



The Official Publication of ACT

P. O. Box 40074, (626) 795-2798

Pasadena, CA 91114-7074

Volume 38

Number 4

April, 2010

Published by Chuck Hains & Sally Beer

GOTV Campaign for CC Underway!

Ballots have arrived throughout the Pasadena Unified School District. The Measure CC campaign needs your help now to be sure voters mail in those ballots. Ballots must be received by the Registrar by Tuesday, May 4.

ACT and the Arroyo Democratic Club have unanimously endorsed Measure CC. Parcel taxes need a 2/3 majority to pass, so we need everyone's help to make sure supporters send in their ballots.

Phone banking is going on Sunday through Thursday at 4:30 pm - 8:30 pm from campaign headquarters at the First United Methodist Church, 500 E. Colorado Blvd. in Pasadena (on the second floor -- use the parking lot off Green St., enter from the rear, and follow the signs). Also, lawn signs are available -- pick them up from the church or call Darla Dyson at 626 644-1425.

Lastly, ACT will be organizing a phone bank to our own members and supporters -- that's on Monday, April 26 and Tuesday, April 27, at the home of Co-Chair Emily Stork at 1250 N. Mentor, Apt. 18, at 6:30 - 8:30 pm. Bring your cell phone!

Time to Renew

If You Find the Dreaded Red Check (✓) on Your Address Label on this *Phoenix*, It's a Reminder to Renew Your 2010 ACT and ADC Membership

ACT and Arroyo Democratic Club membership is by the calendar year -- so 2010 membership dues are due now. A red check (✓) on your address label on this *Phoenix* means we haven't yet received your 2010 check for ACT and/or ADC membership. We sure hope that's



an oversight and you are still with us. Please use the membership coupon and enclosed return envelope to send in your 2010 dues right away.

Also please note that we have voted to place \$10 from each membership into our Political Account so we will be better able to help fund future candidates and campaigns that ACT and ADC endorse.

Marie Salandra

We sadly note the death of long time ACT member Marie Salandra on April 1 at age 90. Marie was a respected educator with a long career as a teacher and principal. In the PUSD she headed Arroyo Seco, Garfield and Sierra Madre Elementary. She was a member and leader in countless civic and women's organizations and received numerous awards and accolades. Most recently Assemblymember Anthony Portantino honored her and her sister, Helen, for their many contributions to the community as Italian-Americans.

We extend deepest sympathy to Helen, to the Salandra's other sister, Agnes, and to two nephews and eight grandnieces and nephews. The family has suggested that any memorial contributions may be made to the College Women's Club of Pasadena, P O Box 452, Pasadena, CA 91102 or to the Pasadena Symphony, 300 E. Green St., Pasadena 91101.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Pasadena's General Plan Update Continues

April 19 Deadline for Public Comment

Pasadena's General Plan is the city's core document describing what we want our city to be like -- what we want to be, where to focus our efforts and our dollars. It is the key policy document for the city, and we are in the process of updating that plan.

The City has held a wide range of community meetings to solicit input, which is summarized in the Draft Outreach Summary Report. (Go to www.cityofpasadena.net -- under the FYI Pasadena rolling menu, look for the Draft Outreach Summary Report heading.)

The deadline for additional public comment is April 19th.

And for those supporters of public education, I

was distressed to see only peripheral mention of the need for excellent public schools in the document. The General Plan now has 7 "Guiding Principles"; I'm urging that an 8th Principle be added -- "Pasadena's success depends upon the health and success of its public school system."

If you agree, or you have any other input for the city, please chime in.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

NWPC-Pasadena

Please, Save the Date for our Annual Caucus Brunch - Sat. May 8, 2010 from 11 am - 1pm.

Keynote speaker will be, LA Councilwoman, The Honorable Janice Hahn, candidate for CA Lt. Governor.

This year will be a special event, a multi-generational affair. Please bring your mother, grandmother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, cousin....



The Harrison Family sharing their *Phoenix* at the launch of Space Shuttle mission STS-131

Half The Sky

What is the most important foreign policy issue on the planet? Most people would probably argue nuclear arms or terrorism should have that dubious honor. But in their book entitled, *Half the Sky; Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, two Pulitzer Prize winning journalists for the New York Times, make a convincing case that ending the oppression of women should be near the top of United States' foreign policy agenda. They argue that honor killings, sexual slavery, genital mutilation and a preference for boys that has led to an estimated one million missing girls amount to the worst human rights violations in history. They argue that the developed world, and particularly the United States, should dedicate resources to improving women's lives in the developing world not only because it is the right thing to do, but because women hold the key to reducing poverty and unlocking the economic potential of the developing world.

