

Moving my money

By SANDY SAMPLE

I had done my banking at Wells Fargo for 48 years; I chose Wells Fargo when I first moved to Modesto because it was reasonably close to where I lived, and I was rather charmed by the Pony Express connection. My banking needs were simple and Wells Fargo served me well: when I deposited my paycheck, it was kept safe; I had local checks to use in paying my bills; it sent accurate statements of my transactions; and the tellers were pleasant and helpful.

Much later, I opened a savings account at World Savings, and when even later World Savings became Wachovia and then Wachovia merged with Wells Fargo, it all seemed to fit together smoothly: all my banking was now under one roof — or more precisely, under several conveniently-located roofs.

Along the way I had also opened an account at MOCSE Credit Union when I needed to save for and then make payments of a new car, but I kept my bank account at Wells Fargo and never wondered what my bank was doing beyond what it did for me. I did

not question its corporate policies, ask how much its CEO was paid, or wonder whether its values matched mine. In those days, few of us asked those questions.

Having never understood economics, even when required to take a beginning Econ class in college, it turned out that I was not paying attention when banks were deregulated or Glass-Steagall was overturned. So I was not paying attention when Wells Fargo became one of the five biggest mega-banks and participated in developing risky financial products like derivatives, toxic securities, or credit default swaps.

Even though I've been an activist for peace, social and economic justice for more years than I'd been a Wells Fargo customer, and have walked many a picket line and stood in many a silent vigil, I somehow did not make the connection between alarming rises in poverty levels in the US and the world, the obscene power of US corporations, and the predatory lending practices of the Big Banks.

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The Modesto Peace/Life Center Presents, November 3: A rockin' roots concert for all

By DAN ONORATO

Mix the thrill of a young prodigy's rockin' jazz harmonica together with the acoustic and vocal artistry of Modesto's favorite trio and you've got the guarantee of a musical night you'll long remember. That's the Modesto Peace/Life Center's promise for our fundraising concert at The State Theatre on Saturday, November 3, featuring **Home Grown** with the lead-in band of **Kyle Rockin' Rowland**. To add a little extra spice, we'll raffle 10 special items throughout the concert. Mark your calendar now, or better yet, call The State (527-4697), stop by the Box Office (M-F: 12 – 3), or go online (<http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/608/view>) to get tickets before they run out. Or even better, become a co-sponsor.

Locals Michael Lingg, Bruce Johnson, and Patrick Durr have been performing together for nearly 40 years. As their website explains (www.homegrowntrio.com), they call themselves Home Grown to highlight “their local roots and capture the earthiness of their acoustic music.” Their musical creativity and stylistic variety, their crisp, tight vocal harmonies, and their sheer joy in making music together are an utter delight. They've traveled far and wide on their musical adventure, and on October they'll be the featured performers in Modesto's Sister City of Kurume in Japan. And they're working hard to make our November 3rd concert a very special event highlighting songs from their most recent CD.

Playing lead-in to Home Grown will be a young man with his band from Sacramento who's destined to be a Jazz great. Nineteen year old phenomenon Kyle Rockin' Rowland sizzles. Among other venues, he's captivated audiences at the San Jose Jazz Festival, the



Sacramento Music Festival, the Blues and Bones Festival in Angels Camp, the California State Fair, and the Monterey Blues Festival. He's played with well-known jazz artists Mick Martin, Mark Hummel, Jerry Martini, Charlie Musselwhite, and Tommy Castro. As one music critic writes, “Kyle can bend notes with the best of them.” In 2009 at the West Coast Blues Hall of Fame and Awards show he was named Blues Harmonica of the Year and Blues New Artist of the Year. Check him out at www.kylerockinrowland.com, and don't miss his YouTube video there.

Both groups will have their recent 2012 releases for sale at the concert: Home Grown's “Even Better in Person” from a live concert recording, and Rowland's “High Rollin’.”

The ten select raffle items include tickets for two to the San Francisco Ballet and a

HOME GROWN cont. p. 2

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Opportunities to visit Nicaragua

Submitted by SHELLY SCRIBNER

La Mariposa and Nicaragua Network Youth Delegation to Nicaragua, January 2 to 14, 2013

Young people: join us in Nicaragua to consider the question: What kind of development is possible?

Social projects, economic development, protection of the environment – are all three possible simultaneously?

Experience, learn and consider the issues through an exciting and powerful combination of:

- Hands-on service work in a school, on an organic farm, on an eco-build construction project or helping teach English;
- Visiting social projects: the Managua garbage dump cleanup, housing projects, youth environmental groups;
- Visiting the stunning volcanic island of Ometepe. Learn while swimming, climbing a volcano or relaxing!;
- Watching films, reflecting, discussing;
- in an environment that protects and enhances the local environment – from using solar heated water, eating meals of organic veggies grown from our community garden in a dining hall built of straw to caring for rescued dogs and horses.

Cost: \$1050 (lodging, all meals, translation, and in country travel; excludes international air fare) Minimum age: 16 years.

Accommodation in the Mariposa Study Centre is in in single sex dormitories. Two adults will be present at all times. No alcohol.

La Mariposa is a Spanish school, Eco hotel, animal rescue

center. We fund a wide range of community and environmental projects. Visit www.mariposaspanishschool.com

The Nicaragua Network works in solidarity with the people of Nicaragua. Visit www.nicanet.org. For information and to apply contact paulette.goudge@googlemail.com

Friendship Tour to Nicaragua

Casa Baltimore/Limay announces a guided Friendship trip to Nicaragua from late December through early January lasting 12 to 14 days. Exact dates will be jointly determined by those who commit by the end of September.

Cost: \$1600; including international airfare, three meals a day, lodging, in-country transport, interpreter, and a donation toward projects in Limay.

Contact Barbara Larcom, at Barbara.Larcom@gmail.com or 410-662-6292. www.casabaltimorelimay.org

Dos Pueblos Delegation to Nicaragua January 19-26, 2013

Experience social justice and sustainable development first-hand in Tipitapa. Work side-by-side with Nicaraguans to advocate for better education, health, economic opportunities, and environmental awareness.

No Spanish? Translators provided.

Cost: \$800 (double occupancy), \$975 (single occupancy). *Airfare, departure taxes, tips and personal expenses NOT included. \$200 Deposit due October 15, 2012.

Space limited. Contact info@tipitapa.org or call 917-776-4246. Visit www.tipitapa.org

Kreplach to Dim Sum and Grammy winning artists at Sunday Afternoons at CBS in October and November

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Grammy winners Eric Tingstad and Nancy Rumbel return to Modesto and the Sunday Afternoons at CBS stage 3 p.m. Sunday October 14 at 1705 Sherwood Avenue in Modesto.

The duo has been charming audiences throughout the world with their original compositions and and innovative treatment of popular standards, along with their classically inspired repertoire influenced by music from the America's British Isles, Asia and Spain.

The artistically precise and musically expressive duo weaves the exquisite sounds of Eric's classically trained finger-style guitar and Nancy's double reeds (Engilsh horn, Oboe) and ocarina into a vocal-free instrumental zone of exquisitely beautiful melody.

The Robyn Helzner Trio from Washington, D.C. will bring a unique musical weekend opportunity to the Modesto Area November 10 and 11 with two very special programs. The entire Modesto Area community is invited to join the Trio on Saturday November 10 at 6 p.m. for a kosher Chinese dinner and presentation entitled "Kreplach & Dim Sum: Yes, There are Jews in China!" The evening will offer a rare artist in residence peek at a little known part of Jewish culture in the diaspora.

