



# Gray Panthers Sacramento

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P. O. BOX 19348 SACRAMENTO, CA 95819

916-332-5980

[www.gpcal.org](http://www.gpcal.org)



## December Meeting

### ANNUAL HOLIDAY SOCIAL

**DECEMBER 12TH - 1:00-3:00 PM**  
**Hart Senior Center, 27th & J Sts.**



**Our annual holiday get-together will feature a dessert and snack potluck, our special White Elephant Auction, sing-along, and recognition of a special Gray Panther!**

**With the outcome of the election, we have much to celebrate nationally!!**

**Bring your friends! For further information, call 916-332-5980.**

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## IN OUR COMMUNITY

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**January 20:** First Statewide Meeting of '07, 1660 Oak Place Blvd., Pleasant Hill. We will carpool at 8:30 am. Call 332-5980.

**Senior Legal Hotline** for Free Advice, written info, referrals in all areas of civil law. Call 916-551-2140, toll free 800-222-1753, or ask questions by going to [www.seniorlegalhotline.org](http://www.seniorlegalhotline.org) and clicking on **Email us for legal advice** on the left side of the screen.

**Notice! Special Legal Advice for Grandparents** or visitation issues now available at the Senior Legal Hotline.

**STROKE Assistance Website** to help caregivers of stroke survivors:

[www.strokeassociation.org/caregiver](http://www.strokeassociation.org/caregiver).

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## SPECIAL HOLIDAY CAROL

**By Francis Steadman**

Come sing-along with us to the tune of Good King Wenseslaus:

Come Gray Panthers, light your light!  
Maggie Kuhn doth call us  
Let's protest with all our might  
The wrongs that do appall us  
Join Gray Panthers everywhere  
Seek ye satisfaction  
Join the struggle - Join the song  
Age and youth in action!!!!



# GRAY PANTHERS NEWS

You will shortly be receiving a BALLOT FOR NATIONAL GRAY PANTHERS BOARD MEMBERS.

We are divided into regions, and now have the opportunity to elect one 2- yr. members and two 4-yr. members from the West Coast. There are five nominations from our region. Watch for the ballot and vote!!! Need I say more? Sacramento nominated Brooke Hollister.

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**Our local network, Gray Panthers Sacramento, has been very active on three local union issues of late.**

**1. We are supporting the SEIU-UHW homecare workers who are again in negotiation with the County over wages and a deceptive healthcare deal. The County is offering a deal on wages and benefits that would amount to a net loss for the workers; we stand by the workers saying this as a BAD DEAL (Note: the County seems to be good at offering bad deals lately...remember the rejection of the Arena tax at the polls)**

**2. Our second issue is the unfair working conditions for housekeepers and other laborers at the Sheraton Hotel, along with the lack of healthcare insurance. We joined in rallies and joined UNITE-HERE meeting with management, telling them we would not use any hotel for our meetings or conventions if they treat workers unfairly. They make unfair demands as to the number of rooms to be cleaned in a given shift which are so egregious, they are causing back problems for the women workers especially. We MUST AND WILL join a boycott of this hotel if they refuse to meet workers' needs.**

**3. Finally, we are supporting the 2-year fight of Blue Diamond workers, represented by ILWU, for their right to have a union shop, if they so choose, and for union organizers to speak with workers. Blue Diamond profits have risen 45% and the company has benefited from public assistance. A recent meeting with the City Council revealed that Mayor Fargo and all but Rob Waters support going to Blue Diamond to do what is necessary to ask them to be responsible corporate citizens.**

**These problems continue to show that there is much labor injustice in the Sacramento area and, if we are to become a world class city, as the Mayor and others proclaim, we must have decent working conditions**

for everyone. Thanks to Margie Metzler, Linda Roberts, Nell Ranta, Gail Ryall and others who regularly attend and even lead or speak at rallies.