The book is a story of triumph. It is a compilation of stories about women like Mukhtar Mai, who was put through the horrors of gang rape, but had the courage to start a school for her rural village in Pakistan. It is the story of Srey Rath, who was sold into a brothel in Cambodia. With help she was able to escape and start her own business. These women showed amazing courage and strength. In each case when they triumphed, not only did they benefit, but the standard of living of their families, and many times their whole villages, was lifted. In each case, they received help and expertise from outside sources. As a politically minded organization, ACT needs to be thinking about what we can do to help further this movement of the emancipation of women. That is why the book will be the topic of discussion at a future meeting. If you have

ideas of how you would like ACT to participate in this global movement, please email me at emilystork@yahoo.com.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

A Method to Republican 'Madness'

Excerpted from Robert Parry, Consortium News

Washington's conventional wisdom for explaining the intensity of Republican obstructionism toward President Barack Obama breaks down one of two ways: either it's a philosophical disagreement over the role of government or a desperate need to stay in line with a radicalized right-wing base.

But there is another way to view the GOP political strategy, as neither principled nor reactive to the rantings of Tea Partiers, Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh. It is that the Republicans are following a playbook that has evolved over more than four decades, to regain power by sabotaging Democratic presidents.

In this analysis, the Republicans believe they can reclaim the lucrative levers of national authority by making the country as ungovernable as possible while a Democrat is in the White House, essentially holding governance hostage until they are restored to power. Then, the Democrats are expected to behave as a docile opposition "for the good of the country" (and usually do).

The "destroy Obama" game plan tracks most closely with Newt Gingrich's strategy for undermining Bill Clinton 16 years ago. But today's strategy also traces back to Richard Nixon's sabotage of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam peace talks in 1968 and Ronald Reagan's October Surprise gambit against President Jimmy Carter's Iran hostage negotiations in 1980.

In all four cases – covering the last four Democratic presidencies – the Republicans did not

Continued on page seven

Political Notes

by Jon Fuhrman



Monday, April 12.

Much has been made recently of Vice-President Joe Biden's slip of the tongue in calling enactment of the health care reform bill a "big f*****g deal." He seems to have gotten a pass of this one from commentators and the public; indeed, the Democratic National Committee was selling T-shirts emblazoned with that phrase like hotcakes.

More seriously, though, it leads one to a more fundamental question: after 15 months in office, is the Obama Administration, as a whole, a "big f*****g deal"? Was it worth all our effort in 2008? To me, the answer is a resounding YES!

We sometimes lose perspective while being bombarded by the most current polls and the latest punditry. But let's take a broader view of what has been accomplished so far.

It may have been a messy process, but we did enact the most fundamental health care reform since Medicare in 1965. President Clinton tried and failed; Democratic Congressional leaders like Ted Kennedy have been pushing toward it for 30 years. Obama delivered.

It was messy, in part, because we lost our 60 vote margin in the Senate. Remember, though, that just 2 years ago we had only 51 Democrats in the Senate. It was Obama's campaign that helped Democrats take Senate seats in Alaska, Virginia, North Carolina, Oregon, New Hampshire, Ohio, New Mexico, Colorado, and, after an excruciating 7 month recount, Minnesota. Without these Democrats, we might not even have had 50 votes in the Senate.

Entirely aside from health care, the Obama Administration sponsored a stimulus package that is, albeit gradually, helping get us out of the worst recession since the 1930's. (And we're starting to see the results as the monthly figures finally show job growth instead of job losses.) We rescued GM and Chrysler, saving countless jobs, and it looks like their turnarounds are headed toward success.

We have the first treaty to continue reducing nuclear weapons in 30 years. We have a new national security strategy that explicitly moves away from cold-war nuclear deterrence and toward focusing on non-proliferation and counter-terrorism. We've renounced torture in all its settings, and at least have a policy aim of closing Guantanamo, even if the progress towards that end is painfully slow.

We have a new Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, not the sort of person a Republican administration would have appointed. We've started the process to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." We are fundamentally changing the government approach to classifying, and declassifying, national security data, and in-

stitutionalizing a bias toward, rather than against, Freedom of Information requests.

Just fifteen months into the Administration, to me that's a pretty impressive list. In fact, I think it amounts to a pretty "big f*****g deal." It's worth remembering how truly important this Democratic Administration, and Democratic Congress, really are.

Here in California, the financial data continue to show a glimmer of hope. Cash receipts for March, once again, exceeded the November budget forecasts. We were \$356 million ahead in revenues, and \$400 million under budget on the expense side. Interestingly, although sales taxes were lower than projected, corporate taxes were substantially higher than projected, and personal income taxes were just about as predicted. This pattern reinforces the macro-economic observations of federal officials: corporate earnings are up, large businesses are starting to spend and invest again, but job recovery is slow and small businesses still find it difficult to borrow and are reluctant to increase spending.

State finance officials continue to be very cautious, warning that these increased revenues won't get us out of our budget jam. But at least the news is not making it worse, as it had been in nearly all of 2008 and 2009.

One key indicator will be tax receipts for April, which reflect calendar year 2009 gains (or losses) on stocks, real estate, and options. My guess is revenue will be close to \$1 billion over projection, which would bode well for the rest of this calendar year and next. If not, the pain will continue in Sacramento.

