Davis vows to restore overtime premium

Gray Davis, labor-endorsed candidate for governor, calls for the restoration of the overtime premium at last month's California Labor Federation convention.

G

ray Davis pledged to restore the eight-hour day and to give government back to working people if he is elected governor of California in the November election.

"I want an environment in which every person's work is valued, in which every contribution is recognized as just that—a contribution to our productive society," Davis told about 500 union delegates to the California Labor Federation's 22nd biennial convention, held last month in Oakland.

Davis congratulated the delegates on labor's successful campaign to defeat Prop. 226 in the June primary election, and won cheers from the crowd when he promised to fight "the son of 226, daughter of 226, grandson of 226" in the years to come.

Davis drew a sharp distinction between himself and his opponent—Attorney General Dan Lungren—by pledging to restore the eight-hour day if elected. Lungren opposes paying overtime premiums to workers who put in more than eight hours in a day.

The California Legislature voted to restore the daily overtime premium last year, but the bill was vetoed by Gov. Pete Wilson.

"Pete Wilson stole our eight-hour day and Dan Lungren, if elected, will keep it that way," declared California Labor Federation leader Art Pulaski, who urged unionists to support Davis with the same enthusiasm they gave to the fight.
Workers here and abroad

Rolling the union on . . .

Auto Pact?: As Utility Reporter went to press, the United Auto Workers were reported to be nearing an agreement with General Motors to resolve the issues that led to a union strike earlier in the summer.

Orthopedists Organize: After several years of frustrations with managed care health plans, more than 80 Cincinnati orthopedists joined the Federation of Physicians and Dentists, an affiliate of AFSCME. "As a small group, doctors really have no power in the marketplace to do anything negotiating with these big national insurance groups," said Dr. John Larkin, past president of the Cincinnati Orthopedic Society.

Harvest of Shame: Following violence in the strawberry fields, pro-union farm workers walked off the job to protest a sham election forced by a front group for growers at Coastal Berry Co. in Watsonville, CA. The UFW refused to participate in the July 23 charade, which the state's Agricultural Labor Relations Board held even though a leader of the pro-management group was arrested for allegedly attacking a police officer during a violent assault on pro-UFW workers earlier this month. "This isn't a union election. It is a modern-day harvest of shame," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.

Folding Their Tent: Faced with mounting pressure from working families and Colorado nonprofit organizations, backers of a proposed ballot initiative similar to California's Prop. 226 Paycheck Deception Act folded their tents and announced they were halting their drive to get the measure on the November ballot. Colorado AFL-CIO President Robert Greene said the move by the measure's backers "showed uncharacteristic good sense."

Threat to OSHA: President Clinton has threatened to veto the FY 1999 Labor/HHS spending bill over education and training funding cuts and riders aimed at OSHA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Passed by the House Appropriations Committee last month, the bill "undermines the work of OSHA and MSHA and their efforts to protect the health and safety of America's workers," said Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman.

Solidarity Strategies: The Machinists are joining with counterparts in Brazil and Germany to respond to the challenges posed by multinational corporations. The first target will be Daimler-Benz AG, where workers will be involved in each other's collective bargaining processes to achieve contracts that expire at the same time. That action would reduce the leverage Daimler and other employers wield when they threaten to shift work to other countries.

Make Health Care Work for Working Families!

INSURANCE COMPANIES AND HMOs are turning health care into big business. They get the profits—and too often we get stuck.
America's health care system should work for working families. Right now, our members of Congress are considering the Patients' Bill of Rights Act (H.R. 3605/S. 1890), which would provide:

- The right of doctors and patients to have more say about our medical care.
- The right to emergency room care.
- The right to see a specialist when we or our children need one.
- The right to appeal insurance company and HMO decisions.

We work hard to take care of our families. The Patients' Bill of Rights Act is a common-sense approach to making sure that every family participating in a health plan can get the quality health care they deserve.

WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU CALL:
Hello, my name is ______. I am a member of [local union affiliation] calling from the representative's/senator's district. I am calling to ask my representative/senator to support H.R. 3605/S. 1890, the Patients' Bill of Rights. What is the representative/senator's position on this bill? [Wait for response.] Please tell the representative/senator how important this is to me. Thank you very much.

You have a voice. Make it heard.