**UNITED VOICES OF THE FUTURE**, our highly successful conference held on Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>, was attended by a total of 104 people. We were pleased to see 28 Gray Panther members there, some driving in from out of town.

We focused on the huge influx of seniors ahead because of the “Boomer generation” and the overwhelming necessity to develop their social and political advocates during roundtable discussions, putting forth some ideas for who, where, and when to reach out. Though not completely successful in coming up with any solutions, we felt that this was a good beginning – at least we got the attention of legislators Dave Jones and Patty Berg, as well as Congresswoman Matsui. Berg addressed the group with a welcoming video, Dave sponsored the event, and Matsui had a representative there.

We will continue to look for ways our local network of Gray Panthers can locate those boomers – perhaps there can be contacts with unions at their new retiree meetings, etc. to identify potential interest.

Whatever happens, Gray Panthers must and will focus on intergenerational goals, on bringing the boomer into our groups, and on becoming that Voice of the Future.

Your ideas are welcome. Call, write, or send an e-message. What ideas or contacts do you have?

Thanks to all those who made the November event a success: Attendees, volunteers, and other organizations who got folks there!!!

Joan Lee



## FROM THE STATE CAPITOL

While legislators gear up for the coming session and advocates meet to discuss legislation they will be promoting, we offer up this space for a message from

Berkeley Gray Panthers Convenor, Margot Smith. It seems appropriate as we look ahead at the need to prevent any potential chest-pounding in the new Congress, where a more reasoned attitude will prevail:

Hiroshima Day commemorates one of the most critical events in human history, the dropping of a nuclear bomb during wartime on a vast civilian population. The awesome effects of the bomb led to our commitment, beginning in 1945, never to use it again. Yet, here today we are threatened with nuclear warfare - India, Israel, and North Korea, even Iran, have the potential for nuclear bombs. Our new Manhattan Project is building up our own armory of nuclear weapons. The United States even uses depleted uranium bullets in wars we have initiated, exposing both opposing and our own military to radiation.

The effects of testing and using nuclear bombs and weapons are still with us: the cancers and birth abnormalities of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, persisting in Russia's Chernobyl, and among the Downwind people in Nevada and the islands of the South Pacific. Nonetheless, today, peace and religious groups are uniting and preparing for actions against war, particularly the war in Iraq. Individual groups are taking stands on their own.. Actions are planned that will include what has so far been missing, the difficult and risky act of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is an American tradition begun in the 19th century that became more effective as a modus operandi used by Gandhi. Civil disobedience is effective. It was effective in ending the war in Viet Nam. In 2000, I went to jail for civil disobedience when we opposed the actions of the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC. We were successful in bringing the oppressive trade policies of these groups to the attention of the world in both Seattle and Washington, and these groups have not succeeded in imposing their destructive policies on developing nations since then...

However, the bad news is that those in charge of our national policies are not listening. They don't care

about the casualties of war, the costs of war, and don't care who opposes it. They seem to be mainly concerned with who profits from war.

The media will not publicize or report on the peace movement. They are owned by corporate interests and, for the most part, only regurgitate Washington Propaganda.

### What can we all do?

- Join the Peace Movement, work in coalitions.
- Write your congressperson. Hand written or fax is best. Each letter is considered as representing 128 persons.
- Work to get your city and county councils to pass resolutions to end the war in Iraq and against nuclear proliferation.
- Form delegations and visit the editors of your press, radio and TV stations. Ask that the actions of the peace movement be publicized. In delegations, visit your congressional offices and state offices and ask that your representatives vote your values.
- Organize and participate in demos and rallies.
- Do civil disobedience if you can.
- Work hard to elect candidates that share your values. Run for office yourself.
- Spread the word. Contact your local Public Access TV station. In many communities, the Christian Right promotes itself this way; we in the peace movement can do so also.

