

# Prescription For Action

## PREVENT WHAT WE CANNOT CURE

Inside: Sue Blumenthal Remembered, World Asthma Day, Take Action: Environmental Health Legislation, Member Profile: Curren Warf, MD, Calendar of Events

Summer 2004 • Physicians for Social Responsibility—Los Angeles • Volume 24 No. 3

## Save the date for Dr. Dean PSR-LA Gala • September 7th, 2004

PSR-LA is delighted to announce that **Governor Howard Dean, MD** will be honored at our Gala Dinner on Tuesday, September 7th at the St. Regis Hotel.

Governor Dean, MD will receive PSR-LA's 2004 Caldicott award for his inspiring campaign to bring new voters to the polls. In the critical days leading up to the November election, we know that he will inspire all of us to participate in get-out-the-vote activities.

In addition, local heroes **Wally and Suzanne Marks** will be honored with the Peacemaker Award for their unyielding commitment to social justice in Los Angeles and their long-time support of PSR-LA.

**Phil Landrigan, MD** will receive our Socially Responsible Medicine Award for his groundbreaking work on environmental toxins and their effects on childhood development.

All proceeds from the dinner will allow PSR-LA to continue its critical work to protect public health from national security threats, environmental toxins, and gun violence. We cannot do this work without you!

For more information, or if you would like to volunteer to help make the dinner a success, please contact Denise Duffield at 213-386-4901 ext. 108.



PSR-LA Caldicott award honoree Governor Howard Dean, MD, shown here with wife Judith Steinberg Dean, MD.

## Getting out the Vote in California and Nevada

Physicians for Social Responsibility—Los Angeles (PSR-LA) is teaming up with a great non-profit group, Project Vote, in an effort to increase voter participation in Southern California and Nevada. Nevada is considered a key swing state. And the folks in Las Vegas may well determine who becomes the next President of the United States. Project Vote specializes in registering, and implementing get-out-the-vote activities in low-income and minority communities. The group has registered three million people since 1982.

PSR-LA has made the trip to Las Vegas before. In 1999, Drs. Richard Saxon and Robert Wesley testified before federal officials on the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear repository. PSR-LA

organized events at the Nevada Test Site. And even as recently as this past month, PSR-LA Director Jonathan Parfrey surveyed the perchlorate pollution entering the Colorado River via the Las Vegas Wash. PSR members are familiar with the issues that may persuade Nevada voters—these include access to health care, Yucca Mountain, and clean air and water.

Please join us for a kick-off “Get Out the Vote Lawn Party” in Los Feliz on Sunday, July 11, 2004, from 5:00 - 8:00 PM. PSR-LA members Jimmy Hara MD, William E. Perkins MD and W. King Reilly MD are serving as hosts. The event will take place at the home of Becky and Don Hanson, [please contact PSR-LA at (213) 386-4901 to receive address and directions]. The requested

*Continued on Page 5*

# Sue Blumenthal Remembered

Sue Blumenthal, our wonderful volunteer, passed away on June 4. Sue was an exceptionally giving woman, a tremendous co-worker and beloved friend to many of us at Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles.

In 1981, Sue left her job at Hughes Aircraft to volunteer full-time at Physicians for Social Responsibility. And for the next nineteen years Sue essentially worked in our offices. "I was so concerned about Reagan and the nuclear build-up I had to do something," she told me. Yet Sue was no ideologue and would speak fondly of her friends at Hughes Aircraft. Still, she maintained, "leaving Hughes was my way of converting the military industry."

Sue faithfully maintained the PSR-LA database, answered correspondence, and performed the sundry unglamorous but necessary tasks that helped PSR-LA thrive.

When I arrived in 1994, Sue maintained membership information on both on a rudimentary computer program as well as a complex colored card system. What did this entail? Once a donation arrived, Sue would type the donation and address change on an IBM Selectric typewriter, then she would move over to the computer keyboard, re-type the information into the database, then she open the word processing program and type-out an acknowledgment letter, then go back to the typewriter and hand-type the donor's address on a stationary envelope. Sue would faithfully repeat this process thousands upon thousands of times.