A MESSAGE FROM THE 13 MILLION WORKING MEN AND WOMEN OF THE AFL-CIO
Brocchini memorialized at PG&E

Former Local 1245 Treasurer Mike Brocchini, who died last year at age 38, was memorialized with a plaque to be hung in a place of honor at PG&E’s Training Center in Livermore.

Local 1245 Business Manager Jack McNally and PG&E Industrial Relations Manager Mel Bradley shared memories of Brocchini at the dedication ceremony on July 6. Bradley was Division Manager in San Joaquin when he first encountered Brocchini, and told of how he grew to respect Brocchini’s straight-forward style. McNally recalled Brocchini’s tireless efforts on behalf of the union as a steward, Advisory Council member, and treasurer.

Along with McNally and Bradley, Local 1245 members attending the ceremony were (from left) Vice President Jim McCauley, stewards Katie Wagner, Bob Olsen, and Dan Mayo (holding plaque), Executive Board member Chris Habecker, President Howard Stiefer, McNally, Executive Board member Anna Bayliss, Business Rep. Gary Hughes, and Executive Board member John Mendoza.


cpuc approves auction of pg&e power plants

The California Public Utilities Commission last month approved the auction process for four PG&E “group 2” plants, triggering the provisions of Letter Agreement 97-53.

That agreement provides financial incentives to power plant employees to remain at the generating facilities for at least two years. AB 1890, the electric restructuring law, requires the seller of a generating facility to offer the facility to another company. The City and County of San Francisco to close that plant once revenue can reduce its capacity, which would otherwise result in a scaling back of work and the reduction of the workforce.

AB 1890 also provided for rate reduction bonds to finance immediate rate relief for residential and small business consumers. Proposition 9 would prohibit the issuance of rate reduction bonds, and raises serious questions as to how the bonds already issued would be paid off.

This attack on AB 1890 is an extraordinary political maneuver by people who view utilities as an enemy, and who seek to punish utilities for past investments made in good faith and with full regulatory approval.

AB 1890 was not a perfect law, but it was approved unanimously in 1996 by both houses of the California legislature because it tried to balance the interests of all the various stakeholders in the electric deregulation debate. The new Electric Service Providers were given an opportunity to compete in an electric market in California, and existing utilities were provided with CTCS to ease their transition into that competitive market.

Among other things, those CTCS provide funding for voluntary severance, early retirement, and re-training programs for utility employees directly affected by electric competition.

The abolition of CTCS would significantly reduce the utilities’ operating revenue, which would almost certainly lead to a scaling back of work and the reduction of the workforce.

Proposition 9 represents a gun aimed at the heart of the major utilities, and our members are right in the line of fire.

Last month the California Labor Federation took our union’s advice and voted overwhelmingly to oppose Proposition 9. Our union will seek to further broaden that opposition to Proposition 9 as we approach November.

Please assist your union in this important effort.

Hunters Point to close

Cpuc approves auction of PG&E power plants

The dust has barely settled from the battle over Proposition 226 and already our members face another threat at the ballot box.

In November, California voters will be asked to vote on Proposition 9. This proposition would overturn many of the provisions of AB 1890, California’s electric restructuring law. In doing so, Proposition 9 represents a very real threat to the financial health of PG&E and to the job security of our members.

AB 1890 established a formula that permits utilities like PG&E to be compensated for past investments in generating facilities that will be uncompetitive in the new electric market. Proposition 9, if passed, would severely limit the authority of electric utilities like PG&E to collect this compensation, known as Competition Transition Charges or CTCS.

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Proposition 9 puts members in line of fire

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Electric deregulation: the reliability question

In the April 15 issue of Public Utilities Fortnightly, George C. Loehr described some of the leading myths about the fate of reliable service in the era of electric deregulation. Excerpts appear below. Loehr served as executive director of the Northeast Power Coordinating Council from 1989-1997.

**Myth: The Market Will Take Care Of Reliability**

(If you really believe this one, I'd like to talk to you about some land in Florida.) **Reality:** There are two kinds of bulk power system reliability: generation reliability (or adequacy) and transmission reliability (or security). Generation adequacy is virtually all anyone ever talks about when discussing reliability — yet it constitutes less than 10% of bulk power system reliability concerns. Transmission security, on the other hand, is responsible for more than 90% of all reliability problems...

