

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



What's Happening in Syria, and Why?

Tuesday, November 17, 12:30–3PM

Unitarian Universalist Center

1187 Franklin @ Geary

The current civil war in Syria has killed hundreds of thousands and produced the greatest refugee crisis since WWII. It is also the most violent site of a rapidly escalating proxy war between the US and Russia. Dr. Paul Larudee, a Middle-East peace and justice activist will explain what's happening, how it affects the entire Mid-East, and why it's important to us.

GRAY PANTHERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS

Board Meeting, Wed, Nov 4, 1 PM
Main Library, Stong Rm, 1st Floor
Members welcome.

Newsletter Committee, Thurs, Oct 8,
Noon, GP Office, 2940 16th St, Rm 200-3

Book Club, Mon, Nov 23, 11:30 AM
Celtic Café, 142 McAllister
between Hyde & Leavenworth
Please call 415-931-1126 to confirm.

Our October Meeting: Prop 13 Reform

Emil Margolis, of Evolve-California, asked the audience to try to honestly recall what we thought about Prop 13 when it was being introduced. People realized that we were so pre-occupied with rising property taxes on residential homes that we completely missed the huge property tax reductions large corporations would get by legal stratagems to avoid reassessment when their property changed hands. The estimated revenue loss for California is \$9 billion this year alone!

Evolve-California and the Make-It-Fair Coalition want to change this, starting with SCA-5, a constitutional amendment mandating *annual* reassessment of commercial and industrial properties at their fair market value by 2018, not just when they change hands. Property tax rates would not change nor assessments on residential property, but there is no protection against commercial landlords charging small businesses higher rents. Increased revenue would be distributed among cities, counties, and school districts as currently done, with transparency on its spending. Increased school district revenue would be pooled state-wide and redistributed to districts as currently done, and could not go to increased administration.

As a Constitutional amendment, SCA-5 requires a 2/3 vote in both the Assembly and Senate, then passage as a ballot initiative in a California election. Clearly, this will be a long, drawn-out process in both the legislature and the general public. However SCA-5 already has support of City Councils, County Supervisors, and School Districts. San Francisco, Los Angeles and 150 other jurisdictions are on board, as well as some 700 elected officials.



Our SF Gray Panther Board Recommends:

Measure F: Yes: (Regulate Short-Term Rentals)

Measure I: Yes: (Suspension of Market-Rate Development in the Mission District)

Measure K: Yes: (Surplus Public Lands)

Displacement From SF = Loss of Health

What are some of the medical consequences of being displaced from San Francisco?

SDA's Tony Robles and Tim Redmond's *48 Hills* eloquently show how the stress of evictions killed North Beach resident Elaine Turner, 78 and Daly City resident Ron Lickers, 69. This is clearly elder abuse. See <http://tinyurl.com/nktuu6v>.

But displacement from the City also can mean loss of health care.

For the tens of thousands of the poorest San Franciscans enrolled in Healthy San Francisco, being displaced out of the City results in becoming completely uninsured. These are people who are not eligible for Medicare or Medi-Cal because of not being seniors, not having documentation, not collecting Social Security, not being deeply enough into poverty, or not earning enough to buy private health insurance on Covered California and still have enough money left over for the co-pays and deductibles on that health insurance, plus pay rent, food, transportation, etc.

For the hundreds of thousands of San Francisco seniors or people with disabilities who are low-income and have one or more chronic diseases, being displaced out of the City results in losing access to trusted doctors and other medical providers that took patients years to find. It means losing providers who understand their patients' complex medical cases, are willing to advocate for their patients, are also willing to hear and consider their patients' opinions on the best medical options.

Many City workers and retirees with chronic disease pay more to use City Health Plan, which allows access to a wider choice of doctors, but is restricted to SF residents. For them, displacement out of the City results in being forced into another plan with a narrower choice of doctors.

Tues, Nov 17 SF Gray Panthers Meeting *What's Happening in Syria, and Why?*



Dr. Paul Larudee, of El Cerrito, is Co-Founder of the Free Gaza and Free Palestine Movements, and active in the Syria Solidarity Movement and the International Solidarity Movement. He was on the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla that was attacked by Israeli forces.

