



From Joan B. Lee

This has certainly been a strange year. Many bills that Gray Panthers supported were too difficult to get through and became two-year bills

— meaning that the author put them in the closet until next year rather than have them voted down. That seems to soon include SB 840. Some of our other favorites were just plain voted down: AB 1554 (Jones) a forward looking idea, which would have required approval for rate increases over 5% by health insurers, met defeat during the same hearing that saw the passage of AB 8 (Nunez), the much-touted health care bill. The Jones bill, in our opinion, took on the insurance industry at the wrong time when the cards were being dealt (is that insurance company \$?) with the Nunez bill (and the Governor's health care proposal). Both those concepts leave the industry pretty much to their own devices - and you at their mercy!

But it was a dramatic hearing, in my opinion, when Nunez brought his bill, AB 8, before the Senate Health Committee, a committee led by Single-Payer champion Senator Kuehl. The Governor's goal would have everyone buying their own policy even if they couldn't afford it, with some subsidies for low income persons. The Nunez bill, which he offered with great fanfare, protects low income persons by a fee on employers and has no cost containment on policies offered by everyone else.

Only one organization gave the bill unconditional support — the audience then divided pretty much in half in terms of those who rose to support IF amended, and those who wanted to oppose it UNLESS amended. The California Nurses Association, represented stoutly by Donna Gerber, spoke out against the bill's passage. When Kuehl asked for hands of those who were still undecided, Gray Panthers and Calif. Alliance for Retired Americans were just about the only ones I could see to raise their hands.

It is difficult to imagine that this bill will be passed, but we must stand ready to deluge the governor with letters and calls if it reaches his desk as is. There are simply not enough protections against skyrocketing out-of-pocket costs and protections for all except for those with low-incomes. For a person making modest income, health policies may well still mean the difference between college educations for kids and a car to get to work.

We support SB 840 and Senator Kuehl and will defend whatever strategy she ultimately decides to bring Single-payer to California. It is obvious that we have a great deal of work to do to educate folks on just what it really would mean and cost.

The message seems to be that money from corporations can still buy bills. The remedy, the so-called Clean Money bill (Hancock's AB 583, that would regulate corporate spending on elections and give the little guy a better chance, was one of those put over to next year. As was Jones Earned Income credit bill, AB 21, some of the mobile home regulations like DeSaulnier AB 111, and, of all things, Steinberg's hate crimes against the homeless bill, SB 122. We in Sacramento are particularly unhappy that we are seeing an increase in hate crimes even as this bill stalled.

The good news is, as this goes to press, that Gray Panthers' sponsored bill, SB 472, the bill to establish a standardized drug label has sailed through the legislature right up to Assembly Appropriations without a problem. Word is that, with the blessing of the Board of Pharmacy, it will eventually wend its way to the Governor and we will then ask you all to write him in support. Watch for e-mail alerts on this and other legislative issues.

So this has been a mixed bag session, with little to shout about and much to be concerned over. I hope you will keep your eyes on the events and help when asked.

Joan Lee, your Legislative Liaison
Gray Panthers California

TELL US YOUR STORIES

A very important bill, SB 633, Alquist, has been made a two-year bill. It would tell hospitals to post their discharge planning policy and provide specified persons, seniors and disabled persons, with information about long term care community-based options after they leave the hospital.

We want to know, if any of you were hospitalized recently, what your experience was with this process. Were you told about what services you would need when you got home - that a homecare worker would need to help you - did you even understand that they had a responsibility to help out this way??

Please e-mail me your story for the work that needs to be done over the next year to forward this necessary process thru SB 633.

Thanks. Joan B. Lee
joanblee@sbcglobal.net

SACRAMENTO BREAST/CERVICAL CANCER PROGRAM

If you have female family members who may not have health insurance or who can't afford co-payments and deductibles, who also are low income, please alert them to this important program They can get free breast exams and mammograms as well as pelvic and Pap tests. They can call the CANCER DETECTION PROGRAM at 449-5300 or to www.dhs.ca.gov/cancerdetection for information. You owe this to them!



The \$3 Invention That Could Save Millions of Lives

Most of us take clean drinking water for granted Many of us even have the choice of drinking bottled water or clean tap water. But for one-sixth of the population (about a billion people) the essential act of taking a drink of water is fraught with risk. Each day, about 6,000 people — mostly children — die from waterborne diseases such as typhoid, cholera and dysentery.

A Denmark company called Vestergaard Frandsen Group, whose main business is malaria prevention by its primary product of insecticide-laced mosquito netting and sheeting has worked with an Atlanta company called The Carter Center. They came up with a personal water filter, dubbed the LifeStraw, that uses a series of mesh filters that block bacteria, plus iodine and carbon to kill what's left. The result is water that's cleaner than many developed countries' tap water.