Generation shortages, when they do occur, are usually predictable and controllable; you can use voltage reductions, public appeals or, as a last resort, rotating feeder outages. Transmission contingencies are usually unpredictable and uncontrollable; they happen suddenly, often cascading over widespread areas in a matter of seconds...

The market can deal to some extent with generation reliability; mostly through the types of products marketers will offer customers. While acceptability problems may emerge when folks start to get cut off, letting the market act is theoretically possible. This possibility is not true for transmission reliability. There's no way to keep some customers on, no matter how much they'reeshping to pay, when the bulk power transmission system collapses. Think of the 1965 [East Coast] Blackout. When the system went down, everybody went down — even the wealthy folks in their million-dollar condos on Central Park West.

**Myth: Today's Reliability Criteria Are Too Stringent And Restrictive.**

He describes in his book how he asked many NASA officials why they had lowered the shuttle's design standards. He was shocked when he repeatedly received the answer, "We hadn't had any accidents, so we figured we could lower the standards." As Feynman points out, the reason they had not had any accidents was precisely because they had stuck with the criteria, and you're entering unexplored terrain.

**Myth: "If You're Focusing On Reliability, You Haven't Gotten The Message."**

**Reality:** That's an actual quotation. So are these: "If your company is focusing on reliability, I'd downgrade your bonds right now," And, "Competition should be your top priority." It's difficult to comprehend, except for hubris, how anyone could make such a statement today. As a society, we are totally and irrevocably dependent on reliable electricity. Next to food and shelter it's probably the most essential of our everyday needs. We live in the Age of Information; its almost instantaneous acquisition and availability lie at the core of our economy. Without a reliable supply of electricity, almost nothing can happen. Yet intelligent people act like it isn't important.

Would we tell American Airlines, "If you're focusing on safety, you haven't gotten the message?" Yet reliability is to electric power supply as safety is to air travel. Reliability should be everyone's top priority. It's in everyone's best interest, whether generator, marketer, transmission owner or customer.

**Myth: Reliability in the Restructured Industry Will Be Just As High As In The Past.**

**Reality:** Don't bet on it! In fact, it's far more likely that deregulation and restructuring will lead to major degradation in bulk power system reliability. There are many reasons for this, some of which have already been touched on above. But here are a few of the most important:

**Complication.** Assuring reliability used to be fairly straightforward. There were few players, a relatively simple infrastructure, and near-universal commitment to the goals of reliability and conformance with criteria. Perhaps most important, there was a culture best characterized by cooperation and coordination. We now have an almost limitless number of participants, an increasingly complex infrastructure, little commitment to the goals of reliability, a "how can we beat it?" attitude toward criteria by many and a culture characterized at best by competition and confidentiality, and at worst by distrust, litigation and authoritarianism.

**Legalism:** Conformance with criteria is becoming an exercise in what we can get away with; how far can we go to just avoid violating the rules; and a search for loopholes. Conformance is "mandatory," and punishment assured. What a far cry from the days of so-called "voluntary" conformance, when players obeyed the rules because it was the right thing to do (how quaint!), and because they understood that reliability was in the best interests of all...

**Politicization.** Now that the reliability infrastructure has made conformance with reliability standards "mandatory," which apparently it cannot legally do without governmental authorization, Pandora's box has been opened to politicians and bureaucrats. But, of course, this is the inevitable outcome of the regulatory takeover of the industry's own organizations. A federal "backstop," we are told, must be provided. Government must review and sanction all standards. And reliability is OK if it doesn't get in the way of the market. Political expediency will replace the judgment of professional experts.

**Expediency.** Many of the industry's own organizations, which were established to promote reliability, have in essence sold their birthright. They have judged that the pragmatic course is to follow the politically correct approach, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Some did this because they genuinely believed they had no alternative, and this was a less-than-perfect way to maintain at least some leverage vis-à-vis reliability. Some did it to survive. Some saw opportunities to build new empires. A few became "true believers."

And some simply lacked the courage. All have been, in my view, misguided.

**The Bottom Line**

We will see more blackouts. It may take just a few months, or it may take years (we are dealing with the subtleties of probability), but it will happen, make no mistake about it. If this is so, one might ask, how come so few people have said it? ... There's been a kind of blanket of silence thrown over the whole industry. It's not written down anywhere, but everyone knows that speaking out, even in private meetings, may, to paraphrase the Surgeon General, be dangerous to your career...

