a lunatic few will continue to insist that Osama's alive and well and running a Papa John's Pizza in Marrakesh.

As for taxes, having to pay them is no longer a sure thing either, especially if you're a corporate giant like General Electric, with a thousand employees in its tax department, skilled in creative accounting. You'll recall recent reports that although GE made profits last year of \$5.1 billion in the United States and \$14.2 billion worldwide they would pay not a penny of federal income tax. Chalk it up to billions of dollars of losses at GE Capital during the financial meltdown and a government tax break that allows companies to avoid paying US taxes on profits made overseas while "actively financing" different kinds of deals.

It gets worse. In 2009, Exxon-Mobil didn't pay any taxes either, and last year, they had worldwide profits of \$30.46 billion. Neither did Bank of America or Chevron or Boeing. According to a report last week from the office of the New York City Public Advocate, in 2009, the five companies, including GE, received a total of \$3.7 billion in federal tax benefits.

As The New York Times' David Kocieniewski reported in March, "Although the top corporate tax rate in the United States is 35 percent, one of the highest in the world, companies have been increasingly using a maze of shelters, tax credits and subsidies to pay far less... Such strategies, as well as changes in tax laws that encouraged some businesses and professionals to file as individuals, have pushed down the corporate share of the nation's tax receipts -- from 30 percent of all federal revenue in the mid-1950s to 6.6 percent in 2009."

What's greasing the wheels for these advantages is, hold on

to your hats, cash. Over the last decade, according to the NYC public advocate's report, those same five companies -- GE, Exxon-Mobil, Bank of America, Chevron and Boeing -- gave more than \$43.1 million to political campaigns. During the 2009-2010 election cycle, the five spent a combined \$7.86 million in campaign contributions, a 7 percent jump over their 2007-2008 political spending.

"These tax breaks were put in place to promote growth and create jobs, not bankroll the political causes of corporate executives," Public Advocate Bill de Blasio said. "... No company that can afford to spend millions of dollars has no money dollars to influence



our elections should be pleading poverty come tax time."

And by the way, those campaign cash figures don't even include all the money those companies funneled into the 2010 campaigns via trade associations and tax-exempt non-profits. Thanks to the Supreme Court Citizens United decision, we don't know the numbers because, as per the court, the corporate biggies don't have to tell us. Imagine them sticking out their tongues and wiggling their fingers in their ears and you have a pretty good idea of their official position on this.

Meanwhile, last week Republicans like Utah's Orrin Hatch, ranking member of the US Senate Finance Committee, grabbed hold of an analysis by Congress' non-partisan Joint Committee on Taxation and wrestled it to the ground. The brief memorandum reported that in the 2009 tax year 51 percent of all American taxpayers had zero tax liability or received a refund. So why, the Republicans

asked, are Democrats and others so mean, asking corporations and the rich to pay higher taxes when lots of other people -- especially the poor and middle class -- don't pay taxes either?

Hatch told MSNBC, "Bastiat, the great economist of the past, said the place where you've got to get revenues has to come from the middle class. That's the huge number of people that are there. So the system does need to be revamped... We have an unbalanced tax code that we've got to change."

All of which flies in the face of reality. As Travis Waldron of the progressive ThinkProgress website explained, "The majority of Americans who do not pay federal income taxes don't make enough money to qualify for even the lowest tax bracket, a problem made worse by the economic recession. That includes retired Americans, who don't pay income taxes because they earn very little income, if they earn any at all.

"And while many low-income Americans don't pay income taxes, they do pay taxes. Because of payroll and sales taxes - a large proportion of which are paid by low- and middle-income Americans - less than a quarter of the nation's households don't contribute to federal tax receipts -- and the majority of the non-contributors are students, the elderly, or the unemployed."

What's more, ThinkProgress notes, "The top 400 taxpayers -- who have more wealth than half of all Americans combined - are paying lower taxes than they have in a generation, as their tax responsibilities have slowly collapsed since the New Deal era. In the meantime, "working families have been asked to pay more and more."

So maybe death and taxes are no longer certain, but one thing remains as immutable as the hills. In the words of another golden oldie, there's nothing surer - the rich get rich and the poor get poorer.

Michael Winship is senior writing fellow at Demos, former senior writer at "Bill Moyers Journal" on PBS and current president of the Writers Guild of America, East.

Source: Truthout 5/10/11 www.truthout.org

California budget talks: too close for comfort

Willie L. Pelote Sr.

California Gov. Jerry Brown is right to call off budget talks with Republicans in Sacramento. There was no point in continuing a conversation with a minority party bent on obstruction and whose hold on political power is predicated on preventing the emergence of solutions to the state's structural budget deficit.

It was clear from the ridiculous demands the Republicans were making that they were only interested in lengthening and delaying the budget process in order to forestall a special election in which California voters would have the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to erase the state's remaining budget deficit through tax extensions.

If such a vote were to occur and if California voters were to support extending taxes on sales, income and cars, such a result would serve to soundly repudiate the Republican claim that Californians want limited government and are averse to taxes.

What Californians want, in fact, are robust social programs like health care, welfare, childcare and mental health, strong public education and transportation systems, environmental protection, clean water and open spaces in our state parks.

This has been confirmed in poll after poll. Most recently, a Field Poll in March showed that 58 percent of voters approved of Governor Brown's proposal to extend taxes on sales, income and cars.

It was clear from the ridiculous demands the Republicans were making that they were only interested in lengthening and delaying the budget process

Then, a companion poll in April showed that 61 percent of Californians support the right of teachers and civil servants to bargain collectively. At the same time, another April poll found that 78 percent of California voters support raising the personal income taxes of individuals making \$500,000 or more.

Where California voters have erred in the past is to assume that the programs and services administered by the state above could continue to operate effectively without revenues to sustain them. It seems that Californians are finally coming to realize that taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society. It's obvious that Republicans were aware of the recent poll results and that they were terrified that voters would approve the tax extensions. Such a development would have national implications and clearly could not be allowed to come to pass.

The good news is that California voters seem to be waking up now and have passed out of denial when it comes to how we as a state can restore quality public education and public services. Common sense dictates that California voters now be asked to re-examine their attitudes concerning how we go about creating a fair tax system to fund our state's future. Only then will we have a government that truly serves all Californians.

Willie L. Pelote Sr. is an assistant director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO.

Source: Truthout 5/12/11, www.truthout.org

The threats of business and the business of threats

Richard D. Wolff

More and more, we hear that nothing can be done to tax major corporations because of the threat of how they would respond. Likewise, we cannot stop their price gouging or even the government subsidies and tax loopholes they enjoy. For example, as the oil majors reap stunning profits from high oil and gas prices, we are told it is impossible to tax their windfall profits or stop the billions they get in government subsidies and tax loopholes. There appears to be no way for the government to secure lower energy prices or seriously impose and enforce environmental protection laws. Likewise, despite high and fast rising drug and medicine prices, we are told that it is impossible to raise taxes on pharmaceutical companies or have the government secure lower pharmaceutical prices. And so on.

Such steps by “our” government are said to be impossible or inadvisable. The reason: corporations would then relocate production abroad or reduce their activities in the US or both. And that would deprive the US of taxes and lose more jobs. In plain English, major corporations are threatening us. We are to knuckle under and cut social programs that benefit millions of people (college loan programs, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, nutrition programs, and so on). We are not to demand higher taxes or reduced subsidies and tax loopholes for corporations. We are not to demand government action to lower their soaring prices. And if we do, corporations will punish us.

Three groups deliver these business threats to us. First, corporate spokespersons, their paid public relations flunkies, hand down the word from on high (corporate board rooms). Second, politicians afraid to offend their corporate sponsors repeat publicly what corporate spokespersons have emailed to them. Finally, various commentators explain the threats to us. These include the journalists lost in that ideological fog that always translates what corporations want into “common sense.” Commentators also include the professors who translate what corporations want into “economic science.”

