



Gray Panthers Sacramento

On The Prowl

Volume 29 Number 12

December 2007

P. O. BOX 19438, SACRAMENTO, CA 95819

916-332-5980

GRAY PANTHERS GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, December 11

12:30 - 3:00

28TH and J Streets Hart Senior Center, Cyprus Room

HOLIDAY TIME TOGETHER

Our annual party this year is a potluck, thus the earlier start time. Please bring a side dish or dessert. Your steering committee will be providing main dishes.

This time we will do something a little different: Come prepared with memories of holidays to share, with what it is like to experience Kwanza, or perhaps Hanukkah, or Christmas caroling in the snow.

Guests welcome.

Note: No white elephant sale, but select raffle prizes will be offered.

Further info, call Joan Lee at 332-5980 or Nell Ranta at 685-5523



***** **IN OUR COMMUNITY** *****

December 18, United National International Migrants Day. Gray Panthers advocate for justice and equal rights for all migrants.

GET YOUR FLU SHOT THIS MONTH BEFORE THE 15TH!!!

Flu Season peaks in February. Go to www.cdc.gov for charts on immunizations; go to <http://www.sacdhhs.com/CMS/download/pdfs/PUB/PUB%20Flu%20Clinic%20Schedule%202006.pdf> for a schedule of low-cost flu shots in the Sacramento area.



GRAY PANTHERS NOW A UNITED WAY OPTION

Gray Panthers has recently been accepted into the Combined Federal Campaign. That means if an employer participates in the campaign, this provides a unique opportunity for contributions to our important justice and peace work.

Look for our name listed under Human and Civil Rights, CFC #12480.

Pass this information along to all your working friends!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Member Bill Young was one of the honorees at the Sacramento Board of Supervisors' First Annual Heroes of Human Services Recognition Awards "honoring those individuals who have touched the lives of others through their advocacy, dedication and efforts in human services throughout Sacramento County."



FROM THE CAPITOL

BANKRUPTCY: AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE

Op-Ed by John Bernier

While the debate goes on as to whether or not to provide health care for all Americans, there is no letup in the numbers of bankruptcies in the U.S. caused by medical bills. According to a study by Harvard University, medical expenses are the cause of at least half of the more than million and a half bankruptcies filed every year.

Opponents of Universal Health Insurance claim that in Canada, which has such health coverage, there is a longer wait to see a doctor than in the U.S. That may or may not be true, but it's certain that Canadian citizens don't have to worry about long lines at bankruptcy courts due to their personal medical costs. Bankruptcy resulting from medical expenses is an extremely rare occurrence in Canada.

Additionally the study said that most of the medical bankruptcy filers in the U.S. were middle class, 56 percent owned a home and had attended college.

Dr. David Himmelstein, the lead author, says most Americans are just one serious illness away from bankruptcy. Most of the medically induced bankruptcies involved average Americans who happened to get sick.

The paradox is that the costliest health system in the world performs so poorly, declared Dr. Quentin Young, national coordinator of the Physicians for a National Health Program, that we waste one-third of every health care dollar on insurance bureaucracy and profits, while two million people go bankrupt annually and we have 45 million uninsured.

Are we willing to let this go on unchecked? Let's see that the right folks get elected next year to support our position on Universal Single-Payer Health Care, and that would end that. Right?



BEWARE OF SIGNATURE GATHERERS FOR CPOFPA

We as now officially signed onto a campaign to fight an initiative getting to the ballot next June. The measure would abolish rent control and gut renter protections. Wealthy apartment and mobile home park owners are behind this, collecting signatures to put a measure on the June '08 ballot for their own financial gain. These landlords want you to believe that the so-called **California Property Owners and Farmland Protection Act (CPOFPA)** – dubbed the “Landlord’s Hidden Agendas Scheme” – is about eminent domain, but the measure is really a dishonest attempt to abolish rent control and other laws that protect renters. Suffice to say, **DON'T SIGN THEIR PETITIONS!**

CPOFPA would eliminate rent control and other renter protection laws and jeopardize affordable housing for thousands of seniors and widows on fixed incomes, single mothers and working families. It would attack protections so mobile home park owners could NOT be prevented by state or local governments from pursuing what are called “condo conversions,” literally buying the space that Mobile homes sit on at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars per unit.