What happens next? Well, it's far too late to stop this train, no matter what happens in the near term. We'll all have to sit tight and hope for the best. And do what we each can. Because, in the end, that's all we can do.

(For subscriptions to Public Utilities Fortnightly, write to Public Utilities Fortnightly, PO Box 99400, Collingswood, NJ 08108-0061)
Corporations will seek the cheapest labor to make the most profit, House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri told the union convention. Without labor protections, he said, “trade treaties represent a race to the bottom.”

Davis vows to restore state overtime pay protections

From PAGE ONE against Prop. 226.

Gephardt Urges Fair Trade

House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri promised the delegates he would continue his efforts to promote fair trade, and would oppose trade treaties that don't respect labor and environmental standards.

Gephardt said that Mexican workers working just south of the US-Mexico border “live in huts made of cardboard boxes next to raw sewage and work for less than $1 an hour.”

Corporations will seek the cheapest labor to make the most profit, Gephardt said. Without labor protections, he said, “trade treaties represent a race to the bottom.”

Gephardt said that Congress will outlaw the use of permanent replacement workers during strikes if Democrats recapture a majority in the US House in November.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told the delegates that the news of labor’s victory over Prop. 226 ran through the nation’s Capitol “like a sizzling burst of lightning.” He urged California union to mobilize their members to get out the vote for pro-labor candidates in November and beyond.

Boycott Wells Fargo

After his keynote address to the California Labor Federation Convention, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney led 500 delegates and guests on a two-block march to a Wells Fargo Bank in Oakland to show solidarity with 1,100 embattled Colorado steelworkers.

At the request of the Steelworkers union, the AFL-CIO has taken the rarely-used step of calling for a national boycott of two companies—Oregon Steel Mills and its main financial backer, Wells Fargo Bank—to protest the war they are waging on the Colorado steelworkers at OSM’s CF&I mill in Pueblo, Co.

“We’re sending a message to Oregon Steel that you can break the bonds of human decency, you can break the law, but you can’t break our spirit or our unions,” Sweeney told the cheering delegates.

The California Labor Federation closed 9 accounts at the bank.
It was not a good day for the local union shop steward when John Stralla hired on at Sierra Pacific Power Co. in 1964.

"I didn't like what the steward was doing," says Stralla. "I kept asking questions. After about six months the steward got pissed off and said, 'If you don't like what I'm doing you can be the steward.'"

Stralla apparently had a talent for union work because he soon found himself on the negotiating committee and the bargaining committee. But he confesses to being "a little overwhelmed" when he was invited to join the union staff in November of 1971 after just seven years on the job.

"I wasn't sure I could do it," Stralla recalls. "I thought, well, I'll give it a shot."

It was quite a shot. When Stralla retired last month, he was the longest-serving business representative on the staff—surviving the administration of three union business managers, six American presidents, and numerous contract negotiations.

Think of it this way: When Stralla became business rep in Nevada, Sierra Pacific Power had been under a union contract for a total of 25 years. Stralla saw that relationship through an additional 28 years—longer than all previous Nevada reps combined.

His early years as business rep weren't easy, Stralla says. A wage and price freeze imposed by President Richard Nixon made bargaining difficult. And the Public Service Commission took away the employee discount.

Furthermore, Nevada was—and remains—a "right to work" state, meaning bargaining unit members could not be required contractually to pay union dues.

"John could be very aggressive when he wanted to be and very cooperative when he wanted to be, and he used both to his advantage."

Perry Zimmerman
Assistant Bus. Mgr.
Ila apparently had a talent for work because he soon found himself on the negotiating committee he was assigned to being "a little over-nerved" when he was invited to join the union staff in November of 1971—just seven years on the job. "I wasn't sure I could do it," Stralla said. "I thought, well, I'll give it a shot."

Last month, he was the longest-serving business representative on the surviving administration of union business managers, six presidents, and numerous local representatives. "That's how you succeed in a right-to-work state," says Stralla. "Get the members to participate. If the companies did all the right things we wouldn't be in business, but they don't always do the right thing and that's why we're still around."

