



Gray Panthers Sacramento

# On the Prowl

Volume 29 Number 7

July 2007

P. O. BOX 19438, SACRAMENTO, CA 95819

916-332-5980

## GENERAL MEETING

JULY 12 - 12:30-3:00

## ANNUAL SUMMER POTLUCK AND CELEBRATION

Hart Sr. Center, 28th and J Sts.

Join us for a potluck, with main dish provided by the Steering Committee  
You are invited to bring salads and desserts.

We will be honoring long-time activist and member LEON LEFSON as our Fourth Annual  
**ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR** award. Friends of Leon's from the Community are invited.

**This is a social time, but you will be invited to tell us about your favorite "activist" issue  
of the hour!**

For further info, contact 332-5980



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### IN OUR COMMUNITY

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#### Informative workshops:

#### NO MORE FALLS

Age is not the only reason people experience balance problems. Learn about causes of balance problems and strategies for improving and maintaining balance.

**Wednesday, July 11, 1:15 PM - 3:00 PM**

Eskaton Monroe Lodge  
3225 Freeport Boulevard, Sacramento

**Tuesday, July 17, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

Eskaton Henson Manor  
1225 Morse Avenue, Sacramento

**Thursday, August 9, 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM**

Eskaton Natomas Manor  
2400 Northview Drive, Sacramento

**Tuesday, September 18, Noon - 1:30 PM**

Casa de Santa Fe, 3201 Santa Fe Way, Rocklin

#### MEMORY MATTERS

Larry Dawes, MSW, will provide an update on recent studies of the aging brain and offer practical information on ways to keep your mind sharp.

**Thursday, August 23**

**1:30 PM - 3:30 PM**

Eskaton FountainWood Lodge  
8773 Oak Avenue, Orangevale

#### SUCCESSFUL AGING

**Aug. 7, Noon-1:30**

Casa de Santa Fe, 1201 Santa Fe Way, Rocklin

#### Wednesday July 4, Afternoon of Friendship:

Sacramento Black Caucus and allies, welcome Cuban Caravan. Info [fayek@springmail.com](mailto:fayek@springmail.com)



## From Joan B. Lee

Your chair labored and studied to reflect our stated position on immigration. For a good discussion, see Utne Reader, March 07, on immigration, and the position statement at [www.graypanthers.org](http://www.graypanthers.org). The letter went to 20 of the most likely of the California delegation. Here are excerpts:

June 1, 2007

"Gray Panthers California wishes to express the concerns of its membership about any hasty passage of ill-considered legislation regarding the immigration problem in America. We hope that we have learned our lesson with the under-handed and coercive passage of Medicare Part D, and frankly want no part of another situation like that." The following thoughts are presented to give you our position as you return from the Memorial Day recess to consider this issue.

There has been little real public hearing process to ascertain the wishes of the American people on this issue. Like Part D, we do not want to have to wait for unforeseen circumstances and personal tragedies to happen before vetting the issues in public.

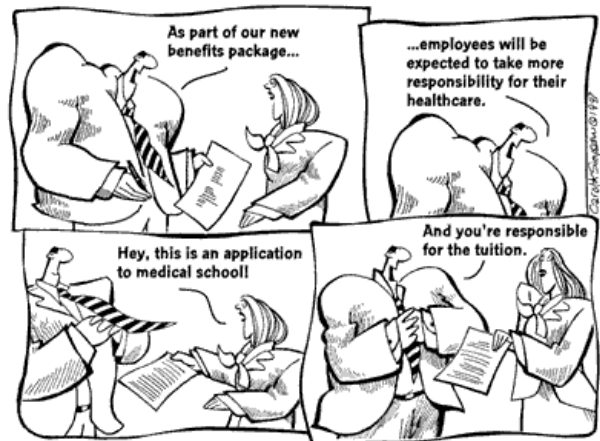
The following points were made:

