

connections

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November 2005

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Investigate Pombo

Ellis Goldberg
JerryMcNerney.org

"Every day, new revelations uncover more corruption within the Republican Party" Pleasanton CA Congressional Candidate Jerry McNerney (www.JerryMcNerney.org) commented about the latest story about how House Resource Committee Chairman Congressman Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, may have violated tax laws in connection with two trips to New Zealand and Japan that cost more the \$23,000. "It is time for a congressional investigation of House Resource Committee Chairman Pombo's activities. They cannot be swept under the carpet and overlooked by his cronies on the Ethics Committee anymore."



McNerney continued, "When taken as a whole, the record is a picture of persistent corruption."

(continued page 3)

Vote November 8

Recommendations for progressive voters



73—Termination of Minor's Pregnancy. Waiting Period and Parental Notification. Initiative Constitutional Amendment. **NO**

Threatens Teen Safety. Parental notification laws like this one threaten teen safety because they delay teens from seeking safe, professional medical care. Prop 73 requires doctors to notify the parents of any teenager under the age of 18 who seeks abortion services, but provides no real solutions for parents. Parents want to be involved in the lives and decisions of their teenagers, but this initiative, which forces the government into sensitive family decisions, is

not the answer. The truth is that the overwhelming majority of girls confide in their parents when faced with a difficult decision like an unplanned pregnancy. But if their daughters are reluctant or unable to approach them, most parents want their teens to be safe.

Backed by: Extremist anti-choice groups

Opposed by: Groups who support teen safety and access to comprehensive reproductive health care like the California Nurses Association, Planned Parenthood, Pro-Choice California, and the California Medical Association, among others.

74— Public School Teachers. Waiting Period for Permanent Status. Dismissal. Initiative Statute. **NO**

Attacks School Teachers. This measure, which requires teachers to wait five years instead of two before they are eligible for tenure, is an attempt to deflect attention from the real problems facing our public school system. Teachers simply do not get paid enough for the work they do educating our next generation of leaders. Taking away a measure of job security, one of the few remaining incentives, will only make it more difficult to recruit and retain quality teachers.

(continued page 3)

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Save the date

Peaceful holiday faire: 2 weekends at the center

Friday, December 2 and 9: 4:00 - 10:00 pm and
Saturday, December 3 and 10: 10:30 - 3:00 pm

The 19th Annual Peaceful Holiday Faire, sponsored by the Peace and Justice Network of San Joaquin County, will be held this year on two weekends at our new Center, 231 Bedford Road, off Miracle Mile (behind SF Floral Shop).

The Peaceful Holiday Faire provides a venue for local artists and artisans to sell their wares and to support the Network in encouraging people to celebrate the holiday season, mindful of the need to promote peace and justice locally for a better world. Items for sale promote non-violence, peaceful living, reflect the beauty of nature, the creativity of the spirit, the skill of the hands, and contribute to a more responsible world.

Any vendors interested in participating in this festive affair by providing beautiful, creative, practical works of art and/or crafts, please call Maria Flumiani at (209) 467-1439 or email mflumiani@sbcglobal.net.

A long night coming to a close

Funny that Pres. Bush is now pushing energy conservation—back in the Davis administration, VP Cheney stated that conservation was a lifestyle choice, not an energy policy. And a reason to oust Davis. Must be, when your approval ratings are at 35% (due in part to \$3/gallon gas), new options emerge. Too bad that there was no preparation for this need to use public transportation or to increase fuel economy on our cars—or even to change the SUV criteria—like 20 years ago, when the last oil crisis hit. So, if your Hummer is “so yesterday,” will we now subsidize Amtrak and increase our fuel efficiency standards to 1970 levels? Don’t hold your breath (unless you’re asthmatic).

So, even if the news sucks internationally (global warm-

ing accelerating—now its the permafrost melting, Iraq war still endless, Korea, Iran, bird flu—all coming home to roost), nation-

ally (Katrina corruption uncovered daily, DeLay booked, Frist on the way, Cheney sucked into the Plame spy whirlpool) and locally

Bush sez...

“If it makes sense for the citizen out there to curtail nonessential travel, it darn sure makes sense for federal employees. We can encourage employees to car pool or use mass transit, and we can shift peak electricity use to off-peak hours. There’s ways for the federal government to lead when it comes to conservation.”

Bush sent a memo to agency and department heads, saying the federal government must “lead by example and further contribute to the relief effort by reducing its own fuel use during this difficult time.” He instructed them to report to him within 30 days, describing which steps they took to conserve.

The White House will be looking at ways to cut down its fuel use, press secretary Scott McClellan said, although that doesn’t include curtailing the president’s plans to return to the New Orleans region this week.

Source: AP



Bruce Giudici

(Pombo scandal, housing & energy costs up, incomes flat, sprawl set to go), um...now where was I going with this? Oh yeah, at least people haven’t given up hope. In this issue, you will find a citizen protest against the endangered species act changes advocated by our own Reps. Pombo and Cardoza, a community garden that teaches, a peace center that is opening to more events, and a population willing to consider change. The long, dark, narcotic American night is coming to a close. The danger is: what will a desperate keptocracy do, as it topples like a Sadaam statue? Beware of false crises—we’re all on orange alert now. Peace.

Feedback

Apologies from Connections

To our readers:

Connections published the wrong advertisement for Pacific Complementary Medicine Center (PCMC) last month. The ad should have omitted reference to Nu-Herb. We regret this error.

Bruce Giudici, Editor
Connections

Health insurance covers?

Editor,

An article in the Sunday Record about cheap healthcare in India says volumes about the lack of healthcare in the U.S. Bradley Thayer, a retired apple farmer from Washington State, traveled 7,500 miles to get a knee operation that cost him a third of what it would cost him to get it done in a U.S. hospital - and that includes airfare. His doctors here told him that it would cost \$35,000 and he would have to wait for 6 months. Mr. Thayer had no health insurance.

My wife and I on the other hand have medical and dental insurance provided in my union retirement plan. The dental insurance covers \$1,000 a year. My wife is planning her second trip to San Salvador, El Salvador to have work done

on her teeth. The dentist here says the work would cost over \$7,000. Airfare and dental work in San Salvador was less than \$800. With the second trip, it is still cheaper to have the work done outside this failed health system.

A recent Teamster contract in San Joaquin County is considered a victory because they were able to keep their fully funded health insurance—but what does a good insurance plan offer? Health insurance does not necessarily mean healthcare.

Many workers and their children are far less fortunate in that they have neither insurance nor funds to seek help inside or outside the failed U.S. healthcare system.

Where can we look for a solution? Are there models in the world that can provide solutions? Are we spending too much on world domination and imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Harold Bell

Bush’s Katrina response unchristian

Editor,

The Religious Right and the ultra-conservative political right have joined hands. For some years they have been inflicting their harsh, inhumane theology/ideology on the American people. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed the

disastrous consequences.

Matthew 25 tells us what Christians do when they practice their faith in word and deed. We feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, invite the stranger in, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and the imprisoned. But what, instead, did we see in New Orleans immediately after Katrina?

National governments are indispensable and irreplaceable. The Preamble to our U.S. Constitution eloquently tells us why we established that Constitution. To form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity. But what, instead, did we see in New Orleans immediately after Katrina?

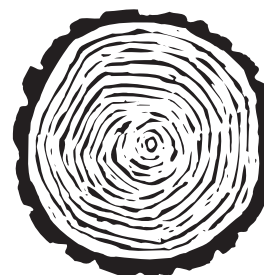
The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, especially in New Orleans, has conclusively demonstrated that the Emperor has no clothes. The theology/ideology of the Religious Right and the ultra-conservative political right has failed the nation. Louisiana is at the very heart of the “Bible Belt.” Louisiana is one of the solidly Red States. The failure of the Christian community in that region before Katrina and the politicians at every level, particularly in New Orleans itself, exposed our hypocrisies for all the world to

see.

Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, is a powerful Republican who embodies the values of both the Religious Right and the ultra-conservative political right. He is a pre-eminent strategist for the conservatives. President Bush buys the Norquist agenda hook, line and sinker. Norquist wants to shrink the size of government in half over the next 25 years “to get it down to the size we can drown it in the bathtub.” His ideal citizen is “the self-employed, homeschooling, IRA-owning guy with a concealed-carry permit, because that person doesn’t need the goddamn government for anything.” New Orleans demonstrated the consequences of such an ideology.

It’s time for all Americans who embrace the principles of Matthew 25 and who honor the American constitution to take back the country to which we pledge allegiance.

Stanley G. Thomas



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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.”

Voter recommendations *(continued from page 1)*

If we really want to ensure our kids have good teachers, we must provide them with the training and support services they need.

Backed by: Gov. Schwarzenegger, anti-union groups

Opposed by: Education groups, including CTA.

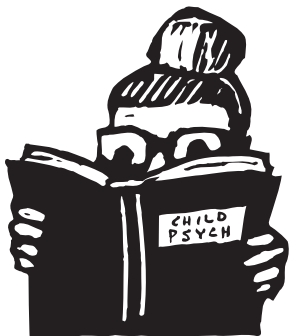
75— Public Employee Union Dues. Required Employee Consent for Political Contributions. Initiative Statute.

NO

Paycheck Deception. Californians have rejected this initiative in the past, and they should do so again. Plain and simple, it is an attempt to handicap unfairly those organizations that give working families a voice in the political process that affects them. It makes it unreasonably difficult for union dues to be used toward political purposes, and it is no coincidence that many of these organizations support progressive causes and candidates. This initiative does not propose the same level of scrutiny for big corporate campaign donors.

Backed by: Anti-worker groups, Bush Administration advisors

Opposed by: A broad coalition of progressive groups including teachers, nurses, school personnel and working family advocates.



76— School Funding. State Spending. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

NO

Guts School Funding. Aims to give the Governor new powers to single-handedly slash state funding, while gutting the voter-approved education funding requirements in Proposition 98. Poorly written, it could also deprive cities and counties of hundreds of millions of dollars for police, firefighters, healthcare and social service programs. Similar measures proposed by Republican governors have been rejected by Californians before. Voters didn't approve of the power grab then, and they shouldn't now.

Backed by: Gov. Schwarzenegger, big business groups

Opposed by: Education, and health care advocacy groups

77— Reapportionment. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

NO

Power Grab. With all of the problems our state is currently facing, this initiative is merely a distraction. Redistricting should only be done in connection with the next Census, and only then should we decide how that process should unfold. Republicans in California know that the only way they can gain any seats in the Legislature and Congress is to change the rules about how districts are drawn, because their increasingly strident, right-wing extremist candidates are not popular with California voters.

Backed by: Gov. Schwarzenegger, and the same people who brought you the 2003 recall election

78— Prescription Drugs. Discounts. Initiative Statute.

NO

False Description Drug Plan. The big problem with this initiative is that it is strictly voluntary, leaving it up to the giant drug companies to decide whether to offer seniors and the working poor cheaper prescription drugs. We doubt that the drug companies will always do the right thing and look out for the interests of their consumers. This measure was designed to confuse voters—it was put on the ballot in response to real prescription drug reform championed by seniors and consumer-rights groups (see below).

Backed by: Big drug companies, including PhRma

Opposed by: Alliance for a Better California, seniors and consumer rights groups



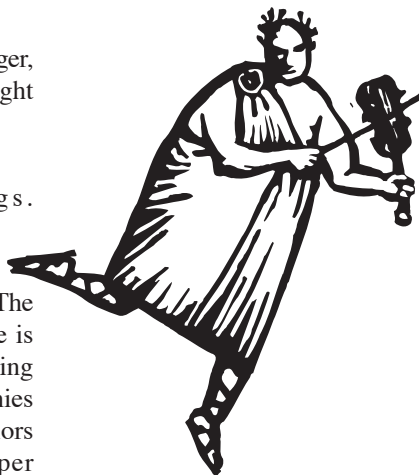
79— Prescription Drug Discounts. State-Negotiated Rebates. Initiative Statute.

YES

Cheaper Prescription Drugs. Supported by seniors and consumer groups, this initiative would make it mandatory for drug companies to provide low-income residents with cheaper prescription drugs, or risk being barred from state Medi-Cal contracts. The discounts would come in the form of rebates that are negotiated between the state and drug makers. This measure also calls for an oversight board and would make certain prescription drug profiteering illegal.

Backed by: Alliance for a Better California, Seniors, consumer rights groups

Opposed by: Drug companies



80— Electric Service Providers. Regulation. Initiative Statute.

YES

Blackout Avoidance. A response to the deregulation disaster that brought us the energy crisis of the late 1990s, this measure aims to bring stability and reliability back to California's electricity grid. It will prevent the kind of Enron-style market manipulation that led to rolling blackouts and skyrocketing electricity bills, and further commits California to increased reliance on renewable energy sources.

Backed by: Alliance for a Better California, and consumer groups including The Utility Reform Network

For more info on the November 8 Special Election, please visit www.speakoutca.org

Source: Progressive Democrats of Sacramento Special Election Voter Guide Progressive Voter Guide, 10/19/05

Investigate Pombo *(continued from page 1)*

The latest story is that he took two expensive trips paid for by anti-environmental groups with legislation before his committee." McNerney connects the dots: "The Congressman uses his chairmanship to help other Congressmen garner donations from those who want influence with the Resources Committee. That is why Tom DeLay appointed him chairman over more senior Republicans; DeLay knew Pombo was not only corrupt but that he would help DeLay corrupt others. Pombo continues to receive funds and direct the distribution of funds from Indian gaming interests with legislation before the Resources Committee. Lobbyist Jack Abramoff, Pombo's biggest contributor, directed the Indian gaming funds to Republican candidates in exchange for influence in Congress. Mr. Abramoff is now busy (elsewhere) but the tribes continue to make contributions anyway."