Of course, there are always two possible responses to any and all

threats. One is to cave in, to be intimidated. That has often been the dominant “policy choice” of the US government. That’s why so many corporate tax loopholes exist, why the government does so little to limit price increases, why government does not constrain corporate relocation decisions etc. No surprise there, since corporations have spent lavishly to support the political careers of so many current leaders. They expect those politicians to do what their corporate sponsors want. Just as important, they also expect those



politicians to persuade people that its “best for us all” to cave in when corporations threaten us.

What is “best for all”

What about the other possible response to threats? Government could make a different policy choice, define differently what is “best for us all.” In plain English, it could persevere in the face of business threats and to do so, it could counter-threaten the corporations. When major corporations threaten to cut or relocate production abroad in response to changes in their taxes and subsidies or demands to cut their prices or serious enforcement of environmental protection rules, the US government could promise retaliation. Here’s a brief and partial list of how it might do that (with illustrative examples for the energy and pharmaceutical industries):

1. Inform such threatening businesses that the US government will shift its purchases to other enterprises.

2. Inform them that top officials will tour the US to urge citizens to follow the government’s example and shift their purchases as well.

3. Inform them that the government will proceed to finance and organize state-

operated companies to compete directly with threatening businesses.

4. Immediately and strictly enforce all applicable rules governing health and safety conditions for workers, environmental protection laws, equal employment and advancement opportunity etc.

5. Present and promote passage of new laws governing enterprise relocation (giving local, regional and national authorities veto power over corporate relocation decisions).

6. Purchase energy and pharmaceutical outputs in bulk for mass resale to the US public, passing on all the savings from bulk purchases.

7. Seize assets of enterprises that seek to evade or frustrate increased taxes or reduced subsidies.

Laws enabling such actions either already exist in the US or could be enacted. In other countries today, existing models of such laws have performed well, often for many years. These could be used and adjusted for US conditions.

Of course, a much better basis than threat and counter-threat is

available for sharing the costs of government between individuals and businesses. That basis would be achieved by a transition to an economic system where workers in each enterprise functioned collectively and democratically as their own board of directors. Such worker-directed enterprises eliminate the basic split and conflict inside capitalist corporations between those who make the key business decisions (what, how and where to produce, for example) and those who must live with and most immediately depend on those decisions’ results (the mass of employees).

One concrete example can illustrate the benefits of this alternative to the threat-counter-threat scenario. Corporations have used repeated threats (to cut or move production) as a means to prevent tax increases and to secure tax reductions. Likewise they have made the same threats to secure desired spending from the federal government (military expenditures, federal road and port building projects, subsidies, financial supports, and so on). In effect, corporate boards of directors and major shareholders seek to shift tax burdens onto

employees. Their success over the last half-century is clear. Tax receipts of the US government have increasingly come (1) from individual rather than corporate income taxes and (2) from middle and lower individual income groups rather than from the rich. In worker-directed enterprises, the incentive for such shifts would vanish because the people who would be paying enterprise taxes are the same people who would be paying individual income taxes. Taxation would finally become genuinely democratic. The people would collectively decide how to distribute taxes on what would genuinely be their own businesses and their own individual incomes.

Richard D. Wolff is Professor of Economics Emeritus, University of Massachusetts, Amherst where he taught economics from 1973 to 2008. He is currently a Visiting Professor in the Graduate Program in International Affairs of the New School University, New York City.

Source: Truthout 5/10/22, www.truthout.org

Fed oil subsidy of \$4 billion/year = one weeks profit

The following are recent remarks made by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid:

“Saving money requires a lot of difficult choices. Which programs do we cut in tough times? Which priorities are more important than others? As we’ve seen here in the Senate and across the country over the last few months, a lot of people have a lot of different answers to those questions.

“Then there are the choices that aren’t so tough at all. There’s clear waste in the federal budget and the tax code. And then there’s Big Oil. We’re giving billions and billions of dollars every year - \$4 billion to be exact - every cent of it taxpayer money - to oil companies that already are more than successful.

“These oil companies made \$36 billion in profits during the first quarter of this year alone. Exxon made 70 percent more this year

than last year.

“The industry’s \$36 billion in quarterly profits means it’s making \$12 billion a month. That’s \$4 billion a week. And yet the U.S. government is giving these companies \$4 billion a year in corporate welfare?”

“Why are taxpayers on the hook for oil companies that are doing just fine on their own?”

“If we’re serious about reducing the deficit, this is an easy place to start. It’s a no-brainer. Let’s use the savings from these taxpayer giveaways to drive down the deficit, not drive up oil company profits.

“Let’s make one thing clear: wasteful subsidies have nothing to do with gas prices. These oil handouts have existed for decades. Prices have continued to rise. Oil executives’ paychecks have gone up too. The \$4 a gallon Americans

are paying at the pump are not related to these subsidies - but those profits are proof enough that they don’t need them.

“Even Big Oil CEOs like the head of Shell, and Republicans in Congress including the Speaker of the House, have admitted that these subsidies aren’t necessary.

“Some of our conservative colleagues have a hard time stomaching giving a hand to those who need it the most. We should all agree - in the interest of fairness, common sense, and saving taxpayer money - that we can cut out corporate welfare to those Big Oil firms who need it the least.”

Source: Buzzflash at Truthout release 5/11/11, www.buzzflash.com

Time to break up the telecom giants

Bruce Kushnick & David Rosen



Today, a communications trust -- made up of AT&T, Verizon and the major cable companies of Comcast and Time Warner -- controls the two wires and the wireless networks that link the nation's homes, businesses, schools and other institutions. The communications trust has failed America by threatening to fix prices and restrict competition. A few examples illustrate this failure:

- America is now 15th in the world in broadband. While Hong Kong and other countries are rolling out 1 gigabit speed services, America's average is a mere 5 mbps (i.e., 1,000 mbps = 1 gigabit).
- Americans paid over \$340 billion for broadband upgrades that never happened; by 2010, America should have been completely upgraded with fiber optic services to every home.
- The FCC approved Comcast's acquisition of NBC-Universal, foreshadowing a likely wave of integration of transport or carriage and content.
- Together, AT&T and Verizon control 80 percent of all wireless services and AT&T is now attempting to close down one of the only remaining competitors, T-Mobile.

AT&T has proposed a major rate increase, known as "broadband caps," on high-volume video distribution targeting initially heavy movie users. This sets the stage for a two-tier pricing model that could effectively end net neutrality. The full effect of these and many other actions by the trust, working through "captured" FCC and state public utilities commissions (PUCs), will be the erosion of Universal Service, further harming those most vulnerable.

BREAKING UP THE TRUST

Targetting the telecommunications trust has three explicit goals:

- Divest AT&T and Verizon of the wirelines they now control to

improve service, thus bringing competition to the market and making sure that the nation's critical infrastructure is properly upgraded.

- Divest the big telecom companies of their wireless subsidiaries to engender meaningful competition.
- Divest cable operators of their content companies and open the networks to real competition, thus furthering democracy.

Divestiture will lead to increased competition, lower costs and better service. Two landmark precedents set the stage for the call to "break 'em up" -- the 1983 breakup of AT&T and the 1948 Paramount breakup of the Hollywood studios control over theatrical movie distribution. In short, it's time to break 'em up, again.

The consolidating "telecommunications trust" consists of the dominant duopoly of telephone and cable companies as well as the wireline and wireless content distribution conglomerates. It is ripe for disaggregation. America's regulatory policy, which has promoted mergers and acquisitions rather than meaningful competition, has encouraged the trust to take over communications with harmful results. Two disturbing facts illustrate the power of the trust:

- There is no serious wireline phone competition -- the cable companies only have 20 percent of the residential phone markets and much less of the business markets.
- There is no meaningful cable competition -- AT&T's U-Verse and Verizon's FiOS are only in 7 million homes out of 120 million homes; thus, over 90 percent of Americans don't have meaningful cable competition.