The 9-inch blue plastic straw can be carried or worn around the neck. Each straw, estimated to cost approximately \$3, cleans a person's drinking water for about a year. It's no wonder that Time Magazine named it an invention of the year, and Forbes put it on its list of 10 things that will change the way we live. It's so simple. It's a straw. As we go about trying to discover the next big thing, we should remember to first simply look around us.

"Dear Abby" Plea: Need Stories

A research project is looking for people with mental illness to share their stories. They're specifically looking for those who have had contact with the criminal justice system. Although the California Women's Mental Health Policy Council is not involved with this research, this looks like it might be a good opportunity for those willing to share their experiences to provide thoughts, address key issues and help to reduce stigma. We encourage you to respond and/or forward this to your friends and colleagues.

Confidential to My Readers Dear Abby writes:

To My Readers: An estimated 320,000 people who suffer from severe mental illness (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression with psychotic features) are incarcerated in our jails and prisons today.

If you or a member of your family has been diagnosed as "mentally ill" and has spent time in jail or prison, please write and tell me about it.

Your firsthand experiences are needed for an important mental-health study being done by an elite group of psychiatrists.

Please address your letters to The C.P. Committee, Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP), Room 322, 701 W. Pratt St., Baltimore, MD 21201.

I thank you in advance for taking part in this important study. Your personal comments will help GAP to identify the seriousness and magnitude of this problem rooted in the mental-health and justice fields. Your participation may help to effect major change in these areas, and have a profound impact on the treatment of many of our loved ones.

Please share your comments today.

Thank you.
Elaine Linn, Executive Director, WMHPC
Darcy Johnson, Support to the Council



Sacramento News

Sacramento County making “Back Room Deals” on housing

Gray Panthers were very involved with Sacramento Housing in seeing that our county has one of the most progressive affordable housing ordinances in US. It requires that 15% of all new houses and apartments be affordable to low, very low and extremely low income people. It's the first inclusionary ordinance anywhere in the country to offer specific help to extremely low income households — parents working at low-paying jobs, frail senior citizens living on Social Security, people with severe disabilities. We were all proud of our county for this.

In just its first two years, we got 4,006 affordable homes and apartments in the pipeline, 75 million dollars in fees to help pay for affordable housing to be set-aside, and 125 acres of land to build affordable housing to be donated. But now the supervisors and their lawyers are meeting behind closed doors with powerful developers and builders to water down this ordinance. They never asked poor people or any of the non-profit organizations serving the poor, like Loaves & Fishes and Mercy Housing, what they thought. They make a phony case about being forced to do this because of a lawsuit, but the lawsuit was thrown out of court over a year ago!

Does this smell like the arena proposal we fought so hard ? and won?

This one's just as bad — it takes housing away from those who need it most and it puts more money in developers’ pockets.

Take action and do one or both of the following:

- Call each member of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors and ask to meet with them on this issue.
- Email each Supervisor and tell them you oppose this settlement. You can go to www.sachousingalliance.org for phone numbers and email addresses for the Supervisors.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

You will be receiving a postcard during August, a reminder of GRAY PANTHERS SACRAMENTO annual dues. Our dues year begins September 1st. We appreciate a speedy response, from both regular members and those who subscribe only to our newsletter. **WATCH FOR THE CARD and send your dues in promptly. Thanks a lot!**

STOP THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

The Crime Gun Identification Act of 2007 (AB 1471) passed the Senate Public Safety Committee earlier this week and continues to move forward in part because of your recent outpouring of emails sent to the committee members. The bill will be voted on soon in the full State Senate. This crime-fighting piece of legislation will help law enforcement solve crimes committed with handguns and reduce gun trafficking in the state. It is up to all of us to convince our State Senators to pass this common sense legislation.

E-MAIL YOUR CALIFORNIA STATE SENATOR TODAY! Tell him/her: "Support AB 1471: Help California Police Solve Handgun Crimes."

The Crime Gun Identification Act would require that starting in 2010, new models of semi-automatic handguns be equipped with technology that allows police to match bullet shells found at a crime scene to the handgun that fired the bullets. This technology, known as "microstamping" would substantially enhance law enforcement's ability to rapidly identify and link shell casings found at a crime scene to the individual semi-automatic handgun from which it was fired.

ACTION ALERT!

On August 9, there will be a discussion on 2 gun ordinances at the Sacramento City Hall. Time and other details will be sent to you via e-mail alert.

GAO talks about overspending

David Walker predicts that if we don't stop overspending, this will be the end of our country. He says, "Raise taxes and overhaul Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security". He plans to speak on this subject in every primary state.

