



Gray Panthers Sacramento

On the Prowl

Volume 30 Number 6

June 2008

P. O. BOX 19438, SACRAMENTO, CA 95819

www.gpcal.org

916-332-5980

GRAY PANTHERS GENERAL MEETING

June 10th, 1:00-3:00

Hart Senior Center

27th and J



Teach Peace Foundation
Education for a more peaceful world!

Presenter: Mary Wind, President of Teach Peace (<http://www.teachpeace.com/>)

Gray Panthers has worked hard toward ending the Iraq Occupation, including their "Bring Hope to America" postcard campaign. Mary will give us insights as to how consumerism aids the war machine, and what the impact is of this war is on each of us. We will learn about the effort to establish a Department of Peace and forward the Leaders program as an alternative to JROTC.

This is an opportunity to learn some important information, so be sure to bring your friends.

Cool drinks and refreshments served

Info. 916-332-5980



IN OUR COMMUNITY

Regional Transit is planning for the future region transit system, updating the long-range master plan.

They are asking for your input:

OPENHOUSES all run from 6 - 7:30:

Wed, June 4 (Note - 5-6:30)

Tsakopoulos Library Galleria

838 I St.

East Meeting Room

This is the last opportunity to provide input to the Regional Transit plan for future transit in the area!

WE LOVE YOU, COPPERMANS!

Long-time Gray Panther leaders Doris and Ralph Copperman were honored at a beautiful lunch at the Walnut Creek Fresh Start program on May Day.

The date was appropriate, especially for Ralph, as he started out his professional life as a union plumber and has remained active in union justice campaigns ever since. Doris served as Treasurer for the Gray Panthers National Organization for many years and both were Convenors of the Contra Costa network. They were honored at the Kitty Moffei Kind-Hearted Person Awards Day as Social Justice Advocates. We are so proud of these two who have given so much to Gray Panthers over the years and now "retire" from our organization for a much deserved rest.

May we all do as much for the cause of social justice as they have over the years!!



Welcome to Gray Panthers
BETH BENNETT



FROM THE CONVENOR

YOUR BIG CHANCE TO JOIN THE ACTION!

Mark your calendar for Thursday, June 19th and Join us in a Bus Trip to San Francisco Protest.

On that date, activists from across state will descend on Moscone Center West in San Francisco where Health Insurance Plans will be holding a major convention. The likes of Tommy Thompson, John Breaux, Bill Frist and Terry McAuliffe will be major speakers and we will be giving them an earful from outside as they discuss health care reform. This is the perfect chance to tell them our version is affordable, accessible, universal and government administered coverage — an improved style of Medicare (and how we love our Medicare!) like other countries have. We will loudly celebrate SB 840, Sheila Kuehl's now famous concept, and nationally, HR 676, John Conyers' persistent and don't-say-die version of single payer.

We are going!! Will you join us? All amenities on a bus from Sacramento — you can, as I do these days — ride light rail, park at their station, and get off at Cathedral Square, just a block from the Capitol. This is going to be an exciting day, an enthusiastic crowd, and boisterous dramatizations of our position! We will tell the private industry and government we mean business and won't give up until we have it! Call Joan (332-5980) if you are interested and do so today to save a spot on the bus.



FROM SACRAMENTO

SENATOR STEINBERG SPEAKS OUT ON HEALTH ISSUES

At a recent local forum on Single Payer health coverage, our Senator Steinberg, keynote speaker, spoke of this effort in terms of the Ark of History, which he said will progress in a way that can lead to change. Although he addressed concerns around term limits, which mean we will lose our champion, Senator Kuehl, this fall, he pointed out that society inevitably pays for an ineffective system, a system that is not even good for business. The money spent

on the current healthcare system could be better put into wages. This struck an optimistic note with attendees who saw hope that the economic wisdom of Single Payer health care will taken up by a wide spectrum of interests.

Steinberg turned to the topic of immigrants, stating that they have helped our nation and our state and we must not be xenophobic about their needs. Among issues, we must provide them with a pathway to citizenship.

Steinberg hit a chord when he said that one of the serious problems is that if you can afford health care, you don't care about who doesn't have it. You say "let them eat cake, our system is working". A sad commentary that we must fight with all our energy Darrell still has six and a half years in the Senate and we are of course proud to have a Sacramentan as President Pro Tem of that body, with all the knowledge and wisdom he will bring forth.

—Joan B. Lee

Sacramento Inclusionary Ordinance needs Expansion!