"The Saginaw Chippewa tribe of Michigan plans to spend more than \$300,000 on political donations in the 2006 fiscal year, according to the Sept. 27 memo, a sum somewhat less than in the tribe's years with Abramoff—in which it made several large donations to questionable nonprofits—but still sufficient to wield substantial political influence. Those receiving the largest donations on the list are House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-Calif.) and Reps. J.D. Hayworth (R-Ariz.), Dave Camp (R-Mich.), Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.) and Dale Kildee (D-Mich.), with \$7,000 contributions." noted Josephine Hearn, a writer for The Hill <http://www.thehill.com>, a Congressional newspaper.

Mr. Pombo has taken campaign contributions from Indian casino interests with legislation before his committee. He used his official position to influence legislation directly benefiting campaign donors. In an event called "Pombo Palooza," Abramoff offered \$5,000 seats at last year's all-star baseball game to tribes that want power plants on their lands without any environmental oversight. Later the same week Pombo demanded that the House Senate Conference on the 2005 Energy Bill allow power plants without any environmental oversight on tribal lands.

Looking at the big picture, McNerney commented "This high-impact corruption has to do with

energy interests who stand to gain the most by drilling for oil offshore and in ANWR. These are the same interests whose record profits are obscene. These are the interests that the President lied for in order to invade Iraq. Much of the financing for terrorist groups comes from the price we pay at the pumps for imported oil.

In the month before he continued to push to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, campaign finance records show that Rep. Richard Pombo took about \$13,000 from donors in Alaska for his political action committee. Donors include executives at an engineering and construction company that likely would be at the forefront of ANWR development and an official from a Native Alaskan corporation that stood to profit from oil drilling if a 1.5 million-acre section of the reserve is opened.

Representative Pombo acted as the spokesperson in Congress for Chevron in its bid against China for Unocal. I agree that Unocal should not be sold to China. But I don't agree that a Congressman should be sold to Chevron. Pombo accepted \$13,000 from Chevron over 3 years and then allowed Chevron lobbyists to draft his letter to the Treasury Secretary favoring Chevron in the Unocal sale. That's bribery.

The congressman's corruption extends to misuse of government funds and employees. Richard Pombo misused his staff of government employees for campaign purposes. He gave his staff a month off with pay plus expenses just before the 2004 election so they could work on his campaign.

Richard Pombo misused congressional franking privileges by sending political mailers at a cost to taxpayers of \$500,000. He used federal tax dollars for partisan political campaign purposes by sending out 175,000 glossy two-page leaflets to voters around the country just weeks before the 2004 general election promoting George W. Bush, in clear violation of franking rules. The Republican-dominated Ethics Committee failed to investigate."

McNerney concluded, "As long as Republicans control Congress, they will continue this outrage. We must take back Congress in 2006 so that they won't be able to prevent an honest investigation."

Source: YubaNet.com release 10/20/05

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With a Justice Miers: The Constitution or President Bush?

Brendan Smith and
Jeremy Brecher

If Harriet Miers's appointment to the Supreme Court is confirmed, she will take an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. But if it comes to a conflict between the Constitution and the policies of President Bush, which will Ms. Miers choose?

Some of the most important cases likely to come before the Supreme Court will involve Bush administration claims of unprecedented Presidential powers. Both liberals and conservatives who believe in limited government under law should reject her nomination, unless she can present convincing evidence that she will stand up to her devoted boss in defense of the Constitution. Both Democratic and Republican Senators should ask her:

Does the President have powers that are not subject to review by the courts? In the 2003 case of *Gherbi v. Bush*, the Bush administration lawyers argued that US courts would not have jurisdiction over detainees even if they were being summarily executed. In its ruling, an astonished Ninth Circuit court wrote that the government asserted the power to do with detainees as it will, when it pleases, without compliance to any rule of law of any kind. The US government has never before asserted such a grave and startling position—a position so extreme that it raises the gravest concerns under both national and international law. Can Ms. Miers show that she would block such a Presidential power grab?

Can the President defy a Congressional ban on torture? The Senate recently passed legislation sponsored by Senator McCain outlawing torture of prisoners. The Constitution says "The Congress shall have Power To ... make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water," but President Bush is threatening a veto on the grounds that it would "restrict the president's authority to protect Americans effectively from terrorist attack and bringing terrorists to justice." If Congress passes the legislation and the President refuses to abide by it, will Ms. Miers rule that

Harriet gushes

Thank you for taking the time to visit in the office and on the plane back—cool! Keep up all the great work. The state is in great hands. Thanks also for yours and your family's personal sacrifice. 1995

Texas has a very popular governor and first lady! I was struck by the tremendous impact you have on the children whose lives you touch. Hopefully Jenna and Barbara recognize that their parents are 'cool'—as do the rest of us. All I hear is how great you and Laura are doing. Texas is blessed. 1997

Source: *NY Times*, 10/11/05

he must?

Can the President unilaterally nullify the law? The War Crimes Act of 1996 makes it a federal crime for any American to commit grave violations of the Geneva Conventions, including the willful killing, torture or inhumane treatment of detainees. On January 25, 2002, then-White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales wrote a memo declaring provisions of the Geneva Conventions obsolete. It urged that an opt-out from the Conventions substantially reduces the likelihood of prosecution under the War Crimes Act. President Bush thereupon declared that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to unlawful combatants captured in Afghanistan.

Does Ms. Miers believe the President can nullify US law, international law, and a US treaty simply by declaring it obsolete? Did she advise the President that (as many leading legal experts have testified) Gonzales's Torture Memo was a travesty of the law? If a member of the Bush administration charged with violating the War Crimes Act came before the Supreme Court, would she back Presidential fiat or the rule of law?

Can the President annul habeas corpus? Despite the objections of the Bush Administration, the Supreme Court recently ruled in *Rasul v. Bush* that Guantanamo detainees must have access to US courts to challenge their detention. Can Miers demonstrate that she would stand up to President Bush's

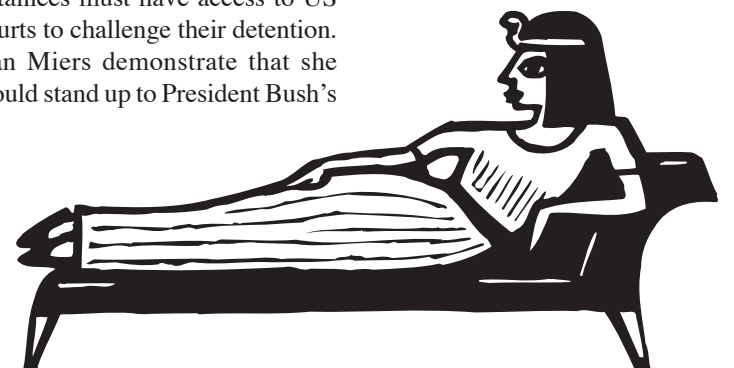
effort to restrict a right that goes back to the Magna Carta?

Should the Supreme Court allow the President to violate the Constitution in the name of the war on terrorism? In hopes of soothing conservative rancor over the Miers nomination, Republican National Committee chairman Ken Mehlman stressed in a recent conference call to conservative activists that Bush needed to confirm a justice who would not interfere with the administration's management of the war on terrorism. What would a Justice Miers do if President Bush pursued the war on terrorism in ways that violate the Constitution?

In short, where does President Bush's nominee stand on the rule of law? Does she believe the President is subject to the courts and Congress? Or will she let her former boss get away with grave and startling assertions of Presidential power? It is a question that should concern those on both the right and the left who believe that even the President must be subject to the rule of law.

Legal scholar Brendan Smith and historian Jeremy Brecher are the editors, with Jill Cutler, of In the Name of Democracy: American War Crimes in Iraq and Beyond (Metropolitan/Holt, 2005).

Source: [truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org) Perspective, 10/14/05
<http://www.truthout.org>



Sally Galiste, supporting endangered species

Beth Luna

Sally Galiste opposes the Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act T.E.S.R.A. now introduced by Rep. Pombo (R-Tracy) and Rep. Cardoza (D-Merced) and approved by the House of Representatives. If this becomes law, it will negate the Endangered Species Act which has rescued much wildlife from extinction. And it is vital for it to continue.

Others haven't realized the danger that this bill poses; as law, it would put birds, animals and fish close to extinction. So Sally chose to act as an individual opposing Pombo. For 3 weeks, she has been seated at a little table outside of Pombo's office with large signs to draw attention. She says "I am not



Sally Galiste

a politician at all. I am just trying to get others, as citizens, to act. I am not paid for this."

"Now, I have proven my point and made a statement. I have more plans. I am going to magnify my voice, specifically by writing letters. In essence, I say: Please contact your senators." In the letter, she

urges the writer to be polite and respectful but firm in conviction. She suggests opposition to T.E.S.R.A. and closing with a 'thank you.' Letters to Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator Diane Feinstein would be valuable.

Sally's next action will be getting a table at the annual Sandhill Crane Festival in Lodi, where she will share and display her information. She is always careful to present facts and let the person decide. She says, "it is the individual that makes all the difference. People have to listen to the individual. We must act non-politically, as individuals, supporting from behind."

Sally Galiste says: "The experience of speaking out has helped me to realize that I am not wasting my time and that I have the right to be heard."

Just say no to cronies

Rep. Henry A. Waxman

Late September, Rep. Henry A. Waxman and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi introduced the Anti-Cronyism and Public Safety Act, which would prohibit the President from appointing unqualified individuals to critical public safety positions in the government.

"President Bush has handed out some of the country's most dif-

ficult and important jobs—leadership positions in public safety and emergency response—to politically well-connected individuals with no experience or qualifications," Rep. Waxman said. "This common sense legislation will end this practice and ensure that public safety is back in the hands of those who are trained and experienced in protecting the public."

The bill would require any presi-

dential appointee for a public safety position to have proven, relevant credentials for that position. In addition, the legislation bars from appointment to an agency any individual who has been a lobbyist for an industry subject to the agency's authority during the preceding two years.

"As Hurricane Katrina tragically demonstrated, serious consequences result when unqualified cronies are appointed to federal public safety positions," Pelosi said. "The Bush Administration's culture of cronyism comes at the expense of public safety. It is unconscionable and must stop immediately—it is literally a matter of life and death. This legislation is critically needed, and I thank Mr. Waxman for his strong leadership in protecting the American people."

Subject to the bill are specific senior-level emergency preparedness offices at the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as any position with the primary function of responding to a direct threat to life or property or hazard to health.

Source: *truthout* | Statement 9/27/05
<http://www.truthout.org>

Gore differences

As reported in an AP story dated 10/12/05, former Vice President Al Gore said the United States would be "a different country" if he had won the 2000 election. "We would not have invaded a country that didn't attack us. We would not have taken money from the working families and given it to the most wealthy families. We would not be trying to control and intimidate the news media. We would not be routinely torturing people. We would be a different country."

Gore also stated that "there were specific warnings that the levees might break. But for whatever reason those warnings were not acted upon in a timely way." Regarding global warming, he said "my country is extremely attentive to the slightest increase in a risk from terror, and that's appropriate. But why should we be so tolerant of risk where the future habitability of our planet is concerned?"

Source: *Associated Press*, 10/12/05 www.truthout.org/docs_2005



Mainstream press = truth? Get alternatives & decide.

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.

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Institute for Global Communication — <http://www.igc.org/igc/gateway/index.html>

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<http://www.pjnsjc.org>

Ret. Army General William Odom: U.S. should cut and run from Iraq

Amy Goodman: We turn now to Iraq, what's wrong with cutting and running? That's the question asked by a retired army general, William Odom, about the continued U.S. military presence in Iraq. Odom served as Director of the National Security Agency, the top secret agency, well larger than the C.I.A., under President Reagan. He served as Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, the Army's senior intelligence officer, now Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington.

He recently wrote, quote, "The invasion of Iraq will turn out to be the greatest strategic disaster in U.S. history." In his article, Odom says, "The wisest course for journalists might be to begin sustained investigations of why leading Democrats have failed so miserably to challenge the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The first step, of course, is to establish as conventional wisdom the fact that the war was never in the U.S. interests and has not become so," he writes. Lieutenant General William Odom joins us on the line from Washington, D.C. Welcome to Democracy Now!

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Thank you.

Amy Goodman: Well, why don't you lay out your argument? A general calling for cutting and running?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Well, I'm trying to think like a strategist. And in war, as well as in politics and diplomacy, one has to know when to withdraw and when to attack. And this was a misguided attack, and it requires a strategic vision and moral confidence to turn it around, the earlier the better. But as the evidence piles up, I think my judgment is being borne out.

I said before the war in February that if we invade Iraq, this will serve primarily the interests of two people: Osama bin Laden, because it will make Iraq safe for al Qaeda, and it will allow him to have access to kill Americans, which he cannot do in the U.S. very effectively; the second party that would benefit greatly would be the Iranians. Saddam Hussein invaded Iran, and they fought for eight years, and Iranians hated that regime much more than we did. Therefore it was very much in their interest,

There is a tendency among both Democrats and Republicans, to really get nervous about doing anything. They know that we're in trouble, and they're just not willing to face up to the reality that we are going to have to one day pick up and leave.

and it is clearer now that a Shiite majority will probably end up in control in Iraq, and it will not be pro-American, and it probably will be an Islamic religious republic.