As Susan Sarandon said , “All we need is imagination and empathy.” And as Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

—Margot Smith





## **ENVIRONMENTAL WATCH**

**NO DEEP BREATHING PLEASE**

In view of the Environmental Protection Agency's decision to reject an overwhelming recommendation by the nation's scientific community to strengthen the regulations governing the amount of soot allowed in the air, probably the best advice for the American public would be to be careful and not breathe too deeply. Actually, this action by the EPA to ignore sound scientific advice in setting policy shouldn't come as a surprise, considering the president's refusal to acknowledge the dire threat of Global Warming. Maybe with the change of Congress control, we can look to some switcheroos in this ignorant policy.

Particulates, no more than tiny specks of soot, are less than one-thirtieth the diameter of a human hair, small enough to penetrate deep into the lungs and circulatory system. They have been implicated in tens of thousands of deaths annually from respiratory ills such as asthma and coronary diseases. In failing to upgrade the rules controlling the amount of soot in the air, the EPA rejected the recommendation of its own Clean Air Scientific Advisory Council. The 22 member council voted 20 to 2 for the tougher standards. The EPA administrator defended his agency's action, though, by noting "there was not complete agreement on the standard."

The environmental and medical communities took the position that the vote seemed clear enough evidence of scientific support for stricter regulations in this matter. They also questioned the motives of the EPA action, speculating that the agency's real objective was to save power companies an estimated \$1.9 billion in costs them to upgrade their facilities to meet these higher standards.

Interestingly, a short time ago the EPA itself released an economic analysis showing that in exchange for the \$1.9 billion in new costs, the stronger standards annually could save as many as 24,000 lives!

We hope that with the recent defeat of Richard Pombo, a strident anti-environmentalist, we can have a bigger progressive voice on these and other issues that protect our world and our lives!



## **FROM WASHINGTON**

### **ROCKY ROAD TO CITIZENSHIP AHEAD**

Becoming a naturalized American citizen traditionally has been considered a non-partisan procedure. Now proposed changes may be part of a drastic makeover in the citizenship process. Changes proposed by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration (BCI) as well as some in Congress, would double the naturalization filing fee to \$800, require on-line filing for all such applications, and require all applicants to take a stringent history and civics test. The basic requirements for taking the citizenship examination include five years as a legal permanent U.S. resident, and passing an English language test. We are concerned that this is quite prohibitive, from the money to the testing required. Can we Gray Panthers get together and call for a more reasonable set of requirements in the path to citizenship?

A coalition of 230 religious, labor, and immigrant rights groups implored the BCI to take another look at these proposals, stating that they "appear to us a clear strategy pursued through administrative fiat to make the dream of American citizenship unattainable for many lower-income, less educated immigrants."

It also has been pointed out that the online filing requirement would shut out many immigrants without access to computers from becoming U.S. Citizens, by Laura Burdick, a deputy director of The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, stated that requiring a 19-page form to register online would all but eliminate the ability to offer mass citizenship application workshops. "This is not a Democratic or Republican issue," Burdick added. "Citizenship is in everyone's in-

terest."

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Gray Panthers has a strong position on immigration and we believe it will be a big issue in the coming session. Watch for e-alerts to be pro-active on the issue. There will be so many opportunities for activism this coming year, in California and in DC. We will support safety labeling of prescriptions, flood protection, and a lengthy list of healthcare related issues here in Sacramento, to say nothing of withdrawal from Iraq, privacy and civil rights, and the ongoing fight over Medicare and Medicare Part D in Washington. Be ready to help out!!!

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### **FUTURE CAMPAIGNS FROM NATIONAL \***

Gray Panthers will undoubtedly be coming out with some strong actions on the situation in Iraq and hawk-like policies around the world by the US. We are looking to some sort of action that will be as eye-catching and pro-active as our Medicare Part D "Donut Hole" campaign. For starters, remember these facts:

#### **IRAQ - The Real Costs of War**

As of election day, the War in Iraq has cost \$340,470,000,000; and the total is rising at the rate of about \$200,000 every minute. That's a conservative estimate. That is without including anything for Afghanistan or other hot spots. Nor does it include economic impact costs to Americans - interrupted careers, uprooted families and reduced lifetime earnings for war-damaged veterans, to name a few examples.

