



Gray Panthers Sacramento

On the Prowl

Volume 31 Number 5

June, 2009

P. O. BOX 19438, SACRAMENTO, CA 95819

www.gpcal.org

916-921-5008



GRAY PANTHERS GENERAL MEETING

No Tuesday Meeting in May! Instead, we hosted the May 2 State Meeting.

Our next regular meeting: Tuesday, June 9, 1:00-3:00 pm

Broadcast Blues, a movie by Sue Wilson

Cypress Room, The Hart Senior Center, 27th and J Sts.

Refreshments! Please bring your friends and neighbors!

Grandparent Stories

She was in the bathroom, putting on her makeup, under the watchful eyes of her young granddaughter, as she'd done many times before. After she applied her lipstick and started to leave, the little one said, "But Gramma, you forgot to kiss the toilet paper good-bye!"

My young grandson called the other day to wish me Happy Birthday. He asked me how old I was, and I told him, 62. My grandson was quiet for a moment, and then he asked, "Did you start at 1?"

A grandmother was telling her little granddaughter what her own childhood was like: "We used to skate outside on a pond I had a swing made from a tire; it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our Pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods." The little girl was wide-eyed, taking this all in. At last she said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner!"

My grandson was visiting one day when he asked, "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?" I mentally polished my halo and I said, "No, how are we alike?" "You're both old," he replied.

When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure." "Look in your underwear, Grandpa," he advised, "mine says I'm 4 to 6."

A grandfather was delivering his grandchildren to their home one day when a fire truck zoomed past. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties. "They use him to keep crowds back," said one child. "No," said another. "He's just for good luck." A third child brought the argument to a close. "They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrants."

A 6-year-old was asked where his grandma lived. "Oh," he said, "she lives at the airport, and when we want her, we just go get her. Then, when we're done having her visit, we take her back to the airport."



**FROM THE TEMPORARY
 TEAM**

This month has been a very busy one for our chapter.

First, at our April meeting, we were honored with a visit from Congresswoman Doris Matsui, who spoke to us about a variety of legislative efforts of interest to us all. She also took time to answer questions, and of course our chapter had some! And for those questions which couldn't be answered in the meeting, her staff was there to discuss them further with individuals.

We have had hearings at the legislature every week, and have been present to testify at many of them.

On May 2, we hosted the spring quarter meeting of the California Gray Panthers. Our members provided food and beverages, and were there to set up and clean up. I was proud of all our stalwarts who showed up in spite of a really rainy, ugly Saturday! I was able to present a new presentation on the drug industry, before a friendly and helpful audience. (I am still interested request comments and suggestions from all of you.) It is always good to have the opportunity to hold a "dress rehearsal," because I could see for myself that the presentation is too long and I need to strip it down.

Besides our regulars, Jim Dawson came from Southern California, along with his partner Wayne, and Supervisor Roger Dickenson dropped by to speak with us. In addition, Sara Rogers dropped in to give us the latest information about Mark Leno's bill, SB 810.

As you hopefully know by now, our Steering Committee decided to use our meeting last Saturday as our only meeting of the month, so our next meeting will be on June 9th. We will have a movie, "Broadcast News, and I know everyone will enjoy it. This movie had its world premiere at the Crest theater several months ago, and some of us saw it then. But it is worth seeing again. If you miss it, please come!

Oh, and our steering committee will still take place on the fourth Tuesday of the month, May 26, and all are welcome to attend and put in their 2 cents. We need to plan upcoming meetings, and we would love YOUR ideas. Please contact me or any other Steering committee member, or come yourself. We can always use fresh ideas!

—Margie

Health Care: The Full Loaf

"Half a loaf is better than none", runs the adage. But if the size, shape, and cost of the full loaf are unknown, what's "half a loaf"? Is it smart to negotiate from a compromise position-from half a loaf-without an understanding of what the full loaf looks like?

Shouldn't "the whole loaf" be on the table?

