



Gray Panthers Sacramento

On the Prowl

Volume 29 Number 10

October 2007

P. O. BOX 19438, SACRAMENTO, CA 95819

916-332-5980

GENERAL MEETING

28th and J Streets Hart Senior Center
Tuesday, October 9 1:00 pm — 3:00 pm

SCAMS and FRAUD TARGETING SENIORS

How far have we gotten in preventing them?
What can we do as individuals?

Presenters:

Marjorie Murray, CARA and SAIF information manager
Deborah Braver, Education and Outreach Coordinator, CA Dept of Corporations

Educational materials will be available.
Bring your friends to help spread the information.

Coffee and refreshments served.
Information 916-332-5980



IN OUR COMMUNITY

SACOG "Unmet Transit Needs" Hearings:

Oct 1 @ 6 pm: Sacramento Regional Transit District RT Board Room, 1400 29th Street, Sacramento, CA

Oct 16 @6 pm: Citrus Heights Council Chambers, 6237 Fountain Square Drive, Citrus Heights, CA

Info about both meetings: Barbara Vaughan-Bechtold (916) 340-6275 or transit_needs@sacog.org

Sunday, October 20 Funeral Consumers Alliance of Northern California 2007 Annual Meeting. St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 2391 St. Mark's Way 2-4 pm. Atty. Mark Hyjek, Certified Elder Law Attorney, will speak about "Planning and Paperwork for Incapacity as well as Death."

• **Wednesday, October 24** at 6 pm. UN Association Annual Dinner at Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento, 2425 Sierra Blvd. Ethnic Fashion Show, Speaker Carol Anne Medlin, Institute for Global Health.

Good Websites for Activists:

- <http://www.poodwaddle.com/worldclock.swf>
(See what happens when you press the 'now' button.)
- www.independent.co.uk: British newspaper, honest reporting

October is National Depression Month. Take heart all ye liberals! We care.

If you haven't paid your dues, please do so now! Remember we pay National Gray Panthers for your membership in September. If you have special financial needs, call Joan Lee, 332-5980.



Washington D.C

PETRAEUS REPORTS TO CONGRESS

Commander of United States military forces in Iraq, General David Petraeus, testified before a joint session of House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs and Armed Services committees.

To quote Congressman Pete Stark in response to that testimony: "Up is not down, the earth is not flat, and the 'surge' is not working. General Petraeus sounded like a broken record for the Bush Administration. Rather than speak factually about the lack of progress and the rising death toll in Iraq, Petraeus chose to carry water for the President who appointed him."

Iraq failed to meet 15 of the 18 political and security benchmarks. Petraeus and Bush remain stubbornly committed to a war the American public opposes. Gray Panthers must keep up the pressure to oppose additional funding for the war and to work with Congress to bring our brave men and women home.

BUDGET TIME: SENIORS BEWARE

By John Bernier

The Administration appears to be engaged in an effort to offset the severe criticism it has undergone for its lack of planning for its ill-fated Iraq War venture by undertaking a project, in contrast to Iraq, which includes precise and detailed planning.

The project is to draft the 2008 Federal Budget with massive cuts in benefits for America's senior citizens, as well as those who didn't qualify for a tax cut for the nation's wealthiest citizens.

Proposed, over a ten year period, is balancing the budget with \$252 billion cuts in Medicare spending, and \$637 billion to be set aside for private Social Security accounts, a policy which already has been rejected by most Americans.

Of course, it is no secret that the budget is so far out of balance because of the president's fiscal policies. Among his most fiscally irresponsible policies are the Iraq War and that tax cut for the wealthiest Americans.

We are awaiting a real onslaught on Social Security and Medicare by bleeding these programs dry through the budgetary process. Unless there is a turn-around in such policies, which rightfully could be described as heartless, the best advice that could be given to the Baby Boomer Generation is: Don't grow old unless these disastrous policies are discarded for good. As the cards are laid out on the table in the coming months we will ask for your advocacy!! Get set for the push!

SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS MAY BE IN ITS FINAL DAYS

The general rule is that most schools take great pride in the accomplishments of their graduates. However, the School of the Americas, (SOA), but now known as the School of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, (WHINSEC) is an exception to that rule, as it has no reason to be proud of its graduates. The position the school takes about its former students is, "the less said, the better."

The school, a U.S. Army facility, was located in Panama when it was founded in 1946, and moved to Fort Benning, GA in 1984. It has trained more than 60,000 military and police officers from Latin America.

The stated objective of the SOA was to prevent the spread of Communism in Central and South America. Just how successful it was in attaining this goal is debatable, but there is no question that among the schools' alumni are some of Latin America's most notorious dictators, and some of its classroom "education" leads to most reprehensible tactics.

Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy (D-MA) has vowed to shut down this facility, declaring, "SOA graduates include dictators and soldiers implicated in gross human rights violations in Latin America. Continued operation of this facility suggests that the US has blessed such excesses. The SOA costs the U.S. millions of dollars a year and identifies us with tyranny and oppression." Kennedy added that the SOA is a relic of the Cold War. HR 1707 calls for closing down the SOA, and is currently in the House Military Affairs Committee.

We need to let our members of the House know our long-standing feelings about this school. With the national disgust over torture and abusive tactics that were

used in Iraq prisons as well, perhaps, as at Guantánamo Bay, more than ever Americans are calling for an end to anything that smacks of abuse and human rights violations.

You can make a difference with a strong letter.

— *John Bernier*



ENVIRONMENT

BIG CONGRESSIONAL WIN FOR CLEAN RESOURCES

In what is seen as a jumpstart of the national market for clean resources, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and 34 bi-partisan California legislators led the way for the House to pass H.R. 3221. The Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) requiring a 15% increase by 2020 is truly remarkable, the first time such a renewable electricity standard has passed the House.

The Senate should give serious consideration to meeting the twenty percent goal. You can make a difference by letting our Senators know your feelings and even taking the step to let your families and friends in other states know about this. Maybe even write a sample letter for them to copy! What a truly revolutionary action!

Gray Panthers California has just signed on to an Environment California letter calling for strong support of legislation sponsored by California Senator Henry Waxman that is the strongest global warming prevention plan being considered by Congress. It would require real, science based reductions in global warming pollution with no loop holes. We have joined with over 600 groups in calling for this action.



Huge and Historic Global Warming Victory

A federal judge in Vermont recently ruled against the U.S. auto industry's attempt to block California and 14 other states from setting tough new limits on global warming pollution from automobiles. The Environmental Defense Council, Conservation Law Foundation, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group fought a winning cause.

In the ruling, Federal Judge William K. Sessions found that the auto industry had failed to prove that it could not meet the tailpipe standards, that the new standards would endanger drivers or that Congress had forbidden states from setting their own pollution limits.

This ruling comes less than six months after a historic Supreme Court decision in early April that the EPA has an obligation to regulate carbon dioxide under the Clean Air Act.

Still needed is for the EPA to grant California its waiver request under the Clean Air Act to regulate global warming pollution from cars.

However this is a clear victory and sets a promising stage for the global warming fights ahead.





STATE CAPITOL

GRAY PANTHERS ARE STEADFAST IN THEIR SUPPORT OF Senator Kuehl's SB 840. Thus, this floor statement to the Senate by Senator Kuehl on Assembly Bill

8 will be of major interest to you all:

"Mr. President and Colleagues: As you know, I have been working to secure real healthcare reform in California for a number of years now. Along with my continuing authorship of SB 840, the single payer universal health care bill, I've also actively participated with other authors trying to craft incremental attempts to reform the health insurance market.

"This year, as the chair of the Senate Health Committee, I've seen my mission as making certain that everything got appropriately vetted and discussed, while at the same time, continuing to build support for 840. Activists, supporters, organizations, and the panoply of more than 700 organizations, those that the press refers to as the "grassroots", have done a magnificent job in building support for single payer.

"This year, as I watched leadership and the administration try to craft a plan different from SB 840, an alternative health reform plan that might expand coverage this year, while *preserving the role of insurance companies*, the experience taught me why health reform has actually been so difficult to do over the past few years, and why every proposed solution just seems to bring out new and often even bigger problems.