"John has been known to contribute his share to the swear jar," says Rita Weisshaar, referring to a jar kept by the bargaining committee members to toss a dollar in every time they swore.

But good bargaining takes more than blue language. Shop steward Bob Baber credits Stralla with being knowledgeable and thorough. "I think we've always gotten a good contract. I think without John we wouldn't be where we are today," Baber said.

If numbers mean anything, that's certainly true. When Stralla started his job in 1971, Local 1245 had 27 members at Sierra Pacific Power. The current number is around 700. Stralla says it's the stewards and union committee members who have kept the local strong.

"Working with a lot of good stewards has been my success and the local's success," he says.

Building a strong local base among the members was especially critical in a location like Nevada that's on the edge of Local 1245's jurisdiction. But Stralla seemed to enjoy the challenge of being out on his own.

"I've been fortunate in terms of my bosses," he says, noting that he worked under Local 1245 assistant business manager Perry Zimmerman to Orv Owen to Chas Wilder. "They allowed me to do things out there—they gave me a long leash and they let me do what I had to do."

"John could be very aggressive when he wanted to be and very cooperative when he wanted to be, and he used both to his advantage," says Zimmerman. "What I was most impressed with was John's ability to work effectively in the background, to have credit only with the bargaining unit management."

"He utilized his committees to the utmost," agrees Owen, adding that Stralla was "a tough negotiator and he had all his facts together when it came to bargaining."

Stralla acknowledges it took finding the best way to do things.
"What amazes me about John is he can look at a proposal and see the global picture—he can predict what effect it will have on other things. I don't know whether it's intuition or just years of experience, but he can really put things together."

Rita Weisshaar
Local 1245 steward

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"I think we've always gotten a really good contract. I think without John we wouldn't be where we are today," says Baber.

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"Working with a lot of good people—that's been my success and their success," he says.

Building a strong local base of support among the members was especially critical in a location like Nevada, out on the edge of Local 1245's jurisdiction. But Stralla seemed to enjoy the challenge of being out on his own.

"I've been fortunate in terms of bosses," he says, noting that he has worked under Local 1245 assistant business manager's ranging from Perry Zimmerman to Orv Owen to John Wilder. "They allowed me to do my thing out there—they gave me a pretty long leash and they let me do what I had to do."

"John could be very aggressive when he wanted to be and very cooperative when he wanted to be, and he used both to his advantage," says Zimmerman. "What I was most impressed with was John's ability to put together teams that had credibility not only with the bargaining unit but with management."

"He utilized his committees to the utmost," agrees Owen, adding that Stralla was "a tough negotiator" who had all his facts together when it came time to bargain.

Stralla acknowledges it took time to figure out the best way to do the job. "To be a good business representative I think it takes you at least 10 years. You learn all the ins and outs and learn who to deal with and how to deal with the problems. It's an educational thing—it's not something you learn over night."

But Stralla figured it out, and crafted an effective role for himself and the union at Sierra Pacific Power. And don't be fooled by those hearing aids he's always fiddling with.

As Weisshaar observes: "Even though he's sitting there calm and quiet and you think he has his hearing aids off, he knows everything that's going on all the time."

"That's how you succeed in a right-to-work state," says Stralla. "Get the members to participate. If the companies did all the right things we wouldn't be in business, but they don't always do the right thing and that's why we're still around."

Stralla's skill in dealing with the company is held in high regard by stewards who have worked with him through the years.

"What amazes me about John is he can look at a proposal and see the global picture—he can predict what effect it will have on other things," says Rita Weisshaar, a steward and bargaining committee member in 1994 and 1997. "I don't know whether it's intuition or just years of experience, but he can really put things together."

Stralla is not a man to mince words. According to Weisshaar, when the company put forward proposals that Stralla didn't like, he would be likely to say something along the lines of "This is a bunch of s—."