In addition to tracking revenue and state spending, the Controller's Office also tracks

several key economic indicators; one of those is the number of foreclosures initiated each quarter. The numbers are still huge, but the 4th quarter 2009 numbers are noticeably down from prior quarters. Once again, it suggests things are improving, but we've got a long way to go, and a large overhang in the real estate market that could take a couple of years to work through.

(Special note: As part of our new Web site, we'll be publishing "mini-editions" of Political Notes during the month, and we'll have supplementary data (like charts of state employment figures and foreclosure rates) to supplement our monthly reporting. Start logging on to ACT's Web site for this extra reporting: www.actpasadena.org.)

Lastly, close to home, one more reminder that the mail-only ballots for Measure CC must be received by the Registrar by May 4th. Please vote YES! to support our schools.

For some time, it appeared that opposition to Measure CC would be muted. But last weekend many voters received some mail opposing the measure. The opposition seems to focus on four issues, each of which, I think, is inaccurate.

First, they question why the District is building new schools (middle schools in Sierra Madre and at the Blair campus). They say enrollment is down, excess capacity exists, so why build new schools, and that this wrong-headed philosophy is typical of a district that can't, and doesn't, manage its money well.

It is true that capacity exceeds enrollment. The problem is that it's the wrong capacity. Last year, the District realigned its school configuration plan. Now, nearly all schools will be either K - 5 elementary schools, or middle



schools for grades 6 - 8, or high schools. When this change is fully implemented, we will need more space for middle school children. Also, the district standardized the space plans for each grade level -- middle schools need different facilities (science labs, computer labs, performing arts space, gyms) than elementary schools, so we can't simply convert existing elementary schools. Therefore, using bond money (that can be used only for capital projects), the district is rebuilding the middle school at the Sierra Madre campus, and building a new middle school at Blair (which will be LEEDS certified, to be as environmentally friendly as possible and to minimize operating costs). At the same time, the District will eliminate many temporary classrooms (trailers, really), reducing those operating costs.

Further, when the PUSD Board adopted its budget plan for the next two years, they explicitly included plans to close three elementary schools, recognizing the excess capacity in the K - 5 group. The District has already hired CB Richard Ellis, the national real estate brokerage / consulting firm, to help it with a market assessment of all its properties -- the first step in deciding what to do with potential excess property.

The bottom line, then, is that the District does have excess capacity in one area, but needs more capacity in another area. It has made educationally, and financially, sound decisions and is moving to implement those plans. This is an example, not of reckless stewardship of public funds, but of thoughtful planning and the desire to give our students the best possible educational opportunities while living within our financial constraints.

Another complaint is that the format of the parcel tax is unfair to property owners. A single family home or condo would be assessed \$120; the owner of a 300 - unit apartment building, or Parson's Corporation, also pay

that same \$120 fee. How can that be fair?

Well, it isn't fair. But that's the law. Prop. 13 prohibits "ad valorem" local taxes -- that is, local taxes based on property values. The one exception is for general obligation bonds, like Measure TT which we passed two years ago. Thus, property owners pay in proportion to their assessed valuation for the bond, but will pay a flat fee for the parcel tax.

Curiously, one of the main opponents of Measure CC, Ross Selvidge, was a strong supporter of the Pasadena Library parcel tax, which is structured just like the school district's parcel tax. At the time, though, Selvidge apparently wasn't much troubled by this inequity in the law.

The last major complaint is a combination -- PUSD doesn't really need more money, already spends more than most other districts, and doesn't deliver the goods with the money it has, so why give it more money.

As far as delivering the goods, PUSD does still lag behind surrounding districts like San Marino and La Canada and Arcadia. But the progress has been dramatic: test scores not only are rising, but they are rising faster than state-wide and county-wide averages. That means we're doing a better job than our peers. In 2001, only 2 PUSD schools had scores over 700; now, 9 schools scored over 800 -- the gold standard under the state regimen. Hamilton Elementary was named a U.S. Blue Ribbon school. PUSD graduates last year were accepted by Ivy League schools, Berkeley, UCLA, and other top colleges. The truth is, we are delivering! Our students are thriving and learning, despite the fact that over 65% qualify for free and reduced lunches, and many are English-language learners (not a lot of those in San Marino or Arcadia).

How is it that, with a predominantly underprivileged student population, our scores are

increasing faster than peer districts. One reason is we work hard at it. Another is we spend the money to help us work hard.

PUSD does indeed, as state statistics show, spend more money per pupil than many other districts. But that's because our student population qualifies for more funding. School funding is pretty complicated. At its base, PUSD receives about \$5600 for each student -- roughly the same amount as every other district (although many newer ex-urban districts, as a perverse result of historical decisions, get more money than we do). When compared to private school tuitions, that's not very much. Over and above that amount, districts receive categorical funding based upon the needs of its students. If 65% of the students qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches, then we get funding for that. If 15% of the students are disabled or special needs students, we get funding for that. If 40% are English-language learners, we get money for that.

The problem, though, is that the state and federal categorical grants never really fund the true need. The district is left short, having to cover the gap with what little discretionary funds it has. And if the district has disproportionately high numbers of lower-income students, or special needs students, then the impact becomes severe, even while the per-student spending seems high.

