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# GRAY PANTHERS of Sacramento

## On the Prowl

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P O Box 19438, Sacramento, CA 95819 916-332-5980  
Volume 28 Number 2\*\*\*\*\*February, 2006.

### **\*\*\* GENERAL MEETING \*\*\***

**FEBRUARY 13 - 1:00-3:00 PM**

**Hart Senior Center, 27th & J Sts.**

#### **WAGES AND POVERTY: CALIFORNIA'S CURSE -**

**An educated view of the problems and solutions, including a current legislative attempt to get a minimum wage signed by the Governor and the framing of issues seen as "just those Unions"**

**Presenting the issues will be**

**BILL CAMP, Executive Secretary Sacramento Central Labor Council**

**ANGIE WEI, Legislative Director, California Labor Federation**

**Bring friends you may want to share your concerns with!**

**For further information, call 916-332-5980.**

## Community

### **SPECIAL MEETING NOTICES:**

**February 13: Special group discussion:**

**Getting Good Value**, research by CA Health Decisions and the CA Wellness Foundation, whether we feel insurance should cover ALL new medical care advances, even if they provide a small benefit to patients, and what is most important in considering whether a drug should be paid for by insurance. Looking for a few additional members. If you wish to join in the discussion, call Joan Lee, 332-5980.

*open to the public.* Joan Lee, your chairperson, is a member of the advisory. Location: call 332-5980, possibly at Dept of Rehab off Royal Oaks.

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### **METRO TRANSPORTATION PLAN WKSHP**

Feb. 21, Maidu Center, Roseville 6-9 PM

March 6, Freeborn Hall, Davis “

March 23, West Sacramento Galleria “

We will give further listings as they are available for these important community workshops to provide input in transportation decisions.

### **March 3 OLMSTEAD ADVISORY MEETING**

This first 2006 Quarterly Meeting of the group is

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**LOOKING AHEAD TO THE MARCH**

**PROGRAM on Wages and Poverty**, here are some interesting facts about raising a family in California, researched by the California Budget Project.

- \* **It takes an annual income of \$63,921 for a family with both parents working just to pay for basics. This equates to \$15.37 an hour.**
- \* **This family with one parent working needs \$44,130, or the equivalent of \$21.22 per hour.**
- \* **A single-parent family must have \$53,987 annually, or \$25.96 an hour.**
- \* **A single person needs \$25,867 a year or \$12.44 an hour, just to make ends meet.**

So, while people struggle and juggle money for rent or mortgages, food, emergency medical care, little attention has been placed on the wages necessary to help these families. Under such stressful situations, often with minimum wage jobs, it is little wonder that life with this bare bones existence brings about difficulty in school, depression, health consequences, and family dysfunction. "Bread earners" say it isn't enough to make minimum wages without relying on food stamps, help from social service agencies and emergency cash from their parents. Children are often left at home alone while mom and dad work, especially since not amiable neighbors or close-by family members may not be able to take on that task.

Catholic Charities, local source of food for the poor, has seen an amazing increase in first-time clients. Food Bank leaders say many have lost hi-paying industrial jobs and are forced into low paying service positions, falling behind on mortgage and car payments. Even the US Dept. of Agriculture says 34.9 million people in the US are "food insecure". Many of these people, whom food banks used to see coming only once now are coming regularly. Putting food on the table amounts to a minimum 20% of a family's take home pay.

Other basic issues impact these folks: California has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest percentage of people lacking basic health coverage in the nation - 18.4% - almost a 5<sup>th</sup> of our residents. Of course, most often these are the low income families. In addition, transportation cost, such as bus fares and gas prices, continue to escalate.

There is a myth that it is just kids who work at fast food businesses. The fact is the majority of those workers are 25 years or older - about 6 in 10 persons. Most of those, 57%, are Latino, while they make up 32.1% of California's work force.