On Sunday November 11 at 3 p.m., the group will showcase their mastery of authentic Jewish music from Beijing to Biloxi and Moscow to Miami in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino (the language of the Sephardic Jews of Moorish Spain) with the style, artistry, warmth, humor and commanding energy that has made them leading interpreters of Jewish music from around the world.

Mark your calendars for all 3 must see programs. Tickets (Season - \$60 adult, \$50 seniors and students, \$5 children with adult season subscriber/Individual concert - \$20 adult, \$15 senikros andstudnets, \$7 children) at 571-6060. More information at www.cbsmodesto.org/concerts.php and like us on Facebook.

Home Grown

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sailboat adventure for four on San Francisco Bay.

Concert tickets are \$20/person. Businesses and individuals can become concert co-sponsors at levels associated with peace pioneers: Mother Teresa, \$50 +; Rosa Parks, \$75 +; César Chávez, \$100 +; Nelson Mandela, \$150 +; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., \$250 +; Mahatma Gandhi, \$500 +. All who give at these levels will be highlighted on the theater's screen as co-sponsors. In addition, they will get Home Grown's recent CD free and preferred seating up front, along with one free ticket for the \$50 level and two free tickets for the other co-sponsorships.



If you're down for an unforgettable evening of lively music, and want to help support the Modesto Peace/Life Center's efforts to promote peace, justice, and a sustainable environment, join us at The State, Saturday evening,

November 3. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.; the concert starts at 8:00. Bring your checkbook for the raffle and your party spirit to shuffle, sway, sing, and shimmy to the rhythms. And get your tickets now.

ACTION: For tickets, contact The State Theatre, <http://www.thestate.org/calendar/event/608/view>. To become a co-sponsor call Mike, 527-7530.

SUPPORT. ADVOCACY. LOVE.

For more information on
meetings, our programs, and
ways you can give back to the
LGBT community, visit
www.pflagmodesto.org

Confidential Helpline
(209) 566-2468



Modesto Chapter
Parents, Families, and
Friends of Lesbians
and Gays

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a suggested donation of \$25.00/yr.

Take the "Stanislaus Solar Tour, 2012"

By RICHARD ANDERSON,
MJC Emeritus professor of Microbiology

The first public tour of the 25 Megawatt SunPower solar project just north of Al's Furniture will kick off the Stanislaus Solar Tour Saturday, Oct. 6, from 8:30 to 9:15 a.m.

"After the SunPower tour, four Stanislaus residents and a church are inviting the public to examine their solar panel systems and chat about their experience with it," said Randy Schack, one of the organizers.

Also, Adrian DeAngelis, MJC's solar energy class instructor, will open Sierra 102 on MJC's West Campus to visitors to examine his class's solar equipment and learn about the upcoming solar class next summer.

Schack will also present a public free lecture in Science 208, MJC East Campus, Oct. 10 from 4-5 p.m. The event is cosponsored by MJC's Civic Engagement Project and www.SolarEverywhere.org

A map to all the Tour sites is at: <http://goo.gl/maps/DZaHc>

Tour details

Part A. Kick-off Presentation, 8:30-9:15 a.m.

Paul McMillan of SunPower will describe the 25 Megawatt plant, followed by Q/A, then a 15 minute tour of the facility. This plant will produce 2% of MID's electrical needs.

Location: on McHenry Ave. a mile north of Al's Furniture. Drive through the gate on McHenry into the parking area.

Part B. Home and institution visits, 9:30 a.m.- 12 Noon:

Residential PV systems

- Mike Kennedy, Oakdale (PG&E), 15437 Orange Blossom Road, Oakdale.
- Bill Warner, Ceres (TID), rooftop home system, and RAV-4 all-electric car, 1182 Moonlight Dr., Ceres.
- Tom Nomof, Modesto (MID), rooftop home system, 1110 Grantland Court, Modesto.
- Richard Anderson, Modesto (MID), rooftop home system and Leaf all-electric car, 916 Melinda Lane, Modesto.

Institutional PV systems

- Modesto Church of the Brethren, 2301 Woodland Ave., Modesto
- Modesto Junior College, solar power installation class, Sierra 102, MJC West Campus
- Public Lecture for MJC's Science Colloquium, Oct. 10, 4-5 p.m. Rm. Science 208 at Modesto Junior College, East Campus. Speaker: Randy Schack of www.SolarEverywhere.org, "Science and Economics of Rooftop Solar Electricity Systems for Modesto." Admission free; park off campus or pay \$1.00 in parking lots.

The Stanislaus Solar Tour is sponsored by www.SolarEverywhere.org, and MJC Civic Engagement Project. For more information: Richard Anderson, 529-5182, andersonr@mjc.edu; Randy Schack, 402-2349.

NOTICE!

This issue of *Stanislaus Connections* is a combined October-November issue. There will be no separate November issue.

NOTICE!

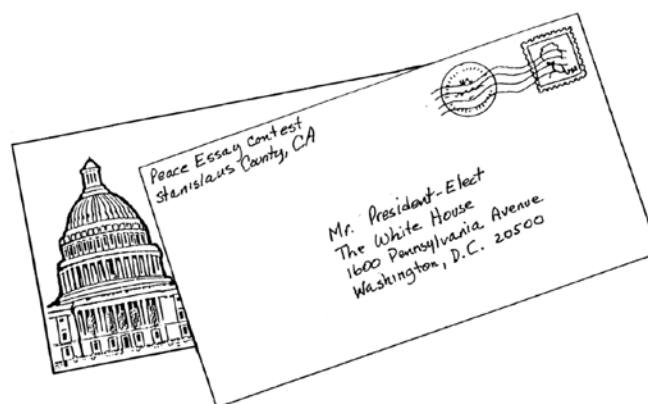
IF YOU RECEIVE CONNECTIONS BY POSTAL MAIL

The Post Office will raise our mail rate significantly beginning in January, 2013. In order to save much-needed funds, we request that those of you who can, please ask to receive Stanislaus Connections by email as a PDF file instead of a paper printed copy. Change would become effective in January, 2013.

Email Jim Costello ASAP at jcostello@igc.org if you wish to make the change.



2013 Peace Essay Contest



In November, 2012, our nation will be holding an election for the office of President of the United States for the four year term of 2013 to 2017. Each candidate makes promises to lead and serve the people of the nation by implementing and supporting various strategies that he/she believes will improve the lives of US citizens and promote stability among the nations of the world.

DIVISION I (grades 11 & 12)

(Essay of 500-1000 words)

DIVISION II (grades 9 & 10)

(Essay of 500-1000 words)

DIVISION III (grades 7 & 8)

(Essay of 250-500 words)

Write a persuasive letter to the President-Elect about a concern you have regarding a particular world, national or community problem that stands in the way of creating a more just and peaceful world. Convince the President that this problem deserves attention and suggest at least three ways that the President could initiate or support nonviolent actions that would address this problem. Be sure to acknowledge the objections others might see in your ideas.

Deadline for entries:

November 16, 2012

For more information, email:
peaceessay@juno.com

DIVISION IV (grades 5 & 6) (Essay of 250-500 words)

Write a letter to the President-Elect concerning your hopes and fears about a particular world, national or community problem that stands in the way of creating a more just and peaceful world. Describe at least three ways that the President could initiate or support nonviolent actions that would bring about what you hope for and/or prevent what you fear.