I wish I'd recorded the amazing conversation that'd take place during PSR-LA newsletter mailings. Sue was the lead organizer of these half-work half-party events. Joining her might be Pauline Saxon, Orpha Goldberg, Lillian Laskin, Mary Breiderbach, Elaine Budin, Doris Bolten and Bea Sperling. The conversation was rich - sometimes bawdy - but always insightful. Sue's lovable loud New York accent would rise and fall with the conversation. I think the world's problems were solved around that table.

Sue grew-up in the Depression and at a young age went to work to support her family. Perhaps this experience made Sue a leading exponent of civic partici-



ipation. For Sue also volunteered at a well-baby clinic, at after-school tutoring programs, and at the Lowman School - a special education center where her daughter, Helen Harter, served as principal.

Sue believed in the political side of civic life as well. She believed that you join a group and use that collective force to make changes in society. Sue not only practiced these political virtues at PSR-LA but also when she retired at the Agoura Hills Senior Retreat. Just last year, when the Iraq War was about to start, Sue made signs and organized her compatriots to vigil against the war. The local Conejo Valley newspaper, the Acorn, prominently featured Sue's protest.

Despite a hard childhood and early widowhood, Sue Blumenthal created a magnificent life and beautiful legacy. Her generation is passing. Through their sacrifice, groups like Physicians for Social Responsibility were created. And I fear that my generation and the ones that follow may be all too self-concerned and scared, and lack the commitment and esprit d'corps to continue the work. Sue Blumenthal's life is a wonderful encouragement to keep on carrying on.

Jonathan Parfrey

# PSR LA

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# PSR-LA Organizes World Asthma Day Media Event

By Gilbert Estrada

United in a stance against the alarming increase in asthma, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA) sponsored a World Asthma Day Press Event on May 4, 2004. Some of Los Angeles' leading public health advocates, environmental justice groups, and community parents commemorated World Asthma Day by demanding for the passage of several air quality bills to prevent future asthma cases and improve the health of the children who currently have asthma. These bills address railroad pollution, port pollution, and indoor air quality in schools. *Continued on Page 4*



The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are the largest single source of air pollution in the region, emitting 47 tons of Oxides of Nitrogen (NOx) daily, or roughly 10% of the Los Angeles area's air pollution. Ships and commercial boats add 49 tons daily, while over 181 tons of NOx comes from area diesel equipment.

## Take Action: PSR-LA Environmental Health Legislation

On May 24 and 25, one hundred and thirty environmental health and justice advocates representing over 60 organizations from across the state walked the halls of the state capital. Organized by the Environmental Health Legislative Workgroup, a working group of over thirty members including PSR-LA, The National Environmental Trust, California Environmental Rights Alliance and Californians for Pesticide Reform, Environmental Health Lobby Day brought residents from all across the state voice their concerns to legislators about human health and the environment.

Of the six bills in our Environmental Health legislative agenda, three remain active and will require further support from our members.

In April of this year, SB 1397 passed out of the Environmental Quality and Transportation Committee. With the support from numerous environmental and public health groups, the bill also passed through the Senate appropriations (May 11), the Senate Floor (May 26), and the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials (June 10). In total, SB 1397 received 28 votes in favor and 18 votes in opposition. PSR-LA is anticipating heavier opposition when the bill is sent to Assembly Appropriations. Contact your local Assemblymember and Governor Schwarzenegger and support

clean air through SB 1397.

The Vended Water bill by Senator Richard Alarcon, sponsored by the Latino Issues Forum, increases enforcement of water vending machines and retail water facilities and establishes a consumer education program. Vended water consumers have a right to know basic information about their water, including source, quality, and sanitation procedures. Consumers must have the assurance of knowing that vending machines and retail water stores are regularly inspected to ensure compliance with the law. On June 22nd the bill made it out of the Senate Health Committee and is on its way to the Appropriations Committee send your letters of support to the Assembly Appropriations committee at (916)319-2181.

On June 22nd the Pesticide Exposure Response Act, SB 391, made it through Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials with a vote of 7-0. The bill is now on its way to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Please fax your support letters to the Assembly Appropriations Committee at (916)319-2181.

For more information on these and other current environmental health legislation contact Martha Dina Arguello at (213)386-4901 x110.