The reasons to oppose this are many.

For a full description of the problems with this proposed initiative are to be found at www.eminentdomainreform.com.



Don't be fooled and don't sign!!

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP FROM YOUR LEGISLATIVE LIAISON:

With the end of the legislative session and deadline for the Governor's signature or veto, many activists felt somewhat down about their rates of success/failures. That included Gray Panthers, who saw many of their issues fail in committee. The up-side of all that is that, while only an unacceptable 13 of the bills we supported got signed, at least two dozen bills will go on to the Spring Session for final action - so-called Two-year bills. As they come up, we can review them, because of newsletter space requirements.

On the plus side, we got our Prescription Drug Label Standardization bill (SB472, Corbett) into law and will inform you of Board of Pharmacy meetings in '08 to devise those necessary regulations.

Assemblyman Dave Jones' AB 70 provides for local governments to accept certain liability during flooding in areas where they had allowed rampant development to take place. This was part of the much reported flood package that Jones and Lois Wolk of Woodland had pushed strongly for. Senator Steinberg stepped up with a bill for improved levees and Folsom Dam 200-year flood protection that was signed. Our local legislators were persistent and responsive to our communities needs.

Faced with increased problems around housing, the Governor signed two bills that we think are really advantageous. These are AB 641 (Torricono) that requires local governments to provide affordable housing developers with deferrals on impact fees until the homes are occupied. And AB 607 (Brownley) which requires all residential hotels to provide locked mail boxes. For whatever reason, the Governor surprised us by signing the bill (AB 1471, Feuer) to carry microchip identification on firearms, a real step in the fight against community violence.

As your legislative advocate in the Capitol, I will again see who might carry a bill to increase the State's share of cost on In-Home-Services programs. This is of particular interest because the Governor is really going to hit on this and other human service programs provided by counties hard when he uses slash and burn impact fees until the homes are occupied. And AB 607 (Brownley) which requires all residential hotels to provide locked mail boxes.

Taking a hard look at getting reauthorization the Medi-Medi safety net program is vital as the people have only until December 6th to choose a program or fall thru the cracks.

We will also work with CARA on a hospital discharge policy that informs the patient of the availability of home and community based options before they leave the hospital and prior to transfer to skilled nursing. We hope to work with Assemblywoman Patty Berg on this issue.

THE YEAR OF HEALTH CARE REFORM

Regretfully, all we can say about this past session is that, rather than being real reform touted by both the Governor and the Legislature, it was really more like a horserace of discussions with advocates and legislators jockeying for position and idea after idea falling over the hurdles. Sadly, we fear, most of it was politically

We wrote strong letters and stood up in opposition to the bill in Assembly Health in November, but even with the Calif. Nurses on our team, it was not enough. However, as strong and historic supporters of Single-Payer measures such as SB 840 (Kuehl), we will continue our own jockeying on track. You will hear about that as time goes along, with the Senator and Health For All leading the way.

Though Speaker Nunez called AB X1-1 a win-win based on "the lessons we have learned about what needs to be", and said the voters want a health care bill passed this year, we think voters want a bill passed that has firm grounding in research and study. Haste, of course, makes waste, right?

Meanwhile just so you know the some of the major reasons for our ultimate opposition to Nunez AB X1-1 (and we don't know at this writing how the vote will go finally) are as follows:

1. Overriding all is our opposition to a bill that is a give away to insurance companies without meaningful controls on premiums, co-pays, and the important inclusions in any minimum benefit package.
2. We, this time, feel there is merit in the concerns of small business owners in the lower profit category who say they may have to lay people off or make them part-time, rather than lose any more of their slim margin. They say some will even be forced out of business, and these are companies that hire low income youth and seniors.
3. Counties will be hard pressed to assume any higher cost sharing than they do now, as is proposed, and homeless, mentally ill and seniors will be the ones to suffer when counties cut back services to make ends meet.
4. We cannot enact ANY laws that are based on revenues from the Federal Government which have no promise of materializing. Take a look at the thousands of children and their parents at real threat of being dumped by Healthy Families in the face of no S-CHIP reauthorization to date.
5. Without adequate incentives and tools to increase the numbers of doctors, clinics and hospitals and see their costs are stabilized, quality of care is certain to be degraded. Transparency must have built in data on health outcomes as well as displacement and excessive retirements by doctors and health care professionals in an overburdened field.
6. Finally, it is not clear how consumers, patients, and their advocates will have any input into the evaluation process of any system enacted.

