

Update

Winter 2018

Ron Zucker, Editor

Local

February 11 Meeting

Protecting Immigrants in our County

Sara Matlin, chair of the North Peninsula Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU-NP), has had her hands full lately working to counter the effects of deceptive and inhumane Federal immigration policies (not only under the Trump administration, but also under the Obama administration). With the current White House intent on deporting as many immigrants as possible and San Mateo County a home for a number of immigrants trying to find work and stability, the ACLU-NP fights to disentangle local law enforcement from the ICE deportation machine.

The local chapter is part of the San Mateo County Coalition for Immigrant Rights (SMCCfIR or Coalition), which Sara helped found in 2010. The SMCCfIR is a growing collaboration of more than 30 community groups, faith-based organizations, immigrant rights attorneys, and other service providers advocating for the rights of undocumented residents of San Mateo County. As Sara puts it, the ACLU-NP and the Coalition strive to “think globally and act locally” in the realm of immigrant rights. That thinking is statewide as well, with the recent passage of SB 54, the California Values Act, which will make this a sort of sanctuary state, eliminating most state support for the federal deportation system. Even with the measure’s enactment, the old ways are likely to not fade away easily, so the ACLU-NP and the Coalition will be pushing the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office and other local law enforcement agencies to learn and comply with the new law.

On Sunday, February 11, Sara Matlin will be the guest of PASMCM with a talk entitled “Making Immigrant Rights Real in San Mateo County.” Sara will address the ACLU-NP’s efforts to protect civil rights here, and the obstacles to do that with different levels of law enforcement. She will also offer ways for citizens to get involved in changing public policy to protect immigrant rights.

The event begins at 7 PM at the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue in San Mateo. Admission is free, contributions will be accepted. The UUSM is wheelchair accessible.

Sara is a lawyer and a life-long activist and community organizer, whose work began in her teenage years, when

she worked against U.S. military intervention in Central America. In addition to being chair of ACLU-NP, she is also the Bilingual Counsel with Alliance for Justice’s Bolder Advocacy Initiative in Oakland, where she empowers Spanish- and English-speaking nonprofit organizations to become leaders in policy change movements.

Mark your calendar on February 11 for an evening about justice-related work that is going on right here at home!

January 7 Meeting

A Catalan’s View of Catalonia

PASMCM’s first meeting of 2018 will focus on the relationship between Spain and its northeastern autonomous region of Catalonia, whose main city and regional capital is Barcelona. This is one of a number of areas in Spain with a people, culture and language all its own. Catalonia has a distinct history of struggle for independence, informed by its conquering by the Spanish military in 1714, its regard as a significant driver of Spain’s economy, and its role in the resistance last century against the fascist regime of Generalissimo Franco.

The drive for Catalan independence came to a head with an October 1 referendum calling for secession from Spain. When the vote yielded an overwhelming majority in favor of independence – in part because of a boycott by anti-secession factions – the result was a heavy police action by the Spanish government, leading to the jailing of some Catalan cabinet members and the flight from the region by others, including Catalonia’s leader, Carles Puigdemont.

With Catalan separatists again winning a short-notice December 21 election for a new regional government – this one called by Spain presumably in hopes of bringing people to power who are more amenable to its central government – the situation remains unpredictable.

On Sunday, January 7, to help us make sense of it all, PASMCM will present Joan Morales, who is originally from the city center of Barcelona but has lived in the Bay Area since 2010. Now an American citizen, husband and father, Joan works at a San Jose software startup. While his home is here, Joan has watched the developments in his country and region of origin, and will share the history, the politics and his thoughts on Catalonia and Spain.

The evening begins at 7 PM at the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue in San Mateo. Admission is free, contributions are welcome. The UUSM is wheelchair accessible.

Summary of October 8 Meeting

A Realistic North Korea Update

With tensions between the U.S. and North Korea the highest they've ever been, Peace Action Outreach and Organizing Director Eric See made his intention clear at the start of his October talk on the subject: that the audience walk away with "not despair, and not overwhelming fear, but a sense that we're at the crossroads, and that we have the ability to really determine how history is going to be written about this crisis." He illustrated his point by citing Donald Trump's questioning why we can't use our nuclear weapons, and instances of states dusting off their disaster plans in case of a nuclear war, against the fact of a recent United Nations treaty (albeit which the U.S. tried to block) to ban nuclear weapons.