"Stralla gives his last report at Local 1245's staff meeting in Walnut Creek on June 29."
Union honors members at service award ceremony

Eureka, Ca.
May 16, 1998

45 Years
Hank Lucas (award presented by Bob Choate, left)

35 Years
Larry Watts, Roger Edwards

25 Years
Ken Cunningham, Dan Flanagan

30 Years
Darrell Gillette, Linda Jurado (presentor)

20 Years
Callos Mier, Kaye Swanson, Linda Jurado (presentor), Ed Quinn

45 Years
Hank Lucas

35 Years
Roger Edwards
Lawrence Watts

30 Years
Darrell Gillette
Kirk Schmidt

25 Years
Pedro Arias
Randy Bollan
Harold Connerly
Dennis Costa
Erica Costa
Kenneth Cunningham
Robert Echeveria
Daniel Flanagan
John Girds
Dale Hubbard Jr.
Aileen Koppenberg
Guy Lund

20 Years
Gloria Eisan
Dennis Elvey
Lee Hardwick
Shirley Jackson
Bernard Johnson Jr.
Kevin Jones
Karen Lamb
Fred McKee
Carlos Mier
William Morris
David Olivieri
Michael Pinske
Ed Pontious
Edwin Quer
Paula Ramsey
Eric Robertson
Kenneth Stephens
Kaye Swanson
Linda Toler
Gathy Wood

Photos by Dave Mauldin
Hank Lucas: Local 1245 honors one of its pioneers

When Hank Lucas received his 45-year service award during ceremonies in Eureka, the union was honoring one of its pioneers.

Hank, who was a business representative for 18 years, turned the award ceremony into an opportunity to share stories that completely captivated his audience.

He talked about his days in Humboldt as a lineman. "Humboldt," he noted, "was known for the activists who were serious about this union. We were at times considered 'radicals.' Every working PG&E employee was in the union, he said, even though the union did not yet contain a union security clause.

When Hank became a business representative, he spent some time in Humboldt and kept the union spirit active.

"We had a full house at every unit meeting," he said. "We had a full house at pin dinners. We all backed this local, no matter what it was, we were out there."

Hank believes the union has its hands full today, and said the need to stick together is more essential than ever in dealing with changes in the employers and changes in the political arena.

"Being a member of Local Union 1245 is a pretty good life. We had it good for a long time. Now it becomes necessary to organize ourselves to become good union members so we can go out into the industry and organize by example," he said.

"If we don't continue to organize, then you here tonight may not be in a position to retire at a decent age and enjoy all that you have earned. I want to see you all back here in five years," he told those attending the Service Award ceremony.

Hank went to work for PG&E in 1947, when the union organizing drive at the company was entering a critical phase. He worked as a lineman, and became involved in the union as a steward, unit chairman (Eureka), and eventually as the union's recording secretary.

Ron Weakley hired Hank as a union business representative in 1964. In his career as a rep Hank had assignments in Stockton, San Joaquin, Yosemite, SMUD, and organizing Pacific Tree. Hank was also active in all the Central Labor Councils in his assignment areas. He went off on LTD in 1981 and retired in 1991.

Hank was a real pioneer in the development of our union's labor agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric. His hard work and dedicated service to his members was a major factor in Local 1245's success. It was a privilege and an honor for me to present him with his 45-year award.

By Bob Choate

August 1998

Utility Reporter
New study links EMF exposure to heart attacks

By Dan Mayo

Does occupational exposure to EMF increase your risk for heart attack? That's the question recently explored by Dr. David Savitz and other scientists. Re-examining an existing database, Savitz investigated whether magnetic field exposure was associated with cardiovascular disease mortality among electric utility workers. This study, recently released for peer-review, seems to point in that direction.

Most EMF epidemiology to date has studied possible associations between magnetic fields and certain types of cancer. Why would researchers want to look in this new direction?

The authors of this study comment, "Laboratory studies on human volunteers suggest that magnetic field exposure may affect heart rate and HRV." HRV (heart rate variability) is a normal, healthy function of the autonomic nervous system. Accordingly, Savitz and his colleagues looked specifically for associations between cumulative magnetic field exposures and risk of death for cardiovascular diseases thought to be related to autonomic nervous system impairment.

First, the bad news:

For arrhythmia-related deaths (related to changes in heart rhythm) and for myocardial infarction (heart attacks), estimated cumulative magnetic field exposure was associated with a 1.5 to 3.2 times greater risk in the highest exposure categories. Although a relative risk of 1.5 is not considered significant (unlikely to have happened by chance). Importantly, these findings are also significant because of a dose-response trend—the higher the exposure, the higher the risk.