1. Any bill that waits for our borders to be secure is doomed to failure. Hiring of 18,000 additional border patrol agents, construction of 570 miles of walls and barriers will take too much time and only slightly stem the tide. Because people cannot feed their families or trust their governments in other nations, they will continue to come to America, by whatever means. We must address legalization process at the same time we tackle enforcement.
2. An added concern about such measures is the effect they will have on already endangered species which we seniors care to preserve for future generations, not bar from our deserts and mountains. We do not support the building of the wall, reminiscent of the Berlin Wall for other obvious reasons. We must substitute working with other nations, calling on them to assist us in stemming this tide. Heightened walls will only result in more smugglers and border deaths and an increasing negative view of Americans. We must offer real assistance to those nations which have the highest numbers of smuggled immigrants into our country - real dollars that would have been misused and misplaced by the building of the walls. The Public Policy Institute of California reported that there is no evidence that border enforcement substantially reduces unauthorized immigration development.
3. Employers already know that they are doing something illegal in hiring undocumented immigrants and should be required to accept their responsibility. They should be required to verify new hires, just as citizens should be

willing to accept the same accompanying possible higher costs to pay ay better wages and benefits. Corporate America, which hires maids and maintenance workers at substandard wages, must look at their outrageous profits and be willing to give a little before they complain so much. The Public Policy Institute suggests that the solution is employer sanctions, ID cards, and a realistic guest worker program.

4. Z-Visas seem to be a possible solution, but a "truly" workable pathway to citizenship is not currently addressed under this proposal. However, most egregious would be a requirement for so-called "illegals" to touch back to their home nation and reapply for admittance. Not only is this unenforceable, but would be extremely costly for most immigrants. Airfares for his family alone would tend to result in those same people, originally willing to attempt compliance with the law, to go "underground", in a sense favoring those who continue to hide from the law. Even provisions in the Senate legislation that would allow these folks to stay here would put them "at the back of the line" and require payment of \$2,000 fines are in our view unfair, too punitive and without justice across the board.
5. Our state governments, particularly in border states and gateway cities, must not be forced to pay for trickle-down programs. We are concerned that the difficult and expensive job of control will overwhelm states in the same way that Katrina and the Gulf States have had to take over roles that should have been the purview of the Federal Government.
6. Finally, we should have a guiding principle that the United States condemns the stereotyping and racism against immigrants as a whole and supports their access to transportation, low-income healthcare, housing and jobs, as we do all other Americans.

These are but a few of the problems we feel must be addressed before knee-jerk legislation is allowed to pass, again giving the nation reason to believe that our leadership in both houses is too willing to give back the store in an effort to be seen as having "accomplished something."





## Washington D.C.

### WHEN WILL WE REPECT HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN?

We urge all Gray Panthers and their allies to continue to contact Congress and the President as we have about the ratification of the CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Our UN Gray Panthers NGO office has been quite proactive in this issue. The CEDAW was adopted by the UN way back in 1978, defining what discrimination against women actually means. Yet the US has not ratified it yet!! Countries ratifying or acceding to this Convention would commit to a National report each 4 years on measures they have taken to comply with the obligation.

The Convention is vital as the ONLY HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY affirming reproductive rights and targeting cultural and traditional biases that segregate and discriminate against women and girls. We think we know why the current Administration is delaying and stalling on this issue!

Let's let our voices be heard. Join me in this effort. You also can write Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Rayburn Bldg., Washington, DC 20515) and the President, as well as our California Senators to express your views on this issue and calling for the ratification of CEDAW.

### Senate Blocks Drug Imports

In yet another triumph for the pharmaceutical industry, the Senate has killed a drive to allow consumers to buy prescription drugs from abroad at a significant savings over domestic prices. In a 49-40 vote, the Senate required the administration to certify the safety and effectiveness of imported drugs before they can be imported, a requirement that officials have said they cannot meet. This vote neutralized an amendment, later passed on a voice vote, that would have legalized the importation of prescription drugs manufactured in Canada, Australia, Europe, Japan and New Zealand.