Awards

	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place	Honorable Mention
Division I	\$300	\$200	\$100	\$50
Division II	\$300	\$200	\$100	\$50
Division III	\$150	\$100	\$50	\$25
Division IV	\$150	\$100	\$50	\$25

Everyday heroes revealed

By JENIFER WEST

The world is full of everyday heroes, and sometimes one is fortunate enough to be aware of crossing paths with them. On the surface, they often seem like ordinary folks, going about their ordinary lives. But, if one is lucky, the stars align in a magical way, and these amazing folks are revealed for who they really are.

The professional, for example, who works tirelessly behind the scenes with the various groups and organizations that pro-

vide necessities like food and other goods, as well as services that are not otherwise available, to those who really need them. Accustomed to giving orders that are instantly heeded, sometimes in life or death situations, you will find this hero among the first to arrive to set up for a charity dinner (having first spent weeks helping to plan, and then tirelessly teasing, cajoling and strong-arming others into donating raffle prizes and buying tickets for the event), and it's a safe bet you can find him pushing a broom around the room after everyone else

has gone home. It would be easy to assume that this man does enough to fulfill the requirements of his profession, rightfully satisfied with the effort. But out of a sense of compassion, he finds many other ways to "give back", as well. He expects no recognition for his efforts, because he believes that's what one who is able "should" do. Because of his hard work, and that of others like him, the world is a better place.

And there's the foster mother, who's taken countless children under her wing. You might not recognize her for the hero she is, because she's busy doing life on her terms. But don't dare underestimate her! This lady has helped many kids who have suffered almost unimaginable injustices to heal. They've come to her battle-scarred (literally, figuratively, or both), and gone on their way, heads on straight and wounded souls healed, far better prepared to meet the challenges of life. She has an uncanny ability to see through the "stuff" on the surface to what's really going on with a troubled child. She knows just when to administer a sharp word, when a kid needs to make vigorous use of work boots and a rake, and when the best medicine is a hug. Never one to back down or shy away when a child's welfare is involved, she works tirelessly until a problem is resolved, or the solution is clear, with those responsible for handling it having been given their marching orders. And she has won the love and respect of all of us fortunate enough to see her in action. The world is a better place because of her, and her "sisters in arms".

And the nice guy, who delivers a little something to the widows in the neighborhood on Valentine's Day. It might be a treat he sweet-talked his wife into making (pun intended!), or a flower from the yard, if he can find one. But he makes sure they have something to brighten their day, on that particular day, and sometimes others as well. He's also the guy who goes out of his way to stay in touch with someone who's going through a rough patch, and who knows which of his friends and neighbors could most use and appreciate a home-grown tomato. (He's also the guy who makes sure his wife always has fresh flowers to enjoy, whenever they're available in the yard.) He's the scuba instructor who would accept a paraplegic dive student, and then personally carry him to and from the water on class dive trips. His gentle kindness and positive outlook reassure those he comes into contact with that maybe things aren't so bad, after all. The world is a better place because of him, and others like him.

Each of us, no matter how big or small, can be an everyday hero. On a recent Sunday morning, I myself was feeling a little blue. As I made my way to my car after church, each of the little ones I passed gave me a wave or a smile. Then a little group of them went by, gifting me with one grin after another. And I couldn't help but smile back. And, in that moment, the world seemed to me to be a better place.

We might not organize a charity dinner, or take in a wayward child, or carry a wheelchair-bound dive student into the ocean. But there just might be someone we cross paths with today, whether it's obvious or not, who could use a friendly smile or a kind word. And if we make the small effort it takes to be the one who smiles, we too can be everyday heroes, and help to make the world a better place.

Gardener's Note: If you've started lettuce seeds, there's still time to set them out. Now is also the time to plant broccoli, spinach, peas, and fava beans.

Peace Essay Contest 2013

Rules

1. The Peace Essay Contest is open to all fifth through twelfth grade students who are residents of Stanislaus County or attend any public, private, or home school in Stanislaus County.
2. Submit one copy of your essay. Essays in Division I & II must be typewritten, double spaced. Essays in Divisions III & IV must be either typewritten or written in dark ink, double spaced. Use one side of white paper 8 1/2 x 11 inches. Number the pages consecutively. Your essay must be of a quality to photocopy legibly.
3. Give your essay a title. Place it on the first page where you begin your essay. **DO NOT** use a separate title or cover page.
4. Attach a "3 x 5" index card with your name, school, grade, teacher's name and principal's name on the index card. **YOUR NAME SHOULD NOT BE ANYWHERE ON OR IN THE ESSAY.**
5. Cite any quotations, borrowed ideas, and facts that are not general knowledge. If you are uncertain about plagiarism, ask your teacher.
6. You must do your own work. However, you may ask a teacher, parent, or friend for constructive criticism.
7. The Modesto Peace/Life Center reserves the right to reprint entries. Entries will not be returned.
8. Entries may be delivered to the **Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th St., Modesto, from 2pm-5pm Nov. 14-16**. You may also mail all entries, postmarked no later than **November 16, 2012** to:

2012 Peace Essay Contest
Modesto Peace/Life Center
P.O. Box 134
Modesto, CA 95353-0134

Judging

A distinguished group of local writers, educators, and peacemakers will judge the essays.

Judging guidelines (in order of weight) include:

I. Content:

- A. Does the essay demonstrate concern for establishing a more peaceful world?
- B. How well-developed are the ideas?
- C. Does it address the given topic?

II. Style:

- A. Is the essay original and interesting?
- B. Is it written with conviction?
- C. Does the personality of the writer come through?

III. Clarity of expression:

- A. Are the ideas clearly stated?
- B. Is the essay well-organized?
- C. Does it have an effective beginning and ending?

IV. Mechanics:

- A. Is grammar, spelling, and punctuation reasonably correct?
- B. Does the author cite all quotations, borrowed ideas, and facts that are not general knowledge?
- C. Does the essay stay within the word limit?

First, Second, and Third prizes will be awarded in each of the four divisions which have at least 15 entries. In the event that fewer than 15 entries are entered in any one division, all prizes may or may not be awarded in that division at the discretion of the judging panel. Up to three Honorable Mentions may be awarded in each division. Group entries (more than one author) are welcome.

The writer of the best essay in a division from a school which has ten or more entries in that division will be honored as the school winner. All participants will receive a Certificate of Participation.

Notification of Winners

In mid-February 2013, winners will be notified. Prizes will be presented at an Awards Reception in the spring. All participants, teachers, judges, and sponsors will be invited as guests of honor.

2013 Peace Essay Committee: Peggy Castaneda, Indira Clark, Pam Franklin, Elaine Gorman, Linda Lagace, Deborah Roberts, Sandy Sample, Shelly Scribner and David Tucker

This 26th Annual Peace Essay Contest is a project of the Modesto Peace/Life Center (209) 529-5750 and is co-sponsored by: Department of Literature and Language Arts, Modesto Junior College

"From a small seed, a mighty trunk may grow"

By MIKE CHIAVETTA

This quote by the Greek playwright Aeschylus was the theme of the just completed 4th Annual Social Justice Youth Leadership Conference. The conference was held on Saturday, Sept. 22nd at the Modesto Church of the Brethren and was attended by about 80 enthusiastic and committed area high school students.