David Walker thinks the biggest economic peril facing the nation is being ignored. David Walker He is the nation's top accountant, the comptroller general of the United States. He has totaled up our government's income, liabilities, and future obligations and concluded that *our current standard of living is unsustainable unless some drastic action is taken.*

David Walker is a prudent, highly respected public official. As comptroller general of the United States he runs the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, which audits the government's books and serves as the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress. He has more than 3,000 employees, a budget of a half a billion dollars, and a message he considers urgent.

The American people are starved for two things: the truth, and leadership. The U.S. has spent, promised, and borrowed itself into such a deep hole it will be unable to climb out if it doesn't act now. The survival of the republic is at stake.

We're spending more money than we make, charging it to credit cards and expecting our grandchildren to pay for it. The cancer stems from massive entitlement programs we can no longer afford, exacerbated by a demographic glitch that began more than 60 years ago, a dramatic spike in the fertility rate called the "baby oom" *Beginning next year, and for 20 years thereafter, 78 million Americans will become pensioners and medical dependents of the U.S. taxpayer.*

Our health care problem is much more significant than Social Security, five times greater.

Eight trillion dollars was added to what was already a 15 to \$20 trillion under-funding.

With one stroke of the pen, the federal government increased existing Medicare obligations nearly 40 percent over the next 75 years. We'd have to have eight trillion dollars today, invested in treasury

Asked if he knows any politicians willing to raise taxes or cut back benefits, Walker says, "I don't know politicians that like to raise taxes. I don't know politicians that like to cut spending, but I think what we have to recognize is this is not just about numbers. We are mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren at record rates, and that is not only an issue of fiscal irresponsibility, it's an issue of immorality."

We need to begin raising taxes or government revenues and put a cap on federal spending if we want to maintain our economic security and standard of living.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

You will be receiving a postcard during August — a reminder of Gray Panthers Sacramento Annual Dues. Our dues year begins September 1 annually. We will appreciate a speedy response, both for regular members and newsletter subscribers only. WATCH FOR THE CARD and send in your dues promptly. THANKS A LOT!

CAN WE TALK?

Have you talked to your kids about private matters such as end-of-life, long term care insurance, living wills? Any of the related issues regarding your desires? Whether they have any concerns about your health, including memory, and vision as it relates to driving. Well, now is better than what may turn out to be never! Thinking before worst scenarios happen is best.

A few of the things you need to bring up to them, and perhaps even put in writing are:

- Do they fully understand your health conditions today, and future prospects?
- Do you have a problem with living independently and what would be your preferences in the future?
- Does your home need modifications to be accessible for you? Can they help?
- Where are you with your estate planning?
- Are there daily chores right now that you could use help with?
- What, if any, emotional concerns have you?
- Get them to list *their* concerns.

Try to focus on issues and facts and not with past problems or conflicts. Give everyone a chance to express their concerns and possible solutions.

It would be a good idea to WRITE out these things and give a copy to any of your children who can't be present as you talk these through.

Now that I have dished out advice, it's time to do it MYSELF!!!

—Joan Lee

2007 Officers and Steering Committee of Sacramento Gray Panthers

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
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- Newsletter Asst. Editors:** John Bernier and Betty Cooper Youngren
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- Members at Large:** Edy 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.

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



CA Wellness Foundation Grant approved

We are delighted to announce that we have just received word that our new MeDIC grant for the period July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2010 has been **approved** by The California Wellness Foundation.

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



From Washington, DC

ANY HOPE FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE FOR AMERICA?

Even as we see the hope of Universal Care in America and in California in particular fade for the close future, it may be that Corporate America will become its leading proponent. The credit could go such an unlikely source as "Globalization"!

The U.S. is the only major industrial country in the world without such a government health plan. However, it appears that adopting universal health care, the competitive edge foreign businesses now enjoy, not bearing the cost of health insurance for their workers, would be lost.

Concerning this competitive edge for overseas manufacturers, General Motors reports that health insurance costs increase the price of each of the vehicles it produces by \$1,500. If that is the case, it certainly would make good business sense for GM to lobby for federal legislation to create a Universal Health Insurance plan, thereby relieving it of such a financial burden. On the other hand, in Canada, which has a government financed single-payer insurance system, health care costs for Canadian auto makers is only \$120 per vehicle.

So, clearly such a health system, in light of expanded Globalization, would boost our Nation's world-wide competitive position. In the event a California program becomes enacted into law, it would not produce the favorable impact on the country's business climate that a national program would. Maybe we should be talking to Congress and candidates about that?!

—John Bernier

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