Making matters worse, 18 states outlaw municipal competition. The trust has had state legislatures adopt regulations prohibiting localities from upgrading their networks even though these

corporations failed to do so after being paid billions.

Unfortunately waiting for the Congress, courts or regulatory agencies (e.g., FCC, FTC) to intervene on behalf of ordinary citizens being overcharged, let alone America's global competitiveness or popular democracy, is like waiting for Samuel Beckett's *Godot*. We'll wait till hell freezes over.

Like the good-old-days of the trusts, the Gilded Age, politicians are bought and paid for. Unless one puts a fire under their proverbial backsides, one knows that politicians -- along with PR skills, newspaper publishers, think-tank hacks and media blowviators -- cannot be counted on to stand up for what's right. Its time for a new generation of muckrakers to take up the challenge, incite popular rage and, hopefully, fuel political action.

Like vampires of legend, today's trusts not only provide over-priced and inferior service, but are sucking dry hapless American consumer by systematically overcharging them. Worst still, their inferior service is turning the U.S. into a second-tier industrial nation. Only a stake in the heart of a vampire will kill it. The call to "break 'em up" is such a stake.

ACTION:

To join the fight to break up the telecom giants, check out the website Break Up the Communications Trusts at <http://breakupattverizoncomcast.com>

David Rosen is a regular contributor to CounterPunch, Filmmaker Magazine and the Brooklyn Rail; check out DavidRosenWrites.com. Bruce Kushnick is a telecommunications industry analyst who serves as the broadband and telecommunications expert for Harvard Nieman's Foundation for Journalism's Watchdog, and a founding member of Teletruth, a customer advocacy group.

Source: *AlterNet* 5/12/11 <http://www.alternet.org>

Corruption at the FCC - again

FCC Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker is leaving the FCC to become a lobbyist for Comcast -- just four months after she voted to approve the Comcast-NBC merger. This is just the latest -- but perhaps most blatant -- example of so-called "public servants" cashing in on companies they are supposed to be regulating. But Baker's jump to Comcast is particularly egregious. As recently as March, the commissioner was giving speeches complaining that the Comcast-NBC deal "took too long."

Congress is already concerned about how the FCC conducts itself. Rep. Darrell Issa, chair of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, has been making a lot of noise recently about alleged ethical violations at the agency.

Outside of Washington, people of every political stripe have expressed near unanimous contempt for a system of government that favors powerful corporations at the expense of the many. Sadly, the complete capture of government by industry barely raises an eyebrow inside the Beltway anymore. The revolving door at the FCC erodes any prospect for common-sense public policy -- such as strong Net Neutrality rules or a rigorous review of mega-deals like AT&T's proposed takeover of T-Mobile.

ACTION:

Urge your representative to investigate this conflict of interest at the FCC.

CEO bonuses - up 20 percent; average worker - not

Marie Diamond

As most American families continue to struggle with high unemployment and stagnant wages, CEOs at the country's 350 biggest companies saw their pay jump 11% last year to a median of \$9.3 million, according to a study conducted for the Wall Street Journal. The survey looked at direct compensation - salary, bonuses, and long-term incentive awards - and did not include assets like stock options:

For the surveyed CEOs, the sharpest pay gains came via bonuses, which soared 19.7% as profits recovered, especially in some hard-hit industries. □ Net income rose by a median of 17%; shareholders at those companies enjoyed a median return, including dividends, of 18%.

Corporate profits may be at sky-high levels, but they are not translating into shared prosperity for all. Median household income has fallen nearly 5% over the past decade and in 2010 was \$50,221. The lack of wage growth has made it difficult for average Americans to keep up with rising prices on everything from gas to food.

This latest report is further evidence that the gap between the rich and everyone else is widening, with economic inequality in the US at its highest levels since the Great Depression.

Source: *Think Progress* 5/9/11 <http://thinkprogress.org>

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Puentes urban farm sprouting



Eagle Scouts with Scoutmaster engineer Ron Kleinfelder set 79 steel posts in concrete and strung more than 200 yards of donated chainlink to fence the new Puentes Community Farm in Boggs Tract, Stockton. The three acres were donated by the Port of Stockton, and are just down the street from Washington School, which will have its own garden patch there.

10 vital steps to slow global warming

1. Cut down on driving my vehicle, or carpool. I will walk or bike, and not buy a car if I do not have one (best of all). I will support and use mass transit. I may work closer to my home.

2. Cut down on working just for money: I can thereby barter more, and cut down on commuting.

3. Depave my driveway, or help others? depave their driveways, or depave parking lots, and grow food in depaved land.

4. Unplug or retire my television, and perhaps go off the electricity grid. I will reduce energy for heating, and share appliances such as my oven with neighbors, and not buy or use power tools or jet skis, etc.

5. Publicly oppose new road

construction and road widening in my community, to start undoing sprawl, prevent growth in traffic, and halt the spread of forest roads allowing clearcuts.

6. Take vacations without jet air travel, and avoid career activity dependent on jet travel.

7. Plant trees, collect rainwater, and avoid overusing municipal water as it is energy-consumptive (and thus may emit CO₂, the main heat-trapping gas that fossil fuels release).

8. Buy local products, buy as little plastic as possible, carry a travel mug. Minimize consumption. Support alternative plant materials to cut down on petrochemicals and trees for paper. Avoid eating animal

products especially shipped-in beef.

9. Not bring more children into the world, or limit my offspring to one, and possibly adopt. I recognize the threat of overpopulation.

10. Inform my community and the greater national and global community on the need to take action such as the above for climate stability.?

*Culture Change action suggestion,
<http://www.culturechange.org/cms/content/view/201/52/> Culture Change,
P.O. Box 4347, Arcata, California
95518*

Honoring Maria Isavel -Farm Worker Fair Treatment Act passes

Three years ago on May 16, 2008, the life of 17-year old Maria Isavel Vasquez Jimenez was tragically cut short when she died of heat stroke from laboring in the scorching grape vineyards near Stockton. In March of this year, the system again failed Maria and her family when the labor contractors who caused Maria's death escaped jail time, receiving merely probation, community service and a small fine. Maria's family and farm workers in general are outraged. They know what this means for them. It means there is no justice

in the fields, and that growers and contractors can continue to disregard the laws, even if that means farm workers die as a result. They want a solution where they can protect themselves as the system isn't going to do it for them.

The Fair Treatment for Farm Workers Act (SB 104), is that solution. It will ensure the laws on the books do become the laws in the fields. This new law will make it as easier for farm workers to have a union and thus have the opportunity to speak up and protect themselves.

"The Fair Treatment for Farm Workers Act" passed the senate on Cesar Chavez' March 31 birthday. And it passed in the Assembly on May 16th anniversary of Maria Isavel's death.

ACTION:

Please join Maria's family in their struggle for justice for farm workers and contact Governor Brown, urging his signature.

*Source: United Farm Worker release
5/9/11, UFW, PO Box 62, Keene, CA
93531, <http://www.ufw.org>*

Study: burning water is fracked

Abraham Lustgarten

For the first time, a scientific study has linked natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing with a pattern of drinking water contamination so severe that some faucets can be lit on fire.

The peer-reviewed study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, stands to shape the contentious debate over whether drilling is safe and begins to fill an information gap that has made it difficult for lawmakers and the public to understand the risks.

The research was conducted by four scientists at Duke University. They found that levels of flammable methane gas in drinking water wells increased to dangerous levels when those water supplies were close to natural gas wells. They also found that the type of gas detected at high levels in the water was the same type of gas that energy companies were extracting from thousands of feet underground, strongly implying that the gas may be seeping underground through natural or manmade faults and fractures, or coming from cracks in the well structure itself.