Eric noted the Korean Peninsula's history of being occupied over the centuries by various civilizations in the region. Its repeated struggles to win independence, he said, "is seared into the Korean consciousness." For more recent history, Eric cited the division, after World War II, of Korea into a north (in the Chinese and Soviet sphere) and a south (in the U.S. sphere), from which came the Korean War. Eric related military records of how the U.S. bombed North Korea so heavily – killing 20% of its population – that our military ran out of targets and turned to bombing dams and causing flooding.

The 1953 armistice never became an anticipated peace treaty, thus there is still a state of war between the Koreas. Now the U.S., said Eric, keeps the south as "effectively a military base". He added the little-known fact that we installed nuclear weapons for a short time "as a way of boxing in the (then-) Soviet Union."

Eric talked about the perception of North Korea as a "hermit country" with allusions to an oppressed (and not necessarily human) people who are like "bees in a hive", ruled by a crazy, unstable, power-hungry dictator. Eric added Trump's hints of destroying the country to a history of North Korean perceptions that a U.S. attack is inevitable – and hypothesized that such perceptions led to the beginning of nuclear weapons research in 1959. He called for humanizing its 25 million people with their own aspirations. This, Eric suggested, was better than reducing the relationship to "Trump vs. Kim."

Turning to the nuclear weapons issue, Eric chronicled the dealings between the two nations about North Korea's nuclear program – beginning with the Clinton administration offering to help build reactors if North Korea stopped its plutonium production. Both sides came up short, with the U.S. failing to help build and North Korea developing uranium instead of plutonium. Then George W. Bush walked away from the agreement while proclaiming North Korea part of the "axis of evil". When the U.S. invaded Iraq and supported the destruc-

tion of the Libyan government, North Korea, thinking it would be next, sped up its weapons research and development. Eric called it, for the country, an "existential question".

Eric called out Obama as well, noting he "didn't want to deal with North Korea" even when, late in his administration, North Korea offered to freeze its weapons development if the U.S. stopped joint military exercises with South Korea. These take place twice a year, Eric said, involving flying nuclear weapons-capable planes in a mock invasion of the north. He added that in South Korea law, its military is "subsumed" by that of the U.S. command. He invited the audience to imagine the U.S. response were tables turned and North Korea conducted military exercises in our vicinity. And in extolling the alternative, he added, "Diplomacy is not easy, but it's a lot easier than war."

Addressing North Korea's arsenal, Eric figured it had one to two dozen weapons, based on the seismic activity from underground testing as well as intelligence from spy planes. From North Korean experts who left the country, we have determined their weapons are fusion (as with the bombs the U.S. dropped on Japan) rather than thermonuclear, though they are trying to develop the latter. As to its missile development, he cited a flight range of perhaps 10,000 kilometers, but also the question of whether they could hit their targets effectively.

Eric augmented Trump's "cryptic messages" and "scary rhetoric" about war with a "horrific" scenario following a U.S. attack. With North Korea's weapons aimed at South Korea, the result could be 25 million civilian deaths, as well as for 28,000 American soldiers stationed there. "We...don't know", he said, if the exchange would result in a nuclear escalation, "but we have two countries with nuclear weapons." On the plus side, Eric added, most of the Pentagon knows that a war is unthinkable – including Defense Secretary James Mattis, who has pushed for talks.

Eric offered his thoughts on solutions, which began with abandoning the idea of North Korea disarming; as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, nobody will give them up. He suggested going back to the Obama-era offer of a "freeze for a "freeze" of North Korea's weapons development and our war games. He added the need for an actual peace treaty, and a reduction of war-like rhetoric. Other provisions, such as a repatriation of war-dead remains and the ability of families to visit each other, could help calm the situation further. He also called for China's participation in talks, citing its aversion to such a war in the region – because of, among other things, the refugee crisis that could result.

Eric related some surprise that such diplomacy from the Trump administration was actually taking place, noting

that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had recently been reported as engaged in some “back-channel” talks (and in late December in fact raised the possibility of talks “without preconditions” from North Korea).

“Diplomacy takes years”, he asserted, typically beginning with low-level exchanges that later call for major players on both sides to finish things. He offered as an example the deal with Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program. He also decried the sanctions model of diplomatic pressure, which tend to hurt the targeted country’s citizens more than its government, and in this case surely would not dissuade North Korea from a nuclear program to which it is so dedicated.