"The attempts fail because, until we squarely face the fact that premiums imposed by the insurance companies are rising 3-4 times faster than wages every year, all the reforms that keep those insurance companies firmly in place are doomed to failure. "The same is true of AB 8, which we are considering today.

"As currently drafted, it doesn't pencil out in terms of money, it doesn't pencil out in terms of who's paying what, and, frankly, it definitely doesn't pencil out for consumers.

"Our failing health care system has often been compared to the Titanic, and I've said in the past that attempts at reform are nothing but attempts to rearrange the deck chairs. AB 8, for a change, is actually trying to turn the boat. But some of you may know that, in fact, had the Titanic faced the iceberg head on, it would have survived, at least long enough to save most of its passengers. Turning the ship only partially was actually its downfall. It's clear to me that that is also the problem with AB 8. (Cont'd ▶)

"Our health insurance company driven system has responded to runaway health care spending by dismantling the entire system. The only questions they ask are "How many people can we turn away; how many of our clients can we kick out, how many people can we under- insure?" Rather than working to contain spending in a patient centered manner, they've created huge profits for themselves by raising premiums, cutting benefits, and limiting access in countless ways.

"As currently drafted, it doesn't pencil out in terms of money, it doesn't pencil out in terms of who's paying what, and, frankly, it definitely doesn't pencil out for consumers.

"So the governor was quite correct to say "Let's have a year of health reform." Unfortunately, however, it became more of a Year of Magical Thinking, with apologies to Joan Didion for stealing her title. All the Governor has really done is to say, "I am sure we can solve this in nine months. Let's hurry up and do it".

"To the credit of the authors of AB 8, they have worked and worked to try to do a good bill *within the context of keeping the insurance companies in place.*

"They have said we will cap what employers have to pay and we will cap what employees have to pay. *What remains uncapped are the premiums that the companies can charge* for all this reform.

"We have been told there is no individual mandate in this bill, but that is incorrect. If an employer pays into the pool, as their choice of how to spend their 7.5% of payroll contribution, then their employees must buy insurance from the pool. *Only if the healthcare costs of those same employees would exceed 5% of their gross income can these employees be let out of the requirement to buy it*, and what happens then? They are simply either uninsured or they can "choose" to pay the inflated premiums that might be heaped on them. For those employees whose employer puts 7.5% of payroll into insurance for his or her own employees, those employees are then required to "take up" the employer's insurance offer.

"And again, if "accepting" the employer's insurance plan will cost them more than 5% of their wages, they don't have to take up the offer which means they're not going to be insured either if they can't afford the higher premiums.

"The bill has come a long way, even since it went through the health committee, and I can understand why many of the unions are now in support of the bill because of the affordability provisions added to the bill.

"But there are still also major problems with the coverage provisions. Your employer might offer you a plan that costs you a little bit less than 5 % of your gross income for the year, and you would have to buy it, but it might not cover what you need. It might be a minimal plan, a catastrophic plan. It

might not have the drugs that you need for the condition you have - for cancer, for AIDS, etc. As we've seen in the last few months, it might not even cover pregnancy.

"AB 8 also has an entirely separate insurance pool for an undefined group of people with "serious" conditions. We don't know if that's chronic conditions, we don't know who will be in that pool. And frankly there's no protection for them in terms of what they might have to pay. So *I see a number of real flaws in this much improved bill.*

"I continue to believe that the movement that's been building for single payer, a movement that has seen support for a single payer universal healthcare system more than double over the last six months alone, will continue to build in '08 in '09 in 2010. Then, with a new governor, perhaps there might finally be a chance to get a signature on the bill that is actually the best solution for businesses, for employees, and for all the people in California. Because if you take the insurance companies out of the system, ***and they are the only entity that adds no value at all to the provision of healthcare,*** the overall costs for healthcare in California drop \$19 billion in the first year alone, simply because we're finally not paying their inflated overhead and profit.

So I am a no vote on this bill.