The group tested 68 drinking water wells in the Marcellus and Utica shale drilling areas in northeastern Pennsylvania and southern New York State. Sixty of those wells were tested for dissolved gas. While most of the wells had some methane, the water samples taken closest to the gas wells had on average 17 times the levels detected in wells further from active drilling. The group defined an active drilling area as within one kilometer, or about six tenths of a mile, from a gas well.

The average concentration of the methane detected in the water wells near drilling sites fell squarely within a range that the U.S. Department of Interior says is dangerous and requires urgent "hazard mitigation" action, according to the study.

The researchers did not find evidence that the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing had contaminated any of the wells they tested, allaying for the time being some of the greatest fears among environmentalists and drilling opponents.

But they were alarmed by what they described as a clear correlation between drilling activity and the seepage of gas contaminants

underground, a danger in itself and evidence that pathways do exist for contaminants to migrate deep within the earth...

Methane contamination of drinking water wells has been a common complaint among people living in gas drilling areas across the country. A 2009 investigation by ProPublica revealed that methane contamination from drilling was widespread, including in Colorado, Ohio and Pennsylvania. In several cases, homes blew up after gas seeped into their basements or water supplies. In Pennsylvania a 2004 accident killed three people, including a baby.

In Dimock, PA, where part of the Duke study was performed, some residents' water wells exploded or their water could be lit on fire. In at least a dozen cases in Colorado, ProPublica's investigation found, methane had infiltrated drinking water supplies that residents said were clean until hydraulic fracturing was performed nearby.

The drilling industry and some state regulators described some of these cases as "anecdotal" and said they were either unconnected to drilling activity or were an isolated problem. But the consistency of the Duke findings raises questions about how unusual and widespread such cases of methane contamination may be. "It suggests that at least in the region we looked, this is a more general problem than people expected," said Robert Jackson, a biology professor at Duke and one of the report's authors.

Methane is not regulated in drinking water, and while research is limited, it is not currently believed to be harmful to drink. But the methane is dangerous because as it collects in enclosed spaces it can asphyxiate people nearby, or lead to an explosion.

The report noted that as much as a mile of rock separated the bottom of the shallow drinking water wells from the deep zones fractured for gas, and identified several ways in which fluids or the gas contaminants could move underground: The substances could be displaced by the pressures underground; could travel through new fractures or connections to faults created by the hydraulic fracturing process; or could leak from the well casing itself somewhere closer to the surface.

INDUSTRY RESPONSE

A hydrogeologist closely affiliated with the drilling industry raised questions about the study. "It's possible, assuming their measurements are accurate, that all they have done is document the natural conditions of the aquifer," said John Conrad, president of Conrad Geosciences in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Conrad spoke with ProPublica at the suggestion of Energy In Depth, a drilling industry advocacy group, but said that he did not work for EID.

He said that the thermogenic methane -- which many scientists say comes from the same deep gas layers where drilling occurs -- could be naturally occurring. He also said the researchers didn't test enough wells to support their conclusions, though he could not say how many wells would have been appropriate.

Conrad said the most likely cause for the contamination identified by the Duke researchers -- that the gas was leaking out of faulty well casings -- seemed implausible. "For their assumptions to hold up there would have to be more than just the occasional bad cement job," he said. "They are implying

that where you see hydraulic fracturing you should expect to see elevated methane. We are aware of faulty cement jobs. But we don't believe that it is common and we certainly don't believe that it is universal."

REGULATION

The Duke study precedes a national study by the Environmental Protection Agency into the dangers of hydraulic fracturing that is expected to be finished sometime next year. Last year the EPA found that some chemicals known to be used in fracturing were among the contaminants detected in 11 residential drinking water wells in Pavillion, Wyo. -- where more than 200 natural gas wells have been drilled in recent years -- but that investigation is continuing and the scientists haven't concluded that the contamination is linked with drilling or hydraulic fracturing.

The release of the Duke research could immediately shape the increasingly intense public debate over drilling and hydraulic fracturing, especially in some of the areas where the research was conducted. Pennsylvania, which holds drilling companies liable for drinking water contamina-

Stop \$50 billion loan guarantees for new nuke reactors

The House and Senate Energy Appropriations Committees are beginning to work on the FY 2012 federal budget. And that means they are beginning to decide the fate of the loan guarantee program for new nuclear reactor construction. We are expecting the first vote in the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy before June 2--within the next three weeks.

As you probably know, President Obama has asked that this program be increased by \$36 Billion. That's on top of the \$10.2 Billion already in the program and the \$8.3 already promised to Southern Company for construction of the Vogtle reactors in Georgia. Plus there is money for uranium enrichment plants in Idaho and Ohio.

Meanwhile, the world's third and fourth largest economies--Japan and Germany--are marching ahead with new energy policies that will focus on clean and safe renewable energy and energy efficiency. It's time the U.S. march ahead in that direction too. And it's time the U.S. end the nuclear loan program. This is the time to act and here are the actions to take now.

And know that the American people are with us: According to a March 2011 poll conducted for the Civil Society Institute, 73% of the American people oppose federal loan guarantees for new nuclear reactors. An April 2011 ABC News/Washington Post poll found that 64% oppose new reactor construction entirely. With your help, we can end the nuclear loan program and begin to build a nuclear-free, carbon-free energy future.

ACTION:

Please send a letter to your members of Congress (Dianne Feinstein is on the Senate Appropriations Committee). We know many of you have sent letters about this program in the past--do it again. We can end this misuse of taxpayer money. And please help spread the word to your friends and colleagues.

Source: Nuclear Information and Resource Service release 5/12/11 www.nirs.org. NIRS, 6930 Carroll Avenue, #340, Takoma Park, MD 20912.



tion within 1000 feet of a gas well, might consider the fact that the Duke researchers found the contamination extended to about 3,000 feet, Jackson said. New York State has a moratorium in place for hydraulic fracturing of horizontally-drilled wells--which cover more area and require more chemicals--through the end of June to allow for more consideration of the risks. "I would extend that at least temporarily," Jackson said.

AND CONGRESS

"This study provides eye-opening scientific evidence about methane contamination and the risks that irresponsible natural gas drilling poses for drinking water supplies," said Congressman Maurice Hinchey, D-NY. "It provides yet another reason why more study of the environmental

and health risks associated with hydraulic fracturing is needed."

Hinchey is one of several Democratic members of Congress who recently re-introduced the FRAC Act, which calls for public disclosure of the chemicals used underground. The bill, which is currently languishing in the House, would remove an exemption in federal law that prohibits the EPA from regulating hydraulic fracturing.

Abraham Lustgarten is a former staff writer and contributor for *Fortune*, and has written for *Salon*, *Esquire*, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* since receiving his master's in journalism from Columbia University in 2003.

Source: ProPublica 5/10/11 <http://www.propublica.org>

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Wikileaks founder

Facebook is the most appalling spy machine ever invented

Matt Brian

Despite awaiting extradition to Sweden on sexual assault charges, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange is still the subject of much media interest. Russia Today (RT) interviewed Assange, getting his viewpoint on political unrest in Egypt and Libya, particularly probing what the Wikileaks founder makes of social media's roles in the recent revolutions in both countries. In his interview, Assange focuses particularly on Facebook calling it the "most appalling spy machine that has ever been invented".

Explaining in more detail, Assange affirms:

Here we have the world's most comprehensive database about people, their relationships, their names, their addresses, their locations, their communications with each other, and their relatives, all sitting within the United States, all accessible to US Intelligence."

According to Assange, it doesn't stop with Facebook. He believes the social network is joined by Google, Yahoo and other major US organisations that have "built in interfaces for US Intelligence":

It's not a matter of serving a subpoena, they have an interface they have developed for US Intelligence to use. Now, is the case that Facebook is run by US Intelligence? No, it's not like that. It's simply that US Intelligence is able to bring to bear legal and political pressure to them. It's costly for them to hand out individual records, one by one, so they have automated the process.