He has spent 14 years in Arab countries, as a supervisor of a Ford Foundation project, as a Fulbright lecturer, and as a government advisor.

Women and Mass Incarceration

Some 25% of all women and 44% of Black women have an imprisoned family member, reports the SF BayView, 5/27/2015. With men currently making up 90 percent of the 2.2 million people currently incarcerated, women who have incarcerated loved ones are often left raising children, managing family finances, and facing stigma in their communities and workplaces.

Article is at <http://tinyurl.com/o6xd6vp>



Housing Matters

Yerba Buena Update: 100 people living in 40 affordable units were forced to leave City-owned Yerba Buena Island by Sept 2015, and given two options: (1) move to Treasure Island, where the ground may liquefy in an earthquake and the soil is too poisonous for children to play in because of World War II US Navy radioactive and chemical waste not being cleaned up, or (2) accept relocation assistance of \$3,700-\$5,500, tens of thousands of dollars less than relocation assistance in cases of eviction from private apartments in the City.

According to Yerba Buena activist Betty Mackey, the City told tenants "It's safe!" and Jane Kim, a member of the Treasure Island Development Authority because she's Supervisor for the islands, said "It doesn't matter where they live as long as its affordable!"

The YBI project involves replacing aging Navy buildings and affordable housing units with luxury condos, a hotel, and a ferry terminal, with no plans yet for public transit. Only 15 of the 300 condos will be below market-rate (5%) and even that is only temporary. Why is Lennar Corp being given this City-owned land to displace us and get rich?

Homeless Snitch App: The City has added a new service to its 311 mobile phone app, allowing citizens to report homeless people on the street. Mayor Ed Lee says it will bring services to the homeless, but as a formerly homeless man said, "It's a snitch app, What they're doing is making residents police." The Mayor said the app responds to concerns like those of a personal finance writer who organized her Nob Hill neighbors to call the City on homeless issues. The app allows reports to be categorized as "aggressive behavior", "encampment", "clean-up shopping carts", and "well-being check," and allows users to up-load pictures of the homeless people being reported. The Health Dept says it's increasing its homeless outreach team. (SF Examiner, 10/9/2015.)

Central Subway Follies: SF needs to demolish the old Pagoda Theater and rent the land for 2 years at \$131,000/mo as a surfacing site for the boring machines for the Central Subway, which will have no North Beach stop. Sup. Scot Weiner is angry the City hasn't bought the property.

Drug Profits Prevent Hep C Cure

In 2014, a wave of enthusiasm swept the medical field as new medicines to cure hepatitis C became available. Older treatments had limited success and bad side effects. New medications eliminate the virus in 80-95% of cases, with few side effects.

The wave crashed, however, on the cost of the medications: a thousand dollars per pill. Profits to Gilead Sciences, the first approved manufacturer, are projected in the billions.

Hep C affects 135-160 million worldwide, including some three million in the US. It is usually a chronic disease; life-threatening liver cancer and cirrhosis take 10-30 years to develop. In the US, more die from Hep C than from HIV illnesses, and Hep C is the leading cause of liver transplants.

Black workers are 22 per cent of Hep C patients, though only 13% of the US population. Middle-aged Black workers' Hep C mortality is 8%, twice that of comparable white workers. For native Americans and Alaskan natives it's even higher.

Physicians agree that almost all of those infected should be treated, but insurance companies have decided that only the worst cases get medication, so many will suffer and die unnecessarily. The cost is prohibitive for the uninsured and undocumented. Getting approved for Medicaid treatment frustrates both doctors and patients, and many give up. And states with the highest uninsured and the worst poverty did not even expand Medicaid.

Pharmaceutical price-gouging has been in the news of late—particularly the company that raised the price of Daraprim, for an HIV- illness, from \$13 to \$750 per pill. Current costs for the new hepatitis C treatments—Harvoni, Solvadi, and Veikira Pak—would bankrupt public health programs like Medicaid. Medicare faces huge costs as well, since federal rules bar Medicare from negotiating lower prices. Legislative efforts to change this policy have failed, because politicians are bought by the drug companies.