The medical community already recognizes that cigarette smoking is a risk factor for heart disease. Did cigarette smoking confound these results? Probably not. A previous analysis failed to find a link between magnetic field exposure metrics and lung cancer in this same database. If smoking were a confounding factor, an association would be expected.

Furthermore, one would expect increased risks among all types of cardiovascular disease, not just those related to the autonomic nervous system. Last year, Kelsh and Sahil reanalyzed data from a smaller cohort of Southern California Edison workers, reporting increased risks of blockage of the blood vessels (cardiovascular disease for linemen, meter readers, field service personnel, plant operations and trade/craft workers. This analysis lacked the kind of exposure information and cardiovascular disease groupings that would shed more light on this issue.

For job titles of lineman, electrician and power plant operators, the risk ratios were all consistently elevated and statistically significant (unlikely to have happened by chance). Importantly, these findings are also significant because of a dose-response trend—the higher the exposure, the higher the risk.

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Seniors can show real power at polls

By Ory Owen

This is an election year and all 435 seats in the US House of Representatives and 34 seats in the US Senate are up for election.

Our current Social Security and Medicare programs are at risk and in harm's way by those politicians who bow to the influence of the insurance companies and Wall Street investors.

Social Security provides benefits beyond retirement. For example, survivors collect when a wage earner dies, easing their financial problems.

Social Security serves an enormous number of people. It pays benefits to 44 million, Roughly 147 million workers—96% of the work force—pay Social Security contributions to support the program and stand to benefit from it as they grow older.

Social Security has dramatically reduced poverty among the elderly. As late as 1959, more than 35% of old people lived in poverty. With the expansion of Social Security, poverty among the elderly has dropped to near 10%.

Social Security does more to reduce poverty and income inequality than either the tax code or the welfare system.

Social Security succeeds at this because it is a progressive system. Low-wage earners, who have less income from which to save during their working years, get back more relative to what they put in. Social Security retirement benefits replace approximately 60% of the post-retirement earnings of a low-wage earner, 42% of an average-wage earner, and 26% of a high-wage earner.

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Social Security also helps the children of retirees, who need to put aside less to care for their parents and thus can spend more on their children.

And Social Security provides benefits beyond retirement. For example, survivors collect when a wage earner dies, easing their financial problems.

Seniors can show real power at polls. The American Association of Retired Persons has asked the US Supreme Court to review a federal appeals court ruling that retirees at General Motors and surviving spouses are not entitled to free lifetime health care coverage despite written agreements with the employer guaranteeing the benefits.

By Paul Wellstone

Before Wall Street hoodwinks the country into privatizing Social Security, let's take a moment to consider how tremendously successful the program is right now.

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And Social Security provides benefits beyond retirement. For example, survivors collect when a wage earner dies, easing their financial problems.

Americans face roughly a 1-in-5 chance of dying before they reach the age of 65. Social Security survivors' benefits are the equivalent of a $32,000 life insurance policy for an average family with two children. More than 7 million Americans, including millions of children, receive Social Security survivors' benefits today.

The odds are high—3 in 10—that a worker will become disabled before age 65. Few workers have private, long-term disability insurance, but Social Security provides nearly all workers with such protection—the equivalent of a $200,000 disability policy for an average family with two children. More than 4 million disabled workers under 65 and nearly 2 million of their dependents receive Social Security disability benefits.

Contrary to the privatizers' propaganda, the elderly are not an affluent group. A majority of Americans 65 or older depend on Social Security for 90% of their income. The average retired beneficiary gets a little more than $9,000 a year from Social Security. Most of the elderly get less than $6,000 a year from all other sources. Fully two-thirds of the elderly have non-Social Security incomes below $1,000 a year.

Without Social Security income, 54% of America's elderly would live in poverty.

When the privatizers say, "Let's cut Social Security benefits to fund individual savings accounts," they're really saying, "Let's take some of that $9,000 a year future retirees hope to get from Social Security and put it at risk."

Social Security is not facing bankruptcy. Yes, we will have to modify Social Security to keep it solvent over the next 75 years, but there's no need to scrap its fundamental benefit structure. Even under pessimistic assumptions, the current system will work without any change whatsoever through 2032. Even under these pessimistic assumptions, modest steps taken now can keep Social Security solvent over the next 75 years.