By the way, National Gray Panthers will shortly be addressing the state of the single payer cause on their action web site. Keep tuned.

—Joan Lee, your Legislative Liaison



MO(O)RE GORE, PART ONE

An OpEd by Karl Stoffers, Environmental Chair

Michael Moore's documentary "Sicko" has now surpassed Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" at the box office. Certainly we hope we solve the healthcare crisis, but don't miss this important point: The inconvenient truth of climate change is not going away. While decent health care is a serious problem for us, climate change is a serious problem for the world!

A report from a federal agency tells us that the polar ice cap is melting faster than previously predicted by climate research. The Feds want to declare Polar Bears an endangered species because they need the ice in order to raise their cubs.

Polar bears may not be that close to your heart, but the melting of the ice cap affects those things which are. The retreat of the boundary of ice toward the North Pole leads to a weakening of the gulf-stream, that thermo-hyaline conveyor belt that transports warm water northward out of the Gulf, leading to scientists thinking that the gulf-stream may COMPLETELY STOP. The weather where the Gulf Stream matters, East Coast of the US and Western Europe, has already been cooler and wetter than normal for several summers in a row. The result is that less warmth is transported north by the Gulf Stream, leaving more potential of hurricanes. Remember Katrina?

Closer to home in California, the snow pack on the Sierras, which give us water and hydroelectric power when we need it most, is shrinking, resulting in more run-off and more severe floods earlier in the season as a trade-off.

The Center for California Climate Change, a state agency, projects by the end of this century a typical summer in Sacramento will have up to 100 ADDITIONAL DAYS of very hot (95%+) weather. California already has areas with the worst air quality in the US. Air quality will worsen as more ozone and smog are formed on those hot days. We will have increases in health problems like asthma, heat stroke, heart attacks, deaths from dehydration, etc. Added demands placed on the health care system will mean additional costs and a serious threat to the health care reform we want. In the political arena, the Kyoto Protocol, now called

Kyoto I, is the most significant tool that presently exists to combat climate change worldwide. It was created with UN sponsorship and strong support by then Vice President Al Gore. The Bush Administration decided to keep us out of Kyoto I, stating as their objection lenient treatment of developing countries. What a shame! Kyoto I will expire in 2012 and a successor treaty is now under discussion.

(Karl's SAGA TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT NEWSLETTER! Stay tuned

Big Win for the Environment

Last week, a federal judge in Vermont ruled against the U.S. automakers and upheld a state law that regulates greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. The regulations adopted by California and 14 other states would require a 30 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from cars and trucks by 2016. The ruling in Vermont adds enormous momentum to our efforts to reduce America's global warming pollution from automobiles, and to the hard work of our partner non profits such as Environmental Defense, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Sierra Club.

California's environmentalists heartily agree. Now perhaps California can move ahead all speed - Time's awastin'!!

SUSPEND OPERATIONS AT SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS

Help us to build momentum for HR 1707(McGovern) which would suspend operations at the School of the Americas, notorious training ground for violent military tactical training. The bill would also investigate atrocities linked to the school, and now has 117 bipartisan cosponsors!

Gray Panthers will be looking for a strengthened and enhanced position on issues surrounding extreme military training, and use of Inquisition type methods at their Fall 08 convention.

Meantime, write your congressperson to express your opinion. Put a cc: to Senator McGovern on it so he really feels the support of American people. More information on SOA can be found at School of the Americas Watch - www.SOAW.org.

Letter to Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

—By Linda Roberts

Thanks for your thoughtful piece on the State budget. Since I do a lot of legislative advocacy for senior, community and disabled groups, I discuss budget matters often. Also, I have a tiny business where I do representation to get folks on Social Security.

We discuss how the State gobbles up the COLA on SSI recipients. Tell me how an SSI recipient can rent an apartment in Sacramento for less than \$1,000 per month since their SSI checks are much less than that? No wonder people are homeless.