Hep C research was funded publicly, through agencies like the National Institutes of Health, so the patents on these drugs were basically stolen from the public. Clearly, the greatest threat to public health is the for-profit medical system.

Medicare Part B Premium Hikes Loom

Increased medical costs, fueled by out-of-control drug prices and insurance administration costs, could cause a 52% increase in 2016 Medicare Part B premiums (covering outpatient care) for almost 1/3 of Medicare recipients.

Because there will be no Social Security COLA increase for 2016, the 70% of existing Medicare recipients whose Part B premiums are paid from their Social Security checks will not have to pay the premium increase.

The 30% who will have to pay the increase include new Medicare patients, those with higher-income, those on both Medicare and Medicaid/Medi-Cal (their Medicare Part B premium is paid by Medicaid/Medi-Cal), and Medicare patients who do not receive Social Security. Premiums would jump from \$105/month to \$159/month. Premiums for the wealthier, e.g. singles earning \$85-\$107K, jump from \$147 to \$223. Deductibles for ALL Medicare recipients jump from \$147 to \$223.

People whose income dropped to a lower premium payment category since their 2014 tax returns because of divorce, a spouse's death, or reduction in work hours, may get Social Security to reduce payment. People below 135% of Federal Poverty Line (e.g. \$22K for family of two) may qualify for a State premium subsidy. More details are available at <http://tinyurl.com/pl6sxbe>.

The Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA's parent organization), Social Security Works, and the Medicare Rights Center are working to oppose these increases. 100,000 signed an on-line petition at <http://tinyurl.com/q6vnfs8>. A proposed Medicare Premium Fairness Act (S. 2148, Wyden, OR, and H.R. 3696, Titus, NV) would prevent these premium and deductible increases.

Meanwhile, Senate Republicans are threatening to refuse to increase the debt limit, needed by Nov. 4th to finance spending that Congress has already authorized, unless there are Social Security and Medicare cuts, such as increasing the Medicare eligibility age and cutting Social Security COLA payments. But remember that reducing the Social Security COLA with the "Chained CPI" was Obama's own idea. Stay tuned.

Calif. Continues Mass Incarceration

After years of declining crime rates, a court order to decrease State prison population, and Prop 47's de-felonizing of many non-violent crimes, California counties continue to plan more jails and to ignore successful programs for bail reform and alternatives to incarceration. Blacks, Latinos and the poor continue to be far disproportionately imprisoned, and the stupendous cost is causing huge losses to mental health and other social services. County jail deaths are up 65% from last year.

A new report, "Are Counties Building Jails or Investing in Community Solutions," by Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) concludes that all 58 California counties are planning to build or expand jails, largely incentivized by \$2.2 billion of State funds, for which 32 counties, including SF, have applied. Despite local opposition, 23 counties are already building new jails.

The big new thing now is "Social Service Jails" supplying mental health and substance abuse treatment, education, and other services. But inmates are still caged, removed from families and their community, and sheriffs are not trained providers. These hugely expensive jails suck away county money that could deliver the same services much more cheaply and humanely. As in San Francisco, these jails would be used to move unsightly homeless people out of gentrifying neighborhoods.

For San Francisco County, the report found that despite community opposition and successful innovation in alternatives to incarceration, the County is planning to spend \$600+ million over 30 years for a 240-bed new jail, even though current inmates could be housed in present facilities after demolition of the two seismically unsafe jails.

As noted before, 70% of SF inmates are awaiting trial but too poor to post bail, and Blacks are 56% of the jail population although only 6% of the general population. Current pre-trial diversion and bail reform proposals would reduce the population by 500, making a new jail even more unnecessary. SF Gray Panthers is helping the No New SF Jail Coalition reach more community and labor groups.

Flash! Sheriff Mirkarimi now says State money for a new SF jail, if awarded, should be returned. So who does support the jail now? Mayor? Supes?