It is good news that home care workers wages are increasing, due in part to great pressure from their clients, advocates and SEIU. Here in Sacramento County wages increased from \$9.50 to \$10.00 per hr. But just refer again to the statistics at the head of this article to see how far they still have to go!

Researchers offer mounting evidence that moderate increases in wages result in little loss of jobs nor do they result in closure of businesses. Such allegations cannot be substantiated. At our February meeting, we will look at these issues and discuss energizing our members into the huge effort to pass a \$1 increase in the minimum wage THIS SESSION, not just 50 cents!

Meanwhile, we are reminded of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "**Economic Bill of Rights**". Said Roosevelt: "We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. 'Necessitous men are not free men.' People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all.."Among those rights he listed was the "right to a useful and remunerative job...the right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation."

Legislators and candidates for office, political parties and those who speak out individually should keep these facts in mind and perhaps forge a new economic bill of rights for this day and age.

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**In these days of difficulty, we Americans everywhere must and shall choose the path of social justice...the path of faith, the path of hope, and the path of love toward our fellow man.**

(Words of Franklin Roosevelt, engraved on his memorial in Washington, CD.)

## From the State Capitol

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Legislation is emerging covering issues Gray Panthers can really get behind.

\* AB 1363 (Dave Jones) the called the Omnibus Conservatorship Reform Act of 2006. This is a measure vital to vulnerable elders and disabled persons from abuse by criminal activity by their conservators. It would improve education and training along with improved oversight by the courts, increased resources for the Public Guardian. A 16-man task force was set up by the Ca. Courts in January to examine the problem, but it fails to include members from the advocacy community. California Chief Justice R. George seems to feel the task-force will lead to reforms. Perhaps we feel it is time to move ahead - we KNOW what the problems are! Legislation may be also necessary. We will undoubtedly be called to help out on this bill, as well as to provide input regarding the task force. Stand by to help out.

\* **SINGLE PAYER HEALTH CARE, Sheila Kuehl's SB 840**, will continue to wend it's way through the legislature. This year it looks as though Sheila will "go for broke" looking to a signature from the Governor at the end of the day.

Gray Panthers California has been strongly supportive and Mary Magill of Contra Costa County will again be calling the shots for us.

\* **AB 977 (Nava) is a bill to regulate health plans** offered through employers or to the public by insurers whose costs continue to rise. This is the only bill at this point that confronts this "heavy industry". It is high time we regulated their ability to charge excessive deductables and other out of pocket costs to the consumer. We have put out alerts to Gray Panthers and hopefully those efforts will keep the issue from dying, as the bill must pass the Assembly by Jan. 31 to survive.

\* Many seniors live in communities known as "Common Interest Developments" or CIDs because they share a common area, a club house, or pool area or some such. We continue working with senior groups in support the concept of a **CID Ombudsman**. The idea is presented in SB

551 and AB 770, which bills seem to struggle with many over who would pay for this consumer protective oversight in communities where Association Boards make sometimes bad decisions and resident need an assist in disputes. Here's hoping the bills make it past the January deadline.

\*\*\*\*\*Are you on Gray Panthers Alert List so you can take action through letters, calls and e-mails on important legislation? If not, contact Joan Lee, 916-332-5980 or [joanblee78@lanset.com](mailto:joanblee78@lanset.com) to be added - TODAY!!  
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## FROM WASHINGTON

Conyers has a bill, HR 635, to require Congress to investigate just why it was we went to war in Iraq, and we hope Congresswoman Matsui will support him. While Gray Panthers continue in their

concerns about issues of the war in Iraq, clean elections, immigration policy, and personal privacy rights, our focus in the immediate is on two bills to remedy the Medicare crisis.

\*HR 4395, another Conyers measure, currently in the Subcommittee on Health, would negotiate drug prices and explore reimportation/importation to save us many dollars.