Finally, some critics seem to doubt the fundamental reality of the budget cuts we face. The opposition web site points to Arcadia as a model district that attains high academic achievement with low spending. But Arcadia is asking every family to contribute \$500 to counter the budget cuts they're facing. San Marino, which already passed parcel taxes in excess of \$1,000, now is asking each family to contribute another \$2,000. Every district is being hit in similar fashion. The only question is whether each community will step up to the

plate and decide that public education is a priority for them and walk the walk, or will they just talk the talk and complain about Sacramento and tough economic times.

Let's just hope PUSD voters stand tall, bite the bullet, and commit to \$10 a month for their schools and their children.

-- Jon Fuhrman



'Madness' *Continued from page three*

behave as a loyal opposition but rather as a single-minded political enemy that viewed the White House as its birthright and Democratic control of the Executive Branch as illegitimate. . .

...So, the Republicans have never been made to pay a political price for their scheming to undercut sitting Democratic presidents -- and to grease the GOP's route back to power. Whenever a Democrat is in the White House, the Republicans believe they are free to do whatever they want to block him from solving national problems, making him look weak and ineffectual. . .

This GOP strategy is pursued even if it tarnishes the international image of the United States or if it undermines national security, even if it means more than 20,000 additional U.S. soldiers dying in Vietnam, or 52 American hostages facing longer captivity in Iran, or the likes of Timothy McVeigh feeling empowered to blow up a federal building.

The strategy continues even if it raises the current threat level against President Obama and Democratic lawmakers. The strategy continues because it works.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com.

Act Research Committee Report

Considerations for June Primary Election

The ACT Research Committee met on March 27, 2010 to consider the June primary ballot measures. Participants were: Ralph Hurtado, Neal Wrightson, Emily Stork, Jeanette Mann, Jim Heringer, Inman Moore, Roberta Martinez, Elliot Cuite, Greg Harrison and George Van Alstine.

State Measures: There are five propositions on the State of California June Primary ballot:

- **Prop 13 - Property Tax: New Construction Exclusion: Seismic Retrofitting**
- **Prop 14 - Elections: Open Primaries**
- **Prop 15 - Political Reform Act of 1974: California Fair Elections Act of 2008**
- **Prop 16 - New Two-Thirds Vote Requirement for Local Public Electricity Providers**
- **Prop 17 - Allows Auto Insurance Companies to Base Prices in Part on Driver's History of Insurance Coverage.**

Prop 13, Property Tax: New Construction Exclusion: Seismic Retrofitting (Ralph Hurtado)

Provides that construction to seismically retrofit existing buildings will not trigger reassessment of property tax value, regardless of the type of building.

This measure would allow properties with masonry buildings currently receiving an exclusion from reassessment of 15 years for earthquake upgrades to extend this exclusion. It would also allow any properties with future masonry upgrades to receive exclusions with no time limits. This would reduce local property tax revenues to the extent that properties are no longer reassessed at higher values after 15 years.

Prop 13 passed the Legislature unanimously. The Ballot only has an argument For and none opposed. The ACT Research committee voted to support this measure, refreshed to see a good idea from the Republicans (the chief sponsor of the measure is Republican State Senator Roy Ashburn). However, it's not without a downside, as the committee recognized that this measure will cause a decrease tax revenues (a minor decrease), and any measure that reduces that tax base effectively reduces money for available for education.

The Research Committee voted 10-0-0 to recommend supporting the YES position. The Steering Committee voted 14-0-0 to recommend supporting the YES position.

Prop 14 Elections: Open Primaries (Inman Moore)

Proposition 14 is a constitutional amendment placed on the ballot by the Legislature. It passed both houses of the legislature in 2009 as a compromise to pass the state budget.

- Creates a Top-Two primary election.
- Encourages increased participation in elections for congressional, legislative, and statewide offices by changing the procedure in which candidates are elected in primary elections.
- Gives voters increased options in the primary by allowing all voters to choose any candidate regardless of the candidates or voters political party preference.
- Provides that candidates may choose not to have a political party preference indicated on the primary ballot.
- Provides that only the two candidates receiving the greatest number of votes in the primary will appear on the general election ballot regardless of party preference.
- Does not change primary elections for President, party committee offices and

nonpartisan offices.

- Affects the following offices:

Statewide Officials: Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Controller, Insurance Commissioner, and Attorney General.

Other State Officials: State Senators, State Assembly Members, and State Board of Equalization Members

Congressional Officials: United States Senators and Members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

What does this measure do?

It creates a single ballot for primary elections for congressional and state elective offices. Candidates would indicate for the ballot either their political party or no party preference. All candidates would be listed—including independent candidates, who now would appear on the primary ballot. Each voter would use this single primary ballot. A voter would be able to vote for anyone on the ballot. The two candidates with the highest number of votes in primary election—regardless of their party preference—would advance to compete in the November general election. In fact, the two candidates in the general election could have the same party preference.