"Single payer" is health care's full loaf. Best we define that full loaf before we decide what to compromise away. Here's my list.

- Everybody in, nobody out.
- Universal for all Americans
- Everybody pays in, according to ability to pay
- Free choice of physician
- Physician paid by government, not hired by government
- Quality of care incentives
- Emphasis on primary care and prevention
- Not tied to employer or employment
- "Portable" throughout the USA
- Costs controlled by voters, not by "market"
- Benefit package set by voters, not by "market"
- No profit-taking investors
- No incentive for competing health plans to provide less care for the dollar
- Almost no financial paper-work for you or your doctor
- A confidential electronic medical record that travels with you
- Freedom to purchase added private "sesame seed sprinkles" to top the full loaf.

—From a letter by James R Hughes MD, published in the 26APR09 Valley News (Lebanon NH):

Dealing with e-mail hoaxes

Do you get e-mails with obviously incorrect or distorted information? During the 2008 election, there was so much junk being sent out that the Obama people had an entire site dedicated to correcting smears, hoaxes and outright lies. If the item is not a normal font but is typed in a color or other decorative text, it usually IS a hoax. You can do your own fact-checking. Go to www.snopes.com. There is a box which allows you to type in one or two key words (like maybe Obama and Muslim) and press Go. They repeat the e-mail so you can be sure it's the one you got, then give a description of exactly what is wrong. I go back to the original e-mail, click **Reply to all** (I want to educate *everyone* that got it), and copy the item from Snopes and also let them know about Snopes. I pretend that they are just naïve and eager to learn. —Margie

Congresswoman Matsui visits our April Meeting



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515

DORIS O. MATSUI
5TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

April 22, 2009

Dear Margie,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Gray Panthers at your monthly membership meeting.

In the Sacramento region, the Gray Panthers have always been a powerful voice for social and economic justice for all people. I enjoyed our dialogue and hope that I can continue to receive your feedback as I move forward in Congress.

Once again, thank you for allowing me to speak at the Gray Panthers meeting. If I can be of assistance in the future, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress

It will be important to advance health care legislation. Thanks for your dedication.

Ms. Margie Metzler
1121 Wayland Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95825

Congresswoman Doris Matsui came to speak at our April meeting. She spoke about health, Medicare and Social Security issues and discussed her support of the Card Check legislation.

We were honored by her joining us, with her staff person, Chris Flores, and we reiterate that she and her staff are welcome at any time.

Gray Panthers asked hard questions, as always, but we all thoroughly enjoyed the visit.





TWO SIDES TO THE GUN CONTROL ISSUE

In reaction to the latest series of mass shootings, the San Francisco Chronicle recently published two columns, side by side, with the one on the left (naturally), calling for an increase in sensible gun control laws, while the column on the right, vigorously opposed any movement toward strengthening such laws.

The pro-gun control article pointed out that at least 30,000 Americans a year lose their lives to gun violence. The article added: "The statistics don't begin to describe the devastating loss and heartache families must endure the rest of their lives."

Not surprisingly, the column on the right did not deviate in the slightest from the National Rifle Association's stand against just about any type of gun control legislation which could reduce this firearm carnage. However, it did suggest that gun violence could possibly be reduced by enacting laws that would "keep kids from dropping out of school or from living in single-parent families or from hanging around the wrong friends."

Now really, is the answer to reducing gun deaths in America a law calling for the screening of children's playmates? And how should such a law be enforced? Maybe each child would be required to answer a set of questions concerning his or her beliefs on such subjects as guns being used in school massacres, or to settle domestic disputes.

In determining the type of legislation that would be most effective in controlling gun violence, it seems it would be a good idea to look around the world and see how other nations are meeting this problem. For

example, Japan probably has the toughest gun control laws in the world, while it's safe to say that the U.S. has just about the weakest. Interestingly, America has more than 150 times the gun deaths as Japan.