*We thought we had a good ordinance to cover affordable housing, but learn from our friends at the Sacramento Housing Alliance that it is in serious need of change. With the City Council working on a Housing Element for the next 7 years, we need to take a strong stand to see that the ordinance covers the entire city, not just a patchwork of neighborhoods. It's obvious that those making less than \$15,000 a year should be able to find housing. It's clear that those living on fixed incomes near the poverty level are at serious risk of one disaster putting them out on the streets. With the extreme rents and renters making up 38% of Sacramento households. and expanded Mixed Income Housing Ordinance is a very important way to face their challenges. We must not ever turn our backs on this segment of our city. Let your city councilperson know your feelings.



FROM THE STATE CAPITOL

A BIG WIN FOR ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

What a big surprise to have this conservative Supreme Court determine that it was unconstitutional for California to ban same-sex individuals from, instead of just a civil union, a real sanctified marriage! We send up a big alleluia to all our members in that category. We have stood side to side for years in the spirit of Gray Panthers strongly held beliefs. Let the right wing conservative religious folks do their best to bring this, once again, to the ballot and see what happens. We will work against any such measure, and apparently this time, even Governor S. says the same thing.

For those of you not really reading that part of the news, the California Supreme Court decision means that as of June 16, same-sex couples can begin marrying in their churches, synagogues, wherever they chose. Of course, the Catholic faith and some others will always be opposed, and we can accept that fact. But they must now allow individuals of other faiths and beliefs follow their own spiritual path. It will never be right to allow religious belief to rule in this country or state. It will always be on the side of right for the government to maintain that separation by standing down on this issue and telling our friends, "The time is now! Go ahead and have those nuptials as you wish. It's your own business - your own faith!"

We Be People

California Right to Know End-of-Life Options Act

The California Right to Know End-of-Life Options Act (AB 2747) cleared its first hurdle on April 29 with a 7-3 vote in favor by the Assembly Judiciary Committee. This bill would require healthcare providers to educate their terminal patients and family about the range of options available, upon that dying patient's request only.

Options would include hospice care, voluntary stopping of eating and drinking, refusal or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatments, palliative care and sedation. This year, Gray Panthers joined a wide range of witnesses in support, including Mary Stompe, daughter of a deceased cancer patient, California Nurses, and the California Psychological Assn. This time we can stand together. It seems likely this bill will make it

through the hoops this time, thanks to Assemblywoman Patty Berg's deep dedication.

NECESSITY FORCES NEW RIDERSHIP

With gas prices at an all-time high, the Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) is experiencing a dramatic surge in bus and light rail ridership. Overall system ridership has increased by 20.2 percent, compared to the same period last year.

We are working with local mobility advocates and Senator Steinberg's office on fleshing out his bill, SB 1560, that would create work groups or taskforces across the state to set guidelines for behavior on light rail and a set of specific penalties for infractions. We are speaking for a wide education campaign for the public and transit operators to know how to respond when they see dangerous or bad behavior on light rail systems. These are public places and people should be under the same restrictions against loud or obscene language in public, brandishing weapons, threatening behavior as they are on the city streets.

We are working hard with Steinberg to see that the public is protected, even as we must more and more resort to public transit. Send me your thoughts on this issue to joanblee@sbcglobal.net.

And while on the subject of mobility, we are pleased that Congresswoman Matsui has introduced the Safe and Complete Streets Act of 2008. "As American families continue to feel the pain at the pump due to the skyrocketing costs of gasoline, they are driving less and less. By diversifying our roadways, we can provide real alternatives to travel by car," said Rep. Matsui. Her Act would require states that receive federal funding for their road improvement projects to implement complete streets policies", says Matusi. These policies ensure that any new road construction or rehabilitation efforts would accommodate the safety and convenience of all users, including pedestrians, of the transportation system.

Thank you, Congresswoman. We can support this one for sure!!

Finally, AB 2586 (Torrico) would provide tenants caught up in the foreclosure problems with 60 days to move, a return of their security deposits, and utility solutions. The bill actually slipped through the Appropriations process because of miniscule state costs. Let you Assembly popel know we support it as they discuss it on the floor shortly.

NO on Prop. 98
the "Hidden Agendas" measure
YES on Prop 99
The Homeowners Protection Act



OUT OF WASHINGTON DC

Come to our Sacramento Gray Panthers meeting. This list sent to us from Peace Action is very relevant, as was our Post-card campaign.

