
GRAY PANTHERS of Sacramento

On the Prowl



P O Box 19438, Sacramento, CA 95819 916-332-5980

Volume 28 Number 3*****March, 2006

GENERAL MEETING

MARCH 14 - 1:00-3:00 PM

Hart Senior Center, 27th & J Sts.

ELECTIONS: MEN, MONEY, AND MACHINES

Speaker: Mary MaGill, Contra Costa Gray Panthers

Mary has been a member of the Voluntary Public Funding of Campaigns No California Committee since 2000 and is now working to pass Loni Hancock's AB 583, the CLEAN MONEY FAIR ELECTIONS BILL. She is known to be a mover and shaker in everything she touches, from Universal Single Payer Healthcare to Walmart to Diebolt voting machine problems.



This should be a GREAT program.

Bring your friends and any other activists who may share your concerns about these problems! For further information, call 916-332-5980.

FREE TAX PREPARATION

for low income families earning under \$38,000 annually, call InfoLine Sacramento - 916-498-1000

For information on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for any family earning under \$37,263, Certified tax and filing assistance is available.

EITC is a refundable tax credit available to working households.

Our sympathy
to Fern Holcomb, wife of

BOB HOLCOMB

former treasurer and long time board member of Gray Panthers of Sacramento who passed away recently. We have lost a good man!

IN OUR COMMUNITY

March 3 OLMSTEAD ADVISORY MEETING

This first '06 Quarterly Meeting of the group is open to the public. Joan Lee, your chairperson, is a member of the advisory. Location: call 332-5980, possibly at Dept. of Rehab off Royal Oaks.

March 14, 8-4:00, Annual Alzheimer's Educational Conference, CSUS. Lectures and workshops. Call 1-800-272-3900 for more info.

March 16th, 8-5:00 (reception afterwards), Calif. Budget Project conference "2006 and Beyond: Fundamental Policy Choices Facing California, and the Future of the Federal Budget. Sacramento Convention Center. Check website at www.cbp.org.

March 21st, 6:30-8:00 pm. "Coming of Age" Lecture Series: Chronic Air Constipation (COPD & Asthma) Samuel Louie, MD, UCD Med Center Cancer Auditorium. 4501 X St.

March 22, Berkeley Gray Panthers invite you to meet Susan Murany, National Gray Panthers Executive Director. For info call Joan Lee - 916-332-5980. Car pool with us!

METRO TRANSPORTATION PLAN WORKSHOP

March 23, West Sacramento Galleria. We will give further listings as they are available for these important community workshops to provide input in transportation decisions.

March 30, 10-11:30, Alzheimer's Assn., 530 Bercut, Ste A. "Maximizing Your Memory" Mary Gillon, Regional Director

SACOG Workshops on "You and Real Transportation Choices", numerous dates and places. More Info, ECOS at 443-1033, Ext. 17.

Special notice: A secret ballot was taken at the February 14th meeting of Gray

Panthers on the issue of the Compassionate Choice Act, promoted by Assemblywoman Patty Berg, AB 651, and patterned after the Oregon Right to Die law. The results of the ballot were 71% "yes", 39% "no". Gray Panthers of Sacramento will support the bill.

IT'S OUR ENVIRONMENT

Eleanor Roosevelt said "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." During the past few years many of us have written and contributed toward the last unspoiled gray whale nursery in the world, at San Ignacio Lagoon in Baja, Mexico. It is exciting to know that a breakthrough agreement with landowners bans all industrial development on the 120,000 acres along the lagoon, meanwhile preserving local community way of life. \$1.5 million bought the development rights and Mitsubishi Corp and the Mexican government withdrew plans for a massive salt plant on the lagoon. It is a win-win for all of us in the long run, a critical first step toward insuring the undisturbed, life-saving sanctuary for gray whales, who annually migrate along the California Coast. These magnificent whales are right now making their way North to Alaska.

Complaints Reports regarding Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan(s) and/or 1 (800) MEDICARE Hotline:

Start by listing the following info:

- * name of the Prescription Drug Plan
- * name of customer service rep
- * date and time of call
- * nature of complaint (in detail)



To contact the national 1(800) MEDICARE or 1(800) 633-4227 Hotline with the information. To contact Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Centers (Regional Office): (415) 744-3602

National Multilingual Toll-free Helpline Numbers:
English 1-800-582-4218 Chinese 1-800-582-4218
Korean 1-800-582-4259 Vietnamese 1-800-582-4336

Gray Panthers is collecting problem statements in an effort to address these issues. Please call 332-5980 for info.

From the State Capitol

We have made it through a hugely expensive (\$100 million) and time-consuming election, sponsored by special interests. As we approach the '06 half of the legislative year, numerous hearings and advocacy on a wide and often disputed selection of issues loom on the horizon. It is our suggestion, along with many other activists, that the legislature and the governor take-away from that wasteful election should be the determination to solve their differences and work together. Read on for issues and proposals they should agree upon.