The Wikileaks founder then warns Facebook users, stating that if a user adds their friend to Facebook, they are "doing free work for US Intelligence agencies, in building this electronic database for them". Assange says his website's revelations are "just the tip of the iceberg", adding that it's only a matter of time before more damaging information becomes known.

Matt Brian is based near London and is the Mobile Editor for *The Next Web*.

Source: *The Next Web* 5/2/11 <http://thenextweb.com>



Islam used to counter US power

Edward E. Curtis, IV

Foreign muslims who resist U.S. dominance in their own countries utilize their religious traditions in so doing. But analyzing this religious violence in isolation from U.S. foreign policy, economic dominance, and military interventionism renders us mute as critics of our own societies and serves -- however inadvertently -- to normalize the secular nation-state's monopoly on legitimate violence.

There is a clash of interests between the U.S. and those whose lives it seeks to shape, often in its own image. But this story does not begin in Mecca; it begins in Washington. Middle Easterners, including Osama bin Laden, were not fantasizing when they saw the U.S. establish military bases

in the Gulf region nor when it restored the Kuwaiti emirate to power in 1991, when it intervened on behalf of both the Iraqis and Iranians in the Iraq-Iran war, when it shelled Lebanon in the 1980s, and the list goes on. This is not primarily a story about religious fanaticism but a story about secular, imperial power.

It may be tempting for religious studies scholars to take advantage of this historical moment by deploying one-dimensional explanations of religion to justify our own usefulness to the academy and to the nation. But even if we have to admit our ignorance, or just say that it's complicated, it is better to resist further propagating or reinforcing simplistic conceptions of Islam, or of religion in general. Instead, we

should spend more time exposing the political contexts in which popular understandings of Islam and religion more broadly are generated, disseminated, and used. And if we must produce a sound-bite about Islam's role in making violence for the media, then let it be this: "Islam is not the cause of violence, but it does offer one means of resistance to U.S. political, military, and economic domination in Muslim lands."

Source: from a much longer piece found at *The Immanent Frame* 5/11/11 <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/05/09/explaining-islam-to-the-public>.

End the land mine plague

Ralph Nader

Every day around the world innocent people, many of them children, are killed or injured by millions of unexploded land mines and cluster bombs. Some of the cluster bomblets look like candy or a toy, which attracts a child in a field, orchard, schoolyard or by the roadside.

Powerful aggressor nations are responsible for most of these anti-personnel weapons being laid from land or by air. Most recently, Libya's rulers laid mines on the outskirts of Ajdabiya as part of its battle against the resistance.

In 2006, Israel laid huge numbers of cluster bombs in southern Lebanon each of which contains lethal bomblets. For many months after the ceasefire, the United Nations could not get Israel to provide its cluster bomb algorithms to UN experts so they could safely neutralize these heinous weapons. In that period many Lebanese, adults and children, became cluster bomb casualties. (Visit <http://www.atfl.org> and see the Cluster Bomb Victims photo gallery.)

Two broad-based international treaties address the humanitarian necessity to ban both weapons, just as many horrific chemical and biological weapons have been banned for years. For both treaties - one on land mines, the more recent on cluster bombs - the United States has been the egregious odd man out under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

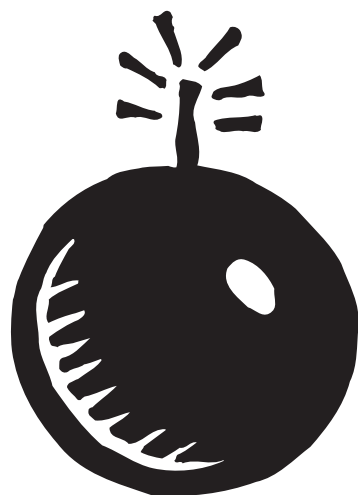
The 1997 Mine Ban Treaty has been signed by 133 countries including many US allies. Not the United States, Russia, Israel and China, all of whom are major producers, users or sellers of these lethal weapons. As reported by Human Rights Watch, 68 US Senators - enough votes to ratify the Land Mine treaty - have urged President Obama to move on this urgent matter. Sixteen Nobel Peace Laureates have urged their fellow Laureate, Barack Obama, to live up to the spirit of this award and lead the US in embracing this treaty.

But the "permanent government" persists, especially when its current President is so preoccupied with all his wars, attacks, incursions, and intrigues with foreign leaders, tribes, clans and spies.

Presently, the US has a stockpile of ten million land mines. Washington claims "it

has not used any since the 1991 Gulf War, has not exported any since 1992 and has not produced them since 1997," according to a Reuters report. The federal government also says it spent \$1.5 billion since 1993 to help clear land mines and treat accident victims.

The State Department and the Pentagon stall and say year after year they are reviewing US land mine policy. Years pass. Still no decision. One reason is that the US wants flexibility to maintain mines in areas like the demilitarized zone between North



and South Korea.

When it comes to the more grisly cluster bombs, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a treaty banning the "use, stockpiling, production and transfer of cluster munitions" and disassembling and clearing the remaining stockpiles within ten years, has been signed by 108 nations. It went into effect August 2010 without the signature of the United States.

From Laos to Kosovo and from Chechnya to Iraq, these savage weapons continue their daily devastation. Pictures of the survivors with lost limbs provide the evidence of what havoc weapons profiteering and unaccountable bureaucrats can wreak. Some of this unexploded ordinance in Iraq and Afghanistan-Pakistan can be reworked into the dreaded IED's used against US soldiers. Maybe that's a wakeup call for the White House.

Still, Obama fiddles and perplexes our allies with his

indecision. He displays no such hesitancy about ordering more and more drones to fire on homes, buildings and vehicles with the imprecision of suspicion that has blown up wedding parties, gatherings of innocent non-combatants and recently, nine boys collecting firewood for their families.

More and more international civic organizations, often backed by their governments, are working together for a "mine-free world." However, sluggishness in Washington can be compared with the speedy innovation by defense firms in the demonic configuration of ever-more-deadly cluster bombs. Wait and see what nanotechnology can do when basic research moves to application in this violent area.

There is all too much secrecy and too little open discussion in the political and electoral arenas. Obama's annual weapons destruction report does not tell Americans why he refuses to sign either treaty.


Mr. Obama has been to many ceremonies and photo opportunities lately. Perhaps he can reserve some space on his calendar to take a photo with some children seriously maimed by cluster bombs and land mines, coupled with an announcement that he will take this next long-overdue step toward disarmament and lessen man's inhumanity to man.

ACTION:

Go to Human Rights Watch's website (<http://hrw.org/>) and sign their anti-land mine letter to President Barack Obama. And call the White House comment hotline (202-456-1111) and voice your resolve to end this scattered and often invisible scourge plaguing war-torn areas of the world.

Ralph Nader <<http://www.nader.org/>> is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His most recent book - and first novel - is, "Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us." His most recent work of non-fiction is "The Seventeen Traditions."

Source: Reader Supported News 5/14/11 <http://readersupportednews.org>



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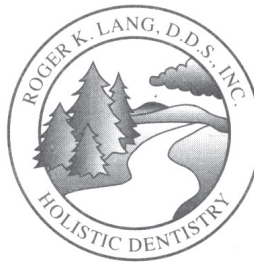


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GOP plan: Let the states do what they want

Evan McMorris-Santoro
& Ryan J. Reilly

Republicans say they've found the problem in America -- and that problem is the basic framework of the Union as we know it today. A group of Republicans in the House and Senate are proposing an amendment to the Constitution that would allow a vote by two-thirds of the states' legislatures to override any federal law they did not agree with.