The focus of this year's conference was the thought provoking topic of Peace and War. The attendees were enlightened by our own Sandy Sample as she motivated the young people in the crowd with a brief but compelling story of her life as an activist. Sandy outlined the "turning points" in her life in which the seed of commitment was sown and germinated. One of the attendees was so moved that they declared on their evaluation that from this day forward they were going to be an activist like Sandy!

The keynote speaker was 28 year old Iraq war veteran, Aaron Hinde. Aaron is an active member of Iraq Veterans Against War. Aaron began his talk with the assertion that ten years ago he was very much like the students in the room. A friend of his had enlisted in the army and he said why not. He was going to junior college and working a Baskin-Robbins and felt that his life lacked direction. He thought joining the army would be a "fun" adventure and he would get some money for college. His experience was much different. His descriptions and testimony to the horrors of war and the impact it had on him will be a lasting impression on all who heard his talk and viewed his slides. Aaron really hit hard on the "human cost" of war, not only on individuals like himself but also on the countless innocent victims that war consumes. From the numerous comments from the students Aaron's remarks will leave a lasting impression.

As in past conferences, we were fortunate enough to have several area non-profits in attendance that offered volunteer opportunities for the students. The groups that so unselfishly gave up their Saturday to reach out to young people included the Tuolumne River Trust, the Innocence Project, Church of the Brethren, PFLAG, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Free the Children and (of course) the Modesto Peace/Life Center. We at the PLC want to thank you for your efforts to engage young people.

The afternoon sessions were packed with learning and activities. Jana and Allie Chiavetta gave a dynamic workshop on personal security as part of their goal of non-violent com-

munication. Halle Pond of Free the Children conducted an interactive workshop on civil war in Africa and the impact her organization is having on the continent. Finally, the students participated in a "teach-in" on the "Cost of War and the Price of Peace." Moderators, Michael Chiavetta and Benjamin Mora dealt with the economic impact of US defense spending and the astronomical cost of the Iraq/Afghanistan Wars. This was particularly poignant for students as they prepare to tackle the costs of a college education. The afternoon was interrupted beautifully by Jennifer Pereira and her Yoga and Yogurt Break!

As has been for the last three Conferences, delicious food was prepared by Deborah and Pat Roberts. They

always provide a wonderful and nutritious assortment of goodies for the day. Peggy Castaneda and her company, We Paint, did an awesome job on the tote bags and t-shirts that were given to all participants. The Yogurt Mill generously donated 150 servings of froyo for the afternoon snack. Milk and chocolate milk were donated by Foster Farms. Thank you to Jim and Claudia Ingols for their donation to

the cause. Finally, a big "shout out" to PLC board members, Dan Onorato, Jim Costello and John Lucas for their invaluable help at the event and for all of their work, dedication and commitment to youth involvement in the Modesto Peace/Life Center.

ACTION: This event is a very expensive endeavor with the cost of around \$2000. As we look into the future and the possibility of a fifth SJYLC, we must think of these costs.

We want to continue to reach out area youth and to make the Modesto Peace/Life Center the dynamic, multi-generational organization that it should be. If you or your business or organization would like to donate to the continuance

of this important event, please contact the Modesto Peace/Life Center, 720 13th Street, Modesto, CA. 95354, or call (209) 529-5750, or contact M. Chiavetta @ (209) 527-7530, mike.chiavetta@gmail.com



How Voter Suppression Could Swing the Election

It won't be easy to protect our votes from being sidelined and stolen this year, but here are a few simple things we can do.

By GREG PALAST

In more than 100 years, there has not been a single case of voter identity fraud in the state of Indiana. Yet, in 2008, 145,000 legitimate voters there were turned away from the polls because they could not produce the photo IDs acceptable to state officials on a crusade against "voter fraud."

Approximately two out of three of those voters were black. Ten of them were black and white (nuns from the Sisters of the Holy Cross). One nun, aged 98, had given up her driver's license as had her "younger" sisters.

Now, 16 states have passed voter ID laws similar to Indiana's. The story is that legislators are trying to stop an epidemic of people voting under false names or casting the ballots of dead people. But nobody's come up with more than a tiny handful of cases where that's happened. Taking away the votes of hundreds of thousands of people to stop one or two fake votes is like killing a flea with a shotgun.

Moreover, no fewer than 68,029 Indiana citizens, and 488,136 voters nationwide, had their absentee ballots thrown out on nutty technicalities like using the wrong size envelope or crossing out a bubble instead of filling it in.

In all, my fellow investigator, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and I found that more than 5.9 million citizens were wrongly barred from voting or having their ballots counted in 2008.

Nonetheless, Indiana, birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan, was won by a black man, Barack Obama, despite the massive number of votes tossed and voters turned away.

That happened because in Indiana, and nationwide, a massive turnout of African-American voters and record registration of young voters—both groups that are hugely affected by voter ID laws—overcame efforts to block votes.

Because of all the attacks on voting I've reported, I've been asked, "Why bother? If they're going to steal my vote, then why should I vote at all?"

The answer is, "That's what the thieves want you to say." If someone steals your wallet, you don't take the rest of your money and throw it in the street. If someone steals your vote, don't just hand them the next one.

It won't be easy to protect our votes this year—estimates say the new restrictions could again disenfranchise as many as 6 million people. But Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. protected the votes of African-Americans when voting while black meant risking your life. Our task in 2012 is far easier.

First and foremost, check your voting status. Think you're registered to vote? Check again. Under new federal laws, secretaries of state have eliminated 22 million voters from the registries in the past two years. Check online right now.

Do you live in a state with new ID laws? Find out what ID you need, and figure out a way to get it. It may not be easy—but that's the point. They're hoping that people will just throw up their hands—and throw away their votes. Do you vote at one address and register a car at another? That's asking for trouble. Have you added your middle initial to your signature? Well, don't.

Read the instructions on your absentee or mail-in ballot. If they tell you to fill in a bubble, don't cross it out. If they say to use a pencil, don't use a pen. It may seem like trivial stuff, but it killed almost half a million votes last time.

The people who don't want your vote to count are counting on you to give up easily. Don't do it. We can work to fix

the laws after the election. But right now, the most important thing is to find out what rules are in place and make sure you follow them.

Get informed—then get going. Voting is for We the People, not Them the Ballot Bandits.

Greg Palast wrote this article for It's Your Body, the Fall 2012 issue of YES! Magazine. Greg is a widely published investigative reporter and author of several books. His latest, *Billionaires & Ballot Bandits*, a look at the role of big money in the current election, features comics by Ted Rall. www.BallotBandits.org

Interested?

Can't Buy My Vote: Maine's Fight for Fair Elections

For more than a decade, a groundbreaking Clean Elections law has helped protect Maine politics from the influence of big money. But what's happening now that big spenders have free rein to influence elections—and what does it mean for the rest of the country? See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/keeping-it-clean-maines-fight-for-fair-elections>

An Oregon Experiment in Citizen Governance

A new law that puts voters in charge of breaking through political spin could be a first step in making policy decisions that work. See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/an-oregon-experiment-in-citizen-governance>

What Would Real Voting Reform Look Like?