We have offered our support for SB 1204 (Perata), required policies providing "lift teams" to prevent nurses from serious back injuries, boosting our friends in the Ca. Nurses Assn.

Again we ask that Area Agencies have a speedy passthrough of money for aging programs needs through electronic transfers, under Berg AB 1929. This is vital to see that programs like congregate meals done go into the red while awaiting funding passthrough.

An important issue with affordable housing advocates is the ability of developers to find ways to sidestep requirement. Hollingsworth SB 1177 would clarify housing language to prevent this practice.

Finally, watch for the launch of the "OneCare NOW" campaign in 365 Ca. city. This statewide campaign will be launched in August, but meanwhile we will be working hard with Sheilla Kuehl to move her plan forward, as well as a companion bill regarding the financing of single payer health care for California. Mary MaGill, our March speaker, may be able to speak to us after the meeting on her participation in the drive. IT IS THE ULTIMATE ANSWER!!

Hearings on other bills key to seniors have not been scheduled for hearing yet. However, if you are at all interested in

being an "active activist" PLEASE call Joan, 332-5980 or come to the next meeting and SAY SO.

Many attended an unprecedented hearing held by Senate and Assembly committees on aging and health. The packed hearing room heard about those hurt by Part D from advocates, pharmacists, the State and Federal government, and those actually hurt by confusion and co-pays they can't afford, premiums and prices the didn't expect, and glitches. Emergency legislation SB 1233 (Perata), forced by this testimony of crisis, and chaptered by the Secty of State on February 9, authorizes the state to pay the co-pays of MediCal/Medicare beneficiaries, and be the "payor of last resort" for them in cases of inability to get drugs. The law carries extensions thru May 16th in increments of 30 days, watching for smoother access to medications under Part D for this population. Just a first step, at least it is a small liferaft for those with critical drug needs. Ultimately, the solution is a repeal Medicare Part Dccc

FROM WASHINGTON

QUESTIONABLE ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE "BLOWBACK"



While we certainly support all necessary efforts to make America secure from terrorist attack, at the same time we also strongly believe such security can be obtained without jeopardizing our freedom and or violating the Constitution. Steps should be taken immediately toward impartial public hearings to investigate The government's warrant-less electronic surveillance of U.S. citizens by the National Security Agency. A Special Counsel should also be appointed to determine if any members of the Executive Branch of government participated in criminal acts involving such surveillance of U.S. Citizens., and further call for an accounting of why the president called for **Actions that bypassed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC).** It appears that the NSA's requests to the FISC for

warrants for electronic surveillance did not hamper the NSA in its' intelligence gathering activities. As you all probably know, the California Clean Money and Fair Elections act - AB 583 - passed the full Assembly at the end of January and is now awaiting action in the State Senate. You don't have to be a James Bond to know that the spotlight of publicity is not the most conducive place to conduct intelligence operations, but that is exactly the result when it was found that the NSA's electronic surveillance had been undertaken while failing to obtain warrants from the FISC. In the espionage field the term cblowbackç is used to describe the consequences of a failed covert operation, and the president, by failing to obtain the required court orders for certain wiretapping has created a classic cblowbackç situation. However, when word leaked out that the agency was conducting electronic surveillance without proper authority, there was a great cry from the public. Keeping up the pressure, we must immediately write or call key persons to encourage this action. The players are:

Senate Intelligence Comm. Chair Pat Roberts

202-224-4714

House Intelligence Comm. Peter Hoekstra

202-225-4401

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist

202-224-3344

Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert

202-225-2976

(You may think this a useless exercise, but if we don't do anything, who can we blame?)

John Bernier and Joan Lee

TIMEBOMB TARGETS HEALTH

Last month, President George W. Bush unveiled his 2007 fiscal year budget proposal, a \$2.8 trillion budget that would start October 1, 2006. It features \$182 billion in cuts for non-defense programs over five years (a second straight year of proposed reductions), as well as proposals for \$285 billion in tax cuts over the same period.

The actual budget document is available by its cutbacks in heart disease and stroke research, could create a cardiovascular timebomb.

As the population ages, the prevalence and costs of these conditions will increase, there will be an even greater need for more research.

With deaths from heart disease alone projected to increase by nearly 130 percent by 2050, it's a

terrible mistake to make cardiovascular research, prevention and treatment a mere afterthought in the proposed budget," declared Dr. Robert Eckel, the president of the American Heart Association. It should also be pointed out that the president's budgetary proposals concerning such research, appears to be at odds with the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition, a bipartisan caucus of some 200 members of Congress. The objective of this Congressional Caucus is to advance public policy by improving treatment and research of heart disease and stroke. There is an answer - and it lies in events next November?