A former police reporter for a California newspaper said that he covered dozens of shootings in homes, and in all such cases, a gun in the home never protected the family. He recalled one case where there had been a loaded Luger in the home, and the mother used it to kill her two young daughters, and then killed herself. The former reporter pointed out that "once you see the brains of two little girls scattered over a kitchen table, you become a very strong gun control advocate."

—John Bernier

Computer tip

If you have trouble reading websites because the text is too small, you can help yourself. Some of the savvier sites that appeal to seniors have a place to click to enlarge the font size, but even if they don't, there is a way out. In your browser, most likely Internet Explorer, if you look above the site you'll see these words:

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Click on the word **View**. You'll get a new list of choices opening up; click **Text Size** and then choose **Larger** or **Largest**. The text will be that size on every site until you change it again.



Want to talk back to the Obama Administration? Do you have a point of view you don't think they've heard? Use their website at www.change.gov.

McGeorge School of Law Community Elder Law Clinic

Gray Panther Alice Thomas, who is a current student at McGeorge School of Law and who also works part-time at the school's free Elder Law Clinic, tells us that the Clinic and its hotline services are available to all of us.

McGeorge School of Law serves the low income senior community in Sacramento County through this clinic, dealing with issues ranging from elder abuse restraining orders, wills, trusts, powers of attorney, health care directives, probate court conservatorships, long-term care residents' rights, consumer protection, and public benefits.

**3455 Fifth Street, Sacramento, CA 95817
916-340-6080**



A Nation of Typhoid Marys

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF, N.Y. Times, May 3, 2009

As swine flu spreads around the country, it's only appropriate that the next political donnybrook may concern health care.

Vice President Joseph Biden said a few days ago that for the second 100 days of the administration, "the top of the agenda, the very top, is health care." Lacing its armor across the field, a group called Conservatives for Patients' Rights is airing commercials denouncing (and distorting) President Obama's health care proposals.

Not to be impolite, but Republicans like Karl Rove and Senator Susan Collins (along with some Democrats) lost credibility on this front when they scolded Mr. Obama a few months ago for proposing stimulus spending on something as frivolous as ... preparations for a flu pandemic. (Note to Senator Collins: You might want to remove from your Senate Web site the February article citing your opposition to pandemic preparation.)

The flu crisis should be a wake-up call, a reminder that one of our vulnerabilities to the possible pandemic is our deeply flawed medical system.

"From SARS to avian flu to the current escalating outbreaks of swine influenza, it has become increasingly clear that we are risking a major catastrophe unless we act to restore the safety net," noted Deborah Burger, the co-president of the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee.

Think of the 47 million Americans who lack insurance. They are less likely to receive flu vaccines (which might or might not help), less likely to receive prompt care when they get sick, and less able financially to stay home from work — and thus they are more likely both to die and to spread the virus inadvertently.

"These are, in effect, 47 million 'Typhoid Marys' of the next pandemic — at risk themselves and to their families and neighbors," said Irwin Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

"This is a most dangerous brew: a dysfunctional health care system, vast numbers of Americans without access to health care, a severe recession, overextended and highly stressed hospitals, and the prospect of a nasty new killer virus," Dr. Redlener said.

The American health care system is exceptionally good at cutting-edge technologies. The top five American hospitals together conduct more clinical trials than any entire European country.

Yet over all, our health care system has failed us. Troll through World Health Organization data and cringe: Americans live shorter lives than Greeks, our kids are twice as likely to die by age 5 as Portuguese children, and American women are 11 times as likely to die in childbirth as women in Ireland. Over all, we rank well below most European countries in our health statistics (for which you can also blame the Danish in your hand as you read this).

The larger problem is that we over-invest in clinical care like CAT scans and underinvest in public health. There should be a Nobel Prize for Public Health, so that we might get more great minds wrestling with nonmedical pieces of the health puzzle, like industrial hog farms that can serve as breeding grounds for viruses and bacteria, from swine flu to MRSA.

President George W. Bush did an excellent job making preparations specifically for a flu epidemic, partly because of the avian flu scare and partly because he read a book about the 1918 influenza epidemic. But he and other presidents starved the broader public health system, so that today it is in desperate shape.