We have to do more than block bad laws. We need real voting reform to expand the franchise for the 21st century. See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/what-would-real-voting-reform-look-like>

From YES Magazine, <http://www.yesmagazine.org>

Moving my money

from page 1

But in early October of last year, my 7-year-old grandson in North Carolina sent me an e-mail: "Hey Grandma. Yesterday we went to a rally. It was called Occupy Durham," with a picture of him holding a sign he had helped his Mama and Daddy make: "The People United Will Never Be Defeated."

That was my wake-up call. I started paying more attention to news articles about Occupy Wall Street, searching for more information. By late October I was wandering to Graceada Park on Friday nights to hang out with a fledgling and rather rag-tag group calling itself OccupyModesto. And I've spent many a Friday night ever since at Occupy meetings, as well as at a Foreclosure Forum in Modesto, a 99% Spring Nonviolence Training in San Francisco, and a Foreclosure Moratorium demonstration and lobbying effort at the State Capitol; helping to lead a local 99% Spring Training event, and participating in many local Move Your Money actions at mega-banks. I now identify myself proudly as one of the 99%, and have read several books about the economic crisis that are a lot more clear and impassioned than my long-discarded college Econ textbook was.

So after spending several Saturday mornings standing in front of a mega-bank with a sign encouraging people to Move Their Money to a local bank or Credit Union, It became clear to me that I needed to put my money where my

mouth was, with an OccupyModesto handout to guide me through the steps.

I was warmly welcomed back to MOCSE Credit Union by a helpful credit union officer, told her I was planning to move all my money from Wells Fargo, and asked her if they'd recently seen an upsurge in new accounts. She replied in generic terms, a "we're pleased to welcome all our new members" kind of response, but I could tell from her grin that they were indeed enjoying an upsurge. I added to the \$60 that was still sitting in my ancient account, and opened two checking accounts, one of them for home repairs. I hadn't thought about needing to provide two references and fumbled to give accurate contact information, but it was fine to call her back the next day with that information.

I needed to authorize changes in my two Direct Deposits, and she explained what I would need to do and how long it would take, provided the forms for both Social Security and PERS, helped me fill them out, and even mailed them for me. The next day, I called both companies that made automatic Direct Debits from my account, and after an annoying ring-around-the-voicemail-circle at each one, got those changed to my new account.

MOVING MY MONEY. cont. p. 7



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What Would Real Voting Reform Look Like?

We have to do more than block bad laws. We need real voting reform to expand the franchise for the 21st century.

By ELISABETH GENN

Since the start of 2011, a wave of restrictive voting laws has swept the country. This attack on voting rights is unprecedented, unjustifiable, and discriminatory in its effects.

Over the last few weeks, the Department of Justice and the courts have stepped in, blocking some of the laws that most clearly violate protected rights. But none of these victories is final. To win the broader battle for the right of every eligible American to vote, we need more than a good defense against bad laws. We need positive bipartisan reform to bring our outdated electoral system into the twenty-first century.

Playing defense

Let's start with the restrictive voting laws, and where they stand. Since the beginning of 2011, 14 states have passed, or are on the verge of passing, restrictive voting laws that have the potential to impact the 2012 election. The states—Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, and West Virginia—represent 192 electoral votes, or 70 percent of the 270 needed to win the presidency. The new restrictions range from eliminating Sunday early voting (when Blacks and Latinos tend to vote in greater numbers) to imposing new burdens and potential penalties on groups that sign up voters. Most common of all are laws that require voters to produce specific kinds of government-issued photo ID before their votes can be counted.

Moving my money

It took about a month for everything to clear, and I had fun imagining a possible scenario for when I would take my money out of Wells Fargo: my son and grandson would be here for a week-long eclipse-watching visit, and I envisioned my grandson standing on the sidewalk outside the bank with a sign “My Grandma’s Moving Her Money To a Credit Union Right Now!” When the timing for that didn’t work out, I knew I’d be on my own.

One of my CD’s was about to mature, so that determined my timing. I went to the bank, got in line, told the teller I wanted to close out my two checking accounts and couple of CD’s, and immediately a Personal Banker was summoned and I followed her to a desk some distance away from the customer line. When she asked how she could help me, I handed her my recent bank statement, and said I wanted to close one of the checking accounts and take the proceeds in a cashier’s check. She slowly processed that through her computer. I then told her I wanted to take all but \$500 from the other account, and would be closing it out when all checks and debits had cleared. I then told her I wanted to close out the CD that was maturing, which she also processed.

And then I said, “I need to know what the penalties and interest forfeiture will be if I also close out the other CD which has several years to go before it matures.” At this point she got quite serious and said, “May I ask why you are doing this?”

Such laws have been justified under the theory that they will prevent “voter fraud,” even though a person is more likely to be struck by lightning than to commit voter impersonation fraud—and even though 11 percent of voting-age Americans lack the kinds of ID these states will now require. That percentage is significantly higher among students, the elderly, African-American and Hispanic voters, and the poor. These will be the people most likely to lose their right to vote under these laws.

The Voting Rights Act, passed in 1965 to protect many of these same groups, has recently been invoked to challenge the new wave of voter suppression laws. In Texas, the Department of Justice objected to a photo ID law, citing concerns that it would disproportionately disenfranchise racial minorities. The DOJ also pointed out that the state had produced no real evidence of a voter fraud problem not already addressed by existing law. In Florida, where a new law imposed such onerous burdens on voter registration groups that the League of Women Voters and Rock the Vote were forced to suspend their activities altogether, the Department of Justice found that the state had failed to meet its burden to show that its voting changes are not discriminatory.

The courts are also taking a more active role. Two Wisconsin state courts, in separate lawsuits, issued injunctions blocking any further implementation of that state’s photo ID law; the courts say that the law violates rights granted by the Wisconsin state constitution. This battle now continues in the state Court of Appeals. More recently, a state court in Missouri ruled that the ballot summary for a proposed constitutional amendment requiring a photo ID to vote was “insufficient and unfair.” Immediately on the heels of the court’s decision, the Missouri legislature began trying to

rewrite the language and introduced new measures to try to get a constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2012.

Given the scope of the challenge, intervention by the Department of Justice and the courts is badly needed to protect our right to vote. But it is not sufficient. If we are to stem the rising tide of restrictive state laws, we must also find affirmative solutions that work.

Time to play offense

The use of so-called “voting reform” to disenfranchise voters hides the fact that there are real problems in our elections. None is bigger than our outdated, paper-based voter registration system, which is exceptionally expensive and riddled with errors. According to a study by Caltech-MIT, in 2008 2.2 million citizens could not vote because of registration problems. This should be a source of embarrassment on both sides of the aisle and an impetus for real election reform.

Among other problems, the existing system cannot keep up with voters as they move, pass away, or change names after getting married. State governments could use existing technologies to automatically and permanently register citizens to vote. In 2012, we have the ability to update voter records when necessary, provide for fail-safe correction of voter information at polling places, and allow expanded methods of registering, such as online registration. Such modernization would lower costs, add millions of eligible voters to the rolls, and also foreclose any possibility of fraud. Using existing government information that can be cross verified, our voting system can be brought into the modern electronic age, limiting the human errors we face in our paper-based system.

At a time when the states are busy enacting “solutions” in search of a problem, this is a real solution we cannot afford to pass up.

Elisabeth Genn wrote this article for YES! Magazine. She is counsel in the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

Interested?

