



Activist Info

#2 4/10/09

RICHMOND PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE

Chevron's place in the community leaves much to be desired

In an op-ed titled, "Chevron's place in the community," Mike Coyle (general manager of Chevron's Richmond Oil Refinery) asserts that Chevron's success means Richmond's benefit:



Mayor Gayle McLaughlin

We continue to believe that when Chevron is successful, it benefits the city of Richmond in a significant way. But to be successful, we need to operate in a business environment that allows us to be competitive, reliable and economically viable. (West County Times 4/4/09),

But the evidence seems to suggest the opposite. There is no positive correlation between Chevron's

snowballing profits (17 billion in 2006, 19 billion in 2007, and 24 billion in 2008) and any significant benefit to Richmond.

Given that this major corporation has existed in our city limits at a highly desirable site along the Bay from which it has benefited for decades, one might expect that our city would have some correlated benefit. Yet while Chevron boasts its spiraling profits, the Richmond community struggles to hold on for its basic needs. Statistically speaking, the disparity gap between Chevron and the Richmond community grows bigger and bigger.

Claims that Chevron and the City are somehow on this spiraling upward dance with every gain that Chevron achieves being mirrored by a 'comparable to scale' gain by the city have no basis in fact.

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Chevron is resisting paying its Measure T Fee

Send letters to the local press, TV stations and blogs. Contra Costa Times letters must be 200 words or fewer and include your first and last name, address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to verification and editing. Email to wletters@bayareanewsgroup.com Click on this link to send Letters to the Editor to the San Francisco Chronicle. <http://www.sfgate.com/chronicle/submissions/#1>

Make your voice heard.

No Taxation Without Relaxation!!

The Richmond Progressive Alliance (the folks who brought you Measure T) invites you to a post tax day party

Meet the folks, discuss future projects, eat and drink, network

Friday, April 17
5:30-8:00

Angel's Restaurant
12469 San Pablo Avenue
(north of I-80 overpass)

More information at 596-4661

Also In this issue:

Jeff Ritterman on the distribution of wealth and health in America

Mike Parker on the Employee Free Choice Act

Marilyn Langlois on the Richmond Reality Ride

Continued

LEARNING FROM OUR CHILDREN: “Turning Problems into Kindness and Love”

Dear friends and supporters,

The high point of a recent press conference celebrating saving Richmond after-school programs was a speech given by a Coronado Elementary School student named Precious.

Precious extolled the virtues of the after-school program at Coronado. She explained to all of us that “at the Coronado after-school program, we take problems and turn them into kindness and love”.

What can we learn from this wise child? Can the “City of Pride and Purpose” also become the “City of Kindness and Love?” This is exactly what Dr. Martin Luther King asked us to do when he encouraged us all to build the Beloved Community.



**Councilman
Jeff Ritterman**

Dr. King envisioned the Beloved Community as a society based on justice, equal opportunity, and love of one’s fellow human beings. The King Center, the memorial institution founded by Coretta Scott King states:

“Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.”

Can we build Dr. King’s Beloved Community here in Richmond? This is our challenge. I have learned from my medical training that the Beloved Community is also the healthy community. The societies in which people live the longest and healthiest lives are also the societies in which people trust one another the most and the societies in which income is most evenly distributed.

It is much healthier for us all to avoid great extremes of wealth and poverty. Unfortunately, we in the U.S. have been going in the other direction for quite some time. The graph below shows the percentage of total U.S. income going to the top 10% of earners.

Leading up to the Great Depression, wealth and income were concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. FDR realized that building a healthy economy required a more equitable distribution of wealth. His policies included strengthening labor unions, creating the Civilian Conservation Corps under the Work Powers Administration, and beginning the safety net of Social Security.

Since the Reagan Revolution, we have witnessed a steady erosion of worker’s rights and a profound shrinkage of the middle class. As the graph shows, this has resulted again in a terrible maldistribution of wealth and income, with disastrous consequences for the country as a whole.