So that's—those kind of outcomes were foreseeable, and then I didn't say anything about it for a year, and pointed out that exactly these things were happening. And I was asked about in August why—whether I thought that journalists were doing a good job in pressing this issue with the President. And the answers you've just read are the ones I gave.

Amy Goodman: Now, you wrote this piece. It's appearing a bit on the internet and some local papers. But you offered it to The New York Times as an op-ed piece?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: I didn't offer this exact version. I offered a draft op-ed. This is considerably longer than would be accepted as an op-ed.

Amy Goodman: But the idea was to call for cutting and running?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Yeah. I said exactly [inaudible] the earlier the better. The idea of staying the course makes no sense at all.

Amy Goodman: Have you gotten other op-ed pieces printed in Times?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Maybe 15 or 20, maybe 30 in the past ten years.

Amy Goodman: What did they say about this one?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Well, they didn't say. They just didn't take it.

Amy Goodman: Why do you think that is?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: I really don't know. Maybe they just overlooked it. Maybe they didn't think my writing style was up to previous ventures. But I think the message

would have been worth the—if they didn't like the structure of the piece, ask me to trim it or edit it. But I really don't know.

There is a tendency, it seems to me, among both Democrats and Republicans, to really get nervous about doing anything. They know that we're in trouble, and they're just not willing to face up to the reality that we are going to have to one day pick up and leave and that you're almost—as I said in the piece, the structure of this piece, essentially saying that all of the things that the administration says will happen if we leave are already happening or they're irrelevant.

Amy Goodman: So, you say the arguments against pulling out, we'd leave behind a civil war, we'd lose credibility on the world stage, it would embolden the insurgency and cripple the move toward democracy, Iraq would become a haven for terrorists, Iranian influence in Iraq would increase, unrest might spread in the region and/or draw in Iraq's neighbors, Shiite-Sunni clashes would worsen, we haven't fully trained the Iraqi military and police forces yet and talk of deadlines would undercut the morale of our troops. You say all of this has already happened.

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Sure. Just take the last one. You can see from the exchanges over the training of troops that went up to the Congress the other day, when General Abizaid and General Casey both gave a rather dismal picture of progress in training up units that can fight on their own in Iraqi's forces. They said only one, Rumsfeld, previously had, within [inaudible] before, had told Congress that three, and the number was surging, and, you know, he gave her a rosy picture. And they were much more cautious.

Now, they've been turned around, and they're up on the Sunday morning news shows this week saying, Oh well, things are rosier. It's clear that they themselves are now dubious about this. They cannot afford to stand up and contradict the regime—rather the administration—too forcefully. I think they can say some of the facts fairly clearly and without [inaudible], if they can avoid it. But—so the judgments out there are not good, and I have heard from many junior officers the view that, yes, we're winning tactically. Our unit wins every tactical battle. But the big picture, the strategic picture, we're losing. If they kill one of us for every thousand we kill—they have over 20 million people, we have 123,000. You know, the numbers are just against us. And once one begins to look at it objectively like that, it—you've got to ask what this is worth, what you gain by doing this.

Amy Goodman: Do you think ultimately this is what will happen? It'll just be a matter of years?

Lt. Gen. William Odom: Oh, yeah. Look, that's what happened in Vietnam. I mean, I, for different reasons, I had a similar view in Vietnam. By the way the troops don't mind you debating the issue back here. I mean, I was in Vietnam. We—a lot of us wondered why there wasn't more debate. We

wondered why mainstream people were not debating it. And they let the fringe left anti-war movement blame us, blame people in uniform. I went over and spoke the other day—you know, I don't have politics, right or left. I've never been a Republican or Democrat. And I have worked in the Carter White House, and I've worked in the Reagan White House.

So partisan—this is not a partisan politics issue. Congressman Walter Jones, who can hardly be called a liberal, is a very conservative Republican from North Carolina, who invented the term "freedom fries" to replace the "French fries" label, has now enrolled a resolution to Congress, calling for a withdrawal. And I was surprised to get calls from him, asking me to come over and attend a small press conference that he had, where he has a small group of Republicans and an equal number of Democrats behind this. And the point I made the only reason I went and joined them was that I would rather see people on Bush's side and responsible mainline Democrats carry this issue than let it go out to the fringes. And that's where it's headed.

Amy Goodman: Lieutenant General William Odom, I want to thank you for being with us, and I hope to continue to talk about this in the coming weeks. This is Democracy Now! DemocracyNow.org.

Lt. Gen. William Odom served as director of the National Security Agency under President Reagan from 1985 to 1988. From 1981 to 1985, he served as Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, the Army's senior intelligence officer. He is now a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington.

Source: DemocracyNow.org transcript 10/4/05 For more information, call 888-999-3877.

Journalists might begin sustained investigations of why leading Democrats have failed so miserably to challenge the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

What the war does—a survivor's testimonial

Hart Viges

My name is Hart Viges. September 11 happened. Next day I was in the recruiting office. I thought that was the way I could make a difference in the world for the better.

So I went to infantry school and jump school and I arrived with my unit of the 82nd Airborne Division. I was deployed to Kuwait in February 2003. We drove into Iraq because Third Infantry Division was ahead of schedule, and so I didn't need to jump into Baghdad airport.

As we drove into Samawa to secure their supplies my mortar platoon dropped numerous rounds on this town. I watched Kiowa attack helicopters fire Hellfire missile after Hellfire missile. I saw a C130 Spectre gunship ... it will level a town. It had belt-fed artillery rounds pounding with these super-Gatling guns.

I don't know how many innocents I killed with my mortar rounds. I have my imagination to pick at for that one. But I clearly remember the call-out over the radio saying "Green light on all taxi-cabs. The enemy is using them for transportation".

One of our snipers called back on the radio saying "Excuse me but did I hear that order correctly? Green light on all taxi cabs?" "Roger that soldier. You'd better start buckling up." All of a sudden the city just blew up. Didn't matter if there was an innocent in the taxi-cab—we laid a mortar round on it, snipers opened up.

Next was Fallujah. We went in without a shot. But Charlie Company decided they were going to take over a school for the area of operations. Protesters would come saying "Please get out of our school. Our children need this school. We need education".

They turned them down. They came back, about 40 to 50 people. Some have the bright idea of shooting AK-47s up in the air. Well a couple of rounds fell into the school ... They laid waste to that group of people.

Then we went to Baghdad. And I had days that I don't want to remember. I try to forget. Days where we'd take contractors out to a water treatment plant outside of

Baghdad.

We'd caught word that this is a kind of a scary place but when I arrive there's grass and palm trees, a river. It's the first beautiful place that seemed untouched by the war in Iraq. As we leave, RPGs come flying at us. Two men with RPGs ran up in front of us from across the road.

"Drop your weapons". "Irmie salahak." They're grabbing on to women and kids so [we] don't fire. I can't take any more and swing my [gun] over. My sight's on his chest, my finger's on the trigger. And I'm trained to kill but this is no bogey man, this is no enemy. This is a human being. With the same fears and doubts and worries. The same messed-up situation.

I don't pull the trigger this time ... it throws me off. It's like they didn't tell me about this emotional attachment to killing. They tried to numb me, they tried to strip my humanity. They tried to tell me that's not a human being—that's a soft target.

So now, my imagination is running ... What if he pulled his trigger? How many American soldiers or Iraqi police, how many families destroyed because I didn't pull my trigger. After we leave this little village we get attack helicopters, Apaches, two Bradley fighting vehicles, and we go back. And we start asking questions. Where are they? Eventually they lead us to this hut where this family is living, and myself and [another soldier] started searching for AK-47s, for explosives, for RPGs, you know ... evidence. And all I can find is a tiny little pistol, probably to scare off thieves.

Well, because of that pistol we took their two young men ... Their mother is at my feet trying to kiss my feet like I deserve my feet to be kissed. Screaming, pleading. I don't need to speak Arabic to know love and concern and fear. I had my attack helicopter behind me, my Bradley fighting vehicle, my armour, my M4

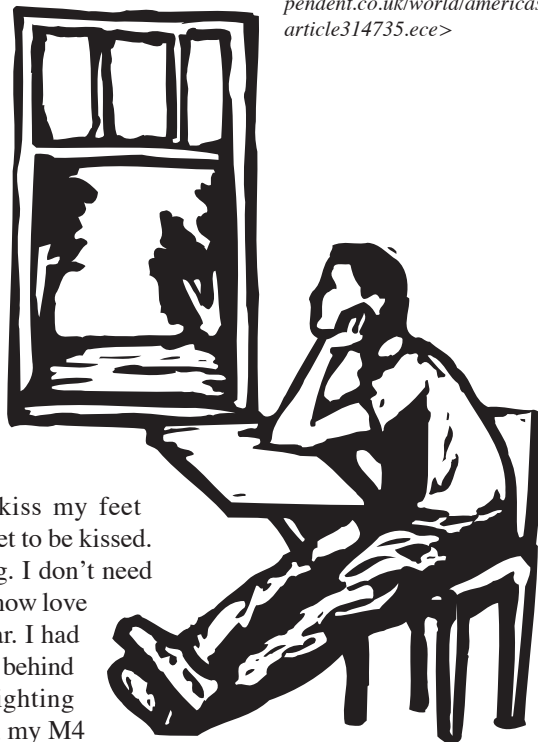
[semi-automatic] with laser sight. I'm an 82nd Airborne killer. But I was powerless ... to ease this woman's pain.

After I came home I applied for conscientious objector [status]. I'm a Christian, what was I doing holding a gun to another human being? Love thy neighbour. Pray for those who persecute you, don't shoot them.

I get my conscientious objector packet approved. I'm free. It's all gone now, right? No! I still swerve at trash bags ... fireworks ... I can't express anything. All my relationships are falling apart because they can't ... understand me. How do they know the pain I've gone through or the sights I've seen? The innocence gone, stripped, dead? I couldn't stand the pain. People were leaving me.

I couldn't cut my wrists. So I called the police. They come stomping through my door. I have my knife in my hand. "Shoot me." All of a sudden I was the man with the RPG, with all the guns pointed at him, thinking "Yes, we can solve the world's problems by killing each other". How insane is that? Lucky I lived through that episode. See, you can't wash your hands when they're covered in blood. The wounds carry on. This is what war does to your soul, to your humanity, to your family.

Source: *The Independent UK* 9/24/05 <http://comment.independent.co.uk/commentators/article314745.ece>; <http://www.truthout.org/>; <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/americas/article314735.ece>



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"If it were proved to me that in making war, my ideal had a chance of being realized, I would still say 'No' to war. For one does not create human society on mounds of corpses." —Louis Levoin

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Americans favor impeachment if Bush lied about Iraq

By a margin of 50% to 44%, Americans say that President Bush should be impeached if he lied about the war in Iraq, according to a new poll commissioned by AfterDowningStreet.org, a grassroots coalition that supports a Congressional investigation of President Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 2003.

The poll was conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs <<http://www.ipsos-na.com/pa/us/>>, the highly-regarded non-partisan polling company. The poll interviewed 1,001 U.S. adults on October 8-9.

The poll found that 50% agreed with the statement: "If President Bush did not tell the truth about his reasons for going to war with Iraq, Congress should consider holding him accountable by impeaching him." 44% disagreed, and 6% said they didn't know or declined to answer. The poll has a +/- 3.1% margin of error.

Those who agreed with the statement were also more passionate: 39% strongly agreed, while 30% strongly disagreed.

"The results of this poll are truly astonishing," said AfterDowningStreet.org co-founder Bob Fertik. "Bush's record-low approval ratings tell just half of the story, which is how much Americans oppose Bush's policies on Iraq and other issues. But this poll tells the other half of the story—that a solid plurality of Americans want Congress to consider removing Bush from the White House."

Support by many groups, up since June

Responses varied by political party affiliation: 72% of Democrats favored impeachment, compared to 56% of Independents and 20% of Republicans.

Responses also varied by age and income. Solid majorities of those under age 55 (54%), as well as those with household incomes below \$50,000 (57%), support impeachment.

Majorities favored impeachment in the Northeast (53%), West (51%), and even the South (50%).

The Ipsos poll shows a dramatic transformation in support for Bush's impeachment since late June. (This is only the second poll that has asked Americans about their sup-



port for impeaching Bush in 2005, despite his record-low approval ratings.) The Zogby poll <<http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1007>> conducted June 27-29 of 905 likely voters found that 42% agreed and 50% disagreed with a statement virtually identical to the one used by Ipsos.

After the June poll, pollster John Zogby told the Washington Post that support for impeachment "was much higher than I expected." At the time, impeachment supporters trailed opponents by 8%. Now supporters outnumber opponents by 6%, a remarkable shift of 14%.

Support for Clinton impeachment much lower

In August and September of 1998, 16 major polls asked about impeaching President Clinton. Only 36% supported hearings to consider impeachment, and only 26% supported actual impeachment and removal. Even so, the impeachment debate dominated the news for months, and the Republican Congress impeached Clinton despite overwhelming public opposition.

Support closely related to Bush lies

Both the Ipsos and Zogby polls asked about support for impeachment if Bush lied about the reasons for war, rather than asking simply about support for impeachment. Pollsters predict that asking simply about impeachment without any context would produce a large number of "I don't know" responses. However, this may understate the percentage of Americans who favor Bush's impeachment for other reasons, such as his slow response

to Hurricane Katrina, his policy on torture, soaring gasoline prices, or other concerns.