Sen. David Vitter, a Louisiana Republican, stated "Well, once again the big drug companies have proved that they are the most powerful and best financed lobby in Washington." Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-VT, called the certification amendment, introduced by Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., a "poison pill" for the drug-imports legislation. Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., acknowledged it destroyed his attempt to allow the purchase of drugs abroad. "This is a setback for us. But the

drug industry is one of the strongest industries in this town," Dorgan said.

The maneuvering occurred on broader legislation to renew the FDA's ability to collect fees from the drug industry to defray the cost of reviewing new drugs. Lawmakers have seized on the bill to overhaul the agency, including its handling of drug-safety issues highlighted in the wake of the withdrawal of the painkiller Vioxx. Many advocates are concerned that having the drug industry involved in FDA oversight in any way is a bad idea. And advocates of drug importation have argued for years that an existing ban is more a protection for the drug industry than a safety issue.

Overseas, drugs can cost two-thirds less than they do in the United States, where prices for brand-name drugs are among the highest in the world. In many industrialized countries, prices are lower because they are either controlled or partially controlled by government regulation.

The pharmaceutical industry vehemently opposes allowing drug imports, arguing that they could leave the nation vulnerable to dangerous counterfeits.

Similar drug-import legislation is pending in the House.



### IMMIGRATION POLICIES: BARRIERS TO WILDLIFE

After reading our response to the immigration debate, we call attention to a serious issue overlooked in plans for an expanded border fence, intended to deter migration. I would lay you ten to one that you yourself haven't considered it?!? While Congress dreams of 700 miles of 15-foot high double-layered steel wall, a group of creatures other than human would be disastrously affected without access to prey and to their mates on the "other side", animals already in the US would be really without hope of survival. In Arizona alone ten specially protected areas deemed critical to wildlife would be "dammed off". Chertoff, Homeland Security Secretary, has exempted the fence from ALL environmental laws.

There are other options, such as that in Organ Pipe Cactus Natl. Monument. There, Park managers installed a 23-mile vehicle barrier made of steel posts spaced feet apart and connected by a waist-high horizontal bar. Cheaper than the double wall, this barrier has slashed vehicle crossing in the area and still allows wildlife access.

Of course, the answer is clear to advocates: build sustainable economies in poor areas of Mexico!



## From the State Capitol

Hundreds of bills passed this past month on to the other side of the legislature, many that will personally impact Gray Panthers members and seniors. These bills cover a range of issues including the high profile **AB 374 (Berg/Levine)**, "**California Compassionate Choices Act**". That bill was pulled by as authors felt they did not have the votes at the end of the day. Another bill we supported, **AB 853 (Dave Jones)**, the **HOME CARE SERVICES ACT OF 2007**, which would have furthered the Olmstead by regulating home care services for seniors, persons with serious medical and health issues, and persons with disabilities., also got stuck in committee and we'll see no further action on this bill until next year.

The Gray Panthers-sponsored prescription drug label standardization bill, **Corbett's SB 472**, neatly passed out of the Senate with little opposition and now goes to Assembly committees. It has been crafted so that it leaves the Board of Pharmacy responsible for the task and that Board seems to approve the role it has been assigned. There will be public hearings to help craft new regulations for the labels and plenty of time for implementation by the pharmacists. So far so good.

**The State Budget Process** is moving to Conference Committee, where there are 6 members, three from each house, including John Laird, Denise Ducheny, Mark Leno and Mike Machado, as well as Roger Niello and Dennis Hollingsworth, two strong Republican conservatives. The conference committee hearings are open to the public, though no public testimony is taken. IHSS funding of the State's contribution toward IHSS worker wages and benefits is likely off the table. But the Governor's proposal re suspension of SSI cola may face a tough battle since both houses already approved in January to fully fund the cost of living increases. Now both houses chose to ignore the Governor's new request to change that. Both houses would have to approve the Governor's new proposal for a suspension to take place - which at this point is not likely. However, until a budget is passed and signed by the Governor, anything can happen, especially with nearly \$1 billion worth of transportation funding still to be argued over. Are you holding your breath?