\*S345 is vital to the future of the currently disastrous Medicare Part D program. It would give us negotiations with pharmaceutical cos. To reduce the cost of covered part D drugs, while encouraging generics. This is tailored after the successful VA program. The bill also encourages standardization of premiums.

Keep these bills at the top of your agenda to call Congresspersons in support. We will watch for flood control measures on both state and local level so important to the safety of everyone, not just those in flood zones in Sacramento.

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## OUR ENVIRONMENT

In a huge win for the environment, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) approved the California Solar Initiative by a vote of 3 to 1. This meant approval of a \$3 billion rebate program subsidizing 1 million rooftop solar systems over a decade. The initiative was based on our Million Solar Roofs bill that failed earlier this year in the state legislature. This is a truly

great and historic program that will make California a world wide leader in solar power and break our over- dependence on fossil fuels. The CPUC received more public comments (50,000!) in support of this initiative than any other decision they've ever made and noted this showing of public support was a reason for their bold decision.

Noting that the state has long prided itself on being a leader in environmental matters, the commission President Michael Peevey said the California Solar Initiative extended that tradition. The success was given an assist by Arnold Schwarznegger, who supported the program as part of a statewide effort to combat global warming and pollution.

Gray Panthers supported this issue, mainly driven by Environment California, and their legislative director, Dan Jacobson.

**SPECIES ACT ITSELF ENDANGERED**

While the country is still reeling from the destructive force of two hurricanes, it doesn't seem like the proper time to destroy a program that has enjoyed such great success—the Endangered Species Act .

Rep. Richard Pombo is sponsoring legislation that would so ravage the Endangered Species Act that the measure has been described as "Pombo's extinction bill," by fishermen and conservationists.

The legislation, H.R. 3824, and it's companion bill S 2110 (Carpo) would allow pesticide users to ignore endangered species when spraying insecticide. And it also would diminish critical habitat protection, and require taxpayers to pay developers not to kill endangered plants and animals.

Pombo, the congressman who suggested selling 15 national parks to raise money for the federal government, claims that the objective of the act, designed to protect endangered species, has not been accomplished. Actually, the Endangered Species Act, is one of the nation's most successful conservation programs. Of the 1,370 species which have been listed as endangered since the program was started 30 years ago, only 22 have become extinct. You are urged to contact Boxer and Feinstein to insure they vote against both of these bills. J. Bernier

**Sacramento Safe Haven for Abused/Neglected Seniors Breaks Ground**

A ground breaking ceremony symbolizing the start of construction of Sacramento's first Senior Safe House will be held on January 18, 2006 at 2 p.m at 3420 East Country Club Lane in Sacramento.

The house is the first-ever shelter of its kind on the west coast designed to temporarily house abused and neglected older adults. The 4,500 square foot facility will have six bedrooms and round-the-clock staff will provide emotional support, nutritious meals, housekeeping and laundry service, liaison to basic forms of medical care, and case management until residents can either return home or be placed in a safe and sustainable environment. Since the operation is financed solely on community donations, contributions should be sent to:

Volunteers of America, Senior Safe House, 1900 Point West Way, Suite 270, Sacramento 95815.

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**SACRAMENTO GRAY PANTHERS 2006/07 OFFICERS AND STEERING COMMITTEE**

- Chairperson: Joan B. Lee 332-5980**
- Secretary/Program: Marge Cumming**
- Treasurer: Lola Young**
- Staff Project Coordinator, Medicare Part D grant, Margie Metzler ([www.gpcal.org](http://www.gpcal.org))**
- Environmental: Dr. Karl Stoffers**
- Disabled issues: Terry Terry**
- Historian - OPEN POSITION**
- Hospitality: Joyce Westergaard**
- Housing issues: Linda Roberts & Karen Raasch(CIDs)**
- Labor/wage issues: Nell Ranta**
- Newsletter Asst. Editor - John Bernier**
- SS/Medicare Advisor: Peter D'Anna**
- Transportation: Jim & Doris Sanford**
- Members at Large - Edie Poole, Pat Naylor, Jean Mellberg, Betty Merle**
- Computer assistant- Beverly Crosby.**
- Webmaster- Kitty Gerwig**
- [www.graypanthersacramento.org](http://www.graypanthersacramento.org)**