Taxpayers in California will pay \$1.5 billion for proposed ballistic missile defense in FY2009. For the same amount of money, the following could have been provided:

- 633,828 People with Health Care for One Year *OR*
- 2,743,830 Homes with Renewable Electricity for One Year *OR*
- 27,512 Public Safety Officers for One year *OR*
- 21,755 Music and Arts Teachers for One Year *OR*
- 231,434 Scholarships for University Students for One Year *OR*
- 154 New Elementary Schools *OR*
- 4,610 Affordable Housing Units *OR*
- 575,650 Children with Health Care for One Year *OR*
- 184,206 Head Start Places for Children for One Year *OR*
- 22,118 Elementary School Teachers for One Year *OR*
- 19,450 Port Container Inspectors for One year

WITHDRAW THIS SHAMEFUL ORDER!

When President Truman fired General MacArthur as U.S. military commander during the Korean War, the San Francisco Examiner ran a huge front page headline: **“Withdraw This Shameful Order”**. Those same words could be directed against the Bush Administration for its proposal to allow visitors to the national parks to carry loaded firearms. It is not in the least likely that there will ever be a time when we turn America's national parks into shooting galleries. In fact, it's not likely that much the current administration has done would ever be considered as having made much of a positive contribution to mankind.

Amanda Wilcox, the president of the Sacramento Chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, pointed out that America's national parks are among the safest places in the nation. It should come as no surprise that the NRA takes an opposite position, claiming that park patrons should be able “to use all legal means to protect themselves from animals and violent crime.” As a frequent visitor and camper in these parks, your Chairperson, Joan, says she is more fearful of crazy gun toters, than of bears and raccoons! And Bill

Wade, chairman of the Coalition of National Park Services Retirees, puts this issue in the proper perspective by describing the Bush Administration's plan to allow loaded guns in the national parks as “surely and simply a politically driven effort to solve a problem that doesn't exist. The probability of becoming a victim of a violent crime in a national park, is one in more than 708,000, less likely than being struck by lightning,” Wade declared. ?

This proposed regulation increases the risk to visitors, employees and wildlife, rather than reducing it. We have written our Gray Panthers message, "Withdraw This Shameful Order." You can write George Bush at the White House as well!

HIGH COURT LEANS TOWARDS DOING AWAY WITH PRO-CHOICE

The Gray Panthers are in full support of passage of the Freedom Of Choice Act (FOCA) (Boxer/Nadler) which would reverse decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court, which have been described as “giving the green light to the anti-choice movement to plan moves to entirely outlaw abortions in America.” S. 1173 was assigned to the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the companion house bill, H.R. 1964, is being considered by the Committee on Civil Liberties.

“The pro-choice community is working to guarantee the right to choose through the FOCA,” declared Nancy Keenan, president of NARA, Pro-Choice America. “The measure would codify Roe v. Wade court decision protecting the right to choose for future generations of women.”

Following the two Supreme Court decisions last year which allow states to regulate abortions, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg., who was one of the four justices taking an opposition position, said the decisions “cannot be understood as anything other than an effort to chip away at a right declared again and a again by the court.”

With Bush's appointment of John Roberts and Samuel A. Alito, Jr., added to the three anti-abortion justices already serving on the high court, it appears that if the Freedom of Choice Act is not enacted into law, it would only be a matter of time before the pro-choice option for women in America would be a thing of the past. We all, who belief in freedom, must give our strongest support to the Freedom of Choice Act - Gray Panthers is pulling its share in that effort.





DAVE JONES WEIGHS IN FOR US!

Here are the thoughts of our 9th District Assemblyman, Dave Jones,

regarding this horrendous budget crisis: We are proud to publish it as the long hot summer - and assuredly the fall as well - will continue heavy discussion about how to save this state from the crisis it is in.

Partisan Politics Kills Effort to Close Yacht Tax Loophole

I recently saw an advertisement for a yacht that looked really nice. The yacht's name said it all. "No Worries" was a true beauty, at 44 feet long with all the amenities. But the \$300,000 boat isn't in the family budget. Nor is it for most Californians. Especially not for many of the state's working families, who struggle to pay for essentials like rent, food, utilities, and child care. The California Budget Project estimates that it takes \$72,343 per year for a family of four to meet basic expenses. California has about two million working families that make **LESS THAN HALF THAT AMOUNT**. While ordinary Californians are struggling to make ends meet, those rich enough to buy a yacht like the one I saw in the ad avoid paying taxes by taking advantage of a huge tax loophole.