The total also does not include opportunity costs: that is, all that is given up when money is thrown on the bloody, sacrificial pyre that is Iraq.

#### **What could those \$340,470,000,000 have bought for Americans?**

How about:

- Pre-school education: 45,000,000 student years

of Head Start

- Health Care for Children: 203,873,600 child-years of insurance coverage
- Improved Public Education: 5,900,000 added public school teacher-years.
- Affordable Housing: 3,065,000 new housing units
- College Education: 16,500,000 4-year college full scholarships

So, what has the war REALLY cost? Dollars, yes; but disastrously, it has robbed us of human capital and quality of life, in every way, in the years to come.

**Want to see the latest figures?** Check out the National Priorities Project website at <http://nationalpriorities.org/> for today's totals.

And for an even better picture, add in the non-economic costs: deaths and injuries of American military personnel, deaths and injuries of contractor personnel and of allied forces; deaths and injuries of Iraqi's. No dollar value captures the enormity of these loses.

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After we all rejoiced that Citrus Heights, CA had passed an ordinance limiting annual rent increases in mobile home parks to 6% a year, they "read it again" and on final reading rejected it. This is a terrible shame. Gray Panthers have been concerned about seniors and disabled persons on fixed and limited incomes who live in these parks. They are most frequently trapped in situations where rents have jumped as high as 55%, the latter the case at Lakeview Village Park in Citrus Heights. Rents can be as high as \$800 or more! Yet, with a "mobile home" often meaning a fixed-base manufactured unit, there is nothing a person can do without giving up the largest asset most seniors, in particular, have - their home.

Hopefully, the residents of these parks in Citrus Heights will be able to press for a continuing debate. Any rent controls may not be popular, including in the larger community, but with landlords frequently looking to make unreasonable profits, we face huge stumbling blocks to ever get them enacted. Remember, low income or fixed income persons, in mobile parks or anywhere for that matter, can't just bite the bullet and pay increases, nor can they afford to jump up and move when the rents get out of bounds.

If you have issues, options, concerns about egregious rents and other housing issues, be sure to let us know:

[joanblee78@lanset.com](mailto:joanblee78@lanset.com). We will continue to work with organizations like Sacramento Housing Alliance and others in an attempt to face up to city- - county entities in bringing about housing justice !

Mobile home parks continue to be one of the sources of egregious problems that cover the wide range from rents to property rights issues, to ADA abuses. Gray Panthers hope to be on the front lines in seeking redress for this population of residents.

### **HOLIDAY SHOPPING HINT!!**

As you start your holiday shopping, you can save hundreds of dollars by saying "no, thank you" to extended warranty offers. \_Take the Consumer Reports quick, free extended warranty pledge! Go to <http://cu.convio.net/site/R?i=7ob2TtV54oyqlyIzla-zA>

Consumer Reports estimates that "Americans could save \$1.6 billion dollars this year"-money you can spend on holiday gifts or just save for a rainy day. Just say "no" to extended warranties today.

Extended warranties are *great for retailers*, but a *notoriously bad deal for you*. CR data shows that products seldom break within the extended-warranty window (typically around three years), and when electronics and appliances do break, the repair often costs about the same as the cost of the warranty. Retailers give you the hard sell because they often make more money on the sale of an extended warranty.

### **Election Creates Panic Among Drug Makers**

Peter Rost, MD

Dr. Rost is a former Vice President of Pfizer. He became well known in 2004 when he emerged as the first drug company executive to speak out in favor of reimportation of drugs. He is the author of "The Whistleblower, Confessions of a Healthcare Hitman." See: <http://the-whistleblower-by-peter-rost.blogspot.com/>

Few recent elections have been as critical for the drug industry as this one. And that's the reason The Wall Street Journal reports that "Assailed by Democrats, drug companies are pouring millions of dollars into close races, giving some Republicans a financial edge." What is at stake is a financial windfall the size of which has never before been endowed on a single industry, courtesy of the current administration. And that windfall is coming from drugs for poor people.