IN OTHER ISSUES -----

Got Access? A team of disability rights attorneys are conducting an investigation into possible barriers on sidewalks and at intersections maintained by the California Department of Transportation

("CalTrans"). Barriers include but are not limited to:

- * Barriers which make it difficult or dangerous for persons who use wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices to use sidewalks such as lack of curb cuts, unsafe curb cuts, and dangerous slopes

- * Barriers that make it difficult or dangerous for persons who are blind or visually impaired to use sidewalks or intersections, including lack of audible pedestrian signals (APS), lack of detectable warnings at curb cuts and presence of protruding objects

If you have encountered any such access barriers, please contact the legal team (Disability Rights Advocates, Linda Dardarian, and Lainey Feingold) which is conducting this investigation. Contact us By calling the law firm of Goldstein, Demchak, Baller, Borgen & Dardarian at (800) 332-6177 or email Disability Rights Advocates at CalTrans@drlegal.org or Lainey Feingold at Lfeingold@earthlink.net

VISITABILITY REGULATIONS ISSUED

Californians for Disability Rights informs us that, following passage of Wolk AB 1400, new permits for single family homes must now

include a Universal Design Checklist offered to the buyer.

The checklist offers a wide array of accessibility feature. If you want to learn more about the checklist, to the state web site www.hcd.ca.gov and to Standards and Regulations.

Quick note from California Housing Law Project: They have a web site which you should visit - www.housingadvocates.org, contains all the latest action in the Capitol related to housing, plus links to local, state and national development & advocacy groups. Worth your time to bring up!!!

FAMILIES USA CONFERENCE:



Joan Lee and I went to this major conference this year, along with several other people involved in Health care advocacy. The conference was terrific, with sessions ranging from problems in health care for children, seniors, and the disabled, making Medicare Part D work, health care as a religious value, dealing with cuts to Medicaid, and achieving health care for all. We had a welcoming taped speech from Bill Clinton and one with George Lakoff on "Health Care and Elephants". Live speakers included Debbie Stabenow, Senator from Michigan; Dick Durbin, Senator from Illinois; E.J. Dionne, columnist for the Washington Post, on "Building a Progressive Agenda;" John Dingell, Congressman from Michigan, on "Coverage for all", and Artur Davis, Representative from Alabama, on "Stand up and Speak Out".

There were also numerous workshops, and though we weren't presenters, we did have the opportunity to pass out information on Medicare Part D and our "PhRMA got the DONUT, we got the hole" postcards. We also had the opportunity to visit on Capitol Hill with representatives of Mary Bono, Pete Stark, Henry Waxman, Nancy Pelosi, and Jerry Lewis' offices. The eye-opener for me was the major difference in the ways they treat visitors. Bono's person clearly felt superior to us all, while the Pelosi, Waxman and Stark people couldn't have been nicer. It was also a treat to go by Tom DeLay's office and say inappropriate things outside his door. (No arrests were made)

Joan and I stayed till Monday, in order to have dinner with the National Gray Panther Executive Dir., Susan Murany. This gave us Sunday to see the city. We made it to the Smithsonian American Indian Museum, the Air and Space Museum, and the Holocaust Museum. We couldn't see them thoroughly and really only spent a little time in Air and Space, but we did a pretty good job of seeing the other two. We were both exhausted, though I must say Joan did better than I did!

Margie Metzler

SACRAMENTO GRAY PANTHERS 2006/07 OFFICERS AND STEERING COMMITTEE

- Chairperson: Joan B. Lee 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 & Karen Raasch(CIDs)
- Labor/wage issues: Nell Ranta
- Newsletter Asst. Editor - John Bernier
- SS/Medicare Advisor: Peter D'Anna
- Transportation: Jim & Doris Sanford
- Members at Large - Edie Poole, Pat Naylor, Jean Mellberg, Betty Merle
- Computer assistant- Beverly Crosby.
- Webmaster- Margie Metzler (website: www.gpcal.org)

Gray Panthers Annual Dues are \$30 for individuals and \$35 for families. This includes newsletter, membership in Gray Panthers National and Gray Panthers California.

If new members choose to join in coming months, the following is the monthly pro-rated schedule for 2006:

	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	8.00
July	5.00	5.50
August	Both \$3.00 + \$30 for 2007	

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

Name _____

Address _____

Phone/E-mail _____

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 any check to Gray Panthers of Sacramento and send to PO Box 19438, Sacramento, CA 95819. Remember that lack of funds won't deter belonging.

**GRAY PANTHER MEMBER IN
CONTRA COSTA, MARY MAGILL,
JOINS OTHERS
AT A CARA-SPONSORED EVENT
IN FRONT OF CONGRESSMAN
POMBO'S OFFICE ----**

**MEET MARY AT OUR MARCH
GENERAL MEETING!!**



GRAY PANTHERS of
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