While expressing the hope that military leaders could “talk Trump off the cliff” and de-escalate his threatening rhetoric, Eric insisted that we need to also ask members of Congress to speak out against such rhetoric. “A few have stepped up”, he said, “but the chorus isn’t loud enough.” Reiterating the importance of the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act (S. 200 in the Senate) to at least rein in Trump, he noted that California Senator Kamala Harris still had not co-sponsored (and at press time still has not). But on a larger level, Eric suggested we think of North Korea not merely as “Kim and his rockets”, but as an entire population.

Ron Zucker

www.peaceaction.org

Weekly Peace Vigils in San Mateo

Come join Peace Action of San Mateo County every Saturday from 3-4 PM as we call for peace! We gather at 3rd Avenue and El Camino Real, in front of the Bank of America Building.

And on Thursdays from 4-6 PM, Declaration of Peace-San Mateo holds its “Stand for Peace” at 5th and El Camino. Add your presence!

Summary of November 19 Meeting

Lakoff’s Approach to Messaging

While George Lakoff was not available recently to speak to us (though this may happen sometime in 2018), we felt it important enough to circulate the thoughts and ideas of this progressive-minded retired Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics, via a DVD containing, among other things, a talk he gave last April in southern California. Delivered in the relatively early stages of the citizenry’s process of dealing with Donald Trump in the White House, Lakoff’s talk was entitled “What do we do now? How we can win with the right message”. Here, and as a matter of course, he looks at political thoughts and opinions to examine why they exist and how to influence them in a political realm.

Lakoff begins with how people think, saying ideas don’t “float in the air”, but rather become part of our neuro-circuitry and thus what becomes a fixed world view. We

understand what our brain allows us to, and we filter information with which we don’t agree by ignoring it, ridiculing it, changing it to fit, and other processes. This, he says, happens on all sides of the political spectrum. We all come to assume our politics are moral and right – as opposed to wrong; this helps to define us, and it also, he says, helps explain why Trump keeps his supporters “even though he is lying to them and they know it”. A lie is not allowed, in this case, to violate the truth, and this leads to the acceptance of what was infamously called “alternative facts”.

Lakoff notes the presence of both conservative and progressive elements in our various world views – especially among “moderates” who may lean one of those ways. His idea is to activate a person’s progressive side with messaging that “turns off” their conservative circuits. This is done by “framing” an issue; we can plant a seed of thought and push progressive talking points in the same way conservatives have done for years through organizations such as the Leadership Institute, which has pushed its talking points by generating speaking engagements and getting on mass media. This is a plan, Lakoff says, that he has tried for 20 years to get Democrats to follow.

He points out the Indivisible movement which sprung up after the 2016 election as a good approach to changing public discourse. Its use of social media (which rubbed off on Lakoff who now has a heavily-followed Twitter account) has generated, he says, a great many ideas on issues framing along with the issues themselves.

Here Lakoff also calls out Democrats for not having enough ideas to generate change – and contrasts that with his recollection of Republican politics in the 1990’s. That was evident in then-Vice President Dan Quayle’s 1992 Republican convention speech criticizing higher taxes on the rich as “punishing the best people”, and then in the 1994 Contract With America which offered a conservative wish list relating to a flat tax, stopping abortion, stopping environmental regulations, and other conservative goals which, in Lakoff’s eyes, seemed, on the surface, unrelated.

Lakoff came to understand that such an agenda gained traction because of its connection to a certain set of “family values”, mainly one of two parent-based models to which people generally subscribe. In this first case it is the “strict father” model, which suggests that the father is an authority figure that must be listened to and obeyed, with discipline as a consequence. Lakoff says the children in such a family are trained to believe they are unable to make decisions or think for themselves, and must depend on an authority figure for their moral views. Not only does this attempt to explain away poverty by implying a lack of “morals” makes one deserve it, it also establishes a “moral hierarchy” that places God

above man, man above nature (and above woman), rich above poor, and many similar constructs.