The proposed constitutional amendment, a tea party favorite, is being touted by Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) in the Senate and co-sponsored by Sens. John Barasso (R-WY) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT). In the House, Reps. Rob Bishop (R-UT), Morgan Griffith (R-VA) and Paul Broun (R-GA) are leading the charge.

The goal, according to proponents, is to stop the tyranny of Washington over the economy and circumscribe other federal powers.

Here's how the plan would

work, from an op-ed Bishop wrote in Daily Caller announcing the Amendment:

[I]f two-thirds of the states collectively find a federal law or regulation abhorrent or misguided, they should have the power to repeal said law or regulation. The law would then be sent back to Washington for further consideration, at which time Congress may choose not to act again on the matter, or they may vote to override the states' repeal and pass it in finality.

"American society itself is so diverse, so organic, so varying in its geography, culture, and demographics that we see the same fatal conceit when government tries to manage it from one central location," Bishop wrote. "That is, unfortunately, what we have done over the past 80 years."

Supporters of the so-called Repeal Amendment say that it was the 17th Amendment, added to the Constitution in 1913, that helped lead the country down the path of too much federal power.



favor of granting final veto power over federal law to states has been kicking around Republican politics for a while now. Last year, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) signaled his support for a plan in the Virginia legislature to call a Constitutional Convention to consider the Repeal Amendment.

Though it's never been tried, a Constitutional Convention can be called by a vote of 2/3 of the states, triggering an amendment process. The customary way an amendment begins is with a vote in Congress that then requires ratification by the states to become part of the Constitution. Bishop last introduced his Repeal Amendment in Congress last year.

Meanwhile, GOP-controlled state legislatures have been passing their own laws aimed at knocking down the federal government's ability to pass laws via the means laid out by the founders. More than one legislatures have considered bills allowing individual states to nullify the federal laws they don't like, and only abide by the ones that they do.

Moran insists her scheme is drastically different from those nullification proposals, which are legally dubious at best.

"It's completely different from nullification. This would be two-thirds of the states getting together to say we don't like a specific law or

regulation, passing a resolution to each state legislature to that effect, and then it would be null and void," she told TPM. "It doesn't prevent Congress from coming back the very next day and passing that same law, but considering it would take a huge majority of the American people to get two-thirds of the states to agree to an appeal, those senators and congressmen would probably no longer have their jobs come election season."

"It's really designed to restore the balance of power between the states and federal government that's been usurped for a long period of time," she said.

(Editor's note: just thinking - health care, income tax, abortion, slavery...let me count the states).

Source: Talking Points Memo 5/11/11
<http://talkingpointsmemo.com>

Tea partiers have suggested repealing the 17th Amendment -- which allows for direct election of senators -- but Republicans have balked. Marianne Moran, executive director of the Repeal Amendment, told TPM creating a new constitutional amendment may be easier to swallow than repealing the 17th.

"A lot of people feel that's the way that Washington controlled much more power and took it away from the states. It's hard to take away direct election of senators from the people, but it was the idea of the founders that give state legislators more power," she said. "And that's why a lot of those people who support repeal of the 17th love the idea of the repeal amendment because it's easier to sell to a large majority of people that you'll be able to repeal bad acts of Congress."

The amendment will be officially rolled out Thursday in a Capitol Hill press conference. Most of the sponsors declined a request for comment from TPM Wednesday afternoon. Barasso's office confirmed his support for the plan, but referred all specific questions to Enzi. Broun's office referred calls to Bishop's office. Moran told TPM her group has been working with Enzi and Bishop to introduce the new bill.

The idea that the framework of the union as we know it today should be fundamentally altered in

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Navigating

In Irish, "muircheartaigh" means "navigator"—one who searches out the way

Why Stone Soup Radio?

John Morearty

AN OLD TALE REBORN

After a hard winter, people in the village were hungry and discouraged. They hoarded food, no one invited neighbors to eat. There just wasn't enough.

One day an old stranger appeared. "Don't be afraid," she said, "I'll make stone soup."

"Soup from a stone?"

From her knapsack she pulled out a gray stone, the size of a hand. Deep in the gray, colors glistened.

"Do you have a pot?" They produced an old banged up kettle.

"And some water?"

She put the glittering gray stone into the water, gathered twigs, built a fire. As villagers watched, the water began to steam. She bent over the pot, breathed in deeply.

"Ah, that's nice!" She looked around.

"If there were a carrot, it would be even nicer!"

Silence. Then a young boy went to his house, and from the cellar brought up one shriveled carrot. He handed it to the old woman.

"Beautiful!" And she gently set it in the steaming water. Hands on hips, she considered the pot. Then she murmured, "A potato would be good." Someone brought a potato, she wiped it on her apron and popped it in, skin and all.

"An onion would add zing!" Someone found an onion, she peeled it and set it in the water.

"Beans would give strength..." A handful of dried beans went in.

"Maybe an old cabbage, and a beet or two..." They appeared.

"And greens are always nice!" Against a south wall a few early spring dandelions were unfolding. Someone plucked them.

"Now if only we had a dried fish, and maybe a scrap of salt pork..."

A girl looked hungrily at the pot. She went back to her house, and returned with hands outstretched. "Here."

In went fish and pork. The villagers watched the pot simmer...

The old woman smiled.

"Our Stone Soup is ready. Get your bowls."

Back they came with bowls

and spoons. Someone brought a drum, someone else a bamboo flute. When the soup was all eaten, an old man sat and played the spoons, the boy and girl banged sticks on the pot. Villagers danced under the new moon, under spring stars....

It takes a community to make community radio happen. And it is happening, here! The Peace and Justice Network has a federal full-power FM license, and Valley community radio KYNJ FM 89.5 is on the way. We have established a new collaborative voice in our community.

But we are not on the air yet. We've got less than two years to start broadcasting, or the feds will yank the license. We do have a transmitter site, rent-free, that will reach Stockton and the south county. We do have generous seed donations from the Concerned Citizens Committee (the group that stopped water privatization) and the Central Labor Council. The Stone Soup Radio Council is in the intense planning stage, meeting every week. But we need your input, ideas, creativity!

ADD THE VOICE OF YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR NONPROFIT, YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS, YOUR CAUSE TO THE RADIO COUNCIL. Call:

Tony Kiser, 471-5671 or Christie Kelley, 943-0539

And we need your financial support! Become a founding member of KYNJ, \$89 for 89.5! Send your tax-deductible donation to Peace and Justice Network of SJC, P.O. Box 4123, Stockton CA 95204. Indicate that your donation is for KYNJ 89.5 RADIO STATION.

All founding members will be recognized in Connections, the Peace and Justice newspaper.

Imagine-Driving in your car, or lying in bed listening to Valley Community Stone Soup Radio. Real news, local and worldwide. "Democracy Now" with Amy Goodman. Serious discussions of many points of view, with mutual respect for all. Volunteers doing programming on-

- War and peace issues
- Veterans' issues
- Women's issues
- Young peoples' issues



- Labor issues
- Elders' issues
- Multi-ethnic issues, in various languages
- Educating our young
- Building a local economy in hard times
- Building a green, sustainable world
- Ethics, spirituality, world religions
- Building a world with liberty and justice for all
- Young people roaming with microphones and tape recorders, "Voices from the Street"
- World music, and
- LOCAL MUSICIANS, MUSICIANS MUSICIANS! Singing, drumming, twanging, tweetling, banging on the Big Stone Soup Kettle with sticks and spoons!

It takes a community to make community radio happen. Let's make it happen!

- Write your check for \$89 and become a founding member now
- Call the Radio Council and come contribute your creativity
- Schedule a presentation to your group, about how the group can support STONE SOUP RADIO, KYNJ 89.5

House passes shocking anti-woman bill: stop H.R. 3

Extremism has defined the Republican House majority since it took power in January. And chief among their extremist pursuits has been a relentless legislative war on women. They voted to defund Planned Parenthood ... they used the budget compromise to take away access to abortion for women (especially low-income women) in the District of Columbia ... and just last week, they passed one of the most sweeping attacks on choice ever. Help stop the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act" (H.R. 3) in Senate by signing our emergency petition now. We expect that Republicans in the Senate will now try to push this legislation through as an amendment to another bill.