Our longtime Historian for Gray Panthers Sacramento, Mary Lou McHolland, has found it necessary to retire from her position on our steering committee. She has maintained scrapbooks of photos and news clippings about our Sacramento group. Mary Lou moved to Davis to be near her son and finds it difficult to drive due to health difficulties. Thanks, Mary Lou, for all your many years of work. And we will sure miss your great dishes brought to our potlucks!

**\*\*All members are welcome to steering committee meetings held monthly on the 4th Tuesday at 1:00 PM in the Cypress Rm. at the Hart Center \*\*All members are welcome to steering committee meetings held monthly on the 4th Tuesday at 1:00 PM in the Cypress Rm. at the Hart Center**

**AS WE GO TO PRESS**

Recent headlines and articles have spotlighted the critical issues around the recent implementation of Part D on the MediCal population who are also eligible for Medicare. These are the so-called "dual eligibles". They are experiencing devastating situations in being auto-moving into private drug coverage programs from MediCal. Many of the unlucky ones were calling us saying they guessed they would just give up taking their medicines, having struggled with understanding what was happening and being told at pharmacies (who were working from inaccurate enrollment lists from the government) that they were not in a program. Many didn't have the money for mandatory co-pays and, in some cases, paying for the full cost of drugs. It was - and remains - difficult to contact HICAP, Medicare, or state MediCal officials (see numbers on the back page) for redress.

We congratulate the state for "taking back" MediCal dual eligibles temporarily and for sitting down with advocates on January 17<sup>th</sup> to thrash out solutions to this problem. We hope the solution is practical and truly fixes the situation in California.

And the Feds must pay back the state for this!! We have to say Gray Panthers and others predicted this mess!!! We are grateful to our member Fred Mayer, who is also President of the Pharmacists Planning Services, Inc., supporting small independent pharmacies, for helping us to understand all the problems they in particular faced. We will fight for equity and citizen rights in this issues as ever!! Late breaking info in the March Newsletter.... Joan Lee

Gray Panthers Annual Dues are \$30 for individuals and \$35 for families. This includes newsletter, membership in Gray Panthers National and Gray Panthers California. If new members choose to join in coming months, the following is the monthly pro-rated schedule for 2006:

	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Family</u>
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	8.00
July	5.00	5.50
August	Both \$3.00 + \$30 for 2007	

**\*TODAY I WANT TO JOIN GRAY PANTHERS SACRAMENTO!!!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**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 any check to Gray Panthers of Sacramento and send to PO Box 19438, Sacramento, CA 95819.**

**Remember that lack of funds won't deter belonging !!**

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**MEDICARE PART D DRUG LAW ISSUES:** Next month Margie Metzler, our Project Coordinator regarding Part D activism, will begin a regular column in this newsletter. Meantime, we offer some needed information:

To Report Complaints regarding Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan(s) and/or 1 (800) MEDICARE Hotline:

Start by listing the following info:

- \* name of the Prescription Drug Plan
- \* name of customer service rep
- \* date and time of call
- \* nature of complaint (in detail)

Contact the national 1(800) MEDICARE or 1(800) 633-4227 Hotline with the information.

To Report Complaints relating to experience to the Federal offices, call 1-800 MEDICARE or 1(800) 633-4227 and relate your complaint and info. hotline, please note the following:

Contact Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Centers (Regional Office): (415) 744-3602

National Multilingual Toll-free Helpline Numbers:

English 1-800-582-4218      Chinese 1-800-582-4218

Korean 1-800-582-4259      Vietnamese 1-800-582-4336

**GRAY PANTHERS of  
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