Lakoff conversely identifies the “nurturing parent” model, which places emphasis on empathy, open communication, focus on what children need and allowing them to take care of themselves. The idea is that such values can translate into progressive thought, thus it is with those “values” – rather than with “policies” – that we need to address issues and politics. Lakoff gives an example of a holiday dinner conversation with a grandfather with whom one disagrees politically. Rather than talk about such differences, we can offer a question about what the grandfather is doing to help people – thus appealing to his values and the idea of “nurturance”. Lakoff brings this idea back to one Indivisible model that emphasizes personal stories over just opinions in communicating with elected representatives.

He also calls on us to apply progressive values in framing issues, using ideas such as citizens caring about one another and working through government to “provide resources for the good of all and freedom of all”. This is manifest in Senator Elizabeth Warren’s talk in 2012 affirming the role of government and public resources in helping businesses succeed. It informs other ideas such as what is derided as “regulations” is actually a set of “protections” which keep businesses from doing anything they want in the name of profit, at the expense of consumers. There is also the issue of unions actually protecting workers’ freedoms and safety, pensions being delayed payment for work already done, and workers being “profit creators” – a counterpoint to businesses as “job creators” which they couldn’t be without workers.

Lakoff emphasizes the need to make these points clear, and his voice rises as he wonders why it doesn’t happen more. “It needs to be said and you have to say it,” he implores. All framing, he adds, is “point-dependent”, and has mostly consisted of the viewpoint of those in power vs. those over whom they have power. The goal, he asserts, is to shift the viewpoints to the latter, which would shift the public discourse – by changing the neural circuitry. Whether by word of mouth or on social networks, the point is that “we all work together.”

Ron Zucker

Log on to www.georgelakoff.com

Joel Beinin in Palo Alto

On Wednesday, January 10, The Peninsula Peace and Justice Center will present a free community forum with Joel Beinin, Professor of Middle East History at Stanford University. The timely topic will be “Trump’s Jerusalem Gambit”.

When Donald Trump claimed that recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital was just acknowledging reality, he denied the reality of the 320,000 Palestinians living un-

der an increasingly aggressive occupation in East Jerusalem. What will be the diplomatic, political, and security implications of this American policy shift? How will this asymmetric recognition impact a peace process that is already under distress, if not for all intents and purposes moribund?

The event is at 7 PM at the Midpen Media Center, 900 San Antonio Road in Palo Alto. It is free and open to all; the MMC is wheelchair accessible. To let them know you’re coming, log on to www.peaceandjustice.org/gambit.

Learn the Basics of Local Public Policy Advocacy

On Wednesday, January 24, the ACLU-North Peninsula chapter will offer a practical workshop on effective local advocacy, with a focus on immigrant rights. Gina Da Silva of the California Immigrant Policy Center and Arceli Martínez-Olguín from Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto will help community members sharpen their skills for public policy persuasion. They will talk about how to identify and target the policymaker relevant to an issue, prepare an advocacy team, formulate talking points, and coordinate a visit with that policymaker.

The workshop is at Burlingame High School’s Theater, 1 Mangini Way in Burlingame. Arrival with light refreshments will be at 6:30 PM, with the program beginning at 7 PM. For more information call 650-286-7791, or email npenaclu@gmail.com.

January 20 – Women’s March Bay Area

Women’s March Bay Area (WMBA) is again planning for actions on Saturday, January 20. The theme will be “Hear Our Vote”. Save the date to activate and engage in San Francisco (12 PM-4 PM, Civic Center) and San Jose (11 AM-2 PM, San Jose City Hall).

Since the historic Women’s March on January 21, 2017, when hundreds of thousands of folks showed up across the Bay Area, WMBA has been working to turn a moment into a movement. This January’s actions will focus on getting out the vote in the 2018 midterm elections. The year will focus on getting more women and allies into office and other leadership positions, with actions focused on voter registration, voter mobilization, supporting women running for office, and electing more women in more offices.

“The San Francisco march was the very last of hundreds of sister marches across the U.S. last January, and watching folks pour through the streets under a down-pour of rain with a pink-lit City Hall in the background lit a fire in me and many others,” said Sophia Andary, co-leader of Women’s March San Francisco. “We had

great local representation at the Women’s Convention in Detroit and can say without hesitation that the energy and work of women are changing this country.”

Women’s March is a female-led movement providing intersectional education on a range of issues and creating entry points for new grassroots activists and organizers to engage with/in their local communities through trainings, outreach programs and events. The focus on voter education, voter outreach, and voter empowerment are encompassed in the theme of “Hear Our Vote!”