We continue to support SB 840 and applaud the Nurses and Senator Kuehl for the giant efforts around Michael Moore's "Sicko" film to forward that cause. Within days the National Gray Panthers interactive website will be on line and you will be able to do direct advocacy with Single Payer Health Care being the headline issue!!

## HEALTHCARE COMMENT BY YOUR CHAIR

While Panthers still tend to focus on issues that affect the elderly, we should remember what our Maggie Kuhn said.

Health affects everybody —the unborn and the dying. Change policies on health and you automatically change attitudes towards aging.

The plight of the elderly is symptomatic of injustice in society as a whole. The Panthers believe that when these injustices have been addressed a society will have been created in which ageism disappears automatically. Maggie noted that the central issue was preventing World War III. "We've got a bloated military budget. The Reagan Administration are not cutting expenditures — they are transferring it from things that are human and compassionate to things that are crass and arrogant. Reagan is a mediocre thinker — a class B actor at best. And Haig is a paranoid. They don't have the transcendence in their spirit to look for peace." Sound like today?

But Maggie believed the old have a special advantage in the fight "Nobody can tell us to shut up," she said. "We can be as radical as we want...And there is room for anger. But you must channel your rage. My goal — until the rigor mortis sets in — is to do one outrageous thing every week. Like putting sequins around my age spots."



*"It's our revised retiree medical plan. A selection of tasteful cards."*

## MICHAEL MOORE'S "SICKO" COMES TO SACRAMENTO



Michael Moore's latest motion picture, "Sicko," doesn't hold back in the least in its criticism of America's Health Care system. As would be expected, the movie has its detractors from the insurance industry. The movie ranks the U.S. health care system just about at the bottom compared to such other industrial nations as Canada, Britain and France.

Further, the film shows examples of workers comp fraud by employers and workers compensation insurers. One example shown was roofing companies who list 49 secretaries and one roofer so they can pay lower WC insurance rates. Workers are denied care over and over for years, even in the face of court orders explicitly ordering care. As a result, workers have untreated pain, are denied required surgery, end up homeless, and sometimes commit suicide. California's SB890 further harmed injured workers. Linda Roberts, Gray Panthers Sacramento, reports that workers like herself, with settlement agreements, suddenly found their agreements illegally overturned. Yet, she states, employers here pay more Workers comp coverage than other states, offering workers less benefits. It is hoped that the movie sparks interest in the plight of injured workers and results in new changes to rectify these egregious situations.

Finally, as our resident news reporter, John Bernier, points out: "It's not likely that many citizens of Canada, Britain, and other industrialized nations are forced to 'outsource' their care overseas like more and more middle-class Americans, without health insurance, who have no alternative but to travel to such countries as Thailand, India and Singapore, to undergo a variety of surgical procedures saving as much as 2/3 of the cost in the US."

Wonder why we support Kuehl's single-payer health care?

Note: to see videos of Michael Moore's testimony etc., go Senator Kuehl's site at [www.sen.ca.gov/kuehl](http://www.sen.ca.gov/kuehl).

## Let's Pay Attention to Politicians' Stances on Healthcare!

Many of us are watching closely to see how candidates speak about healthcare in the debates, as well as in other speeches.

Several candidates have disavowed any universal healthcare plan, stating that such plans are "Socialized Medicine." To those of us who study healthcare this is either a gross misunderstanding of the issue or a calculated distortion. Socialized medicine is a system in which the government owns and controls the providers of healthcare, including doctors, hospitals etc.

In February John Edwards came out with a plan to cover *all* the uninsured.