My First Vote: “I was overjoyed when I got my voter registration card. I was a real citizen!” Ex-offenders on reclaiming the human right to vote. See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/my-first-vote>

Recovering from Citizens United How can we get our democracy back? See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/citizens-united-v.-federal-election-commission>

Can’t Buy My Vote: Maine’s Fight for Fair Elections. For more than a decade, a groundbreaking Clean Elections law has helped protect Maine politics from the influence of big money. But what’s happening now that big spenders have free rein to influence elections—and what does it mean for the rest of the country? See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/keeping-it-clean-maines-fight-for-fair-elections>

The Importance of Being Sassy. How Occupiers, pranksters, and artists speak louder than money. See <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/9-strategies-to-end-corporate-rule/the-importance-of-being-sassy>

From Yes Magazine, <http://www.yesmagazine.org>

from page 6

You’ve been with Wells Fargo for 48 years. Are you unhappy with our service?” I knew this was my opportunity to get on my soapbox, but I was anxious to finish the process, so I kept it brief: “I’ve always been satisfied with your service, and have appreciated the way I’ve been treated. I’m choosing to leave Wells Fargo because of its corporate policies, particularly its predatory lending practices and involvement in the foreclosure crisis. I cannot in conscience remain as a customer when your corporate policies have harmed so many homeowners.” She said, “Oooh, has someone in your family gone through a foreclosure?” in an almost-sympathetic way. I replied, “No, but I care about what’s been happening to families, even if I don’t know them personally.” She then offered, brightly, “Oh, but Wells Fargo has a new program to help people with their loans so they can avoid foreclosure.” and I countered with, “Yes, but that won’t help any of the people who’ve already lost their homes, will it?”

We returned to the last item. I again asked how much I would forfeit in interest of penalties if I withdraw the second CD. She played around on her computer for awhile, wrote down the current value and the amount I would receive after penalties for early withdrawal, and handed me the figures. The penalty was quite a bit higher than I had hoped, and I

MOVING MY MONEY. . . . cont. p. 10

Highly effective conservation group needs funds to keep up key efforts

By JOHN BUCKLEY

Director, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center

Most readers of *Stanislaus Connections* have learned that big corporations and special interests often profit greatly from wars. Corporations and special interests also often profit from waging war on the natural environment. Clear-cut logging projects denude hillsides. Sprawling new development projects often bulldoze oak woodland habitat and open space corridors. Other projects pollute air or water and threaten nature.

For the past 22 years, a small non-profit organization located in Twain Harte (east of Sonora) has accomplished major successes on many key environmental issues where the Sierra Club, Audubon, and other volunteer groups simply don't have the staff or expertise to get involved. The Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (CSERC) has four full-time staff who work on every imaginable conservation issue across 2 million acres of Tuolumne and Calaveras counties. From the foothills to the crest of the Sierra Nevada north of Ebbetts Pass and from Yosemite National Park to the North Fork Mokelumne River, CSERC attempts to be a vigilant advocate for nature.

CSERC responds to all of the region's clearcut logging plans, all proposed new development projects, various threats to water, and all of the projects and plans proposed for the Stanislaus Forest and Yosemite National Park. CSERC's field monitoring locates sites in the national forest where livestock damage violates Forest Service rules or where water is being heavily polluted by cattle waste. CSERC's staff does intensive year-round photo-surveys for rare and threatened wildlife species in remote areas of the mountains. And perhaps most of interest to Stanislaus Connections readers,



CSERC school presentations have reached over 7,000 students this year with free programs.



Volunteer workday projects help restore meadows and stream areas.

CSERC provides free environmental slide show programs for schools and community groups, reaching more than 7,000 kids a year in Modesto, Stockton, Lodi, and other areas of the Central Valley.

Because CSERC is so intensely involved in every imaginable environmental issue across the vast Northern Yosemite region, CSERC's director ends up providing nature's point of view to the media over 100 times each year. The staff takes reporters into the forests or to proposed development sites to show on-the-ground concerns. Almost every week, year-round, CSERC staff testify at meetings or submits detailed written comments on proposed plans, policies, and projects. And on top of all of this time-consuming work, the Center provides free consulting help to local volunteer organizations to make them more effective.

CSERC offers 10 or more volunteer workday projects each summer and fall in the forest. Volunteers assist Center staff in doing meadow and stream restoration projects on public lands.

CSERC does this incredible amount of work with its small staff in part because the staff donates over 1,000 hours a year on top of their paid full-time work. But grants and donations are essential because that is the sole funding that CSERC receives. CSERC is now facing a major budget short fall because it needs more members to provide enough contributions to perform all the needed work.



ACTION: *Connections* readers can help. Every donation to CSERC is stretched to its utmost. Donating any amount, no matter how large or small, makes you a member. To learn more about CSERC or donate, go to www.cserc.org. Or send a check to: CSERC, Box 396, Twain Harte, CA 95383.



CSERC works to end clear-cuts that denude hillsides in the local mountains.



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Have the power
To vote for our
Favorite season
Yet we give voice
To the decisions
Of others
Trusting their innate
And virtuous instincts
To be hopeful,
Cognitively sound,
And strong enough
To withstand
A multitude of storms
To blossom through
The mysterious communication
Of our common dreams

— **Carol Miller**

(Carol Miller is a retired Elementary School teacher, who has recently become a certified Yoga instructor. As a caregiver to her husband with Alzheimer's Disease, she writes poetry to support the journey of other caregivers.)

MeterMaids Poetry

Members of the MeterMaids, a Modesto poetry writing group, weigh in on the complexities of voting, the making of peace and the lacking of peace that leads to war. The group came together 1990 following the 20th Anniversary of Earth Day, and the entire group will be featured as *Voices* poets in a future edition.

— **Tina Arnopole Driskill**,
Gathering of Voices editor

[Untitled]

Things are generally going to Hell,
heaven is heavily overpopulated
with the crowds of innocent souls
shoveled there by killers and politicians
drunk with promises of wealth and power,
believing that trendy lawyers
can assure them a comfortable, cool place
in Hell
beyond striking distance in space
next door to the Devil's fortress.

The fight for peace is a war
that should never have been fought.
Humankind produced an abundance of
profound thinkers,
Shakespeare and Faulkner invented pure
love
but I learned nothing
except for the all-importance of words.

I developed the courage to fail
experiencing rejection from an early age --
dyslexic, agnostic, funny sounding Russian
who imagined she could write in English
confusing America with her literature.
Whoever I thought I was,
it is clear I was not.

The importance of time out,
the importance of compromise --
peace doesn't have to be paid for
with human sacrifices,
with mindless bombing,
with holocausts,
with the frozen heaven --
zillions of robust Polar bears are feasting on
the schools of fat cod.

No endangered species,
no nagging Greenpeace,
no Al Gore with his annoying Nobel Prize,
no war for peace,
just me and Jesus
sharing a burger at the Barkin' Dog,
flashing a peace sign
in a desperate attempt to forget
the horrible place things are generally
going,
and the endless fight for peace
that starts the infinite wars.

September 11, 2011

— **Elena Kanevsky**

(Elena is from Moscow, Russia and is a retired college English professor.)



Peace?

Peace is not a condiment
You cannot buy it at the store
and pour it on your dinner
It is not a something you can fight for
without making things less peaceful
Peace may enter a mind
but you cannot manufacture peace of mind
no matter how long you do the right things, or meditate,
or send up prayer flags
Peace exists where there is no longer a desire for it
as desire shows only its absence
Peace washes up like seashells on the beach
It whispers in your ear on a Saturday when you sleep in
It enters cathedrals and battlegrounds, making no discrimination
Out in our world, of course, we will ask and clamor for
changes that might mollify the tension of our fears
But peace is in a wider place
Yet near

— **Karen Baker**

(Karen is a member of the MeterMaids,
Licensed Fools and AWG poetry groups.)