“Last year’s election compelled many of us to a level of action and activism that has changed our lives and our communities, forging connections across groups that have otherwise been siloed,” said Jenny Bradanini, co-lead of Women’s March San Jose. “As is clear from the unprecedented number of women candidates this cycle, the grassroots movement has taken hold. First we marched, now we run!”

The WMBA marches are two of 18 planned across California – the state’s part of a national movement to unify and empower those who stand for women’s rights, human rights, civil liberties, and social justice for all.

www.womensmarchbayarea.org.

Membership Report

PASMC extends a warm welcome to these new members: Harvey Rarback, Elaine Salinger

And we say “welcome back” to the following renewing members: Tara Bass, Max Bollock, Mike Caggiano and Keiko Kim, Alan Dean, Lucy Goodier, Timonie Hood and family, Jackie James, Cheryl Kozanitas, Gary Parma, Ron and Eve Visconti, Ron Zucker

JOIN PEACE ACTION OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

___ **New Member** ___ **Renewing Member**

Name: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

___ \$30 Individual Membership

___ \$40 Family Membership

___ \$52 (“A Dollar a Week for Peace”)

___ \$15 Student/Limited Income

___ Other \$ _____

\$ ___ Bonnie Burnham Memorial Fund (Supports Video Project in Schools)

\$ ___ Leo Sack Memorial Fund (Addtl. Donation)

\$ ___ Student Activist Scholarship Fund

Please make checks payable to:

PEACE ACTION OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

P.O. BOX 425, San Mateo, CA 94401-0425

Because of our advocacy and political action programs, membership is not tax deductible.

Dobrae Uttra (Sounds Like “Hello” in Russian)

“Moscow’s Makeover Turns it into a Model Metropolis”, is how Moscow is described in a recent issue of Bloomberg Businessweek. And this is confirmed by the 30 members of a visit sponsored by The Nation magazine who recently returned from an eye-popping visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia. A friend from Sea Ranch and I were part of this group, almost all of whom had never visited the Russian Federation. We certainly cannot comment on the rest of this vast country (3 times the size of the U.S. and crossing 11 time zones), but we can say that these two cities defied all of our pre-conceived expectations, fed in large part by the insistent drumbeat of negative MSM animosity.

St. Petersburg is truly remarkable, with stunning onion-domed churches, golden-spired cathedrals, mosques and incredible museums, many dating from the 14th century Romanov Czars and Czarinas. One of our main inducements to this trip was a visit to the world’s largest art gallery – the Hermitage. It is said that if a person spent a single minute in front of each of the priceless original art pieces, and did so 24/7, that chore would take 8 years – and that represents only 8 per cent of this entire collection of 2 and a half million pieces.

We saw no homeless people or panhandlers. The streets were clean, the numerous parks manicured, and one could have mistaken the street scene for any major U.S. city – except for the tiny number of obese people. Everyone, including our exceptional guides, was friendly and seemed to move briskly with purpose and determination. And I saw only two policemen, with only batons, in those 6 days there.

We were all stunned by the size of Moscow: 17 million people, 5 modern airports, 4 metro systems with 185 stations (and many of these are art galleries), and millions of late-model German and Japanese cars. There were lots of police here and surveillance cameras everywhere. We stayed in a 5 star hotel, and everywhere the food was plentiful and delicious. Every major global hotel chain is represented, and every international haute couture clothing brand, along with McDonalds (2nd-largest on the planet) and every other fast-food joint. And all this was accomplished in the past 17 years under Vladimir Putin and the energetic mayor of Moscow, largely financed by \$100-per-barrel oil in the early days of his administration, Chinese investment, and probably some billionaire oligarchs. Despite an 80% popularity rating, Putin is viewed with concern in that he might rig the system to make himself president for life.

There were tunnels, bridges, streets and freeways, huge attractive buildings all shiny new, and churches, historical galleries and numerous parks abound. And we went

to the Bolshoi opera house and saw “Swan Lake” – spectacular!

The Nation and the tour agency Distant Horizons arranged and hosted special concerts, musical events, lectures with renowned academics and creative roundtables. One very special meeting was with Pavel Palazchenko, the principal English interpreter for Mikhail Gorbachev in the U.S./Soviet summit talks that led to the end of the Cold War.