## Coffee, Croissants, & Commitment!

PSR needs your voice. Or more precisely, we need your handwriting. We need your active support of important legislation regarding peace and security, the environment and preventing violence in our streets. As you know important legislative initiatives may only become law when people engage in the unglamorous activity of sitting down and writing policymakers on their beliefs.

At our "Coffee, Croissants, and Commitment" breakfast you will be briefed on the issues. With good company nearby, you will be encouraged to write elected representatives on the urgent issues of the day. The lovely Warszawa Restaurant in Santa Monica has graciously offered its facility. The first of our quarterly meetings will take place on Saturday, July 10, from 10:30 AM to 1:00 PM, and you should feel free to drop-in anytime between those hours.

So start the weekend right. Sip on delicious coffee. Nibble on perfectly crafted French-handmade croissants. Write your representatives. And afterwards, take a stroll on the beach.

Contact PSR to reserve your place at the table. Bring a friend. Write us at 3250 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1400, Los Angeles, CA 90010; or call at (213) 386-4901 x112, or via email at [parfrey@psr.org](mailto:parfrey@psr.org)

# PSR-LA Works to Reduce Los Angeles' Railroad Pollution Through New Bill: SB 1397

By Gilbert Estrada

A mainstay of the national economy, railroads haul an estimated \$100 billion in goods throughout the Los Angeles region annually.

But diesel powered locomotives are also part of Southern California's "mobile sources" which account for nearly 75% of the air pollution Los Angelenos breathe. The nitrogen oxide pollutants emitted from Southern California railroads exceed emissions from 100 of the largest oil refineries, power plants, chemical plants, and other industrial facilities combined, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD).

Railroad pollution has helped the region earn the title as the only "extreme" non-attainment area for ozone in the nation.

To protect public health, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA) has taken an active role in ensuring the passage of SB 1397 by writing letters of support, educating the public, lobbying legislatures, and collaborat-

ing with environmental justice and public health groups working to improve the health of communities impacted by railroad pollution.

SB 1397 (Escutia) could reduce railroad locomotive-emissions by giving AQMD the authority to impose fees on polluting locomotives. The bill would allow "AQMD to adopt a reasonable emissions mitigation fee on railroad companies that operate [in Southern California], require the district to consider recommendations from an advisory committee, and mandate that fee revenues be used on those communities most impacted by railroad pollution," according to the bill's language. In short, SB 1397 would allow AQMD to regulate railroad locomotives and all activities within rail yards.

Opponents of the bill say extra regulations could add an additional strain to the economy. "The bill's faulty premise is that it is necessary to provide new authority to the District. [The] overkill will result in transportation mode shifting [and] increased pollution," reads a

statement from opponents of the bill which include the California Railroad Industry and the California Association of Port Authorities, among a few others.

The list of groups who favor increased railroad regulations are in the hundreds, including the California Nurses Association, the Teamsters, and PSR-LA.

**Status:** In April of this year, SB 1397 passed out of the Environmental Quality and Transportation Committee. With the support from numerous environmental and public health groups, the bill also passed through the Senate appropriations (May 11), the Senate Floor (May 26), and the Assembly Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials (June 10). In total, SB 1397 received 28 votes in favor and 18 votes in opposition. PSR-LA is anticipating heavier opposition when the bill is sent to Assembly Appropriations. Contact your local Assemblymember and Governor Schwarzenegger and support clean air through SB 1397.

## World Asthma Day cont.

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"Currently, there are over half a million Latinos, including approximately 200,000 Latino children, who suffer from asthma in California. The passage of SB 1397, AB 2863, and AB 2042 are important elements of a comprehensive plan to reduce environmental asthma triggers," said Martha Dina Arguello, Director of Environmental Health and Justice with PSR-LA.

Dr. Elisa Nicolas, Project Director for the Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma, added, "California can and should be doing more to ensure that children with asthma are adequately diagnosed and treated. The first step is insuring children have a medical home for treatment. The second step is ensuring that children live, study, and play in an environment [free of] asthma triggers."