Other polls show a majority of U.S. adults believe that Bush did in fact lie about the reasons for war. A June 23-26 ABC/Washington Post poll found 52% of Americans believe the Bush administration "deliberately misled the public before the war," and 57% say the Bush administration "intentionally exaggerated its evidence that pre-war Iraq possessed nuclear, chemical or biological weapons." Support for the war has dropped significantly since June, which suggests that the percentage of Americans who believe Bush lied about the war has increased.

Passion for impeachment not reported

The strong support for impeachment found in this poll is especially surprising because the views of impeachment supporters are entirely absent from the broadcast and print media, and can only be found on the Internet and in street protests, including the large anti-war rally in Washington on September 24.

The lack of coverage of impeachment support is due in part to the fact that not a single Democrat in Congress has called for impeachment, despite considerable grassroots activism by groups like Democrats.com.

"We will, no doubt, see an increase in activism following this poll," said David Swanson, co-founder of AfterDowningStreet.org. "But will we see an increase in media coverage? The media are waiting for action in Congress. Apparently it's easier to find and interview one of the 535 members of Congress than it is to locate a representative of the half of the country that wants the President impeached if he lied about the war. The media already accepts that Bush did lie about the war. We know this because so many editors and pundits told us that the Downing Street Memo was 'old news.' What we need now is journalism befitting a democracy, journalism that goes out and asks people what they really think about their government, especially George Bush."

Source: <http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/10/11/05> <http://www.truthout.org/docs_2005/printer_1012050.shtml>

News media and the anti-war movement

Norman Solomon

It's reasonable to estimate that more than a quarter of a million people demonstrated against the Iraq war on Saturday in Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco and other US cities. The next day, the Washington Post front-paged a decent story that described "the largest show of antiwar sentiment in the nation's capital since the conflict in Iraq began." But more perfunctory back-page articles were typical in daily papers across the country. And over the weekend, many TV news watchers saw little or nothing about the protests.

Hurricane Rita was clearly a factor. But even without dramatic natural disasters, the news media are ready, willing and able to downplay news about war—and the antiwar movement—for any number of reasons. Conventional wisdom on Capitol Hill or in newsrooms can tamp down media coverage of a surging movement. What's crucial is that the movement not allow its momentum to be interrupted by media treatment.

If "journalism is the first draft of history," the journalism of corporate media is usually the quickie top-down view of history that's told from vantage points far removed from progressive movements. Media technologies and styles aside, what we're experiencing now from major US news outlets is not very different from the coverage of the Vietnam War.

A persistent myth is that mainstream American news outlets were tough on the war in Vietnam while boosting the antiwar movement. And these days—after a summer of plunging poll numbers for President Bush along with the profoundly important media presence of Cindy Sheehan—many people seem to think that the news media have turned against the war makers in Washington. But overall the media realities are something else. Actual history should make us wary of any assumption that the press is apt to be a counterweight to militarism.

Vietnam "was the first war in which reporters were routinely accredited to accompany military forces yet not subject to censorship," media scholar Daniel Hallin wrote in his excellent book *The*



"Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam. The authorities in Washington figured they could expect correspondents not to wander too far in terms of content; "the integration of the media into the political establishment was assumed to be secure enough that the last major vestige of direct government control - military censorship in wartime—could be lifted."

Some reporters exercised a significant degree of independence. And, Hallin concluded, "this did matter: in 1963, when American policy in Vietnam began to fall apart, the media began to send back an image that conflicted sharply with the picture of progress officials were trying to paint. It would happen again many times before the war was over. But those reporters also went to Southeast Asia schooled in a set of journalistic practices which, among other things, ensured that the news would reflect, if not always the views of those at the very top of the American political hierarchy, at least the perspectives of American officialdom generally."

Despite all the changes in news media since then, a systemic filtration process remains crucial. Strong economic pressures are especially significant - and combine with powerful forces for conformity at times of war. "Even if journalists, editors, and producers are not superpatriots, they know that appearing unpatriotic does not play well with many readers, viewers, and sponsors," media analyst Michael X. Delli Carpini has commented. "Fear of alienating the public and sponsors, especially in wartime, serves as a real, often unstated tether, keeping the press tied to accepted wisdom." Journalists in American newsrooms don't have to worry about being taken out and

shot; the constraining fears are apt to revolve around peer approval, financial security and professional advancement.

Interviewed in early November 2003, with the Iraq occupation in the midst of turning into a large-scale war against a growing insurgency, Hallin compared media treatment of the two wars and saw similar patterns. "As you begin to get a breakdown of consensus, especially among political elites in Washington, then the media begin asking more questions," he said. In the case of the Iraq occupation, "the Democrats were mostly silent for a long time on this war, and when things began to bog down, they started asking questions. There were divisions within the Bush administration, and then the media starts playing a more independent role."

To a notable degree, reporters seem to await signals from politicians and high-level appointees to widen the range of discourse. "They need confirmation that this issue is part of the mainstream political discussion in the US," Hallin commented. "Journalists are very keyed into what their sources are talking about. Political reporters define news worthiness in part by what's going to affect American politics in the sense of who gets elected the next time around. But it isn't absolutely only elites. I think it also makes a difference that polls show the public divided, and that there are problems of morale among soldiers in Iraq. But the first thing that the journalists look to is: 'What are the elites debating in Washington?' That's what really sets the news agenda." So, with the autumn of 2005 underway, what are the elites debating in Washington? With rare exceptions, they're debating how to continue the US

Richard Pombo's \$10 billion Folly

Rep. Pombo and his family stand to benefit financially on the backs of federal taxpayers.

In the Diablo Range separating San Jose and Silicon Valley from the Central Valley in California, a congressionally nurtured boondoggle is beginning to grow. The proposed project is a six-lane, 23-mile, cars-only freeway which instead of using a natural mountain pass would run straight up rugged Mount Diablo and then down the other side. Because of this, the officially labeled Mt. Hamilton Range Freeway, has garnered another, unofficial moniker "Pombo's Folly" after the road's most aggressive proponent, Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA). The reason is simple. Initial project estimates for this short strip of macadam indicate the road could cost taxpayers \$10 billion.

Pombo's Folly, however, doesn't end with exorbitant costs and challenging topography. As proposed, the highway would also slice through some of the last undeveloped land in the area. Scientists at the Lick Observatory have expressed reservations about the light pollution the project would generate. The Nature Conservancy, which owns more than 82,000 acres around Mt. Hamilton is concerned about the impact on the area's wildlife. In addition, fast growth and high demand for housing have combined to eat up much of what was historically farming and grazing land. As a result, some of the region's few remaining ranchers stand poised to oppose a highway

that would fragment their property and heavily impact their traditional way of life.

Despite this swirl of opposition, Rep. Pombo secured a \$7.6 million earmark to study the project in the transportation bill signed in August.

And to add insult to injury, Rep. Pombo and his family own a 205-acre ranch just miles from where the new highway would meet Interstate 5. Rep. Pombo owns a 10.4 percent stake in the ranch, and he lists the value of his share at between \$250,001 and \$500,000 on federal disclosure forms (which don't require him to be more specific). Land speculation in the areas near the proposed highway has already begun, and Rep. Pombo and his family stand to benefit financially on the backs of federal taxpayers. And while there is little question that this region needs relief from the congestion that has come with new growth and development, a \$10 billion boondoggle should not be how that conversation gets started.

Source: *The Chopping Block Issue 8, Volume 1, 10/13/05* www.greencissors.org *The Chopping Block* is a production of the Green Scissors Campaign. Led by Friends of the Earth, Taxpayers for Common Sense and U.S. Public Interest Research Group, the Green Scissors Campaign is dedicated to protecting taxpayers and the environment.

occupation of Iraq.

High-profile Democrats and even some Republicans like to bemoan "mistakes" and bad planning and the absence of an "exit strategy." The prevailing version of Washington's debate over Iraq still amounts to disputes over how to proceed with the US war effort in Iraq. Top officials and politicians in Washington won't change that. The journalists echoing them won't

change that. The antiwar movement must.

Norman Solomon is the author of the new book *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*. For information, go to: [WarMadeEasy.com](http://www.WarMadeEasy.com) <<http://www.WarMadeEasy.com>>.

Source: *truthout* Perspective 9/26/05 http://www.truthout.org/docs_2005/

Borrow for Katrina, pay for war now

If ever there was a good reason for deficit spending, assisting the communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is it. These hurricanes could not have been anticipated by Congress when they prepared the federal budget, but aid is urgently needed now to assist the displaced and to help rebuild the Gulf Coast. Relief and reconstruction may cost \$100 billion or more. Yet, ongoing government operations, already budgeted for, must go on, too. Therefore, it is reasonable for the federal government to borrow funds to address the emergency.

If ever there was not a good reason for deficit spending, the war in Iraq is it. This was a war of choice. It was premeditated. Why didn't the administration and Congress budget for it and ask the public to pay for it? Pentagon spending for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has so far exceeded \$224 billion. Non-military reconstruction costs are on top of that. So far this year, the Pentagon's "burn" rate for the Iraq war has been about \$5.6 billion per month, up from an average of about \$4.4 billion per month last fiscal year. In addition, the U.S. is spending another \$700 million per month for the war in Afghanistan. This spending rate is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Regretably, President Bush and Congress got it backwards: They cut taxes several times and took the country to war, driving the U.S. Treasury hundreds of billions of dollars into debt. And now, when the federal government is needed to assist in hurricane relief and re-

construction here at home, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (TN) and Chair of the Senate Republican Conference Rick Santorum (PA) are calling for cutting ongoing federal programs in order to reduce the impact on the deficit.

and regarding our military spending...

In the fiscal year just ended (FY05), the U.S. spent about \$466 billion on the military (not including mandatory spending on military health care and retirement). That's more than \$1,600 for every man, woman and child in this country. That's 23% more than the U.S. spent in the average year during the Cold War when the U.S. was eyeball-to-eyeball with the Soviet Union (adjusted for inflation in 2000 constant dollars; FY05 compared to the period 1962-1989). In FY05, military outlays were about 3.8% of U.S. GDP.

In June, The Independent (London) cited a new report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute which observed that, "led by U.S. purchases of \$455 billion, the world spent more than \$1 trillion on arms in 2004, the highest level since the height of the Cold War." The figure dwarfs the \$78.6 billion the world spent on aid to the world's most needy countries, prompting aid groups to label the recent push for more aid to Africa by G8 countries "negligible." (From the UN Wire, 6/9/05)

Source: Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), 245 Second St. NE, Washington, DC 20002-5795 www.fcnl.org (800)630-1330

Funding human needs:

Oppose tax breaks for the rich

The fiscal year '06 Budget Resolution called for \$35 billion in cuts to discretionary programs. Some conservative House Republican leaders are demanding that additional cuts - up to \$50 billion - be made. These same conservatives are using the recovery costs for Hurricane Katrina-ravaged areas as the reason these cuts are necessary—an outrageous use of a national disaster to further right-wing fiscal policy.

Among the many likely budget cuts are ones that would harm women and their families. The \$574 million in cuts to the Food Stamp program could cause 300,000 people to go hungry, while cuts in Medicaid could cause 1.2 million children to lose health care coverage. Another \$15 billion in budget cuts will harm millions more needy families. Related measures being promoted under the camouflage of Katrina aid are a host of tax break extensions that would total up to \$90 billion over five years. Of course, these tax breaks mainly benefit large corporations and the top 1-2 percent of income earners.

It is despicable that Congress plans to cut Food Stamps, Medicaid, TANF and other crucial programs for people in need. It is even more despicable that conservatives would use a national disaster as a cover for more cuts to social programs and extension of tax breaks that benefit the wealthy.

There are many in Congress who disagree with these cuts, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Rep. John Spratt (D-S.C.), Ranking Member on the House Budget Committee, who have sent a letter to the leadership requesting that efforts to pass a reconciliation bill be halted. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid sent a similar letter, and many Democratic Senators are opposed to these reckless and wrong-headed plans to cut taxes, cut critical public programs and make the deficit larger.

ACTION: Call your senators and representatives to urge them to oppose the irresponsible budget cuts to important programs and to vote against any proposed extension of tax breaks for the wealthy.

How to Call:

1. Call a senator from your state.
2. Say: "My name is _____ and I live and vote in [your town/city]. May I please speak to the person who handles the budget for Senator/Representative [name]." (If that person is not available, ask for voice mail to leave a message.)

"I would like [name] to oppose the \$35 billion in cuts to Medicaid, Food Stamps and other vital services that are in the upcoming budget reconciliation bill. I also oppose \$90 billion in tax cuts for the wealthy, especially in these hard times."

"Our real priorities should be protecting people from sickness and hardship, investing in housing, jobs, and other services that families need—not squandering billions on tax cuts for the wealthy and well-connected."

3. Feel free to add your own thoughts or conditions relevant to you. Try to get the staff person's name and follow up with an e-mail or phone call as the vote nears.

Source: NOW National Action Center release 10/13/05 now@now.org

Funding human needs:

Stop funding dangerous nukes

Congress could save taxpayers nearly a billion dollars by simply agreeing to cuts already made in the House and Senate versions of the FY 2006 Energy & Water spending bill (H.R. 2419). The Chairmen of the Conference Committee have the most power over what cuts or increases survive in the final bill. Call your legislators and urge them to tell the Chairmen to accept the House and Senate funding cuts to nuclear weapons and energy programs while preserving the House increases to environmental cleanup and nuclear warhead dismantlement.