It’s difficult to point out national characteristics with so little exposure, but one that appeared to us was that Russian people are self-effacing. As an example, in an address we attended entitled “*Paradoxes of Russian Mentality: With the Mind Alone Russia Cannot be Understood*,” Dr. Nina Philippova, academic director of the Center of Russian Language and Culture at St. Petersburg University, said, “We are the greatest at building the tallest towers, the most beautiful parks, the best submarines and aircraft – but we can’t produce a decent automobile and we’re rotten at forming governments”.

Max Bollock

Lords and Ladies

The name of the youngster in the White House is Baron Trump. President Trump may thus be ahead of the rest of us in realizing that we’re moving toward a society that is more conducive to establishing a royalty along with their titles rather than maintaining our liberal democracy. If you look at the end result of his Republican tax plan with its unswerving direction of redistribution of the nation’s wealth toward the upper reaches of the income ladder, the outcome is obvious.

In reality we have crony socialism for the well-connected and powerful, while the free market will just have to do for the lowly toiling classes. Just look at the continued subsidies for the mega-corporations in the carbon fuels sector – in the face of cheaper, safer renewables – to see more examples of the serfs contributing to the lords of obsolete industries.

I can hardly wait for the opportunity to implore the nobility for the privilege of cultivating some crops on the master’s estate.

Mike Caggiano

Action Alert

Save Yemen

The world is witnessing a severe humanitarian crisis with the civil war in Yemen. While Saudi Arabia mounts an attack on Houthi rebels that has claimed a great many civilian lives, it has also kept up a blockade keeping needed food, medicine and other supplies from reaching the people there, including many women and children. The result is a deadly famine and a cholera epidemic –

along with the possibility of other infectious diseases that accompany starvation – that combine to threaten lives of millions of lives.

The U.S. is complicit in this tragedy: Our government has OK’d \$110 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia from companies such as Boeing, Raytheon and other “defense” giants. Our military engages in refueling flights for Saudi planes that bomb and indiscriminately kill Yemeni civilians along with rebels. And we are shown to have assisted the blockade of food and medicine that could ease the suffering.

The cruelty of the situation is obvious, and its illegality also recently came to light when Jennifer Newstead, Donald Trump’s nominee (since confirmed) as the top legal advisor at the State Department, indicated Saudi Arabia could be violating both U.S. and international law by restricting humanitarian aid in Yemen. Indeed, Trump himself has expressed dismay at the crisis, albeit while the U.S. continues to support the Saudi war.

A resolution (H Con Res 81) introduced last Fall in the House of Representatives to invoke the War Powers Act to stop U.S. participation in the war has so far gone nowhere. In the new year activists will be gearing up to revive it and also bring it up in the Senate. As information about the crisis spreads, the hope is that – with our help – it will no longer be ignored.

Action: Contact Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris and tell them to support legislation to take steps, via the War Powers Act, to stop U.S. complicity in the war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Suggest we need more than sympathy and “lip service” to stop a military effort that is outside the law. Also contact Rep. Jackie Speier or Anna Eshoo, or whomever represents you, and tell them to add their names to (and demand a vote on) H Con Res. 81, to show who is for and against it.

A Call for Better Priorities

The Republicans’ single signature legislative achievement in Congress brought smiles to the faces of a lot of wealthy people and corporate board members, but it should not (and does not, if public polls are to be believed) do the same for the middle class on down. The tax overhaul bill cuts corporate taxes drastically and permanently, and many basic workers’ taxes marginally and temporarily.

On the way to a \$1 trillion budget deficit increase that suddenly, for now, isn’t important to the majority party, they are moving to preserve tens of billions of dollars in military spending increases, while somehow coming up short when it is time to renew the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which expired in September. \$81 billion for disaster relief was also left off the recent subsequent short-term spending bill, as was a renewal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

provision. These are all expected to see funding in the new year, say the Republican leadership, but we will of course believe it when we see it.

Meanwhile, the deficit will soon become important again – when Republicans start targeting, as they have foretold, programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and Head Start. “We’re going to have to get back next year at entitlement reform, which is how you tackle the debt and the deficit,” said House Speaker Paul Ryan recently on a conservative talk radio show, adding, “... Frankly, it’s the health care entitlements that are the big drivers of our debt, so we spend more time on (them) – because that’s really where the problem lies, fiscally speaking.”