Barack Obama has since delivered a comprehensive health care plan without proposing an injection of federal funds to help lower-income families pay for insurance, involving some kind of tax increase. Mr. Obama is now on record calling for a partial rollback of the Bush tax cuts. Also, insurance companies won't be allowed to deny people coverage or charge them higher premiums based on their medical history.

The Obama plan also contains the same feature that makes the Edwards plan superior to the Governor's California proposal: it lets people choose between private plans or buying into a Medicare-type plan offered by the government.

Since Medicare has much lower overhead costs than private insurers, this competition would force the insurance industry to cut costs making our health-care system more efficient. But if private insurers did not cut costs enough, the system would evolve into Medicare for all.

Gray Panthers vehemently opposes any plan that enriches the pharmaceutical and insurance industries on the backs of the poor, the elderly, and the disabled.

We will watch for and report on the positions of other candidates of other parties on this issue of such importance to all of us.



## INITIATIVE TO REFORM TERM LIMITS LAW

A large coalition, including Gray Panthers, supports the bipartisan effort to revise the California term limits law. An initiative has been proposed to reduce legislative terms from 14 to 12 years, allowing legislators to gain more expertise in their body of the legislature. Currently State Senators are limited to eight years and Assemblypersons to six, but the proposed law would allow serving up to 12 years in a single branch, or 12 years spread over both houses.

Legislators need to gain invaluable experience in a branch in order to reduce the influence of lobbyists and other interests not accountable to the voter. If we eventually vote for this term limit reform initiative, the sense is that it would provide for greater stability and expertise in the legislature, something that seems very much lacking currently. "Stability and expertise" are needed today more than ever in history.

The Public Policy Institute of California, after extensive research, has reported: "One of the most important findings is that there is a pressing need to hold the executive branch accountable, particularly in the budget process, to ensure that taxpayer money isn't being wasted. Amending term limits to give legislators more time and incentives to develop expertise will be an important step toward making state agencies, and the executive branch as a whole more accountable." Follow the discussions and watch for a ballot initiative forthcoming.

## GERONTOLOGY CLASSES AVAILABLE ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS

American River College is a national "Program of Excellence" when it comes to Gerontology. So you should take advantage of their inexpensive and interesting Saturday Classes, as well as those on-line. The wide variety is "viewable" at [www.arc.losrios.edu](http://www.arc.losrios.edu); then go to "Gerontology" under the **Quick Links**. In September they will be offering everything from "Parkinson's Disease and other Movement Disorders", to "Special Need Seniors: Mentally Ill & Homeless." Joan Lee has served on their Gerontology Advisory Board for many years and is a graduate of that program many years ago. Gray Panther member, Dr. Barbara Gillogly is the Director of the Gerontology Center, so we feel right at home there.

Or on campus you can sign up for "Men as Caregivers"

or "Health of Older Women". Between on-line and on-campus there are about 50 special classes in this department! And, hey, they can keep your brain stimulated better than TV or crosswords!

## Help Us Promote Our Upgraded Presentation



The Medicare Part D PowerPoint presentation has morphed significantly this year. While it still contains information on the problems with Medicare Part D; we now stress some of the larger

issues:

- Privatization is still a major threat. There are many in Washington who are still gunning for the destruction of Medicare as we love it.
- There are 41 million uninsured Americans, as well as many more whose insurance is totally inadequate. There are 7 million uninsured in California alone.
- While the US has the greatest technical medical knowledge in the world, much of it is available only to the wealthy and to those with the best insurance. By every measure, our system provides less care than that of almost every other developed nation.
- The only way to eliminate wasteful administrative costs, up to 30% of the total cost of insurance, is to have a true single-payer plan. We know that the insurance companies will put their enormous wealth behind assaults on any attempt to implement such a plan, but we are committed to the process of educating our seniors and others.

The new and improved presentation had its maiden voyage last week at a meeting of the UAW Union's retirement group, where it was greeted warmly. I am now undertaking a campaign to get myself invited to other venues; if you know of a place where you think I might be welcome to speak, please let me know! (921-5008 or [margiemetz@hotmail.com](mailto:margiemetz@hotmail.com)).