By some estimates the windfall for the drug industry could be \$2 billion or more this year, and it is the result of the transfer of millions of poor people into the new Medicare Part D program. Under this program, the prices paid by the taxpayer, for the medications given to those unable to pay for drugs, are likely to be higher than what

was paid under the Medicaid programs.

This is a program embraced by the current administration, and by the drug companies and the insurance industry. They all work together. In fact, when I was a Vice President at Pfizer, I received a phone call from someone calling on behalf of the CEO, requesting that I pay \$2,000 for a fund raising dinner for President Bush's reelection...

...House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, has said that within the first 100 hours of taking over the House, she will help rewrite the prescription-drug benefit to take away most of the advantages it handed to pharmaceutical companies. The Medicare Part D program, which forbids the government from negotiating drug prices, was initially such a mess that at least two dozen states had to take emergency action to help low-income people who could not get their medications under the program, which began Jan. 1. States were spending millions of dollars a day in such assistance. The Medicare Part D program, which forbids the government from negotiating drug prices, was initially such a mess that at least two dozen states had to take emergency action to help low-income people who could not get their medications under the program, which began Jan. 1. States were spending millions of dollars a day in such assistance.

But the program is good for the drug companies, and the insurance industry. The Wall Street Journal reports that the "early winners" include large health insurers, who "have snagged roughly 15 million new customers and healthy government subsidies" under the program. The WSJ concludes, "By far, the biggest winner in the race to sign up seniors is UnitedHealth Group Inc., which has used an alliance with AARP to help it grab more than 3.9 million new customers."

And one person who has won more than anyone else is the former CEO of UnitedHealth, who was recently terminated due to his backdated stock options. Earlier this year those stock options were valued at \$1.6 billion in unrealized gains. He and in some years at least 10 other top executives of the company frequently received options just before big run-ups in the company's share price, which had the effect of making the options more profitable than they otherwise would have been.

In conclusion, the current administration has done what this administration does best. Funnel money to already fabulously rich executives. And American taxpayers do what they do best—pay the bill. Meanwhile, our poor and our elderly are suffering. In fact, in a Washington Post-ABC poll less than a third of respondents said they were saving a lot, and 26% said they had seen no savings due to the Medicare Part D program.

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

We have an urgent need for help printing computer generated labels from a master data base monthly for the Newsletter. The job takes perhaps a half-hour a month, though occasionally we need a second set. We can train you!

If you are able to perform this service, please contact Joan B. Lee, Sacramento Convenor, 332-5980 or [joanblee78@lanset.com](mailto:joanblee78@lanset.com).

**This is a very urgent need.**

## Sacramento Gray Panthers 2006/2007 Officers and Steering Committee

**Chairperson:** Joan Lee 916-332-5980  
**Secretary/Program:** Marge Cumming  
**Treasurer:** Lola Young  
**Staff Project Coordinator, Medicare Part D grant,** Margie Metzler  
**Environmental:** Dr. Karl Stoffers  
**Disabled Issues:** Terry Terry  
**Historian:** OPEN POSITION  
**Hospitality:** Joyce Westergaard  
**Housing Issues:** Linda Roberts and Karen Raasch (CIDs)  
**Labor/Wage Issues:** Nell Ranta  
**Newsletter Asst. Editors:** John Bernier and Betty Cooper Youngren  
**SS/Medicare Advisor:** Peter D'Anna  
**Transportation:** Jim and Doris Sanford.  
 Interim: Dale Kooyman  
**Members at Large:** Edie Poole, Pat Naylor, Jean Mellberg, Betty Merle, Judy Bietz  
**Computer Assistant:** Beverly Crosby  
**Webmaster Staff:** Margie Metzler

Visit our website, [www.gpcal.org](http://www.gpcal.org), for Sacramento and California Gray Panthers issues, as well as Medicare Part D Updates!