The yacht tax loophole works like this. If you buy a yacht and take delivery out of state and keep it out of state for 90 days before bringing it back to California, you can escape paying sales or use tax on the purchase. Just sail southward and choose one of the many "90-day yacht clubs" available in Ensenada, Mexico, then stash the boat there.

When you and I buy something at a local store, we pay a sales tax. But if you are rich enough to buy a yacht, you can escape the same rules that apply to everyone else. This is a tax loophole big enough to sail a yacht through. The same loophole applies to airplanes and RV's. Take delivery out of state, and remain out of state for 90 days and avoid paying a California tax. Collectively these loopholes cost the state about \$26 million a year in avoided taxes.

Earlier this year I introduced legislation to eliminate this "sloophole." My proposal to eliminate the yacht tax became a part of the Assembly Democrats package of budget solutions to respond to the current year budget deficit. These budget solutions included cuts to important programs, like education, health care and funding for our courts. While these mid-year cuts are painful, they are also necessary to bring our budget into balance. Taken together, these budget solutions reduce next year's budget deficit by \$7 billion dollars, which represents roughly half our projected deficit. Included within the

package of budget bills that the Assembly voted on was a bill to eliminate the yacht tax loophole. With a \$16 billion (\$16,000,000,000) state budget deficit, you would think that everyone could agree that the time has come to close the notorious "Yacht Tax Loophole." Governor Schwarzenegger certainly agrees. His budget proposal closes the yacht tax loophole. There should have been bi-partisan support in the Assembly to close this egregious loophole. Sadly, Republican Assembly members voted once again last month to allow California's yacht purchasers to avoid paying taxes, and not a single one of them voted to support elimination of the loophole, saying it would hurt the economy! It failed passage as a result.

It is simply unconscionable to protect rich yacht purchasers while the rest of us are expected to pay taxes on goods we purchase. It is even more outrageous to vote against closing special interest tax loopholes at the same time cuts are being made to education, health and other programs that help ordinary Californians. We should immediately close the yacht tax loophole for good. The ultra rich of the world will do just fine without the tax loophole.

—Dave Jones (D-Sacramento)



UPDATE ON SUIT IN LA SUPERIOR COURT

Gray Panthers Sacramento and San Francisco both joined in a suit in Los Angeles Superior Court to enjoin the 10% cut to Medi-Cal providers (enacted to start July 1, 2008), from the theft by the State from poor SSI/SSP recipients of four months of COLA payments (cost of living increase) -- in June, July, August, September of 2008. This is but one piece of our larger effort to stop the egregious efforts by this Administration to solve their budget problems on the backs of those of our friends least able to shoulder the burden. We will keep you posted on the latest on the suit.





THE ENVIRONMENT

A MESSAGE FROM GRAY PANTHER MAGGIE DEE ON DRUG DISPOSAL:

Freddie Meyer of PPSI told me, “Did you know, Maggie, that flushing medication down the toilet can effect the environment in many different ways?”

I listened intently as my environmental awareness is strengthening, perhaps since I am an end-stage rectal cancer statistic. I am nearing the end of my work here and welcome taking the last breath here and my first breath in the glory of the hereafter, whatever that is.

My spirit has awakened within to many issues, so when Freddie shared with me that fish are found to be deformed, critters that thrive on shorelines of our rivers, streams, lakes and ocean are showing increasing deformities, whales are beaching for no apparent reason until autopsies indicate the ingestion of medical pollutants and supplies, I was concerned. Many believe that flushing expired medications is causing these problems.

I tried to turn in my expired medications to Walgreens in Pittsburg.

They looked inside the brown bag and said, “What do you want us to do with these?” “Safely destroy them,” I responded. “We do not do that. Just flush them down the toilet,” the pharmacy technician said.

I left asking myself, can I do that when I consciously know that by following her flip response I could be a polluter. I decided I can not.

Since there is only one county in California, Marin County, that has a program to safely dispose of medication, what are my options? I have not come up with an answer so I have put the medication in a jar, inside a bag and hidden them in a garage niche.

As I tucked the jar/bag into a spot, I thought, “What’s wrong with this picture?!”