Legislative Analyst's Estimate of Fiscal Impact: No significant net change in state and local government costs.

Arguments In Favor:

- The "Top Two" primary will put more moderate politicians in office.
- It would reduce the partisanship that causes legislative gridlock.
- Frees control of the state's politics by special interests at the extremes of both major parties.

Arguments Against:

- Proposition 14 will increase the cost of

administering elections.

- It gives a great edge to an incumbent.
- It will increase the cost of campaigns, as candidates will have to reach out to both parties in the primaries.
- It will result in the destruction of the minor and independent parties.

Supporters: California Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Elias (Journalist), Jonathan Alter (Newsweek columnist), Tom Campbell, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Steve Westly.

Opponents: Chairs of the California Democratic and Republican Parties as well as the California Democratic Party, ACLU of Northern California, California Green Party, and California School Employees Association.

The Research Committee voted 10-0-0 to recommend supporting the NO position.
The Steering Committee voted 11-3-0 to recommend supporting the NO position.

Proposition 15: California Fair Elections Act (Elliot Cuite)

Currently, state law prohibits the use of public funds for political candidates' campaigns. Campaign finance laws are overseen by the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) as well as the Secretary of State. Lobbyist registration, records, and administration is overseen by the Secretary of State

What's Proposed?

Creates a voluntary public financing system for the 2014 and 2018 Secretary of State elections. Can be extended by a majority vote in the legislature. Lifts the ban on public funding for political campaigns. Significantly increases the registration fee of lobbyists to cover the costs of qualified candidates

Details:

To qualify, a candidate would have to show

support by raising \$5 contributions from 7,500 people (3,750 for minor parties). Once qualified, candidates are entitled to a certain levels of public funding. Candidates who opt to receive public funds are prohibited from accepting any private contributions (with a few exceptions) and are required to spend money only when “directly campaign related”. A majority of the public funds would come from fees imposed on lobbyists and lobbying firms. The proposition would increase the annual registration fee from \$25 to \$350. This would raise an estimated \$6 million for each election, which is also the estimated cost of funding the qualified candidates.

Arguments for: The main argument in support of the proposition is that public funding would eliminate the influence of money in politics. Proponents claim this would allow ideas to compete with each other, rather than the war chest available to each campaign.

Proponents: AARP, League of Women Voters, California Nurses Association, California Church IMPACT.

Arguments against: Rather than arguing philosophical objections to the public financing, most opponents focus on technical or procedural problems with the implementation. Opponents claim the proposition: 1) will allow candidates to raise unlimited private funds through loopholes, 2) raise taxes, and 3) can be expanded without voter approval.

Opponents: Institute for Governmental Advocates, FPPC

Note: This proposition conflicts with Proposition 14 also on the ballot. If they both pass, they will have to be reconciled through additional legislation, judicial action, or another ballot measure.

The Research Committee voted 10-0-0 to recommend supporting the YES position. The Steering Committee voted 10-2-2 to recommend supporting the YES position.

Proposition 16: Imposes New Two-Thirds Voter Approval Requirement for Local Public Electricity Providers. Initiative Constitutional Amendment. (Jim Heringer)

If approved, this would impose a requirement of a two-thirds vote of the electorate involved before a public agency could enter the retail power business. This would make it more difficult for local entities to form either municipal utilities or community wide clean electricity districts called Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs). This initiative qualified for inclusion on January 12, 2010. The petition drive management company “Direct Voice” was paid \$2.2 million to collect the qualifying signatures.

The Legislative Analyst estimates there will be “unknown net impact on state and local government costs and revenues due to uncertainty as to the measure’s effects on public electricity providers and on electricity rates. These effects are unlikely to be significant in the short run.”

Arguments for: Greg Larson, paid spokesperson from Larsen Cazanis, a Sacramento PR firm: “Why shouldn’t the people who are going to pay the bill have the right to vote on that?” President of the California Chamber of Commerce Allen Zaremberg: “Requiring a vote will ensure that the complicated and risky choice to create a government-run electricity business gets the public discussion it deserves. These are long-term deals that can commit generations to hundreds of millions of dollars of debt.”

Proponents: California Taxpayers Association, California Chamber of Commerce and the Pacific Gas & Electric Company. PG&E has given \$15.5 million so far, expects to spend \$25-\$35 million on the campaign for a “yes” vote and is the only donor to the “yes” campaign. PG&E, which reported a \$1.22

billion profit in 2009, has notified its shareholders that the cost of contributions to the “Yes on 16” campaign will amount to about 6-9 cents per share of the stock. Company executives told shareholders that they believe this is a good use of PG&E funds because otherwise the company would have to spend “millions and millions of shareholder dollars to defend itself repeatedly” every time a municipality is thinking about going the CCA route. PG&E fights against municipalities forming CCAs because when local government agencies form their own local utility districts, PG&E loses customers, thus cutting into the corporation’s long-term profitability. (*Capitol Weekly*, March 11, 2010)

Arguments against:

This initiative reduces the ability of people to choose between private and public utility companies.