In this corner we beg to differ. When nearly \$600 billion went to the military in 2015 (about 54% of discretionary spending), including expensive weapons systems the Pentagon didn’t ask for and nuclear weapons that could end virtually all life on the planet, a question for our elected representatives is likely to be “What makes us more secure... better health care and education and taking care of our citizens? Or weapons we hope to never use?” We hope for votes based on the replies we expect.

Action: Contact Rep. Speier or Eshoo, as well as both Sen. Feinstein and Harris, and tell them to fight for preserving such programs as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – that Congress needs to keep its hands off these programs that so many Americans have worked to earn. Add that they should make sure CHIP and DACA remain intact, since they let the end-of-the-year spending bill go without inclusion of these important programs. Suggest that we should cut the fat and the fear out of our military budget before we target such benefit programs.

A Free and Just Internet

(Here is an item less “peace-related” but properly “justice-related” and steeped in the notion of free speech.)

The effort to preserve net neutrality – the idea that all participants in distributing information on the world wide web are entitled to the same speed and the same costs regardless of their size – hit a big roadblock in December when the Republican-majority Federal Communications Commission voted to repeal it. Should the repeal stand, large communications companies like Comcast and Verizon (for which FCC Chair Ajit Pai was once a lawyer), can charge internet providers whatever they want depending on such issues as ability to pay or politics (which certainly can be intertwined at times).

But the net neutrality issue is still in play – in the courts where legal challenges will emerge, but also in Congress, which can pass a “resolution of disapproval” that would nullify the FCC vote and bring back the net neutrality rules. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer intends to force a vote on such a resolution in that cham-

ber, and the hope is that a similar action will take place in the House. With over 70% of voters (and that would include a lot of Republicans) in favor of net neutrality, the decision in Congress to preserve it is liable to be an easy one – if its members respond to us rather than big communication companies.

Action: Contact Sens. Feinstein and Harris and tell them to push for a “resolution of disapproval” in the Senate of the FCC vote to repeal net neutrality. Send the same message regarding a House action to Rep. Speier or Eshoo. Suggest that a less-than-open internet will be even more unfair than the phony comments used to tilt the tally of public comments on the issue – and that we need to be able to communicate freely in our modern world.

Ron Zucker

Directory

Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121

Senator Dianne Feinstein

One Post St., Ste 2450 San Francisco, CA 94104
(202) 224-3841 fax: (202) 228-3954
(415) 393-0707 fax (415)393-0710

Senator Kamala Harris

50 United Nations Plaza, Ste 5584 San Francisco, CA 94102
(202) 224-3553 fax: (202) 228-3865
(916) 448-2787

Representative Jackie Speier

155 Bovet Rd., Ste 780 San Mateo, CA 94402
(202) 225-3531 fax: (202) 226-4183
(650) 342-0300 (650) 375-8270

Representative Anna Eshoo

698 Emerson Street Palo Alto, CA 94301
(202) 225-8104 fax: (202) 225-8890
(650) 323-2984 (650) 323-3498

Donald Trump

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20500
(202)456-1111: fax: (202)456-2461
www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

Find out who your Representative is: www.house.gov
If you are not in California, identify your senators here: www.senate.gov

The **Update** is published quarterly by Peace Action of San Mateo County. We welcome all submissions and letters, and reserve the right to exclude or edit for content and other considerations. The views expressed within are not necessarily those of the members of Peace Action of San Mateo County or Peace Action.



Officers

President: Mike Caggiano

Vice President: Cheryl Kozanitas

Secretary: Mary Beavins

Update Editor: Ron Zucker

Peace vigil every Saturday

We will be at 3rd Ave. and El Camino Real in San Mateo at 3 PM for our weekly antiwar vigil, while our military presences in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan continue.

Visit us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/pasmc

Peace Action of San Mateo County presents

A Catalan's View of Catalonia

A talk by

Joan Morales

citizen of the U.S. and Spain,
former resident of Barcelona,

Joan will discuss Catalonia's efforts to
achieve

independence and autonomy

Sunday, January 7, 7 PM

Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo

300 E. Santa Inez Avenue, San Mateo

Admission free, contributions welcome

Wheelchair accessible