Random Thoughts, Autumn 2012

This has something to do with the pulse of the universe --
is it contracting or expanding?

This has something to do with the fraud of requiring voter identification
to prevent fraudulent voting.

This has something to do with a mind that thinks backwards,
yet knows enough to plan ahead.

This has something to do with the need for diversion
so we can dream a solution to our economic conundrum.

This has something to do with the sweet syrup of campaign rhetoric
that drowns out reason.

This has something to do with political ads like Doberman Pinschers
wiggling their image but whose purpose is to savage another.

This has something to do with autumn
when things wind down into release.

This has something to do with allowing weeds in the garden
because they too make oxygen.

This has something to do with the importance of voting
even if you don't live in a swing state.

This has something to do with efforts to create peace in a world
riddled with conflict even though the struggle seems endless.

This has something to do with hope for an end game
that remains elusive.

— **Lynn M. Hansen**

(Lynn M. Hansen is a retired Modesto
Junior College biology teacher and an
environmental and social justice activist).



Green Tips for a Green Planet: Green Halloween

By TINA ARNOPOLE DRISKILL

Halloween has become one of the most fun-filled and celebrated holidays in the United States. Parties, harvest carnivals, trick-or-treating are all part of the merry making, along with lots of unhealthy food traditions and waste.

When we went looking for information we discovered Green Halloween® (www.GreenHalloween.org), “the non-profit, grassroots revolution sweeping the country, giving Halloween a child-friendly, Earth-considerate makeover that everyone can feel good about.”

Moving my money from page 7

felt myself starting to move in the direction of fear-mode. I caught myself, decided that an act of resistance and a clear conscience was worth precisely the amount of the penalty and told her I wished to close out that CD also. She processed the transaction, sent all of it to the printer, then walked me back over to the teller window, where she instructed the teller to prepare the checks. I waited while the computer and printer completed the process, collected my cashier's checks, thanked the teller for her service and wished her well, and walked out of Wells Fargo bank a free woman. I knew I would have to come back once more, but I felt a great sense of relief and freedom.

I immediately drove to MOCSE, deposited the cashier's checks into my new checking accounts, and opened two “term share certificates” with the proceeds from the CD's, and danced merrily out the door.

My last trip (ever!) to Wells Fargo came a couple of months later when I had been notified that my two Direct Deposits and Direct Debits had all gone into effect, and all prior checks had cleared. Again I had to meet with a Personal Banker (a man this time). He too asked me why I was closing this account. I explained that it was a matter of conscience because of Wells Fargo's corporate policies, and that I had enjoyed the service I had received all these years. I collected the \$142 remaining in that account, and left feeling truly and finally free!

By now I have shredded all those checks, and the ATM and credit cards. And the sign I now carry at Occupy's Move Your Money actions said: “I Just Moved My Money from a Megabank to a Credit Union. How about you?” And when the day comes that we're standing in front of a Wells Fargo bank, I'll proudly carry it there.

I like knowing I can use my MOCSE ATM card at any credit union anywhere with no fee. I like the unpretentious, casual feel that greets me when I go to MOCSE. It's always a-buzz with activity, but the line always moves quickly. My monthly statements are clear and concise. Sometimes the Coffee Road branch sounds a bit like a casino when customers are putting their penny collection through the coin-sorting machine in the lobby, but it's a merry sound. I appreciate that there's a bathroom for customers, and that just plain friendly folk work and wait in line there. There's no pomposity at all in the whole place.

But most of all, I like knowing that a mega-bank no longer has any power over me, and that I'm not part of a financial institution for which the bottom line and highest priority is corporate profit, no matter how much harm it does to the 99%. The feeling of freedom, clear conscience, and small daily acts of resistance make a membership in a credit union a rare gift to my soul in these troubled times.

May it one day be so for you, too.

15 “eek-o-friendly” Green Halloween® tips:

Halloween is meant to be enjoyed, but somewhere in between “planning” and “cleanup”, many parents find themselves feeling overwhelmed. It might seem that attempting to consider the Earth while planning a great ghoulish party is just too much work and way too expensive. Some fear it might even zap the fun right out of the day. But creating an eco-savvy Halloween doesn't have to be scary, nor does it have to cost an arm and a leg when you follow these pointers:

1. **Consider your costumes.** The truth is many store-bought costumes and accessories contain toxic chemicals that not only are a potential hazard to your child, but also to the environment and the people who helped to make them. Choose fabrics such as cotton, wool and silk or make costumes yourself from materials you know to be safe.

2. **Go au natural.** When decorating your home for Halloween, skip the plastic black cats and paper skeleton streamers made in China. Instead, use décor inspired by Mother Earth by choosing fallen leaves, gourds or pumpkins, and 100% beeswax candles.

3. **Trim your trick-or-treats.** Hand out less _____ (fill in the blank). Preferably your goodies of choice are healthy and/or Earth-friendly, but even if they're not, handing out just one (rather than the conventional handful) of something is better for kids, better for the planet and better for your bank account.

4. **Apply the 3Rs** (reduce, reuse, recycle) to all of your holiday choices: costumes, décor, goodies, etc. Of the 3 R's, reducing is the best for the Earth, our wallets and, in regard to food, our waistlines. Rent, borrow, swap, make or acquire used, when possible, to avoid buying new, especially disposables.

5. **Choose eek-o-décor.** Say “no” to disposables and instead, re-use or re-purpose items you already own. Look also for items from nature and don't forget to decorate with food (consumable décor). If you must use disposables, look for products that are compostable and then be sure to compost them. Or, choose recycled, reusable and recyclable items like Preserve products. Too bad they don't come in Halloween colors... yet.

6. **Go kid powered.** Give your child a shakable or hand crank flashlight to light his way.

7. **Love LEDs.** Use decorative Halloween LED and/or solar lights for trees, outside of your home, and for lighting the path for trick-or-treaters. They come in every shape, theme and color imaginable!

8. **Bag it, green style.** Instead of buying, make your child's goodie bag from a pillow case or anything else you already own that goes with the theme of the costume. Or, purchase a keepsake, reusable Green Halloween® trick-or-treat ChicoBag™ at <http://www.chicobag.com/category/halloween>. (Designed each year by kids! Enter the design contest at <http://www.greenhalloween.org/content.php?page=contests>. 10% of the sales support the Green Halloween initiative.)

9. **Get creative.** Turn costume making into a creative and fun experience for your child. Hunt through the house, at neighborhood garage sales, or a thrift store for costume-worthy items. Enjoy the process and the product! Another idea: host a costume exchange as part of National Costume Swap Day™ (second Saturday in October).

10. **Switcheroo.** Instead of allowing your child to eat all the candy he collects, ask him to select a limited, pre-agreed upon amount and then leave the rest out for the Halloween Fairy/ Witch/ Great Pumpkin, who will, while your child is sleeping that night, swap the candy for goodies such as books, games or pumpkin points redeemable for outings.

11. **Green the YUM.** Make the party meal using foods that are mostly orange, black and green. Create spooky names for the food, if you can. Shop locally (support local farmers) and choose organic, whenever possible.