Protects the monopoly enjoyed by a giant for-profit electric utility.

Holding the required elections would be expensive.

This measure shows that the initiative process has become “a plaything of powerful interests using deception and misdirection to line their pockets.” (Michael Hiltzig, *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 2009)

Opponents: League of Women Voters, Sierra Club, AARP, Consumer Federation of California, California Tax Reform Association, The Utility Reform Network, Agricultural Energy Consumers Association, California state senators Steinberg, Leno, Oropeza, Wolk, Kehoe, Lowenthal, Cedillo and Florez, the San Francisco Guardian, the Palo Alto City Council, the Modesto Irrigation District.

The Research Committee voted 10-0-0 to recommend supporting the NO position. The Steering Committee voted 12-0-0 to recommend supporting the NO position.

Prop 17 Allows Auto Insurance Companies to Base Prices in Part on Driver’s History of Insurance Coverage. Initiative Statute. (Greg Harrison)

Proposition 17 was placed on the ballot via signatures collected from a petition drive, sponsored by Mercury Insurance company. If the measure passes, it will allow insurance companies in the state to give “persistency discounts” to new customers. These discounts are for those that have had continuous, or nearly continuous auto insurance coverage for a given period of time.

Official ballot summary:

- Changes current law to permit insurance companies to offer a discount to drivers who have continuously maintained their auto insurance coverage, even if they change their insurance company, and notwithstanding the ban on using the absence of prior insurance for purposes of pricing.
- May allow insurance companies to increase cost of insurance to drivers who do not qualify for discount.
- Establishes that lapses in coverage due to nonpayment of premiums may prevent qualifying for the discount.

Arguments for: Under current California insurance law, drivers with continuous insurance from the same company are eligible for a “continuous coverage” discount. If a driver switches insurers, they are not eligible for this discount. This measure ensures all drivers that maintain continuous coverage will be eligible for this discount even if they switch carriers. This will lead to more choice and help consumers.

Proponents: “Californians for Fair Auto Insurance Rates” (Cal-FAIR), a coalition of business, Chambers of Commerce, and Taxpayer groups. Mercury Insurance spent \$3.5 million to gather signatures to get it on the ballot.

Arguments against: The initiative would legalize a surcharge that is currently illegal under California law. Allows insurance companies to raise auto insurance prices for customers that had a lapse in insurance in the past five years. The Campaign for Consumer Rights has shown how Mercury Insurance currently discriminates against soldiers in Texas, (where these surcharges are allowed), causing insurance premiums to rise by 33%. Rates rose as much as 73% in Nevada. In 2005, California courts prevented Mercury Insurance from engaging in this practice.

Opponents: Campaign for Consumer Rights, Consumer advocate Harvey Rosenfield, author of Proposition 103, VoteVets, USAA Insurance (largest insurer of military), Consumers Union.

Recommendation: Prop 17 would overturn existing consumer protections and allow insurance companies to charge higher rates to people that have allowed their insurance to lapse. This will adversely affect low-income consumers, students, and military.

The Research Committee voted 10-0-0 to recommend supporting the NO position. The Steering Committee voted 11-0-1 to recommend supporting the NO position.

Bonus Action

The Research Committee met with Denny Zane, Executive Director of Move LA

- **Move LA's** mission is to build a broad constituency that will advocate for the development of a comprehensive, diverse, robust, clean, and financially sound public transportation system for Los Angeles County and champion strategies to accelerate its implementation.
- **Specifically**, we discussed Move LA's (and Mayor Villaraigosa's) "30/10" plan to accelerate the voter-approved Measure R plan to

expand the Los Angeles region's transit system. The fast-track plan aims to secure federal funds to complete the expansion in 10 years time, rather than 30 years (hence "30/10").

- **The LA Times** reported on 3/29/10 that the idea is gaining support at the federal level, and "it could serve as a national model for speeding economic recovery and reducing pollution and traffic congestion." (links listed on ACTpasadena.org website forum)

The Research Committee voted 10-0-0 to recommend supporting the 30/10 Transportation Initiative's acceleration of Measure R funds.

The Steering Committee voted 12-0-0 to recommend supporting the 30/10 Transportation Initiative's acceleration of Measure R funds.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

**From
State Senator
Carol Liu...**

**Sacramento Update
April 5, 2010**



As we welcome a long-awaited spring the Legislature is fully engrossed in budget and bill hearings. Each house must have its bills passed out of their policy committees by April 23. After that comes the dreaded Appropriations Committee. But, there is no money for new programs, so most legislation with a chance to move on to the other house will either eliminate or reform programs or make changes in law that have no government cost.

My legislative agenda is concentrated mostly

on reform. One bill will restructure the state K-12 education governance system. Another creates a statewide higher education fee policy that enables students and their families to predict college costs over time and shields them from abrupt fee increases. These bills are being heard in the Senate Education Committee on April 14.