Social Security is the most successful government program in history. It is one of America's proudest accomplishments. We should sustain that success, not destroy it.

(Paul Wellstone is senator from Minnesota. This article was excerpted from The Nation. For subscriptions, write to The Nation, P.O.B. 37072, Boone, IA 50037."

Don't be hoodwinked by Wall Street

Leave Social Security alone

By Paul Wellstone

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(Paul Wellstone is senior senator from Minnesota. This article was excerpted from The Nation. For subscriptions, write to The Nation, P.O.B. 37072, Boone, IA 50037.

AARP appeals benefits case

The American Association of Retired Persons has asked the US Supreme Court to review a federal appeals court ruling that retirees at General Motors and surviving spouses are not entitled to free lifetime health care coverage despite written agreements with the employer guaranteeing the benefits.

The GM retirees contend that their benefits vested upon retirement and, therefore, cannot be changed. Retirees also claim they gave up their jobs on the promise of lifetime health care coverage.

Congratulations to the newly-retired!

The Local 1245 Retirees Club extends its congratulations to these recently-retired members of the union. We invited you to participate in a Retirees Club chapter in your area, or to start one in your area if there is none!

Call Austin Lea at 925-955-0600 Ext. 240.

Name

Dorothy Little

San Jose, CA

18

Robert J. Tainter

Pacific, CA

24

Lawrence Bruce

Redding, CA

19

Elise DeLeon

Novato, CA

7

Donald Jeffersons

Cupertino, CA

36

Everett Meredith

Sacramento, CA

41

Residence

Utility Yrs/Srvc.
Ceremony honors members for long-time union service

San Jose, Ca.
March 27, 1998

30 Years
Gerald Mills, Rich Culbertson, Ted Altman, Robert Ramirez.

25 Years
Back row: Gerry Roza, Hugh Manix, Steven Camarena, Rick Bustamante, Jim Drapchaty, Martin Savage, Rod Ulibarri. Front row: Paul Shirley, Jess Martinez

20 Years
Johnny Villanueva, Robin Morrison, Susan Poore, Bob Koval, Todd Harris

40 Years
Dave Decloeidi
Gary Dewitt
Jim Drapchaty
Harry Guilford
Dan Guilia
James Hall
Kirk Hazel
Jerry Hernandez
Anthony Herrera
Dennis Hayeck
Timothy Lohr
Hugh Manix
Jess Martinez
Lupe Martinez
Patrick McCullough
Carmen Messado
Robert Nimrod
Joe Ontiveros
Steven Panighetti
Reynoldo Perez
Rudy Paraz
Ray Ramos
Margaret Rector
Joseph Rodriguez
Gerald Roza
Martin Savage
Robert Schroeder
Paul Shirley
Kelly Smith
Joseph Soza
Gregory Stokes
Ronald Taylor
Tyrone Taylor
Richard Trask
Rodney Ulibarri

35 Years
Connell Allison
Dave Mackley
Ralph Riplinger

30 Years
Ronald Airey
Ted Altman
Gary Anderson
Charlie Ballon
Richard Culbertson
Gilbert De La Rosa
C. A. Dotson
John Edwards
Ellie Hernandez
Paul Herrera
Carroll Love
Gerald Mills
Larry Packer
James Pendry
Robert Ramirez
Richard Sinnott

25 Years
Roger Beart
Albert Beltran
Jeffrey Bishop
Dennis Blakley
Warren Brown
Edward Bruno
Richard Bustamante
Steven Camarena
Joseph Cardinale
Marvel Contreras

20 Years
Joanne Barnes
Richard Bohn
Allen Bomagat
Joan Brannelly
Sharon Burnam
Harvey Craig
Noel DeGroof
George Dickinson
Benjamin Driese
Robert Gault Jr.
Filomena Goble
Todd Harris
Michael Hendrix
Gail Klein
Robert Koval
Gary Langworthy
Gene Lighty
Mike Livingstone
Robert Martin
Chris McKernan
Robin Morrison
Cara Morrow
Rosie Muillo
Barbara Najari
David Olivo
Dave Painter
Susan Poore
Sandra Preston
Ronald Sheppard
Pietar Tibbertsma
Johnny Villanueva
Donna Walsh
Neil Ware
Danny Wendel
James Whitecar
Claire Yeater
Debra Zerbaugh