Hospitals lack spare beds, ventilators and staff to cope with an epidemic. One study found that a flu epidemic would mean that 10 million Americans would need to be hospitalized — compared with a total of nearly one million beds in America, about two-thirds of them occupied. Last year, Representative Henry Waxman ordered a review of "surge capacity" in hospitals available for a terror attack, and found that more than half the emergency rooms studied were already operating above capacity.

We don't know whether this swine flu will be as lethal even as a typical flu season (the boy who died in Texas last week has already received more attention than all 36,000 Americans who die in a typical year of the flu). So far it has been mild in this country, but we know that the first wave of flu in 1918 caused few deaths but was followed three months later by a different form that killed tens of millions of people around the globe.

We do know we need to take precautions. These include not only washing our hands with soap and water, but also instituting far-reaching health care reform in the coming months. "If a severe pandemic materializes," Dr. Redlener said, "all of society could pay a heavy price for decades of failing to create a rational system of health care that works for all of us."

Top Ten Enemies of Single Payer

By Russell Mokhiber, from www.commoncause.com

(Remember, virtually the entire industrialized world - save for us, the U.S. - makes it a crime to allow for-profit health insurance corporations to make money selling basic health insurance.) Before we confront and defeat the inside the beltway cesspool/hot tub crowd, we must first know who they are.)

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). AARP, one of DC's most powerful lobbying groups, has worked inside the beltway for years to defeat single payer. Why? AARP makes about a quarter of its money selling insurance through its affiliate, United Healthcare Group, the nation's largest for-profit insurance company. AARP must defeat single payer - which if enacted, would wipe out that revenue stream.

America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP). The private health insurance industry. Public enemy number one. The health insurance corporations must die so that the American people can live. Of course, facing the death penalty, AHIP is the most aggressive opponent to single payer. No compromise with AHIP.

American Medical Association. With a shrinking base of doctors (only 25 percent of doctors nationwide belong) - the AMA is the most conservative of the doctors' organizations. I just returned from a health care policy forum at the Center for American Progress. As usual, not one of the panelists mentioned single payer. But ... the majority of doctors, probably even a majority of doctors who belong to the AMA, support single payer.

Barack Obama. He was for it when he was a state Senator in Illinois. Now, ensconced in the corporate prison that is the White House, he says single payer is off the table. To get off the list, Obama needs to put single payer back on the table.

Business Roundtable. Dr. David Himmelstein, co-founder of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP), was at a health care forum a couple of years ago sponsored by the Business Roundtable. And the moderator asked the audience - made up primarily of representatives of big business - to indicate their preference of health care reforms. And the majority came out in favor of single payer. Why then is the Business Roundtable opposed? Himmelstein put it this way: "In private, they support single payer, but they're also thinking - if you can take away someone else's business - the insurance companies' business - you can take away mine. Also, if workers go on strike, I want them to lose their health insurance."

Families USA. A major inside the beltway liberal foundation and long-time foe of single payer. Its chief executive, Ron Pollack, was once an advocate for single payer. But no more. Even considering the Canadian system, (Families USA believes), would prompt GOP cries of 'socialized medicine' - cries that the press would faithfully report."

Health Care for America Now. The largest coalition of liberal groups promoting a choice between a public plan and private insurance companies. "They are saying - we can't do single payer because Americans don't want it," said Kip Sullivan of the Minnesota chapter of PNHP. "That's based on junk research conducted by Celinda Lake for the Herndon Alliance. It is bad enough to say we can't do single payer because the insurance industry is too powerful to beat. But it is just plain insidious to say we can't do single payer because the American people don't want it. In fact, polling data indicates that two-thirds of Americans support a single payer system."