Another one of my measures establishes a task force to develop pathways to economic self-sufficiency for those now living in poverty. The federal poverty guideline for a single person is an income just over \$10,000 a year and just over \$22,000 a year for a family of four. Using those guidelines, California's poverty rate is almost 13%. But we all know these guidelines are unrealistic. People and families earning even twice those amounts are living on the brink. Those living in poverty don't want a handout; they want a way out through education, job training, micro-business loans, and equal opportunity. The task force will identify programs and creative strategies to help break the cycle of poverty. This "double-referred" bill passed out of its first policy committee and has one more to go before the end of the month deadline.

Another one of my bills moving through the process is **SB 998**. This measure provides for a coordinated long-term care policy that helps elders remain in or return to their homes for treatment of injuries or disabilities.

SB 907 would create an Office of Federal Funding Information and Assistance to facilitate the flow of federal dollars to local government, non-profits, and community-based organizations. Part of the effort would be to build more local capacity to pursue federal funding opportunities and submit winning bids. Speaking of which, I was thrilled to see so many participants in the recent Federal Grants Workshop that Congressman Schiff and I hosted last month. We plan another one

soon that will tackle more of the nuts and bolts of how to write a competitive proposal. Please remember to check out my website (www.senate.ca.gov/Liu) for more information on federal funding opportunities and future workshops.

On the budget front, we are continuing hearings on the Governor's proposed budget while awaiting new revenue numbers from tax returns filed on April 15. Even if returns are better than expected, we will still have a substantial budget deficit and many tough choices ahead of us. For those of you interested in the budget balancing process, the organization Next10 has created an exercise you can access through its website. Go to www.nextten.org and click on *California Budget Challenge*.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that my District Director, Tahra Goraya, has been selected by THE Magazine as one of its **2010 TOP 50 Fabulous Women of Influence in the Pasadena Foothills Region**.

Congratulations Tahra.

Senator Carol Liu represents nearly 850,000 people in the 21st Senate District, which includes Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, La Cañada Flintridge, San Gabriel, Temple City, and several City and County of Los Angeles communities. Visit www.senate.ca.gov/LIU.



Phoenix Deadline

The deadline for the May Phoenix will be Sunday, May 9. Please send items to Chuck Hains at Hains27@SBCGlobal.net. *The Phoenix* will be prepared for mailing on Thursday, May 13 at 7 p.m. at Chuck's house, 1391 La Solana, Altadena. (Volunteer mailers please call Ellen Coles at 626-798-2402 to verify date and time.)



**From
44th District
Assemblymember
Anthony
Portantino**

Greetings from
Sacramento!



Since coming to Sacramento three years ago, I have advocated for fiscal accountability. That's why I am especially pleased to introduce a reform package of bills that will soon be coming up for a vote. Included in the package is a "pay as you go" proposal that would force financial discipline on Sacramento. I've also introduced legislation to freeze state salaries over \$150,000; though it is not very popular in the capitol. I am hopeful that one way or another we can bring some common sense to Sacramento during these tough economic times.

Earlier this year a constituent came up with a very good idea: why not do something to help underage drinkers get help in an emergency? That suggestion and the recent death of a South Pasadena teen led to legislation that I am pleased to report has been approved by the Assembly and is now on its way to the Senate. SB 1999 – the 911 Immunity Bill – encourages teens to call for help and sends the message that if you do the right thing and call for help for a friend in trouble, you will not be punished.

I am delighted to join Senator Carol Liu in once again recognizing the accomplishments of outstanding businesswomen in our districts. Nominations for the *11th annual Women in Business Awards* to be held July 11 are now available. For more information or to obtain a nomination form, contact my district office at (626) 577-9944 or log on to my website:

www.asm.ca.gov/portantino. The deadline to submit nominations is April 23.

Finally, I have been appointed Chair of the Select Committee on the Preservation of the California Entertainment Industry. As many of you know, I was in film and television production for many years before becoming involved in politics. This committee gives me the ability to continue to explain that production in California is about jobs and their impact on the state's economy.

I took my first small vacation this week; headed home to New Jersey to visit my mother. She has not been traveling lately so I wanted to see her during the first real break we've had in a while. Sofia flew back last week to see both her grandparents during her spring break from UCSB. Bella is playing softball for team Juice it Up. Her jersey nickname is "Rock Star."

Assemblymember Anthony Portantino represents the 44th Assembly District of California, including La Canada, Pasadena, Altadena, South Pasadena, Eagle Rock, Highland Park, Glassell Park, Temple City, Duarte and parts of Arcadia and Monrovia. He can be reached by Email at:

<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a44/>



Peace or World War III?

Does Iran's nuclear program merit the ruckus it is raising?

By John Gula from the
Pasadena Weekly 04/08/10



How will the West's confrontation with Iran over its nuclear program ultimately be resolved? In the infamous words of former President George W. Bush: World War III?

Bush's remark to this effect on Oct. 17, 2007, was jarring, but it accurately reflects the grav-

ity of the situation. If Iran is attacked by either Israel or the US, it has vowed to retaliate with medium- and long-range missiles. US troops in Iraq and Israeli citizens would be the most vulnerable to such attacks.