Shutdown of GE Mark I reactors

There are 23 nuclear reactors currently operating in the United States using the same General Electric Mark I design as those that have failed so catastrophically at Fukushima.

The flaws in this design are fundamental, cannot be fixed, and have been documented for 40 years now. They have led to containment building explosions at three of the Fukushima reactors, the exposure of irradiated fuel pools to the environment and enormous radiation releases.

It is time to close them, permanently. Please take a moment to tell that to President Obama, your Congressmembers, and the Nuclear Regulatory

Commission (NRC). You can do that with one letter below.

A list of the GE Mark I reactors can be found here <<http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/accidents/genk1reactorsinus.pdf>>. You will also see that 18 of these 23 aging reactors already have been approved for license extension by the NRC. Rather than putting Americans into peril for 20 more years, the renewals must be rescinded and the reactors closed now.

An explanation of the fundamental flaws in the Mark I design is here. <<http://www.nirs.org/factsheets/bwrifact.htm>> The explanation includes links to the original 1971-72 Atomic Energy Commission discussion of the design's flaws and recommendation that the design be discontinued in the U.S. Astonishingly, this recommendation was agreed to in concept, but denied because it "could well mean the end of nuclear power..." Hmmm...

Dear President Obama,

There are 23 operating and aging GE Mark I reactors in the United States. This is the same design that has failed so catastrophically at Fukushima. Top safety officials at the Atomic Energy Commission and later the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have warned about the flaws of this reactor design for the past 40 years. The flaws in this design are fundamental and cannot be fixed. Americans should not live in peril due to flawed reactor designs. Taken together, all 23 of these reactors provide less than 4% of the nation's electricity. There is ample reserve capacity available. These reactors must be permanently closed now. Please inform me of the actions you will take to ensure their permanent shutdown.

Sincerely,

Your name

Source: Nuclear Information and Resource Service release 5/10/11 <<http://www.nirs.org>>

H.R. 3 does a lot more than its name would imply.

- It resurrects the failed "Stupak ban" from the healthcare debate, effectively banning even private coverage of abortion care, and adds a new tax penalty to ensure that the ban becomes a reality.
- It opens up the possibility that rape and incest survivors who choose abortion care could be audited by the IRS.
- It makes permanent the current annual ban on federal abortion funding known as the "Hyde Amendment."
- It continues a funding ban for the District of Columbia.

• It expands refusal clauses that allow healthcare providers to refuse to provide abortion services.

• Finally, it has been reported that Republicans are trying to reinstate a widely-condemned redefinition of rape through behind-the-scenes procedural tactics.

ACTION:

Contact your Senators; tell them Senate Leadership can't let H.R. 3 be snuck onto the floor as an amendment.

Source: People For the American Way release 5/11/11 www.pfaw.org PFAW, 2000 M Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036, 202-467-4999

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June 4 Astronomy in the Park

The Oak Grove Nature Center presents "Astronomy in the Park" on Saturday, June 4th from 8:00 – 11:00 pm. Astronomy themed activities and crafts inside the Nature Center. Stargazing with telescopes provided by the Stockton Astronomical Society. Activities are free and open to people of all ages. Oak Grove Regional Park entrance fee of \$5 is required per vehicle. Visit www.mgzoo.com or call 953-8814 for more information.

June 20 - July 29 Micke Grove Zoofari - signup time

Winter blues got you down? Well spring into summer at Micke Grove Zoo's Summer Camp 2011! Summer time means Zoofari! camp time and this year's themes will excite, engage and inspire your child. Discover zoo animals, learn about habitat conservation, engage in hands-on activities, see live animal presentations, and create art. Zoofari! camp sessions will be offered from June 20th – July 29th for children ages 4 – 12 years. For more information on how your child can have a "WILD" summer, visit www.mgzoo.com or call (209) 331-2010.

Tidewater Artists

Small Works and Beyond group show

Tidewater Artists will display at least one small work while showcasing their best works in their Group Show for June "Small Works and Beyond." Come see their creative creations. Show begins June 7th and runs thru June 30th. Receptions for the artists will be Friday, June 10th from 5 pm to 8 pm.

Participating Tidewater Artists will be: Ceramics and Glass-Sean Flaherty, David Hopman; Jewelry- Derek Ibarra, Gay Lynn Saunders, Susan Winton; Painting and Mixed Media- Denny Ah-Tye, Helen Betz, Leon Cao, Jorge Elizalde, Cyndi Esenwein, Sarah "Ra" Lippincott, Heidi Mazo, Tina Moore Judy Randolph and Tim Tanis; Photography- Karen Olson, John Nagle, Henry Paine, Arturo Vera.

The Tidewater Art Center & Gallery, an artists' collaborative located directly across the street from the county Courthouse at 223 E. Weber Avenue, is open Monday-Friday from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. For further information about the gallery, artists, exhibits, special events, please visit the website at www.tidewaterartgallery.org.



Sign up now!

Summer Learning fun at Kids College

Summer is the perfect time for students to develop new interests, learn new skills, and explore new possible careers. Kids College is offering over 100 mini-camps and workshop for students ages 4 to 17 on the Delta College campus in Stockton. For the explorer in "Giant Leap Into Space Camp", the chef in "Mangia, Mangia...Italiano," and the budding artist in "Pee-Wee Picassos", there is something for everyone at Kids College. Mini-camps and workshops are offered in the areas of Academic Skills & Creative Learning, Arts & Crafts, Computers & Photography, Cooking, Dance & Movement, Foreign Language, Music, Online Learning, Personal Pursuits, Science & Engineering, Sports, and Performing. Class sizes are small...learning fun is BIG!

For detailed information about Kids College, the current summer workshop descriptions, schedule, fees, and online registration, visit the web: <http://www.adultedreg.com/deltakidscollege>. Have questions? Please call 209-954-5015.

June Calendar

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

Apr 24 – June 19

Pastels USA art show - 25th Annual International Open Exhibition sponsored by the Pastel Society of the West Coast. Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. Hundreds of art works by SJ County students from K-12. Wed-Sun 1:30 - 5 pm. 1st and 3rd Thurs 1:30 - 9 pm. \$5 adult 18 & older, student/senior/youth age 10-17 \$2.50. Under 10/first Saturday free. 940-6300 info@hagginmuseum.org

May 3 - June 3

Ning Hou presents Art with Intention. Reception May 3, 5-8 pm. M-F 10-5. Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. 463-4033

Wed-Sun

May 4 - 29

The Odd Couple. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton \$15 - \$25. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

May 15 – 22

Delta Drama presents "Ordinary People." Studio Theatre, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$12. Th, F, Sat 8 pm. Sun 2 pm.

Mon, May 23

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.

Thu, May 26

33rd annual Senior Awareness Day, 8 am - 1 pm. Micke Grove Park, Lodi. Fit after Fifty theme. Food, music, Tai Chi, free health screenings. Free bus shuttle every half hour from Yokuts and Claremont (8 - 12), from the park until 3 pm. \$5 park fee. 468-1104

Connections Redesign Committee meeting, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 7pm. All welcome. 467-4455 If you have a suggestion for the committee please email: message@gemini87.info

Sat, May 28

3rd Annual Mayor's Hike & Bike in Stockton, 8:30 am. Begins/ends at the DeRosa Student Center, UOP, 3601 Pacific Ave. A variety of courses takes participants through scenic Stockton. Proceeds benefits the Emergency Food Bank and Catholic Charities food nutrition programs. 464-7369, www.stocktonhikeandbike.org

Tue, May 31

US Corporate Involvement in the Israel/Palestine Conflict, an evening with Dalit Baum. 7 pm. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 464-2246. (p 18)

Thu, Jun 2

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

Sat, Jun 4

Astronomy in the Park at Oak Grove Nature Center, 8 - 11 pm. Oak Grove Regional Park, 4520 W Eight Mile Rd, Stockton. \$5 parking. 953-8814.