The Los Angeles metropolitan area is the most polluted region in America, with significant air pollution caused by regional goods movement, specifically railroad, port, and diesel truck emissions. The nitrogen oxide pollutants emitted

from Southern California railroads exceed emissions from 100 of the largest oil refineries, power plants, chemical plants, and other industrial facilities combined, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District. With the forecasted tripling of international cargo, an expected 216% increase in diesel truck trips, and anticipated doubling of railroad trips, it will be difficult to maintain satisfactory public health standards, including the deadlines of the Clean Air Act, unless bills like SB 1397 (Escutia), AB 2863 (Pavley), and AB 2042 (Lowenthal) are fully implemented.

In attendance were some of PSR-LA Community Action to Fight Action (CAFA) partners, including Coalition for Community Health, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, and the Coalition for Clean Air. In total, we received coverage from KCAL 9, KCBS 2, FOX 11, and several Spanish and Chinese community newspapers.

## Environmental Health White Paper

Published in March by PSR-LA and the ad hoc coalition, Environmental Health Lobby Working Group, "Recommendations for Improving California's Public and Environmental Health" promotes specific environmental health legislation and administrative action.

If you wish to receive the 21 page document, please contact PSR-LA at [gestrada@psr.org](mailto:gestrada@psr.org), or call 213 386 4901 x109.



## Member Profile: Curren W. Warf M.D.



I finally caught-up with the indefatigable Curren Warf last month at the H.M.S. Bounty, the historic mid-Wilshire gin joint across from the Ambassador Hotel. Over tuna sandwiches we discussed life.

Curren Warf M.D. serves as medical director of the high risk youth program and adolescent medicine fellowship program at

Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. After hearing Curren describe his work, I came to see that adolescent medicine, by definition, requires a diverse set of skills. Perhaps most important among these skills is social awareness as so many teen afflictions are associated with social issues. Drug use, unsafe sexual activity, eating disorders, depression, violence - each of these individual pathologies stem in part from social and political pathologies. Being socially aware may, therefore, make you a better adolescent medicine doctor.

And Curren is nothing if not socially aware. On gun violence, Curren is one of the state's leading voices, having recently served as co-chair of the Los Angeles County's Violence Prevention Coalition. His interest in halting gun violence derives from his work in the 1980s when he worked as a physician's assistant and medical student at the King/Drew Medical Center emergency room. "There would be five to six gunshot wounds per night," Curren says. "The area is impacted by violence that the U.S. Army trains its trauma surgeons there. The fact that it's somehow okay for hundreds of young men and women

to die in LA streets every year - and we call ourselves civilized - it's simply unfathomable."

Dr. Warf was a leading speaker at PSR-LA's Cease Fire symposium in 1994; the very year that homicide was leading cause of death among children in California.

Curren came late to medicine. In the 1960's he traveled extensively in Latin America, even picked sugar cane in Cuba. In the 1970's he worked as a political organizer near downtown LA, later becoming a PA. In the 1980's he attended UCLA Medical School of Medicine (and was then a member of Student Physicians for Social Responsibility) and performed his residency and pediatric fellowship at Childrens Hospital.

Dr. Warf also feels passionately about access to care as well as the US role in achieving peace and global security. "PSR has such prestige and authority on peace issues," he says, "I'd like to see the organization take an even greater role in opposing the Iraq War."

Peace activism appears to run in the family. Curren's father, James C. Warf, is a founder of the Federation of American Scientists, and the author of "All Things Nuclear" (soon to be available in an updated, expanded edition) and is one of the nation's most respected authorities on radioactivity.

Curren is also assistant clinical professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. He is active within the American Academy of Pediatrics, Chapter Two. He directs a program with the LA Free Clinic serving homeless and runaway youth.

He lives in Silver Lake with his wife, Susan Rabinovitz, and stepson, Michael.

## PSR-LA's "Best Untold Stories" Event a Success

Well over one hundred attendees filled the Academy Room at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, May 8, for PSR-LA's conference, "L.A.'s Ten Best Untold News Stories; The Environmental and National Security Stories You Haven't Heard About."

Three camera crews, assorted journalists, attorneys, physicians and members of the public were rewarded with well-told heretofore unheard news stories.

Dan Hirsch told how he recently obtained documents that revealed how the local water board and the polluter they regulate recently coordinated on ways to thwart an investigation.

Rochelle Becker gave vivid accounts of lax security at California's nuclear power plants.

Greg Palast, the great investigative journalist, revealed the State of Florida will soon strike some 45,000 names (mostly African-American) from the voting rolls - just as Katherine Harris did during the 2000 Presidential election.