Moreover, Iran has military alliances with Syria, Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. If war breaks out between Iran and Israel, there is a good chance these other entities would join the fight on Iran's side. Hezbollah, which fought Israel to a draw during a brief war in 2006, retains hundreds of missiles that can strike deep within Israel. Where all of this would end is anybody's guess.

Obviously, cooler heads favor some kind of diplomatic solution to the standoff over Iran's nuclear program. But it's also fair to ask if this program really deserves the ruckus it is raising. After all, Iran continues to claim its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, and as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) it does indeed have a right to peaceful nuclear development.

Let us also remember that all 16 US intelligence agencies reached a consensus in December 2007 that Iran ended its nuclear weapons program in 2003. Perhaps a new National Intelligence Estimate will reach a different conclusion, but so far this has not yet happened.

Should we not also be skeptical when those most alarmed about Iran sound a lot like the hyperventilating Bush administration officials who led us into the disastrous Iraq war over weapons of mass destruction that proved to be non-existent? Take, for example, the recently reported "secret documents" which purport to show that Iran has worked on a "neutron initiator," a device that can serve as a trigger for an atom bomb. However, US intelligence has not yet confirmed the authenticity of these documents, which Iran says are forgeries. Some CIA officials have agreed. All of this is reminiscent of the bogus claim that Saddam

was seeking yellowcake uranium in Niger.

Just how close is Iran to having a workable nuclear weapon? Its grand total of two tons of low-enriched uranium that some find so menacing is only 3.5 percent pure. To work in a nuclear weapon, uranium must be enriched to more than 90 percent. Whether Iran can make this huge leap and then assemble a reliable nuclear bomb is by no means certain and is surely not imminent.

Much has also been made of Iran's nuclear site under construction beneath a mountain near the city of Qom. But after Israel unilaterally bombed and destroyed an above-ground nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981, and later destroyed an above-ground nuclear reactor under construction in Syria in 2007, Iran has clearly learned a lesson from these events and is seeking to shelter its nuclear facilities from any other Israeli attacks.

So far the threat of additional UN Security Council sanctions has done nothing but stiffen Iran's resolve to build even more nuclear plants. Furthermore, the lack of unity on the council has probably emboldened Iran, as China has consistently opposed new sanctions and current council members Brazil, Turkey and Lebanon have signaled they may fail to support new punitive measures. In any event, it's doubtful a fourth round of sanctions would accomplish something the previous three have not.

How far can the West push Iran before it follows North Korea's path and withdraws from the NPT? If this happened, Iran could expel the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors who continue to monitor its nuclear facilities. This would be a colossal setback. As long as IAEA inspectors remain active in Iran, its ability to make mischief is severely constrained.

Finally, it's time to deal realistically with the underlying assumption driving the whole

debate about Iran's nuclear program. That is, if Iran were to someday actually acquire a workable nuclear weapon, this would somehow constitute an "existential threat" to Israel.

Writing in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Dr. Avner Cohen, a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, recently called this perception "hysterical," "apocalyptic" and "alarmist." He invokes the time-honored concept of deterrence, pointing out that any Iranian attempt to destroy Israel with a nuclear weapon would surely result in the destruction of Iran itself by Israel's sizable nuclear arsenal. According to Cohen, the powers that be in Iran understand this.

We need to take a deep breath and let reason and restraint guide us to a peaceful resolution of the "Iranian nuclear crisis." If we fail, the possible consequences may truly be apocalyptic.

John Grula, Ph.D., is affiliated with the Southern California Federation of Scientists



**P. O. Box 40074
Pasadena, California
91114-7074**



- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| April 16-18
Fri-Sun | California Democratic Party
State Convention in Los Angeles |
| April 30
Friday | L A Registrar recommends
mailing your PUSD Parcel Tax
ballot by this date. |
| May 4
Tuesday
8 p.m. | PUSD Parcel Tax ballot dead-
line. Ballots may be delivered
to Pasadena City Hall Rotunda,
Baptist Church at 2283 N. Fair
Oaks, Altadena or Reference
Room, Sierra Madre Library. |
| May 6
Thursday
7 p.m. | ACT Steering Committee and
ADC meeting at home of Wendy
Gordon and Michael Gottlieb,
1535 Ontario Ave., Pasadena.
All members are welcome and
urged to attend. Prop. CC up-
date & PUSD Planning. Coffee
at 7 p.m.; meeting follows at
7:30 p.m. (ACT and ADC meet
on 1st Thursdays.) |
| May 7
Friday
8-9 a.m. | Friday Morning Progressive
Discussion Group at Conrad's
Restaurant, NW corner Lake &
Walnut, Pasa. Call Inman
Moore for info at 626-795-2201.
Group meets 1st & 3rd Fridays. |
| May 14
Friday
10 a.m. | San Gabriel Valley Democratic
Women's Club meeting at 2525
Highland Ave., Altadena.
Presentation on the five June 8
ballot measures. |
| May 21
Friday | Friday Morning Discussion
Group. (Details same as May 7.) |