Background

Differences between the House and Senate versions of the Energy & Water spending bill must be worked out by a joint House-Senate Conference Committee. With the deficit over \$330 billion, it is imperative that Congress approve the \$1 billion in cuts to nuclear weapons and energy programs that were ad-

opted earlier this year.

Budget cuts we support include:

- * \$85 million for the Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative, a dangerous and expensive return to REPROCESSING nuclear waste.
- * \$74 million from the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository;
- * \$303 million for plutonium fuel fabrication (MOX), a commercial reactor fuel;
- * \$7.6 million for a new plutonium bomb plant to mass-produce nuclear bomb triggers;
- * \$4 million for research into a nuclear bunker buster that has the potential of a million casualties but would be unable to penetrate many of the deepest targets;
- * \$25 million to increase the readiness to resume underground nuclear testing;
- * \$146 million for constructing

the National Ignition Facility for nuclear weapons research;

Budget increases we support include:

- * \$115 million to dismantle nuclear warheads as pledged by the President following the Moscow Treaty;
- * \$190 million to the environmental cleanup budget for sites to adhere to legal obligations for cleanup of contamination from U.S. nuclear weapons production.

ACTION: Urge Congress to stop dangerous nuclear weapons and energy programs. Call your Senators and Representative at 202-224-3121 and urge them to contact the Chairmen of the Conference Committee, Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) & Representative David Hobson (R-OH)

Source: Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, 322 4th Street, NE, WDC, 20002 www.anuclear.org

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Funding human needs:

Cut royalty relief for Big Oil

It's no news flash that the energy bill, signed into law in August, was filled to the brim with giveaways to Big Oil. Readers of the Chopping Block already know the statistics: \$1.7 billion in new tax breaks and more than \$2.3 billion in additional spending for the oil and gas industry. But while commentators and pundits have focused their attention on the bill's spending and tax breaks, there were some oil and gas giveaways that failed to catch the public's eye. Indeed, some of the sweetest handouts in the entire bill were the royalty breaks to oil and gas companies drilling offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.

Offshore drilling has always been a big part of our domestic oil and gas mix, accounting for approximately 30 percent of the oil and 23 percent of the natural gas produced domestically. It has also been a major source of revenue for the government: in 2005, the U.S. Treasury is expecting to pull in nearly \$6 billion from oil and gas leasing in public waters, according to the Minerals Management Service.

The new energy bill gives big oil and gas companies in the Gulf of Mexico a royal holiday from having to pay for the privilege of drilling on public lands. Corporations who sign new leases to drill for oil in the deep waters of the Gulf will get their first 5 to 12 million barrels royalty-free. Companies drilling for natural gas in the Gulf will get a break on their first 35 billion cubic feet of natural gas extracted from shallow wells, beginning in October 2006.

According to an assessment by Citigroup Smith Barney, the companies most likely to benefit most from this free-pass include Apache, Anadarko Petroleum, Devon Energy, Forest Oil, Kerr-McGee, Noble Energy, Nexen, and



Pioneer Natural Resources. With near uniformity, these companies reported record profits in 2005, totaling more than \$5 billion in the first half of the year.

This is not the first time that the oil and gas industry has gone to Congress demanding royalty breaks. In 1995, oil companies convinced Congress to pass the Deep Water Royalty Relief Act, claiming that with oil at \$15 a barrel, the industry could hardly scrape by. Yet with oil prices at \$65 a barrel, oil companies have convinced Congress to let the good times roll. What remains unclear is why Congress continues to coddle the oil industry, while consumers are paying record prices at the pump.

"I will tell you with \$55 oil we don't need incentives to oil and gas companies to explore. There are plenty of incentives." President George W. Bush, quoted in the Washington Post article "House Energy Bill Increases Tax Breaks: Legislation at Odds With Bush Proposal," 4/19/05.

The Chopping Block is a production of the Green Scissors Campaign. Led by Friends of the Earth, Taxpayers for Common Sense and U.S. Public Interest Research Group, the Green Scissors Campaign is dedicated to protecting taxpayers and the environment.

Source: Green Scissors Campaign Issue 7, Volume 1 10/6/05 www.green-scissors.org



Funding human needs:

Slice into millionaires tax cut

Even before Hurricane Katrina, large deficits were projected far into the future, with the nation's debt burden ultimately swelling to unsustainable levels. The relief and recovery from Hurricane Katrina is estimated to cost \$100 billion to \$200 billion, adding to the nation's mounting debt. Debate has now begun about whether in the face of these costs and the grim long-term fiscal outlook, some belt-tightening and 'shared sacrifice' are in order.

The budget reconciliation bills that Congress is slated to consider this fall will not help. Taken together, the two bills will increase deficits by more than \$35 billion over five years. Under these bills, \$35 billion in cuts in programs such as Medicaid and food stamps will be used not to reduce the deficit, but to offset a portion of the \$70 billion that the reconciliation tax-cut bill will cost.

On September 16, President Bush said further budget cuts will be needed. The Administration presumably intends these cuts to come primarily in domestic programs. One obvious step, however, is being overlooked: Two tax cuts enacted in 2001 that are not yet in effect—and will only start taking effect on January 1—could be reconsidered as a way of helping to defray some of the costs of Katrina relief and recovery. These two tax cuts will benefit only high-income households (primarily millionaires), will do little for the economy beyond further increasing the deficit, and were not even requested by President Bush in the first place. (They were added by Congress.)

The highly respected Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center reports that households with incomes of more than \$1 million a year—the richest 0.2 percent of the U.S. population—already are receiving tax cuts averaging \$103,000 this year, before these two new tax cuts take effect. The Tax Policy Center finds that the two tax-cut measures in question will give these 'millionaires' nearly another \$20,000 a year in tax cuts, when the measures are phased in fully.

This raises the question of whether the nation should proceed with these tax cuts at a time when many Katrina survivors remain in difficult straits, when huge sums are

Households with incomes of more than \$1 million a year—the richest 0.2 percent of the U.S. population—already are receiving tax cuts averaging \$103,000 this year, before these two new tax cuts take effect.

being discussed for Katrina relief and recovery, and when cuts in domestic programs—including programs for the poor—are slated for Congressional consideration this fall as part of the reconciliation bills.

The facts about these two tax cuts are as follows:

- Under the tax code as it operates today, there are limits on the value of the personal exemptions and itemized deductions that people at high income levels can take. The two tax cuts scheduled to start taking effect in January would phase out these limits and repeal them entirely by 2010.

- President Bush did not ask for these tax cuts. Congress added them to the 2001 tax-cut bill, which was enacted at a time when policymakers assumed budget surpluses would surpass \$5 trillion over the coming decade.

- According to the Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center, a majority of the tax cuts from these two tax-cut measures—54 percent of these tax cuts, to be precise—will go to the 0.2 percent of households that have annual incomes of more than \$1 million a year. These households will receive added tax cuts averaging nearly \$20,000 a year from these two tax-cut measures, when the measures are fully in effect.

- Some 97 percent of the tax cuts from these two measures will go to the 3.7 percent of households that have incomes of over \$200,000 a year.

- Virtually none of the tax cuts from these measures will go to families

in the middle of the income spectrum.

- As noted, these tax cuts will phase in fully by 2010. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates they will reduce revenues by \$9 billion in 2010, and by \$16 billion in 2015. The ten-year cost of these provisions in the first ten years that they will be fully in effect (2010 through 2019) will be \$146 billion. When the associated interest payments on the debt of \$51 billion are added in, the cost rises to \$197 billion over this ten-year period.

- * These estimates understate the cost of the two tax cuts. These estimates are based on Joint Tax Committee estimates that do not assume continuation of relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax. The Joint Tax estimates instead assume that a swelling AMT will cancel out a portion of these tax-cut benefits, reducing their costs. Virtually all observers expect, however, that AMT relief will be extended. With AMT relief in place, these tax cuts will cost significantly more than the amounts cited here.

- Over time, the costs of these two tax cuts will exceed the costs of relief and recovery from Hurricane Katrina (assuming that the tax cuts are extended beyond 2010, as the President has proposed).

ACTION: Contact your representative and senators.

For more information, contact the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities <http://www.cbpp.org> 820 First Street, NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002

Source: CBPP website, 9/19/05 www.cbpp.org

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What did Arnold sign?

As most everybody knows by now, many of the more substantial environmental bills didn't even make it to the Governor's desk this year. Ambitious—not to mention critically important—bills like the Solar Roofs Initiative, the Public Health and Environmental Enforcement Act, and legislation that would have required chemical manufacturers to disclose how to detect the chemicals they put into products all ran into a roadblock on the Assembly floor. Many of the remaining environmental bills that did make it out of the legislature were whittled down substantially. So, by the time the Governor sat down to decide which bills to sign in the stack of environmental legislation sitting on his desk, many of the tough choices had already been made for him.

The no's

And to make matters worse, the Governor chose not to sign a number of environmental bills that remained.

No SB 658, which would have raised millions of dollars for coastal protection programs.

No SB 455, which would have given victims of illegal pesticide exposure a better chance to hold perpetrators accountable.

No AB 1168, which would have ensured that the water we drink from desalination facilities is safe.

No SB 600, which would have helped reduce our exposure to deadly toxics.

No SB 523, which would have prevented cuts in seriously needed funding for the bicycle transportation projects.

and the yes's

Don't get us wrong, the Governor did sign some good bills, for which we are very grateful.

AB 1328 will forever protect 31 miles of the Cache Creek River as "Wild and Scenic."

SB 484 will help us figure out if the makeup we wear is full of cancer-causing chemicals.

AB 338 will increase the amount of recycled tire material we use to build our roads.

AB 383 will help more low-income motorists get financial assistance to repair their cars to pass Smog Check.

SB 771 will reduce the amount of filth that ocean-going ships dump in waters along our coast.

AB 841 will deliver much needed air quality monitoring equipment to the San Joaquin Valley. All of these are good bills that will in one way or another make our environment cleaner. But, for the most part, the stuff the Governor signed this year is pretty modest.

California has always been a leader in environmental protection, in large part because we have taken bold and far-reaching actions to protect our environment. For the most part, we didn't do that this year.

Court says no to delta pumping

Last week the Third District Court of Appeal handed down a historic decision that will significantly alter the way California manages water into the future. In what could be one of the most influential decisions in California water history, the Court found that State and Federal water managers cannot simply assume that more water will be pumped from the Bay Delta Estuary.

Citing three significant flaws, the Court's decision invalidated the environmental documentation for the CALFED program, the largest water program in California. The three flaws cited by the Court were: (1) failure to analyze options to pump less water from Northern California and the Bay Delta Estuary; (2) failure to identify the

sources of the additional water CALFED had planned to export; and (3) failure to recognize that population growth is not inevitable.

Many projects, including the State Water Project/Central Valley Project Intertie now in litigation by PCL, were proposed and approved under the CALFED programmatic EIR. Under the Court's decision, these projects will have to be re-evaluated.

Population growth not inevitable

While it will take time to fully understand the impacts from the decision, it recognizes the danger of continually supporting growth based on water that may not actually be available. In addition, the Court's decision recognizes that alternatives such as conservation, recycling and groundwater treatment, as included in the Investment Strategy for California Water coordinated by PCL, are viable alternatives to ever more water exports. In the coming months, PCL will work with others including State and Federal agencies to determine how to best use the Court's decision to move California water policy in a more positive and sustainable direction.

Source: Planning and Conservation League Insider, 9/20/05, www.pcl.org

Schwarzenegger signs AB 405

Protects kids from experimental pesticides

Governor Schwarzenegger, in signing AG 405, helped to ensure that California's most vulnerable population will now be protected from exposure to experimental pesticides in California Schools. AB 405, authored by Assemblymember Cindy Montanez and sponsored by California Safe Schools—a children's environmental health organization—is a common sense bill that prevents K-12 public schools from being used as test sites for experimental pesticides and protects children, teachers and school workers from being exposed to chemicals whose health effects are unknown.

The bill's long list of endorsers included the California Medical Association, California State PTA, California School Boards Association, California Teachers Association, Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, Los Angeles Unified School District, Learning & Disabilities Association of America, California Communities Against Toxics, California Environmental Rights Alliance, Sierra Club, California League of Conservation Voters and the Environmental Health and the Environmental Justice Community.

Source: California Safe Schools release 10/7/05 www.calisafe.org

The Rosemarie Lane community garden miracle

Rosemary Atkinson

A modern miracle takes form: early in 2005, Rev. Hailey, pastor of the Unity Southern Baptist Church, expressed an interest in creating a community garden on the plot of ground behind his church at 1545 Rose Marie Lane in Stockton. At about the same time, a young man, Adrian Nickols, let it be known that he wanted to start a community garden. Put the two of them together and voila: a community garden was born!

Rev. Hailey envisioned a garden that produced food for “the needy, not the greedy.” He pictured an international garden where people of all cultures came together and shared in the basic art of growing one’s own food.

Now, in October of 2005, after false starts and stops, they have rejoiced in the first fall harvest of tomatoes, peppers, corn, cucumbers, black-eyed peas, okra, watermelons and pumpkins. The winter garden is planted to chard,

cauliflower, cabbage and garlic.

Two mornings a week, students, from a nearby county high school, walk to the garden to help till the soil. Much of their curriculum is built around what they are learning about nature and the art of growing food. The goal is for the students to make the connection between working in the garden and providing food for those who need it.