NATIONAL GROUP TACKLES DEEP SEA PROBLEMS

This Administration has been accused of many questionable activities, but it certainly can’t be charged with being inconsistent in its support of the oil industry or opposition to protecting the environment. These two hallmarks of the current administration were confirmed with the acceptance of a 2.6 billion dollar bid to allow the drilling for oil in the pristine waters of the Chukchi Sea. Such development would

threaten such endangered wildlife as polar bears, Pacific walrus, and a number of birds.

The Chukchi Sea is located north of the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska, which is one of the world’s most productive seas. Oil and gas development of this area would not only threaten the Arctic, but the subsistence lifestyle of the region’s indigenous culture. Various legal steps are being taken in an attempt to halt this devastation of the Chukchi Sea. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is charging that federal government scientists were aware of the detrimental effects oil drilling would have on the region, but deliberately concealed such information. It’s estimated that oil development in the Chukchi Sea will result in a 40 percent chance of a major crude oil spill, and over 175 small oil spills, totaling about 50,000 barrels.

“If the true impact of oil development in the Chukchi Sea were made public and properly analyzed, the area would be protected, not opened to oil development,” declared Chuck Clusen, , a senior policy analyst for NRDC.

The Center for Biological Diversity, to emphasize its concern for the wildlife if the proposed Chukchi Sea oil drilling project is carried out, issued the following statement: “The polar bear is in need of intensive care, but with this lease sale the Bush Administration is proposing to burn down the hospital.” Those of us concerned about the future of our world certainly support the NRDC in their efforts.

—John Bernier



National office shows our web hits are increasing with a new look to the website, but we could do better. How a many of you go to the website <http://www.graypanthers.org> and provide National with your email addresses, then sign up for those issues that you especially care about?. National says they are in the process of bringing on a new web manager and because of that, the level of proactive activism on line will increase. You can be part of making sure each network member is counted in the system. Thanks!!

2008 Officers and Steering Committee of Sacramento Gray Panthers

Convener: Joan Lee 916-332-5980

Secretary: Pat Naylor

Treasurer: Lola Young

Staff Project Coordinator, Healthcare Issues grant,
Margie Metzler

Environmental: Dr. Karl Stoffers

Disability Issues: Michael Dunne and Terry Terry

Historian: Marge Cumming

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: Dale Kooyman

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 Healthcare updates:

www.gpcal.org.

Gray Panthers Newsletter thanks Paratransit!

Gray Panthers is indebted to Paratransit for its continued help in printing this newsletter. Paratransit, Inc., is a private nonprofit corporation dedicated to providing transportation services to individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and related agencies throughout the Sacramento County area. They have been creating independence through smart transit since 1978 and have consistently partnered happily with Gray Panthers of Sacramento.



<http://www.paratransit.org/index.html>

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

Gray Panthers National Action Network:

<http://graypanthers.e-actionmax.com/>



Gray Panthers Sacramento

THE BIGGEST MESS IN THE WEST

Rather than attempt to do my own re-wording of the many analysis of the Governors May Revise of the budget, here is the statement of T4CF, the huge coalition working together to make sense of what is turning into a bloody — but I can assure you, unbowed — fight over this budget.

Today Governor Schwarzenegger again proposed a “cuts-only” budget that would be devastating to California’s families and our state’s future. We strongly oppose the Governor’s “cuts-only” approach to the budget. Ignoring the concerns of millions of Californians, the Governor’s revised budget simply proposes more of the same, making deep cuts to health care, senior and disabled services, schools, and investments in children.

The revised budget cuts are *even deeper* than in the Governor’s original proposal in some critical areas, such as health care. If enacted, these cuts would jeopardize the safety and security of California’s children, families, seniors, and the disabled.

The proposed cuts will impact California families in multiple ways, often compounding problems. Communities will receive cuts to their local schools, hospitals, in-home care programs for seniors, and foster care services for kids. The Governor’s short-term approach will have long-term, negative human and fiscal consequences.

The Governor’s budget also includes a distracting “power-grab” proposal that already has been overwhelmingly rejected by California’s voters and that doesn’t address the real concerns of California’s families. In fact, it undermines our system of checks and balances by giving the Governor unprecedented power to make cuts without approval from our legislators.

Our legislators and our Governor need to find real solutions that don’t jeopardize the education of our children, health care for the sick and elderly, or the environment.

We believe that California is ready to invest in our shared future and seek balanced solutions. We are working together with all Californians to hold our Governor and legislators accountable and make that happen .



Gray Panthers Sacramento

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

**Non-Profit
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Monthly Meeting: June 11!
TEACH PEACE!