We discuss the Governor's proposal to cut back inspections of care homes for the elderly and disabled. Remember that article in the Bee about the fire that killed a patient who couldn't get out of bed? We have State executive and legislative branches with no guts or leadership.

Pete, Gray, Arnie and legislative leaders refused to fix the structural problems with the budget.

Here what real courageous leaders would do:

1. **Stop expanding the prison system.** Institute the POPS program (where a non-profit interviews elderly prisoners and places them with family or nursing homes)
2. **Amend the three strikes law to only apply to violent crimes**
3. **Educate prisoners with job and living skills and give them real mental health care**
4. **Spend money on education.** Studies have shown that businesses locate where there is an educated work force
5. **Spend more money on teachers and class room supplies** than on administrators, superintendents, and charter schools,
6. **Increase to the former level the vehicle license fees** (it is bad public policy to encourage gas guzzling toys like Hummers),
7. **Institute single payer health care** including the medical portion of Workers' Compensation (saving money for government, workers and employers like

myself),

8. **Increase taxes on upper income Californians** to the levels before Pete Wilson and Willie Brown decreased them (this is so small that they won't notice the change and many of these folks have said that they wouldn't mind paying it),

9. **Fix the rules, as suggested by Angelides, so corporations can't avoid taxes** by setting up a post office box HQ in the Caribbean

10. **Quit being a donor state to the federal government, Amend proposition 13** so that corporations can't unfairly avoid property taxes (remember, a corporation can change ownership in a different way than when an elderly person dies and someone inherits).

Both parties are full of gutless wonders.

—From Linda Roberts, who is incidentally, a member of Gray Panthers "with ideas"!!

GO FOR THE CURE!

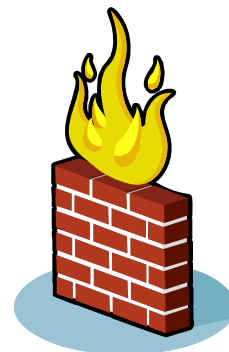
Years from now you can look back and remember the day you supported Alzheimer's research...or remember nothing at all.

Donate on line 51 on Form 540 when you file your state

PLEASE LIMIT YOUR FIREPLACE BURNING!

Remember Sacramento is a major US polluted area for tiny soot or "particulates". These are a major source of lung disease.

Fires are pretty to look at, but dangerous to our health.





Washington D.C.

SAN FRANCISCO PUSHES AND FEINSTEIN CAVES.

As we write this newsletter, we await hearing the outcome of the arrest of San Francisco Gray Panther Michael Lyon on the steps of the Senator's offices. Senator Feinstein, so often voting on the right of issues, appears to be starting to listen, thanks to local pressures.

This evening, the Senate Democrats finally stood up to President Bush and I have no doubt it was all because of Gray Panthers and others like them who protested and were arrested and kept up the demands she listen to her constituents. Feinstein finally did one thing right: she voted for the bill to reign in telecom companies without retroactive immunity.

Senate Democrats are now refusing to let Bush get away with his latest egregious abuse of power. They voted unanimously for this bill to stand up to major telecom companies that break the law. Now the Administration's assault on our civil liberties will find it necessary to be more transparent and accountable — all because of people like Michael.

We are so proud of you, Michael Lyon!!



More on Medicare Part D, 2008 Version, Continued from Nov. Newsletter

Lower Deductibles are Deceiving

Although the average deductible for the standard Part D plan has increased to \$275 in 2008, there are more plans that are offering zero or reduced deductible plans in 2008. But watch out; many of them are compensating by increasing the premiums on the drugs you may need.

Massive Disruptions for Low-Income Seniors (LIS)

There was always a small category of people who benefited from the “Low-Income Subsidy”, or LIS, also called “extra help.” You had to file for it with the Social Security Administration.

About one of six beneficiaries who are eligible for the subsidy will have to change to another Part D plan in 2008 because ***their current plan's premium will be higher than the value of their premium subsidy.*** Then if you don't change, you'll wind up paying the part of the premium that exceeds your subsidy.