Ray Ledesma, with a life-time of gardening experience, has taken a plot and created a model garden.



High school students volunteer at the community garden.



He offers counseling. He is only one person and the need is great. There is always room for more volunteers. Both amateur and veteran gardeners are needed, not only to plant, cultivate and weed, but to mentor the students. There is nothing more rewarding than to share a moment of discovery with a student who has not seen tomatoes grow on vines nor watched a bee pollinate the ears of corn.

If you wish to help out with some

donations, the garden can always use cash to purchase seeds, tools, irrigation supplies or to pay the water bill. The biggest need is for a rototiller. An acre and a half is too much for hand shoveling. Small hand-tools, rakes, hoes, shovels are welcome. Also, gloves of all sizes come in handy at the garden.

To volunteer or make a donation, call Adrian at 943-0840 or the Unity Southern Baptist Church at 477-6655.

Ray Ledesma, community gardener

Beth Luna

Meet Ray Ledesma, volunteer mentor for Rose Marie Lane Community Garden. He has an encyclopedic mind when it comes to gardening, and he loves to share his knowledge. He has had experience with community gardens and he reflects that no two are alike. He remembers one which started smoothly, right from its inception and another that was a start and stop effort. He says that the important part was that both were successful. He adds, “I know the problems to be faced in creating a community garden.”

Ledesma recalls telling Adrian Nickols (who was taking charge of the garden), “you need more volunteers. Don’t be surprised if you are working out here by yourself.” That is exactly what happened. I have seen him do a lot of work by himself. We have a schedule. Then nobody comes. I have seen his frustration. I tell him, “Those are situations you are going to have to deal with. You gain experience.” Ledesma sees himself in the role of counselor.

Then spring merged with summer. Irrigation pipe was being installed. It was a relatively small area where corn, beans, tomatoes and peppers were planted and all was being watered by hand (pipe costs money). Ledesma was out there demonstrating how to do the fittings. He was very quiet, but always on the move. He has a day job, so all that he did for the garden was done during his off hours.

There was talk of planting a winter garden. Ledesma was alert to winter garden problems. To all that would hear, he cautioned, “Once the rain starts, all this (waving his arm) is going to be dirty, sticky stuff.” He added, “We are still going to have to weed in the winter.” However, he didn’t object when the garden was planted.

Ledesma was always careful to remain in an advisory capacity, speaking softly in an impersonal way. He wanted to help where he saw the need, but to avoid being the boss. He was truly a mentor.

When he saw the vegetables being triumphantly gathered. He warned, “We still have a lot of work

to do, getting ready for spring.” When he stated that the cover crop should be inedible, others thought ‘edible.’ He agreed, commenting that even if the crop doesn’t have time to mature, we can apply the law of composting and work it into the ground.

He created the demonstration garden. This is an intensively planted space about 15 x 20 ft. One aspect of this garden is learning how to compost. For this, he set up 3 bins. Each one is designed to be a compost with a problem. For example, this compost is too dry. What do we do to activate it again? This compost is too wet (a ‘stinker’). What do we do? How do we stop it from stinking? All of these are composting problems. Either we use too much water, or not enough. Composting does need some moisture.

His intention has been to plant a little bit of everything. He said, “if I had the time and the energy, I would plant 100 different varieties.” Even in this compressed space, there is egg plant, several kinds of squash, cherry tomato and

heirloom tomatoes, and 2 varieties of Armenian cucumbers. He talks of saving seeds.

He confides, “All of this display is to bring the ‘kids’ (kids can mean any group of young people) out here and show them how it is done. Details, such as tying up tomato plants. He shows them how to plant seeds in a tray, and then transplant them. He holds up the tip of a tomato plant. The leaves and flowers are gone: a tomato worm has been there.

He explained that a community garden has dual purposes. It has a large central area where vegetables are grown and shared with those in need. There are also 6 x 8 foot small plots. He says the selection of a plot depends on a person’s ability to care for it. The frustration is when someone signs up for a plot and they don’t come back. Or when they plant something illegal.



Ray Ledesma

Ledesma also spoke of the very real need for donations and tools. He says, we have talked about making a wish list. He didn’t know that Rosemary Atkinson was also suggesting one. All in all, the first season of the garden has gone well; skills learned, volunteers tested. We look forward to the winter.

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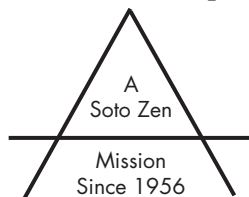
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ANWR won't solve dilemma

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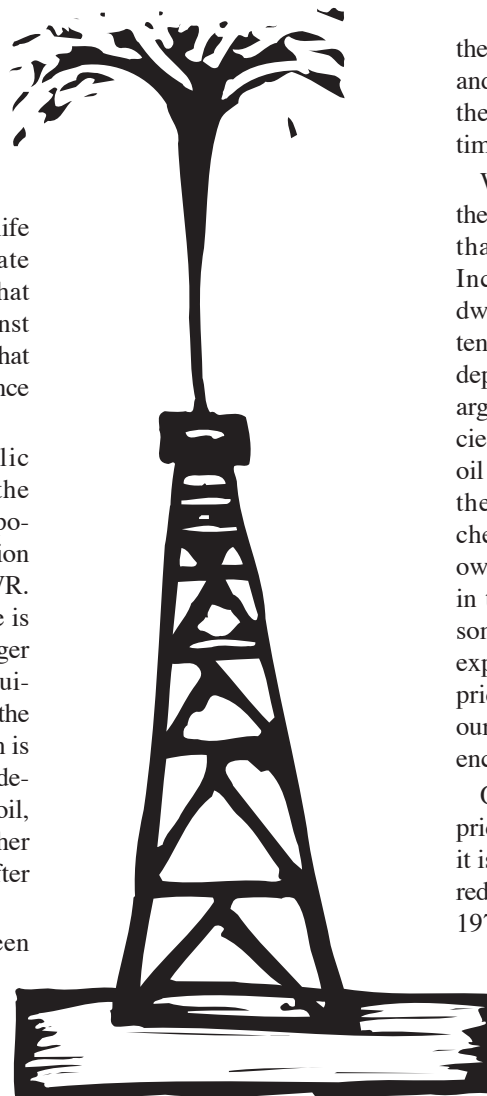
The current oil crisis and a bill passed by the House of Representatives have resurrected the issue of oil exploration in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). This debate usually pits conservationists that wish to preserve wildlife against economic and political interests that wish to relieve us of our dependence on foreign oil.

There has been little public discussion, however, about the long-term economic and geo-political consequences of our decision about exploiting the oil in ANWR. Assume for a moment that there is no wildlife at all in ANWR larger than hummingbird-sized mosquitoes. In other words, pretend that the question of wildlife in the region is totally resolved. Once we have determined that we can exploit the oil, we still have to determine whether to do it now or later. The oil, after all, is not going to evaporate.

For many years we have been pumping petroleum into salt caves in Louisiana to create a Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Several presidents have continued the reserve policy so that we might have a few months cushion in case of emergency. Does it make sense to pump oil out of the ground in Alaska so that we can pump it into the ground in Louisiana? Why not consider ANWR as an extension of our Strategic Petroleum Reserve?

Most people expect that an increase in supply from Alaska will translate into declining prices at the pump in the lower forty-eight. There are several reasons why this is unlikely. World oil prices are largely controlled by the decisions of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). If we were able to increase our production of oil by ten percent, OPEC could neutralize the price effect by lowering their production by one percent!

If we can't affect world oil prices with our own production, could we at least lower the price at the pump in the United States? We need to remember that the American oil



companies and British Petroleum are corporations. Corporations are owned by shareholders who expect a return on investment in the form of profits and dividends. Would those companies sell oil to U.S. consumers at below world market prices? Will they sell to China if they are offered more? There are a lot of reasons why increased production in ANWR won't be converted into substantially lower prices at our gas pumps.

Decisions we make today have consequences for our national interests in the future. Oil is the life-blood of an industrial society. There haven't been any major new oil discoveries for thirty years. We know which regions have the largest reserves of oil and we can predict where reserves will decline the fastest over the next few decades. Oil experts tell us that the remaining reserves in non-OPEC countries are declining faster than they are in OPEC countries. This means that

the world's dependence on OPEC, and their power and influence over the rest of us will increase over time.

We have very little control over the scenario outlined above other than to moderate our demand. Increasing the use of our own dwindling supplies will only hasten the day that we become totally dependent on others. Some experts argue that the industrial democracies should import as much of their oil from OPEC as possible while the price is cheap (that's right, cheap!) We should husband our own resources to provide leverage in the future. As long as we have some oil in reserve, the threat of exploiting it will help keep foreign prices at reasonable levels. Once our reserves are depleted, our influence will be dissipated too.

Our real leverage over OPEC's prices is not our modest supplies; it is the possibility of substantially reducing demand. Our efforts in the 1970s and 80s to lessen demand drove the price of a barrel of oil down from \$35 in 1980 to \$17 in the mid nineties. I heard a representative of the current administration a couple of weeks ago claim

that the President's energy policy is balanced because it addresses oil, natural gas, coal, nuclear, and alternative energy. But all of these are sources of supply. A balanced energy policy needs to embrace both supply and demand. What are we doing to reduce demand?

Those who are not impressed with the conservationist's arguments for preserving ANWR should nevertheless think about the long-term economic and geo-political consequences. There seems to be a presumption that every resource should be used by this generation now, with little consideration for our future needs, or those of our grandchildren. This attitude could prove to be costly when productivity in our domestic oil fields declines. Even without the conservationist's arguments, there are good reasons to leave the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge alone.



Bill Bennett, Bob Bennett and the criminal element

Russell Mokhiber
and Robert Weissman

Bill Bennett and Bob Bennett are brothers.

Bill Bennett is the social conservative pundit.

Bob Bennett is the white-collar criminal defense lawyer.

Bob Bennett is the lawyer for New York Times' reporter Judith Miller.

As you might recall—and how could you forget?—Bill Bennett took to the airwaves a couple of weeks ago espoused that “you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down.” He then quickly added, “That would be an impossible, ridiculous, and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down.”

Of course, Bill Bennett was talking about street crime.

If he were to address the issue of white collar and corporate crime—the kind that his brother Bob defends every day for a very nice living—then he might have said something like—“you could abort every white male destined to go to Harvard Business School, and your crime rate would go down.”

Now that would be impolite.

But the reality is that all crime committed by the powerful -- both in government and in corporations -- inflicts far more damage on society than all crime committed by the powerless.

Let's take the crimes of Harvard Business School graduate George Bush.

The President's cronies are being investigated for leaking classified information to various reporters, including to Judith Miller.

(By the way, we agree with Patrick Buchanan who was on MSNBC's Hardball Show last night and observed that Bush and Cheney's real success in the whole Judith Miller/Valerie Plame episode was turning “the New York Times, the newspaper of record in this country, into a propaganda organ for the war party.”)

Why not an investigation for war crimes?

In the words of former Supreme Court Justice and Nuremberg

prosecutor Robert Jackson -- whom newly confirmed Chief Justice John Roberts says he “admires” -- the supreme international crime is the war of aggression.

And guess who are the architects of the most recent war of aggression?

George Bush and Dick Cheney and their associates.

With an assist from Congress -- including Presidential hopefuls John Kerry and Hillary Clinton -- which voted to authorize the war.

Do you see any of the architects of the illegal war in Iraq on trial for mass murder?

Why not?

If putting Saddam on trial for mass killing is a good thing, then putting the architects of the most recent war of aggression is a good thing too.

(And by mass killing we mean approaching 2,000 young Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis in an unjustifiable war of aggression.)

Despite the wave of crime by the powerful that has swept over the country in recent years -- and inflicted far more damage on society than all street crime combined -- when people with the institutional megaphones like Bill Bennett use the word “crime,” they mean street crime.

(When Bob Bennett talks about crime, he invariably means white-collar and corporate crime -- but that's because his clients are paying him big bucks to clear their names.)

As a result, this bias has been hard wired into our brains.

Here's a quick test.

We will write down a word.

And you tell us the first image that comes to your mind.

Ready?

Looter.

Okay, and the first image to come to your mind?

Do you conjure up a black kid in New Orleans wading through the waters with DVDs stuffed in his pockets?

Why not Conrad Black, also known as Lord Black of Crossharbour?

Lord Black is under investigation along with his associates



--by the same Patrick Fitzgerald who is investigating the Bush leak affair--of looting \$400 million from Hollinger International, the esteemed publisher of the Chicago Sun-Times and the Jerusalem Post, among myriad other publications.

A special 513-report on the looting at Hollinger, issued by Richard Breeden, former chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, called Black's management team at Hollinger a corporate kleptocracy.

That would be a bureaucracy of kleptomaniacs. (Credit for the looter imagery goes to Joe Loughran, a Republican white-collar crime pundit we interviewed recently.)

So the image of a looter is that of the black kid with some DVDs stuffed into his coat pocket.

And not of Lord Black of Crossharbour?

And the image of the war criminal is that of Saddam Hussein.

And not George Bush?

And Bill Bennett says that if we aborted all of the black kids, the crime rate would go down?

Russell Mokhiber is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Corporate Crime / Reporter. Robert Weissman is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Multinational Monitor, <http://www.multinationalmonitor.org>, and on the steering committee of the Center for Corporate Policy. Mokhiber and Weissman are co-authors of On the Rampage: Corporate Predators and the Destruction of Democracy (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press).