"I praise those who have been working on this bill for trying. But I encourage those who believe this bill is deeply flawed to join me in voting no. I know that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have problems different from my own and will not vote for it. For those who will vote for it on my side, I understand you are voting your hopes. Many of you also have told me you know that 840 is the only real solution.

"So I'm also asking you to stay with me on SB 840; it's not going to the Governor for a veto. Next year we'll continue to develop it, hold it up as the right standard for California, and work with everyone we can, until the day when we understand that facing the iceberg head on is the only way we are going to save everyone on the ship."



SPECIAL EDITORIAL FROM JOAN LEE, YOUR LEGISLATIVE LIAISON

As the sessions wind down at the Legislature with AB 8 assured of a veto and the Governor calling a special session on healthcare (and water), we must register our disappointment that the only legislator to stick to her guns about the crisis was Senator Sheila Kuehl. While other legislators and officials publicly and privately have supported the single-payer concept of universal health care, really no one else has stepped up and affirmed their belief against the forces of political power. For the Senator's stance, we are truly grateful.

Now as we enter into this special session, sad to say Gray Panthers, Health Care for All, the California Alliance of Retired Americans and the California Nurses Assn. will perhaps find themselves almost alone out there in demanding we stick to the principles of Kuehl's proposal.

Be it SB 840 or some other numbered bill in January, we call on legislators not to be pressured into supporting the governor's faulty and foggy proposal. His vision calls on citizens to ***pay whatever is the will of the insurance companies.*** Calling a thing Universal does not automatically make it a good thing. Nor do we want our elected officials to support AB 8, when it simply says insurance companies have to cover everyone. There must be honest and meaningful restraints on premiums, co-pays and deductibles. Otherwise it is neither affordable nor truly accessible, and therefore not Universal. ***We cannot allow Californians to be prisoners of the healthcare insurance industry.***

The legislature put over to next year meaningful discussion of requiring those insurers to seek approval of rate increases. Why then rush this fall to put in force into place a plan requiring so many more beneficiaries be dumped into the insurers' pockets? Isn't that what happened with Medicare Part D which, while helping a few, has done irreparable harm to so many?

We call on our legislators to think about the will of their constituents who are overwhelmingly in support of a single-payer plan, and who have seen their healthcare premiums rise beyond affordable, an average of seventy-eight percent higher while they must live on incomes that have only risen 2% over inflation. **Reject both AB 8 and the Governor's pipe-dream while you can.**

We ask that you let the legislature know how we feel, having voted at our Gray Panthers State meeting to support the Kuehl concept. Call on them to show their personal strength and not be forced into something we will have a hard time living with, let alone correcting. Contact them now while they are in their districts. **Please, do it today!**



CITY OF SACRAMENTO

SACRAMENTO ASSN. SUES STATE TO STOP MONEY SHIFT



The California Transit Association filed a lawsuit in Sacramento Superior Court after the state budget was passed, seeking an injunction to stop more than \$1 billion from being shifted away from bus and light-rail operations so the state can pay for debt as well as home-to-school transportation and other programs. The group hopes their action will prevent shifting of transit funds to solve future budget deficits "We absolutely recognize the huge complexity of any sitting governor to balance California's gigantic budget, but we think the law, as expressed by California voters, is clear: Transit should be funded," said public transit lobbyist Josh Shaw, who is the suit's named petitioner.

There are certainly big changes ahead for Sacramento transit causes in any case. We are unsure what the resignation of RT Director Beverly Scott will mean, but at the very least it will mean a period of transition and education of a new person.

And in further developments, Gray Panthers Transportation committee member Richard Seyman advises us that he is looking for an interested person to join him in representing us on the group studying a "Strategic Highway Safety Plan Implementation Plan". This particular committee is focusing on safety and mobility for older roadway users. We need more representation of seniors there, says Richard, who serves on our Transportation committee. Seyman thinks that including the non-experts is necessary to get some of the experts to look at things "outside of their particular boxes" (and possibly their vested interests). Contact Joan Lee if you are interested, 916-332-5980.



GREAT STRIDES TOWARD REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

Gray Panthers Sacramento proudly testified in support of two important city ordinances on public safety forwarded by Councilman Kevin McCarty. They both were passed **unanimously** by the Sacramento City Council.