If you were automatically assigned to a plan when you first joined Part D you will be automatically enrolled in another subsidy-eligible plan chosen at random by CMS. The important point is ***the assignments will be made even if the plan you're assigned doesn't offer the drugs you need!*** And in yet another unpleasant twist, if you chose your own plan initially, rather than letting CMS do it, you will have to change your plan yourself. Otherwise, you'll be paying premiums for the difference between your subsidy amount and the premium charged by your plan beginning in January.

Have we mentioned lately how complicated this mess is?

—Margie Metzler, Medicare Project Coordinator



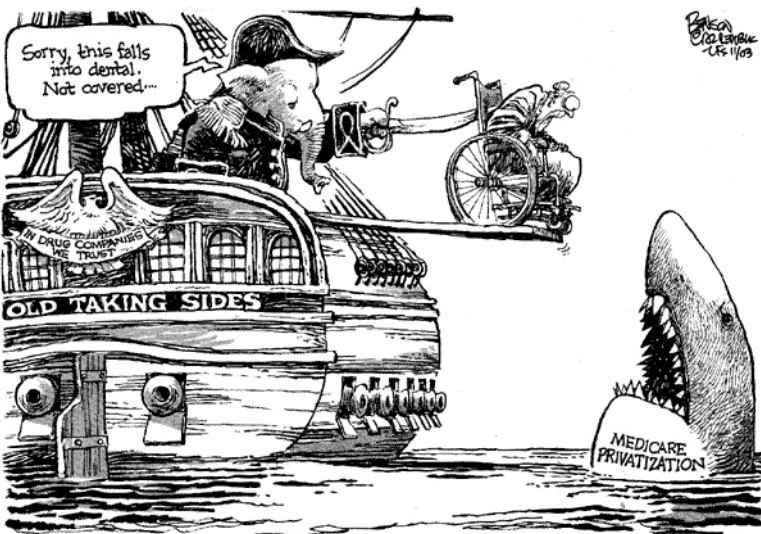
2007 Officers and Steering Committee of Sacramento Gray Panthers

Convener: Joan Lee 916-332-5980
Interim Secretary: Pat Naylor
Treasurer: Lola Young
Staff Project Coordinator, Medicare Part D grant, Margie Metzler
Environmental: Dr. Karl Stoffers
Disability Issues: Michael Dunne and Terry Terry
Historian: OPEN POSITION
Hospitality: Nell Ranta
Housing Issues: Linda Roberts, 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: Beverly Crosby
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 Healthcare and Medicare Part D updates: www.gpcal.org.

Gray Panthers National Action Network:
<http://graypanthers.e-actionmax.com/>



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 2006-2007. 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

Old newsletters: go to <http://www.gpcal.org/indexsac.htm>

Low-cost Flu Shots in the Sacramento Area

<http://www.sacdhhs.com/CMS/download/pdfs/PUB/PUB%20Flu%20Clinic%20Schedule%202006.pdf>

Sacramento Assoc. of Realtors Wed. Nov. 22 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. 2003 Howe Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95825	Boys & Girls Clubs Mon. Nov. 27 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. 1117 G Street, Sacramento, CA
Hart Senior Center Tues Nov. 28 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. 915 27 th Street, Sacramento, CA 95816	Fair Oaks Library Wed. Nov. 29 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. 11601 Fair Oaks Blvd, Fair Oaks, CA 95628
Jean Harvie Community Center Thurs. Nov. 30 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. 14273 River Road, Walnut Grove, CA 95690	St. Theresa Hall Thurs. Nov. 30 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. 100 4 th Street, Isleton, CA 95641
Sunrise Mall “Drive-Thru” Fri. Dec. 1 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. 6041 Sunrise Mall, Citrus Heights, CA 95610	Pannell Center Tues. Dec. 19 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. 2450 Meadowview Road, Sacramento, CA 95832 “Community Flu Clinic”

There will be a \$10.00 charge for the flu shot. It will be provided to seniors 60 years and older, healthcare workers, pregnant women, caregivers of high-risk individuals, and persons who are chronically ill under the age of 60 - with a note from their physician. Pneumonia shots will be offered for \$40.00, Tetanus and Tetanus with Pertussis shots will be offered for \$10.00. Persons with MediCare Part B without HMO coverage may qualify for MediCare billing. You must bring MediCare card to clinic. Some restrictions will apply.

TELEPHONE INFORMATION (916) 875-7053

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

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