Source: CommonDreams.org, 10/20/05

“War is the only game in which both sides lose.”
—Walter Scott



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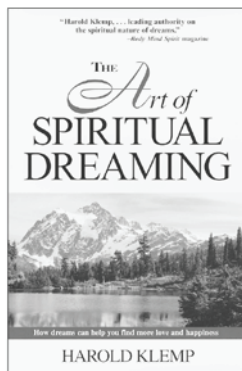
"War is the blackest villainy of which human nature is capable."

—Erasmus

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Peace & Justice Network roots

John Morearty

I decided in 1979 to do what I could to save my teenage sons from thermonuclear death.

I tracked down the Peace Life Group, and they were a brave little band of prophets. Ellen Lyon, the acknowledged leader, was a Quaker Cassandra, a tall woman with a big voice and a head for dire facts. She towed her two young daughters along to meetings and demonstrations; husband Ed was a Jehovah's Witness, unsympathetic to politics. Ellen's constant companion was Lucille Eisner, who in her youth had trained as an operatic soprano; we sang up a storm together at rallies and demonstrations.

Young Barré Stadtner was the class clown. To Rancho Seco, the breakdown-plagued local nuclear power plant (the twin of Three Mile Island) he gave the name Rancho Mistake-o. A passionate environmentalist, Barré had been recycling since he was a kid and people called him a Commie. The fourth member of the band was Nancy Shephard, another Quaker, a young single mother who delighted in teaching Hmong immigrant children in the public schools.

They were happy to get a new recruit. We reserved the elegant Fireside Room of Central United Methodist Church, where pastor Bob Moon had been preaching peace for years, and in February 1979 we posted a flyer for the "George Washington's Birthday and Nuclear Disaster Averting Party." Thirty people turned up, and over cookies and punch we schemed to save the world.

From Stockton came John and Linda Whittock. John survived the blitz as a boy in London, was trained as a patternmaker, and immigrated to San Francisco as a staunch socialist and a supporter of the United Nations. He married Linda Ramirez, a Stockton girl, and they had six children. At the time he was working as a draftsman, building furniture and founding the California Youth Soccer Association. Linda was about done raising their children, ready to become a grade-school teacher and global education specialist.

I met the stalwarts of the Lodi peace group, and they had to be tough; Lodi was notoriously right wing. Counselor Reid Cerney and his lawyer wife Ann had been holding peace vigils at Lodi city hall

since the Vietnam War; they cut their activist teeth as young Catholic volunteers in Latin America years before. Art Raab was the radical history teacher at Lodi High School, and Bonnie Meyer was his pal, a professional bookkeeper and peacemaker. There was a sturdy old German couple named Gottlieb and Martha Kammerer, and a grape grower, peace scholar and 1930s radical named Richmond Ferdun, who eventually passed on to me treasures from his library.

The quirky flyer had attracted a newcomer-fiftyish, bulky, crew-cut, gravel-voiced. "I was curious who the heck would put out such a crazy flyer, and I met you," Wilbur Hubbell told me later. Born near Buffalo, N.Y. in 1920, Wilbur dropped out of Michigan State and enlisted in the Army six months before Pearl Harbor "to fight the fascists." He flew a couple dozen missions as tailgunner in B-24s over Germany, left the army an alcoholic, and became a brakeman

on the Western Pacific Railroad out of Tracy, California. By the time of our George Washington party, Wilbur had been clean and sober for several years, and his red hair had turned white. He spent his spare time reading American history.

All these people became my friends for life. Looking for allies, I had found my intellectual and heart community. I remember walking in my meadow on Carpenter Road, thinking what magnificent men and women these were-willing to look hard truth in the face, eager to give their time and money-as the Declaration of Independence says, pledging their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. They were some of the best people in the world, and I knew that in the peace movement I would meet more.

To be continued....

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A defense of George W. Bush

With all the nasty things being said about our President, it seems only fair to write a defense of George W. Bush.

Whatocracy?

His words about democracy
Are really not hypocrisy.
He thinks it means theocracy
Well oiled by dollarocracy—but
Our Georgie's not a phony, only
dumb.

Iraq

He started with avidity
a war fueled by cupidity
and never let lucidity
Infringe on its stupidity—but
Our Georgie isn't crazy, only
dumb.

Crime

For crime he has a simple, clean
solution.
It's each and every suspect's
execution—but
Our Georgie's not Judge Lynch,
he's only dumb.

Stem cells and zygotes

He venerates these nerveless
blobs of tissue.
Real children's lives are simply
not his issue—but
Our Georgie isn't heartless, only
dumb.

Interior

He chose a woman firmly bent
On trashing the environment—but
Our Georgie's not a vandal, only
dumb.

UN

He found a wonderous diplomat
Whose tantrums are so famous
that
At sight of him, his colleagues
scat
As if faced by a rabid rat—but
Our Georgie isn't berserk, he's
just dumb.

Katrina

When multiple disasters strike,
At Crawford, he still rides his bike.
Why worry when Scott's got the
mike?—but
Our Georgie isn't callous, only
dumb.

SEC

He thought to fix the stock
exchange
And found a friend who could
arrange
A place where crooks can safely
range—but
Our Georgie's not Ken Lay, he's
much too dumb.

—Patty Sitkin

George and Laura breakfast tete-a-tete

A year has gone by since we last heard from the first couple when they shared a hearty breakfast of eggs benedict and blueberry muffins. They chatted about the upcoming presidential election, the newly formed Iraqi governing council, Jenna and Barbara's great adventures in academia and sundry other matters.

The president won a second term to the White House with his convincing re-election in November. He vowed to reform Social Security. Many feared that if he was successful with a tinker here and a tinker there Social Security would, like Humpty Dumpty, come tumbling down. The president planned to visit 30 venues to convince the citizens of the merits of privatization.

As time marched on, the daily news from Iraq had become increasingly grim. Condaleeza Rice and Karen Hughes were delegated to present the bright side of the ongoing struggle.

Other signal events, since George's re-election, include the catastrophic Indonesian tsunami and more recently, category five hurricane Katrina and the follow-up hurricane Rita. After a delayed start with Katrina, the president was in full command attending to Rita. Just prior to the hurricanes, he was dogged by gold star mother, Cindy Sheehan, for three weeks at the Crawford ranch.

Sept. 24 marked the day of the largest anti-war protest since war preparations began. More than 100,000 people marched by and demonstrated at the White House. The President missed this event because of his engaging non-stop schedule attending to affairs of state.

Once again, we join the President and First Lady at breakfast as they share a meal of poached eggs, smoked ham and hot buttered biscuits. Lucy Van Pelt, Laura's social planner and family archivist, recorded George and Laura's recent breakfast chat. What follows is a digest of their sparkling give and take.

Laura: George, I can't tell you how much I relish our breakfast time



together. No matter how busy your daily schedule of appointments, speeches and conferences, you don't allow

anyone to intrude on our breakfast time when we share our most intimate thoughts and feelings. You are such a dear. Early morning is my favorite time of day with you. You are so relaxed.

George: I must admit that just being with you is relaxing. Your support is what motivates me to do the right thing when important decisions are to be made.

Laura: This has been such a whirlwind year, no pun intended. I have several files of e-mails from ordinary citizens praising you for your many visits to the hurricane-stricken areas, while giving comfort and promises of aid to those who have suffered the loss of loved ones, their homes, their possessions and their livelihoods. No one can be more proud of you, George, than I.

George: Everyday I pray for guidance from our heavenly caretaker and my spiritual mentor. Beyond that, I never forget that wise saying of Teddy Roosevelt, "The buck stops here."

Laura: Spoken like the leader you truly are. During our lunch together last week, your mother confided

that both she and your father are as proud as punch with your masterful display of presidential leadership.

George: Daddy George has been my role model since I turned 40 and took the pledge.

Laura: Thanksgiving will soon be here and the girls will be home from college. Let's invite George and Barbara to join us for a special holiday dinner at the ranch. No talk about the war, the economy, terrorism or natural disasters. Jenna and Barbara can tell us about their academic challenges and their volunteer work embroidering flags for the wheelchair disabled war veterans.

George: There is nothing I like better than a little rest and relaxation time with the family on the ranch, free of unwanted intruders.

Laura: George, we won't mention the names of disagreeable persons. I want you to enjoy every moment of our breakfast time together.

George: I appreciate that, Laura. You sure know how to make a cowboy feel good. Without your comfort and encouragement I don't want to think about where I'd be.

Laura: George, you need to give yourself more credit. George Will thinks you are the right person in the right place at the right time.

George: My buddy Karl says that for fair and objective commentary, Will is right up there with Cal Thomas and Charles Krauthammer.

Laura: All right, George. Enough politics. Back to breakfast.

George: Right you are, Laura. I think I could handle another hot biscuit with a slice of ham.

Laura: Coming right up, mon cher.

Reid Cerney political pundit

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P&J Center Tuesday Film Nights

7:00 pm, 231 Bedford Road, Stockton

October 25, 7:00 pm Berkeley in the Sixties

The 1960s come to life in this gripping film that captures the birth of the Free Speech Movement, civil rights marches, anti-Vietnam War protests, the counterculture, the women's movement and the rise of the Black Panthers. Dramatic archival footage is interwoven with present-day interviews and songs from the Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, Joan Baez, The Band and the Jefferson Airplane.

October 31, 7:00 pm Ghost Stories #2

Journey to some of the most haunted places on Earth to relive the harrowing experiences of those who had the grave misfortune of encountering restless spirits. Not all ghosts are bad. Some, such as the Native American ghosts explored in this documentary, are good-natured and just want to play. But others, such as the malevolent specter who still roams an old prison, have more sinister plans.

Nov. 1 Salt of the Earth

A controversial drama about the struggles of striking mineworkers in a small New Mexico town whose views are socialistic and surprisingly feminist. Filmmakers consider this to be America's only blacklisted film, as a concerted effort was made to prevent this movie from ever seeing the light of a projector. Director Henry Biberman and other blacklisted Hollywood luminaries made the film using a combination of professional actors and real New Mexican miner families.

Nov. 8 Life and Debt

This searing documentary examines how the policies of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other aid organizations have changed the Jamaican economy over the past quarter of a century, leaving the local people to struggle in poverty and work in sweatshops. Author Jamaica Kincaid narrates with Belinda Becker to a reggae soundtrack that includes songs by Bob Marley, Ziggy Marley, Mutabaruka, and Peter Tosh.

Nov. 15 Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media

Funny and provocative, this 1992 documentary explores the political life and ideas of Noam Chomsky, a world-renowned linguist, intellectual and political activist. Chomsky illustrates how the media tacitly manipulates public opinion to further the agendas of the powerful. A compelling examination of the suppression of news about the U.S.-supported invasion of East Timor brings home the point.

Nov. 22 A Place Called Chiapas

One of the poorest regions in Mexico, the southern province of Chiapas drew worldwide attention in 1994 when a militant political faction, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, staged a major uprising. Featuring a rare on-camera interview with the mysterious insurgent leader Subcomandante Marcos, filmmaker Nettie Wild's documentary investigates the rebel movement and the government's attempts to quash the activities of the Zapatistas.

Free guitar lessons for valley youth

Lodi resident Donna Pacini-Christensen and her husband Tim Christensen are starting a Guitars Not Guns chapter in October, which will serve valley youth in Lodi, Woodbridge, and Galt.

Guitars Not Guns provides guitars and guitar lessons to foster kids, youth at risk, and other deserving children, regardless of their ability to pay. It also provides mentoring to children by inviting professional musicians, teachers, entertainers, producers and other music related professionals to speak to children to make them aware of the opportunities a life in music can provide.

For more information about the San Joaquin Guitars Not Guns chapter go to A Starry Night Production's main website: <http://www.astarrynightproductions.com> and click on the Starry Night Kids4Kids Guitars Not Guns Projects link. The official Guitars Not Guns website address is: <http://www.guitarsnotguns.org> Or write to: A Starry Night Productions, P.O. Box 1648, Woodbridge, CA 95258.

Prison guard training center in Stockton? come discuss

Ari Wohfeiler, Prison Moratorium Project.

Last month, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) announced from Sacramento the planned conversion of the Northern California Women's Facility (NCWF), a prison that has sat closed since 2003, into the Richard A. McGee Correctional Training Center for new prison guards. This is another in the very, very long list of backroom political deals that the CDCR is notorious for, and that have brought prisons and pollution but not economic development, political empowerment, or increased public safety to Stockton, the San Joaquin Valley, or the entire state.

Stockton residents were not consulted or even made aware of this plan to any reasonable degree. There are many questions that deserve straight answers:

* What economic benefits can Stockton expect from a training center?

* What other viable uses for this site are possible?

* What assurances do we have that this facility will not be reopened as a prison?

* What are specific environmental threats that might come from this training center, such as noise and other pollution from a firing range?

* What benefits and/or harm has the existing training center in Galt brought to that community?

and, most importantly, what do Stockton residents want to use this site for?

To make sure Stockton residents have a say in this issue, the Prison Moratorium Project (PMP) and Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) are holding a Community Redesign Forum on Saturday, November 5th in Stockton from 11am to 1pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 2373 Pacific Ave.