*All members are welcome to steering committee meetings held monthly the 4th Tuesday at 1 PM in the Cypress Room at Hart Center.*



White House Protest

Julie Jensen Photography

*Maggie Kuhn*

## JOIN SACRAMENTO GRAY PANTHERS!

**Gray Panthers Annual Dues are \$30 for individuals and \$35 for families.** New members who join through the end of 2006 pay the full amount. Beginning January 2007, they will pay the amount from the following monthly pro-rated schedule for 2006-2007. **Be aware that you will be billed again in September.** This includes newsletters, membership in Gray Panthers National, and Gray Panthers California.

Month	Individual	Family
January	\$20.00	\$20.50
February	17.50	18.00
March	15.00	15.50
April	12.50	13.00
May	10.00	10.50
June	7.50	8.50
July	5.00	5.50
August	Both \$3.00 + \$30.00 for 2007	

**TODAY I /WE WANT TO JOIN GRAY PANTHERS SACRAMENTO**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Regular: \$30 or pro-rated amt. \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \$35 or pro-rated amt. \_\_\_\_\_

newsletter subscription **only** \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** It is not necessary to pay for the newsletter if you join as a full member! Make check to Gray Panthers of Sacramento. Send to PO Box 19438, Sacramento, CA 95819.

**REMEMBER: Lack of funds does not deter you from belonging to Gray Panthers!!** Call Joan Lee for further information: 916-332-5980

**Drug Plan Prices in 2007** In the November newsletter, we wrote that the sign-up period for the Medicare Part D plan extends from Nov. 15, 2006, to December 31, 2006. However, we suggest you change plans before December 9, if you choose to change, to avoid any gap in coverage.

You don't have to change plans, but many will want to, because there are more plans with low premiums and also more expensive plans with coverage of the gap known as the doughnut hole. But the average premium cost increased by 12%, if you stick with the same plan. To compare costs and benefits, go to Medicare's Plan Finder at [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov) or [mymedicare.gov](http://mymedicare.gov), or call 1-800-medicare.

One of the least expensive plans this year was Humana. For 2007, the average monthly premium this year has risen by \$22.60, to \$80.43. There is still no deductible, but doughnut hole coverage will cover only generics, not brand-name drugs. In addition, the top 10 part D plans as a group are increasing premiums by \$3.58 a month. For example, the average charge for a UnitedHealth plan, AARP, will increase by \$1.52, to \$27.83. Beneficiaries in stand-alone drug plans should look at Medicare Advantage plans that offer drug benefits.. These plans wrap physician and hospital services in one, some with additional benefits. They are available in 39 states. (Sacramento Bee, 11/19, D7, Jane Zhang.)

**Nancy Pelosi, *New Direction for America:***

<http://www.house.gov/pelosi/press/releases/Sept06/EconomicSecurity.html>

"Some of our proposals are in our New Direction for America that we put forth. Among the suggestions were to make the economy fairer by raising the minimum wage and repealing the subsidies for companies that send our jobs overseas. It's quite a remarkable phenomenon: you're a worker, you pay taxes, and your taxes are used to give an incentive to a company to send your job overseas, and then you are asked to train your replacement or else you won't get any severance.

"Essential to economic security for American families is access to health care, and **we will make health care more affordable by giving the federal government the opportunity to negotiate for the lower the cost of prescription drugs.** We will make college more accessible by cutting interest rates for student loans in half, and making tuition tax deductible. And we will do this with fiscal discipline."

Margie Metzler

**GRAY PANTHERS  
Of SACRAMENTO  
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Sacramento, CA 95819**

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**Reminder: Our December Meeting, December 12, will  
be our ANNUAL HOLIDAY SOCIAL See  
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