Kaiser Family Foundation. One of the most prestigious liberal inside the beltway think tanks on health reform policy. Saul Friedman is a reporter for *Newsday*. In February, Friedman wrote an article for *Newsday* arguing that single payer is suffering from a conspiracy of silence. And he says Kaiser is the most culpable of the co-conspirators. Kaiser, funded initially by insurance industry money, regularly keeps single payer off the table, Friedman says. When single payer advocates released a study in January asserting that Congressman John Conyers' single payer bill (HR 676) could create 2.6 million new jobs and would cost far less than the private insurance currently paid for by individuals and employers, "the Kaiser Family Foundation's daily online report on health care developments at kff.org didn't mention it," Friedman reported. "Nor has Kaiser, the most comprehensive online source of health care information, made any mention of single-payer or the Conyers bill since it was introduced in 2003, despite widespread support for such a plan according to Kaiser's own polls." After a number of insistent inquiries, Kaiser told Friedman that they would publish charts in March comparing the Stark and Conyers bills. They never did.

The Lewin Group. The go-to consulting firm for health reform studies. The most recent study, released last week and widely quoted in the press, of the public plan option, showed that the insurance industry would lose 32 million policy holders if a public plan is enacted. Lewin's health reform policy guru, John Sheils, told the Associated Press: "The private insurance industry might just fizzle out altogether." What the mainstream press didn't report was that The Lewin Group is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ingenix, which is in turn owned by UnitedHealth Group, the nation's largest health insurance corporation.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association of America (PHRMA). PHRMA chief executive Billy Tauzin says that under single payer, the government would become a "price fixer." By which he means, the government, as a single payer, will have the power to negotiate drug prices downward, thus costing the drug corporations millions in excess profits. In recent years, PHRMA has infiltrated liberal sounding groups like America's Agenda

2008 Officers and Steering Committee of Sacramento Gray Panthers

Temporary Officers: Margie Metzler, 921-5008 or margiemetz@hotmail.com; Arnie Godmintz, 332-5980 or arniegod@sbcglobal.net

Secretary: OPEN

Treasurer: Lola Young

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: Betty Cooper Youngren, Margie Metzler, Pat Naylor, John Bernier, Caroline Schmidt, Nell Ranta

Transportation: Dale Kooyman, Barbara Stanton

Members at Large: Edy Poole, Pat Naylor, Jean Mellberg, Judy Bietz

Webmaster Staff: Margie Metzler

Project Coordinator, Healthcare Issues : 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 Margie Metzler for further information: 916-921-5008.

Gray Panthers National Action Network:

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



Gray Panthers Sacramento



BROADCAST BLUES

Toxic fumes fill the night sky; people are choking to death. Four miles away, seven Canadian Pacific train cars have derailed, spewing poisonous anhydrous ammonia into the air. Emergency personnel scramble to alert the residents of the deadly threat. But the local radio station tasked with providing emergency information play music. Just music. For more than 90 minutes.

As Minot Resident Jennifer Johnson told the local paper, "The phone line was out, so I couldn't call 911. The only thing on the radio was music -- no one was telling us what happened or what to do." Media consolidation rules had permitted Clear Channel to own six of Minot's seven commercial radio stations. All six were programmed from 1200 miles away.

Media policy. A dry and yawn-inducing term that sounds like it belongs on page four of the newspaper's Business section.

But media policy is killing us. Literally.

And it's killing our democracy.

41% of Americans still believe that Saddam Hussein attacked us on 9/11. Journalists Helen Thomas, Amy Goodman, David Brancaccio explain access and deception and a drumbeat to war. Documents that prove, despite what pundits told us, Valerie Plame was a covert agent. Fox News gets a court ruling ... that news doesn't have to be true.

But the public airwaves are public property; that's why people from all political spectrums are standing up to take our media back.

Media Reform is the battle line of this century. **Broadcast Blues is the rallying cry for action!**

<http://www.broadcastblues.tv/>

June 9, 2009

Hart Senior Center



Gray Panthers Sacramento

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

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Monthly Meeting:

No Tuesday meeting in April, since we hosted the California state meeting on May 2.

June meeting: June 9, Movie, Broadcast Blues