June 7 - 30

Tidewater Artists present small works and Beyond. M-F 10-5. Reception June 10, 5-8 pm. Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. 463-4033

Tue, June 14

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. All welcome. 467-4455

Edwin McCain with guest David

Ryan Harris, 7:30 pm. Stockton Empire Theatre, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$20 general admission. 209-594-1669.

Thu, June 16

Fantasy sculptor Mat Falls, 7 pm. Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. \$5 age 18-64, \$2.50 age 10-17; free under 10. 940-6300.

Sat-Sun, June 18-19

Isleton Cajun Festival, 10 am. Main Street, Isleton. Vendors of food & fancies, three stages of Zydeco, Cajun and Souther blues, crawdads and more. \$5. 916-777-4800.

Sun, June 19

Spend a Day on the Farm, 11 am - 5 pm. Countryside Farms, 6666 E Main St, Stockton. Nature hunt, pet/feed animals, pick fruit, plant seeds and more. Kids 2-12 \$7.50, adult \$3.75. 943-1632.

First Mondays

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

Fourth Mondays

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

Second Tuesdays

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7-9 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

Second Thursdays

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

Third Saturdays

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 10 am-12 pm, Blackwater Cafe. 467-4455.

Fourth Saturdays

Greater Lodi Area Democrats (GLAD) breakfast meeting, 8:30 am, Dee Dee's Family Dining, 1170 S. Cherokee Ln, Lodi. 209-663-3717

Mondays

Jazz at the Blackwater 8:30 - 11 pm. Mike Rocha, Rick Russell, Giulio Cetto, Michael Klooster and more. Acacia & Yosemite, Stockton.

Thursdays

Cairo, Madison, Stockton! Peace and justice demonstration along Pacific, just north of Delta bus stop. 5 pm. Signs provided, or bring your own. Parking in Sherwood lot across the street. Info: Patrick Wall, 954-5438.

Dinner and a show, 6:30 - 9:30. Blackwater Cafe, Acacia & Yosemite, Stockton.

Saturdays

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

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



May 31

Israel/Palestine Task Force
Of California/Nevada United Methodist Church presents
A Peace Week Observance

US Corporate Involvement in the Israel/Palestine Conflict

An Evening with

Dalit Baum, PhD



Founder of "Who Profits from the Occupation," an activist research initiative of the Coalition of Women for Peace in Israel (www.whoprofits.org). Scholar and teacher at Haifa University and Beri College in Israel.

Tuesday • May 31, 2011 • 7:00 pm
Central United Methodist Church—Stockton
3700 Pacific Ave. (across from UOP)

Offering for Israel/Palestine Task Force

More Info:
Gloria 209-464-2246

US corporations in Israel/Palestine

DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2011

TIME: 7 PM

PLACE: CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
FELLOWSHIP HALL, 3700 PACIFIC AVE. (ACROSS UOP)

The Israel/Palestine Task Force of the United Methodist Church presents a Peace Week observance, "US Corporate Involvement in the Israel/Palestine Conflict," An Evening with Dalit Baum, Ph.D.

Dalit Baum is founder of "Who Profits from the Occupation" (www.whoprofits.org), an activist research initiative of the Coalition of Women for Peace in Israel. She is a scholar and teacher at Haifa University and Beri College in Israel. Dalit is spending this year working with Global Exchange to build the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Who Profits is the go-to place on the web for anyone who wants to know about companies that are profiting from the occupation and continuing conflict in the Holy Land. Dalit's visit to Stockton is a rare opportunity for peace activists and all who want to know more about a this rapidly growing global movement for a just peace in Palestine. For more info, contact Gloria at 209-464-2246

Talking It Through

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

Peace & Justice Network sponsors two half-hour shows:

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

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

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

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

Working Locally for a Better World

June 24-26

Peace Camp in the Sierra

This summer marks the 29th year that peace-minded folks of all ages have gathered in the Sierras for the Modesto Peace/Life Center's Peace Camp. This year's camp will be June 24-26 at Camp Peaceful Pines on Clark Fork Road off Hwy. 108.

Lenore Mantegna will lead a workshop on nonviolent communication. Lenore is a peace advocate and long-time participant at Peace camp. Currently living in Santa Cruz and working as Director of Special Education for Santa Clara Unified School District, she has a background in counseling and education.

David Smith-Ferri will read from his new book of poetry. David is an active member of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. He has traveled twice to Iraq and traveled with to Afghanistan with Voices in a December 2010 delegation.

Jennifer Pereria will lead a discussion of Michael Pollan's book, "In Defense of Food," and will offer a yoga workshop each morning. Tim Smart will offer his popular star walk with stories about the night sky. In addition to the workshops there will be hiking, campfire, a talent show, arts and crafts, children's activities, and lots of stimulating conversation with interesting people of all ages.

At the 6,200-foot elevation in the Stanislaus National Forest near the Clark Fork of the Stanislaus River, Camp Peaceful Pines is located about 25 miles above Pinecrest off Hwy. 108. Surrounded by tall peaks, the camp is set in the forest and has a creek running through it. Sunrise Rock, with views of the river valley, is a short hike from camp.

The camp features kitchen and bathroom facilities, rustic cabins and platform tents and a cabin for those with special needs. Campers share in meal preparation, cleanup, and other work. Families and individuals are welcome.

The \$70 fee covers program, food and lodging for the weekend. Young people are \$50. Early registration, before June 6th, entitles registrants to a \$10.00 per person discount. Partial scholarships and day-rates are also available. Registration forms are available at www.stanislausconnections.org, where they can be printed and mailed. Directions and additional details will be mailed to registrants.

Campers are welcome to arrive any time after 2:00 p.m. on Friday. The camp opens with supper on Friday and closes at noon on Sunday. Directions and other information will be mailed to participants before camp. Information: Ken Schroeder in Modesto, 209-569-0321.

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WALDO HOLT SAN JOAQUIN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY PROUDLY PRESENTS

the 4th Annual

WALDO MUSIC FEST

SATURDAY
JUNE 4th 2011

3536 RAINIER AVE, STOCKTON
on the Banks of the Calaveras River

THREE 'til 8 PM

Food, Art
Silent Auction
Music & More!

Music by
DIRK HAMILTON
STEPHANIE D TRIO
BEN VOGEL
and **KATIE HELL**

ONLY \$20
KIDS FREE!
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for MORE INFORMATION:
check out "Waldo Music Fest" on Facebook
visit waldoconservancy.org
or call 209.463.0216

PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE WALDO HOLT SAN JOAQUIN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY

Waldo Holt Conservancy

MISSION

Preserve and enhance wildlife habitat lands in San Joaquin County and nearby areas for the benefit of people and the environment.

GOALS

Preserve and protect as much of the remaining wildlife habitat in the San Joaquin County area as possible. This will be done

through purchase, lease or wildlife conservation easements. We plan to work with farmers and other landowners and to cooperate with other conservation organizations and government agencies. The conservancy will target riparian and other woodland wildlife habitat along rivers and streams of the valley and nearby foothills, as well as adjacent areas of importance to wildlife. Areas

may not be pristine but can be appropriate for restoration. These parcels will provide habitat for Swainson's hawks, brush rabbits, kit fox, tiger salamander, tri-colored blackbirds, yellow-billed cuckoos, sandhill cranes and other plant and animal species of concern which are of importance to the functioning of ecosystems.

For more info, check out <http://www.waldoconservancy.org/>