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Philip Coyle described the soon deployment of new Star Wars missiles here in Southern California.

And Renee Sharp provided a tremendous briefing on how the rocket fuel contaminant, perchlorate, has come to permeate California's drinking water.

Adroitly moderated by journalists Michael Collins and Kate Lutz, organizers affirmed that the event "got the word out" and that it should become an annual event.

## Get Out the Vote . . .

*Continued from Page 1*

donation \$25 per person, but, of course, bring your checkbook. Jonathan Parfrey will speak.

Please note that both Project Vote and PSR are non-profit organizations and as such cannot help any candidate or party. Our work is non-partisan, as it must be to preserve the tax-deductibility of contributions. We cannot tell voters how to vote. But we can help voters have a voice, and we can clarify issues within our expertise.

For more information call the PSR-LA office at (213) 386-4901 x108 or W. King Reilly MD at (323) 341-6154.

# Calendar of Events: Summer 2004

**Saturday, July 10 • 10:30 AM - 1:00 PM**

*Coffee, Croissants, and Commitment*

Warszawa Restaurant, 1414 Lincoln Blvd, Santa Monica (near Santa Monica Blvd.) Call PSR-LA for more information (213) 386-4901 x112. (See article on page 5)

**Sunday, July 11 • 5:00 - 8:00 PM**

*Get Out the Vote Lawn Party*

Home of Becky and Don Hanson, Los Feliz. (See article on page 1.) Call PSR-LA for more information (213) 386-4901 x112.

**Tuesday, July 13, 6:30 PM**

Global Security Seminar, UCLA Faculty Center

Nake M. Kamrany, a native of Afghanistan and Professor of Economics and Director of Program in Law and Economics at USC, will speak on the "Current Dilemma of Afghanistan." Cost \$22 for dinner. Please call (213) 386-4901 x112, or

parfrey@psr.org for reservations or information.

**Tuesday, July 20, 7:30 PM**

*"Liberty and Truth Are the First Casualties of War" at the Home of Drs. Donald and Judith Broder, Studio City*

Stephen Rohde, Esq. – nationally recognized constitutional law expert, author of "American Words of Freedom," and current president of the Beverly Hills Bar Association – will discuss the Bush Administration's war-time uses and abuses of First Amendment protections. Please call to reserve and receive directions: (213) 386 4901 x125.

**Friday, July 30, 2004 • 7:00 - 9:00 PM**

**BRUCE GAGNON**

2131 Lyric Avenue, Los Angeles (off Hyperion Blvd., Franklin Hills)

Bruce Gagnon is coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space. In 1999, Project Censored named Bruce's

story on space weaponization as one of the "Most Censored."

Please reserve your space by calling (213) 386-4901 x125.

**Tuesday, September 7th**

**GALA DINNER \* SAVE THE DATE**

PSR-LA will honor Governor Howard Dean, M.D. with our 2004 Caldicott Award at our yearly Gala Dinner to be held at the St. Regis Hotel. Invitations will be sent out soon.

For more information, or if you would like to volunteer at the dinner, please contact Denise Duffield at 213-386-4901 x108.

**Tuesday, September 21, 6:30 PM**

Global Security Seminar, UCLA Faculty Center

Honorable Jack Weiss, Los Angeles City Council will speak on "Potential Terrorist Threats to Los Angeles; What We Can Do About it" Cost \$22 for dinner. Please call (213) 386-4901 x112, or parfrey@psr.org for reservations or information.

## GET OUT THE VOTE WITH THIS T-SHIRT FROM PSR-LA

Artists Sheila Pinkel, Jonathan Hoffermand and Jaye Moscariello teamed up to create this great and informative t-shirt for PSR-LA's summer voter registration drive. Wear it around your office, medical school or anywhere you want to take the message -- "VOTE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDED ON IT, ON NOV. 2 IT WILL."

White ink on a navy blue shirt. Available in Small, Medium, Large, X-Large, and XX-Large.

Your \$15 donation includes the cost of postage.

To order please call (213) 386-4901 or send donation to PSR-LA, 3250 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 1400, Los Angeles, CA, 90010. Make sure to specify size and quantity.



# PSR LA

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