CARA Convention

Gray Panthers of SF is a member of CARA, the California Alliance for Retired Americans. CARA just had its bi-annual state-wide convention in Ontario near Los Angeles. There was a very informative and timely panel on Prop 13 Reform, Renewing and Improving the Prop 30 Millionaires Tax, Threats to Public Workers' Pensions, and an update from the Campaign for Healthy California (Single-Payer). There was a great workshop on trying to expand home-based Long-Term Care for seniors while managed-care cost-containment is being increased. There was also a workshop on Pedestrian Safety, a newer focus of CARA work, and a workshop on helping others make the tough emergency or end-of life decisions about one's medical care, finances, dependents etc.

The Convention enthusiastically adapted the SF Gray Panthers resolution "Include Universal Long Term Care In Medicare for All: (1) CARA will work to include Long Term Care costs and benefits in every study and analysis, with the intention that these services should become part of the standard benefit package in any Single Payer effort, (2) CARA will also work to have these cost and benefit analyses also include Dental, Podiatry, Eyeglasses, Hearing Aids, and Alternative Medicine, and (3) that the Long Term Care component of Single Payer efforts should be based on quality and compassionate principles including emphasis on home and community care, preventative medical care, a smooth continuum of care as patient's conditions change, public education of Long Term Care options available, and adequate compensation, working conditions, and training and support of caregivers."

The Convention also passed, on a divided vote, a SF Living Wage resolution on Racism in Mass Incarceration, Drug Wars, and Police Killings, which a SF Gray Panther member helped write. It urged continued de-felonization of non-violent crimes, less money to prisons, and urged local CARA chapters ("CATs") to engage in local campaigns against mass incarceration, prison construction, and police killings. Other resolutions concerned climate change, urgent actions to stop traffic deaths, elimination of the commercial property tax loophole in Prop 13, and elimination of a Social Security penalty suffered by many public workers.

Gray Panthers of SF

2940 16th Street, Room 200 – 4
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-552-8800
<http://graypantherssf.igc.org/>
graypanther-sf@sonic.net

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We believe ALL people are entitled to certain fundamental rights:

- meaningful employment
- economic security
- decent and affordable housing
- quality health care
- a life of dignity from birth to death free from fear and abuse
- a world in peace



Age and Youth in Action

Call the office for membership information.

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Actions and Events (Complete on-line Calendar at <http://tinyurl.com/2gy6enb>)

Sat, Nov 7, *Enough is Enough* West Coast Rally: 12-4 PM, Civic Center Plaza.

<http://tinyurl.com/o5zagyv>

Sat, Nov 7, Calif Coalition for Women Prisoners Gala: 7PM, 3543 18th St

<http://tinyurl.com/q4v9kwf>

Wed, Nov 11, Health Action Team Meeting: 11 AM, 1010 Mission at 6th.

<http://tinyurl.com/pcdkcl2>

Wed, Nov 11, Screening: *This Changes Everything*: 6-8 PM, 209 Golden Gate, at Leavenworth.

<http://tinyurl.com/nwkdnxq>

Thurs, Nov 12, Senior & Disability Action Meeting: 10AM-12 Noon. 1187 Franklin.

<http://tinyurl.com/q7po7mq>

Thurs, Nov 12, CARA SF CAT Meeting: 1-3 PM, ILWU office, 1188 Franklin at Geary, 4th Fl.

<http://tinyurl.com/qzhvzk7>

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Sun, Nov 15, Howard Zinn Book Fair: 10 AM-6 PM, 1125 Valencia.

<http://tinyurl.com/oq94aq6>

Tues, Nov 17, SF Gray Panther Meeting: *Syria*, see page 3 of this newsletter.

Wed, Nov 18, SDA Housing Cooperative Meeting: 1-3 PM, 1360 Mission, 4 Fl

<http://tinyurl.com/ogfhgxb>

Thurs, Nov 19, Jobs with Justice 5-Year Celebration: 6-8 PM, 2868 Mission. With Angela Davis.

<http://tinyurl.com/nq3m78g>

Sat, Nov 21, OWL-SF Program “Brain Fitness”: 10 AM-12 Noon, 555 Ellis.

<http://tinyurl.com/qhohsj6>