Come help create a creative and healthy plan for redesigning NCWF to fit Stockton's needs! For more information, contact Debbie Reyes at 559-916-4370

Non-violence training success

John Morearty

Our first Stockton nonviolence training on September 17-18 was grand! Thirteen initial participants (ten completed), four facilitators, all day Saturday plus Sunday morning in our beautiful new Peace and Justice Center. We shared lives, studied nonviolence theory, practiced tools and skills, watched the Nashville sit-in video, and told stories from the nonviolent tradition. (The infamous Wolf of Gubbio whined to Saint Francis of Assisi, "but they were such juicy little children!" "No, no," said Francis, "you must stop eating them. The people of Gubbio will feed you." The wolf agreed, and probably played nicely with the children from then on.)

We ate bagels and cream cheese,

drank coffee and juice, lit candles for absent loved ones, and sang at the end, "step by step the longest march can be won, can be won..." Yes it can.

People admired the new Center building, and everything worked, thanks to Master Builder Gary Barrington and the many who helped. (Three helpers themselves participated in the workshop—Sammy Nunez, Francisco Rodriguez, and Chris Torres.) The team pointed out that the Center itself is an excellent example of the Constructive Program in Active Nonviolence; participants donated a generous \$65 for support of the Center.

Our next scheduled nonviolence training in Stockton is December 9/10, at Cathedral of

the Annunciation. Limit, 12 participants.

The team (Paula LeVeck, Linda Whittock, Adrian Nickols and John Morearty) is also available to do other trainings, on request. For information call Linda Whittock, 465-4043.

Pace e Bene in Oakland also does trainings—that's where our team was trained. For info, call them at 510-268-8765.



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November Calendar

Through Oct 29

Tidewater Gallery presents works by Marika Wolfe and Lucinda Kasser. 223 E Weber Ave, Stockton. Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 11-3. Free.

Through Nov 4

The Subversive Stitch art show featuring work by Peig Fairbrook, Carrie Ann Burckle, Maggy Rozycki Hiltner, Susan Field, and Carol Lehmann. Reynolds Galler, 1071 Mendocino Ave, UOP. 946-2241.

Through November

"The Gift of Light, the Painting of Gil Dellinger." Knowlton Gallery, 115 S. School Street, #14, Lodi. Opening reception on Nov 4, 6-9pm. 368-5123.

Fri, Oct 7-Sat, Nov 19

Play "Bell, Book and Candle," Kiley's Dinner Theatre, 1030 Hutchins St #1, Lodi. 366-2100.

Sun, Oct 23-Sun, Nov 13

Haggin Museum presents Dia de los Muertos. 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. Daily 1:30 - 5 pm. 940-6315

Tue, Oct 25

Candlelight peace vigil, Annunciation Catholic cathedral, Lincoln and Rose, Stockton. All are welcome. Bring a candle, bring a friend. Always the fourth Tuesday. 7 pm Info: John, 464-3326, Ria 462-3340.

Fri, Oct 28

Delta College Composer's Series, three works including a premier by Max Simoncic, 7:30 pm Tillie Lewis Theatre, Delta College. \$7.50 adult, \$5 senior/student, children free. 954-5110

Thu, Nov 2

Peace & Justice Network Board meeting, 7 pm. 231 Bedford Road, Stockton. All welcome. 467-4455

Fri, Nov 4

UOP Jazz Ensemble, 7:30 pm. Faye

Spanos Concert Hall, UOP. 946-2474

Sat, Nov 5

Community Redesign Forum on the prison conversion, First Unitarian Church, 2373 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 11 am - 1 pm (see p 18). 559-916-4370.

SJ Delta College Mariachi Band concert, 7:30 pm Atherton Auditorium, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$7.50 adult, \$5 senior/student, children free. 954-5110

Tue, Nov 8

Election day - VOTE

Wed, Nov 9

SJ Delta College Big Band Jazz Concert, 7:30 pm Lewis Theatre, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$7.50 adult, \$5 senior/student, children free. 954-5110

Sat, Nov 12

UOP Symphony Orchestra and Choruses Beethoven Festival, 4 pm and 8 pm. Faye Spanos Concert Hall, UOP. 946-2474

Sun, Nov 13

Friends of Chamber Music presents the Adaskin String Trio with oboist Thomas Gallant, 2:30 pm. Faye Spanos Hall, UOP. \$25. 946-0540.

Fri, Nov 18

Jim Gamble Puppet Productions presented by Musical Chairs Children's Concert Series. A marionette production of *The Nutcracker*. 10 am & 7 pm at the Scottish Rite Auditorium. Tickets \$8 in advance/\$10 at the door. Call 462-2536 or go to <http://www.musicalchairsconcerts.org>.

Weekly

Tuesdays

Stockton City Council Meeting, every Tuesday at City Hall, 5:30 pm. <http://www.stocktongov.com/clerk/pages/CouncilAgenda.htm>

TaiChi, 6-8 pm, Northeast Community Center, 2885 E Harding Way.

First & Third Fridays

Poetry, 8:30-10:30 pm Latte Lounge, 235 E Miner Ave. 466-6224.

Saturdays

Birding Field Trips with S.J. Audubon Society. www.sanjoaquinaudubon.org

Tai Chi Chuan at the Confucius Church on Lafayette St., 8:30 am-11:am. (209) 952-8582.

Sundays

TaiChi, 2:30-4, Northeast Community Center, 2885 E. Harding Way & Golden Gate.

Monthly

Second Mon

PFLAG meeting, 7-9 pm, Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 209-870-3339.

Second Tues

Audubon Society, 7:30 pm, St. Paul's Church, 2220 W Alpine, Stockton.

Third Thur

Hispanics for Political Action meeting, 6:30-8:30 pm. Cancun Restaurant, Weber St, Stockton

Music by Morearty

John Morearty will present an evening of song, bamboo flute music, and readings from his poetry and memoir-in-progress on Wednesday, November 30, 7-9 PM, at the Peace and Justice Center, 231 Bedford Place. Playing with him on the African drum will be Jean-Claude Crhi from Cameroon. Admission is free, seating limited. 464-3326.

Invitation to Mokelumne River Cleanup

The Mokelumne River Cleanup event is scheduled for Saturday, November 5th weather permitting. Volunteers are being asked to help clean two sites—the Highway 26 Bridge on the North Fork and Highway 26 Bridge on the Middle Fork. We will meet at

8:30 at the West Point Elementary School parking lot. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes and bring work gloves, hat, and lunch. A general idea of turnout would be great so please let me know if you plan to attend. For more info, contact Terry at strangeaqua@volcano.net

Volunteers needed for progressive faith work

In late July, Stan Thomas attended the organizing conference of the Network for Spiritual Progressives on the UC Berkeley campus. The four day progressive spiritual activism conference was led by Rabbi Michael Lerner and Jim Wallis, an evangelical spiritual leader and author of "God's Politics." The driving idea behind the conference was: "America Needs a Spiritual Left to Counter the Religious Right."

The conference took a progressive stance on many of the difficult issues that challenge the American and world society today—civilization-threatening nuclear weapons, an out-of-control militaristic society, national and global environmental degradation, persistent racism and sexism in American society, the issue of the separation of church and state, the damaging hostility toward science

by the Religious Right, America's irrational and dysfunctional health care system, and much more.

The ultimate purpose of the conference was to recruit facilitators who would form small interfaith groups (5-10 people) in their local community. Each of these small groups, planted nationwide, will tackle—in deed, as well as in word—society's key issues discussed in the conference.

Stan Thomas joined the Network of Spiritual Progressives and committed to become a facilitator. His small group will focus on "Transforming America's Irrational, Dysfunctional Health Care System."

Mr. Thomas is seeking members of Stockton's Peace and Justice Network to join his group. If interested, phone him at (209) 464-3233.

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Fishermen, farmers protest Pombo's assault on ESA

Dan Bacher

Former Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey and representatives of fishing, farming and environmental organizations gathered in front of Congressman Richard Pombo's office in Stockton on September 26 to deliver petitions with thousands of signatures protesting Pombo's bill

to gut the Endangered Species Act (ESA), a law that has served as the last resort to protect salmon, steelhead and other fish on the brink of extinction.

The broad ranging coalition said it opposes Pombo's HR 3824, deceptively titled 'the Threatened And Endangered Species Recovery Act of 2004,' because it would cut 'large holes' in the safety net that the ESA provides for fish, wildlife and plants and fish on the brink of extinction. The law would significantly weaken protections for our nation's fish and wildlife and their habitat ' and for California fish and wildlife in particular.

"The Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act has the same intellectual candor as the Healthy Forest Act that increased logging and the Clean Skies Act that increased air pollution," said Bill Jennings, chairman of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance. "It cares not for endangered species nor promotes their recovery. It will certainly facilitate their demise."

Since going to Washington,

Congressman Pombo's main goal has been to destroy the Endangered Species Act. A scion of a wealthy developer family, Pombo, once blasted supporters of fish and wildlife restoration as the "eco-federal conspiracy of crypto-communist environmental regulations makers," according to Jennings.

Pombo's bill, introduced into the Resources Committee on September 19, is cosponsored by Reps. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA), Greg Walden (R-OR) and George Radanovich (R-CA). The controversial bill is being rushed through Congress with little debate—or input from constituents.

The U.S. House of Representatives narrowly approved the nightmarish legislation by a 299-193 vote on September 30. Fishing, family farming and environmental groups are now hoping to stop the bill in the Senate.

According to Pombo, the bill "fixes the long-outstanding problems of the Endangered Species Act by focusing on species recovery, providing incentives, increasing openness and accountability, strengthening scientific standards, creating bigger roles for state and local government, protecting private property owners and eliminating dysfunctional critical habitat designations."



"After three decades of implementation, the ESA has only recovered 10 of the roughly 1,300 species on its list," said Pombo. "What it has done instead is create conflict, bureaucracy and rampant litigation. It's time to do better."

However Jennings disagreed strongly with Pombo, noting that the law has been successful in stopping the extinction of many species: of 1,800 listed species, only 9 have been extirpated. Meanwhile, hundreds of species continue to survive only because of the act.

"One only has to look at the Delta, where remnant populations of Delta smelt and winter-run chinook salmon survive only because of the Act," he said. "The few steelhead that return to the Calaveras River do so under the protection of the Act. If endangered species have failed to achieve full recovery, it's largely attributable to political cowardice " to a failure to aggressively implement the Act's explicit requirements."

Zeke Grader, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, pointed out how the ESA, even with all of its bureaucracy, has kept the commercial salmon fleet in business. "Our membership depends on having harvestable populations of fish and the ESA has been an essential part of sustaining fish populations," he stated.

Grader cited the restoration efforts by the state and federal governments and fishing groups to recover the winter-run chinook, a species that plummeted from nearly 120,000 spawning adults in 1969 to only 191 fish in 1990. The winter run's listing under the ESA resulted in the construction of a temperature control device at

Shasta Dam, screening of irrigation pumps, opening of the Red Bluff Diversion Dam to fish passage during peak spawning periods and restrictions on pumping by the state and federal governments in the Delta.

"We still have a long way to go, but winter run numbers now range from 6,000 to 10,000 fish per year," said Grader. "The changes we accomplished because of the ESA are also beneficial to fall-run chinook populations, the mainstay of the Pacific Coast salmon fishery. If it wasn't for the ESA, our fleet would be basically off the water."

Grader explained that the ESA could use some improvements to strengthen the law, such as mandating the adoption of recovery plans, but Pombo's 'reform' legislation simply guts the law and paves the way for more rampant, unsustainable development at the expense of fish.

Among the ways that Pombo's bill would attack the ESA is by eliminating critical habitat provisions, abandoning the commitment to the recovery of endangered species and repealing protections against dangerous pesticides. It would require taxpayers to pay developers, oil and gas companies and other industries to comply with the law and politicize the scientific decision making process.

In addition, the Pombo bill would allow the Bush and future administrations to exempt any agency action from the requirement to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service before they take any action that could undermine the survival of recovery of protected species.

Even more onerously, the bill

would place endangered species at risk whenever the federal government fails to meet a 180 day deadline for telling developers whether their actions would kill or harm and endangered species.

According to Pete McCloskey, the ESA was one of a the series of landmark environmental laws, including the Wilderness Act, NEPA, Clean Water and Clean Air acts, adopted in the 1960's and 1970's to clean up and restore the nation's environment.

"The provision repealing protections from DDT and other pesticides is particularly appalling," he said. "The ESA protects the Web of Life that is America's Heritage. Without it, we may not be blessed with the American bald eagle, the California condor or the Pacific salmon. We have a duty to protect Endangered Species and the Act has done that well."

Pombo's legislative assault on the ESA has angered McCloskey so much that he said he may run against him in the 2006 election. "This is an outrageous bill. There should be a Republican opponent to run against Pombo," said McCloskey. "I'm tempted to move back to Pleasanton and take Pombo on!"

Other individuals who spoke out against Pombo's "extinction bill" include Cindy Lashbrook, owner of Living Farms and board member of Community Alliance with Family Farms, and Brian Stranko, the Executive Director of California Trout. The Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, Earthjustice, Endangered Species Coalition and a host of environmental groups are also opposing the legislation.

ACTION: There is no doubt the Endangered Species Act needs some fine-tuning after 32 years. However, the way to do it is not by gutting the law, but by strengthening and improving it. Unless we want to see many more fish kills like those that have occurred on the Klamath River and Butte Creek in recent years, we need to stop HR 3824 in the Senate. Now is the time to urge Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer and all other Senators to oppose Pombo's "Extinction Act."

Dan Bacher writes for the FishSniffer <<http://www.fishsniffer.com/>>

Source: TIDEPOOL 10/19/05 <<http://www.tidepool.org>>

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