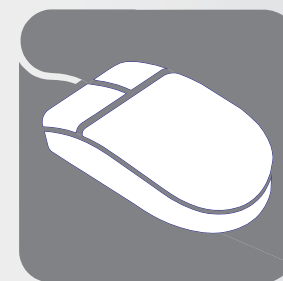
12. **Recycle the unexpected.** Compost all leftovers, jack-o-lanterns, natural décor and unconsumed candy - remove wrappers unless they're compostable. In some places of the country, you can add compostables to your yard waste bin.

13. **Celebrate others.** Host your Halloween party at a retirement home, children's hospital, organic farm or similar.

14. **Say “no” to toxic chemicals.** Make your own face paints. See <http://parentingsquad.com/easy-homemade-face-paint-thats-safe-for-kids-and-a-how-to-face-painting-guide>. Or purchase mineral-based, lead-free paints.

15. **Choose eco sweets.** If buying candy, choose organic - you'll be surprised at how affordable some brands are! If buying chocolate, look for triple certified: organic, shade grown, Fair Trade.

ACTION: Log on to <http://www.GreenHalloween.org> for more suggestions. Spread the word throughout your family, neighborhood, school, place of work and community organizations.



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<http://stanislausconnections.org/>

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Proposition 32 is NOT campaign reform

By KAREN LEE & RICHARD HULL
Union Representatives, AFSCME Local 10

Labor's Fall Agenda: Labor Day comes and goes with the predictable accounts in the mainstream media about the demise of the labor movement. It is variously described as a result of the increase in jobs in areas that are not traditionally organized such as the technology sector, waning interest in participating in unions, or the erosion of bargaining power due to wholesale shipping of jobs overseas. Recently, however, the traditional press has sought to demonize union workers (particularly in the public sector) as greedy grabbers, accruing lavish pension benefits at the expense of taxpayers. The focus has been on pension reform and labor's influence on electoral politics.

Protecting Collective Bargaining: Shouldn't workers have a say in their terms of employment? The basic tenet of organized labor is that workers collectively bargain with Management on compensation, hours, and working conditions. If bargaining does not result in an agreement, they can choose to withhold their labor as a means of asserting their collective will. We all know that the labor movement's accomplishments include an eight-hour day and the weekend, paid medical leave, health and safety standards, an end to child labor and much more. Some were accomplished through legislation at the hands of labor-backed politicians, and some

were through negotiations. Protections normally negotiated at the bargaining table seem now to be dangerously determined at the ballot box and in legislative chambers. One needs to look no further than the pension reform package recently rushed through the legislature on the last day of the legislative session, without a public hearing. Legislators may have been comforted by the fact that most elements of the package apply to prospective employees only, but the fact remains that it takes away the rights of unions to collectively bargain on their behalf. And one provision pertaining to level of retirement contribution does apply to current union members, permitting employers to unilaterally impose contribution increases by 2018 if they are not achieved at the bargaining table.

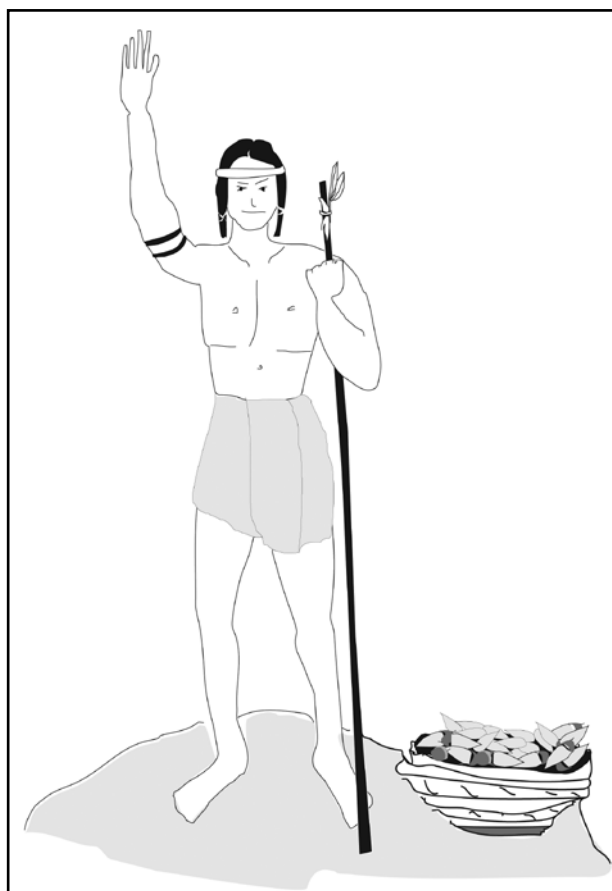
Progressives share the notion that people deserve decent jobs during their working years. They are entitled to live their lives in retirement free of worry about poverty. They deserve access to adequate health care. That's why unions negotiate post-employment benefits that set the standard for how seniors should be treated. Pension reform zealots ignore the following realities: 1) Cutting pensions only achieve savings many years down the line 2) the average CalPERS retiree's pension is only about \$26,000 per year—hardly a lavish sum and 3) The majority of retirement benefits are not paid by taxpayer dollars, but from investments. Politicians are creating myths around pensions instead of coming up with real solutions to the budget crisis. And they are legislating benefits that should be addressed at the bargaining table.

Proposition 32 is NOT Campaign Reform: Unions have traditionally relied on political action to help achieve our

goals to protect working families and promote the middle class. Proposition 32 on the November 6th ballot seeks to eliminate the participation of labor unions in the political process. This measure would prevent funds derived from payroll deductions (the method by which union dues are customarily paid) from being used for political contributions. It would also prohibit union members from voluntarily choosing to have money deducted for this purpose.

Unions share the values of progressive thinkers in promoting peace as well as social and economic justice, so Proposition 32 should concern them as well. This measure is touted as campaign reform by its promoters, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Common Cause, the League of Women voters, and other good-government advocates oppose this measure. "Prop. 32 is not what it seems, and it will hurt everyday Californians," said Trudy Schafer of the League of Women Voters of California. Relying on a host of special exemptions, Proposition 32 would serve only to benefit the 1% that gave birth to the Occupy movement. Wall Street, land developers, the health insurance industry, oil and tobacco companies, would still be able to funnel their millions into candidates and initiatives. Unions, the advocates for working people would not.

So despite the harsh accounts of the demise of the labor movement, unions are alive, well, and continuing the fight to protect our members. We advocate for them when they are working in their jobs, and continue to do so when they have retired. It's in the best interest of our communities and local economies to continue to do so.



Chief Stanislaus sees a plentiful harvest of acorns. Many acorns means a long, tough winter ahead. He wants his people to plan, to support each other & to look out for the less able.

Julia B Mensinger © October 2012

Endorsements for November 2012 California ballot measures Compiled by KEN SCHROEDER

	CA Labor Federation	League of Women Voters	CA Democratic Party	CA Republican Party	Sierra Club CA	CA League of Conservation Voters	CA Nurses Association
Prop 30	Y	Y	Y	N			Y
Prop 31	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Prop 32	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Prop 33	N		N	Y			N
Prop 34	Y	Y	Y	N			Y
Prop 35	Y		Y	Y			Y
Prop 36	Y		Y	N			Y
Prop 37	Y		Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Prop 38	N		N	N			N
Prop 39				N	Y	Y	
Prop 40	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y

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