The first ordinance now requires gun owners to report all lost and stolen guns to the Sacramento Police in order to promote gun owner responsibility and reduce gun trafficking to criminals and gang members.

The second city ordinance requires ammunition vendors to maintain records of ammunition sales in order to reduce illegal ammunition purchases within the City of Sacramento.

While naysayers from the NRA say it will do nothing to stem the tide of random and often gang related violence in our city, we felt we could not stand by without setting in place some measure to lead to a reduction in illegal trafficking and sales in the city. Hopefully, other cities and counties will step up to this challenge - perhaps the legislature will even consider this fight with the NRA for the sake of all Californians.

ADDITIONALLY, we should ask our Congresspersons to support **H.R.2640**, which would strengthen the National Instant Criminal Background Check law by improving automation and transmittal of criminal and mental health histories to a national data base. Senator Barbara Boxer is fighting for this in the Senate.



Warning Signs of Stroke for your refrigerator

- Sudden numbness or weakness one side of face, arm or leg
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble with balance, coordination, walking, dizziness
- Sudden severe headache without known cause



NEWS FROM CONGRESS- WOMAN DORIS MATSUI

Let's locally help Congresswoman Matsui, who has co-sponsored **HR 353** to prohibit the further expenditure of money for the "troop surge", **HR 787** to require all combat brigades out of Iraq by March 31, 2008, **HR 2929** to prohibit permanent bases in Iraq, and **HR 3071** to begin the immediate redeployment of troops, to be completed within a year.



We will have more Gray Panthers postcards at all events to send your own message to Congress.

2007/2008 Officers and Steering Committee of Sacramento Gray Panthers

- Convener:** Joan Lee 916-332-5980
- Secretary:** Pat Naylor
- Treasurer:** Lola Young
- Staff Project Coordinator, Medicare Part D/Healthcare grant,** Margie Metzler
- Environmental:** Dr. Karl Stoffers
- Disabled Issues:** Terry Terry
- Historian:** OPEN POSITION
- Hospitality:**
- 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:** Dale Kooyman, Richard Seyman
- Members at Large:** Edie Poole, Pat Naylor, Jean Mellberg, Betty Merle, Judy Bietz
- Computer Assistant:** Margie Metzler
- Webmaster Staff:** Margie Metzler

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

Visit our website for Sacramento and California GP issues as well as Medicare Part D updates:
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!

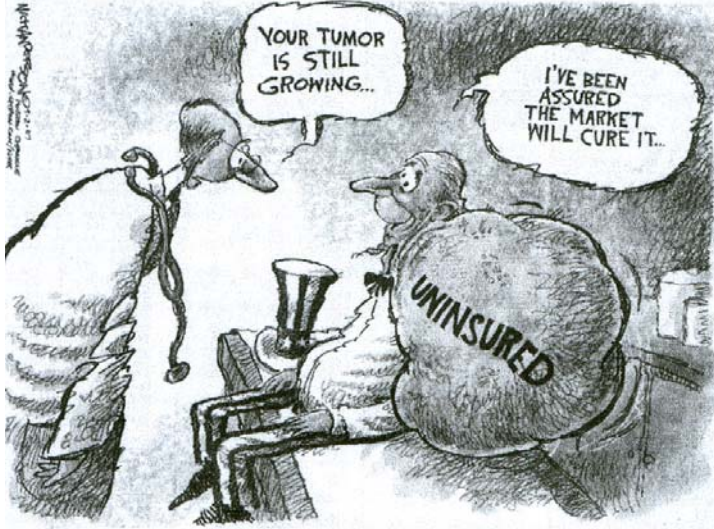
Make check to Gray Panthers of Sacramento. Send to PO Box 19438, Sacramento, CA 95819.

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, New Members of Gray Panthers Sacramento!

Important news about AB8/Governor's Proposal and our favorite, SB 840, on pages 4 and 5....

We will have more Gray Panthers postcards at all events to send your own message to Congress.



Nick Anderson • Houston Chronicle



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