To view the presentation, go to <http://www.gpcal.org/indexproj.htm>

—Margie Metzler

## FOLSOM APT COMPLEX APPROVED

In a much needed move, the Folsom City Council approved a 19-unit apartment complex for people with mental illness. The council also approved \$200,000 requested from the City's housing trust fund to help build the complex.

There was some opposition from local residents at several of the public meetings, who argued that the historic district already had more than its fair share of low income-housing. Supporters held that Folsom needed more housing for people diagnosed with major depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

For further information call the Folsom Planning Department at 916-355-7222. Further information about the project: is at [www.tlcssac.org](http://www.tlcssac.org)

—Report from Jean Mellberg

### OFFICERS AND STEERING COMMITTEE

**Chairperson:** Joan Lee 916-332-5980

**Secretary (Interim):** Pat Naylor

**Treasurer:** Lola Young

**Program Coordinator, Medicare Part D grant,**  
Margie Metzler

**Environment:** Dr. Karl Stoffers

**Historian:** Marge Cumming

**Hospitality:** Joyce Westergaard

**Housing Issues:** Linda Roberts and Karen Raasch

**Labor/Wage Issues:** Nell Ranta

**Newsletter Asst. Editors:** John Bernier and Betty Cooper  
Youngren

**SS/Medicare Advisor:** Peter D'Anna

**Transportation:** Doris Sanford, Dale Kooyman

**Members at Large:** Edie Poole, Pat Naylor, Jean Mellberg,  
Betty Merle, Judy Bietz

**Computer Assistant:** Margie Metzler

**Webmaster:** Margie Metzler

*Visit our website for Sacramento and California GP issues  
as well as Medicare Part D updates: [www.gpcal.org](http://www.gpcal.org).*



**Gray Panthers Annual Dues are \$30 for individuals and \$35 for families.**

This *includes* newsletters, membership in Gray Panthers National, and Gray Panthers California. If new members choose to join in coming months, they may pay the full amount or choose from the following monthly pro-rated schedule for 2007-2008. Be aware that you will be billed again in September.

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 will not deter belonging to our organization!** Call Joan Lee for further information: 916-332-5980

**Welcome to Greta Cannon, Maggie Dee and Ruth Greenblatt, New Members of Gray Panthers Sacramento!**

## **Matsui votes to reject an Iraq war without end**

Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) issued the following statement after voting to reject the President's war funding as part of debate on H.R. 2206, which provides emergency war funding for the fiscal year 2007:

"Sadly, the President has rejected every opportunity this Congress has presented to bring the war to a close and bring the troops home responsibly. Time and again, my Democratic colleagues and I have demanded a change of direction from the President. Time and again, he rejects the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the American people that we must support our troops and institute a timetable for redeployment from Iraq. I have opposed this war from the beginning. I support a responsible timetable for redeployment from Iraq, and have been proud to vote that way several times under Democratic leadership. Regrettably, the President's intransigence has left members little choice. I could not in good conscience

"Nonetheless, our commitment to our men and women in uniform remains strong. I was pleased to vote with a bipartisan bloc of members to increase veterans' health care funding by several billion dollars. That necessary funding will go to good use right away to assist our many veterans as they seek care after dedicated service to their nation.

"Finally, I commend the Democratic leadership for moving the process forward so that our men and women will continue to have everything they require in the field. I look forward to working with the Democratic leadership and willing colleagues on both sides of the aisle to continue the pressure on the President.

"The process to change U.S. policy in Iraq continues."

**Notice - there will be no newsletter in August, just a reminder flyer of the September program. Also, remember that there is no General Meeting in August - each year we give folks a holiday! Well deserved, by the way**

**GRAY PANTHERS of SACRAMENTO**  
**P.O. Box 19438**  
**Sacramento, CA 95819**

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**Remember: Potluck at July meeting, and no August meeting**