Our problems in Richmond reflect this national trend. Our solutions require doing much of what FDR did, putting folks back to work and strengthening our labor unions. But today we must



do this at the same time as we meet the challenges of climate chaos and environmental destruction. Our work is cut out for us.

Our challenge is to train our unemployed and under-employed in jobs which will provide stable and livable wages and benefits, and which will at the same time meet the environmental challenges we face. Much has been written and celebrated about the RichmondBUILD-Solar Richmond working partnership. This program can train an unskilled person in a matter of a few short months to learn the soft skills of job success as well as the hard skills of home construction and solar installation. Federal stimulus funds will help us expand this pioneering program.

But not everyone can find work on the rooftop of a house. We need a thousand creative ideas and creative programs to bloom. And we need funding for all of them.

I worked with many others to pass Measure T precisely because Measure T allows for a shift in wealth and income in a way that can promote health and well being in Richmond.

Measure T funds will allow the city to make substantial ongoing investments in job training and in rehabilitating foreclosed homes, an immediate emergency for the city.

Much of the Measure T revenue will come from Chevron Corporation. Chevron’s profits now go disproportionately to those already in the upper income brackets. Measure T shifts a very small percentage of those profits to help those in need in our city. This is part of correcting the income and wealth imbalance which has produced disastrous consequences for all of us.

Chevron Corporation is currently contesting the legality of Measure T in the courts. This will prevent the city from using these much needed funds until the law suit is resolved.

This is a good time to write letters to the editor and op-ed articles explaining why the Measure T funds are so crucial to Richmond. Chevron is very sensitive to its community reputation, and courts are sensitive to public opinion. The more that both understand that the public is knowledgeable and care the more quickly it will be resolved for a better Richmond.

Securing Richmond’s economic future as an equitable community provides us with the basis for us becoming a community which, as Precious reminds us, can turn problems “into kindness and love.”

In partnership for a healthier and a safer Richmond,

—Jeff Ritterman

Labor Law Reform:

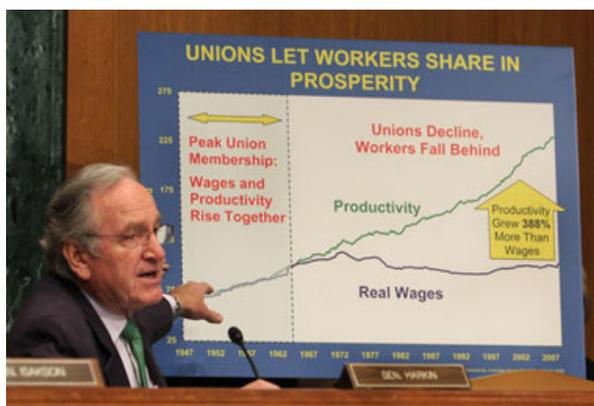
Key to Economic Reform

A critical labor law reform bill is currently before Congress and may turn out to be key to how we emerge from the economic crisis. The goal is to remedy the extreme violations of human and labor rights that are routinely visited on workers who attempt to organize a union in their workplace.

Introduced into the House of Representatives by George Miller as the "Employee Free Choice Act" (EFCA or H.R 1409) the bill has clear majority support but has to break a filibuster to be successful

WHAT WOULD IT DO?

Passage of the EFCA would be a good step in the direction of bringing larger numbers of workers into unions. EFCA's primary function would be to facilitate speedy union recognition via the "card check" mechanism. This would replace the current employer-dominated and corrupted National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) procedures. These procedures allow employers to delay union recognition elections for years while they fire and intimidate union supporters.



Senator Tom Harkin at hearings on EFCA

With EFCA the NLRB would automatically certify the union as the collective bargaining agent for workers in any unit where a majority of workers have indicated their desire to have the union represent them in contract talks by signing union cards.

The bill provides for quick negotiation of a first union contract, a mediation process for unsettled contract negotiations, an expedited defense of fired or harassed workers with a back-pay remedy, and civil penalties of up to \$20,000 per incident on employers who violate the rights of workers during this process.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT?

One of the great problems we face is the increasingly unfair distribution of wealth. Greed and the control of wealth by a tiny few has been a major part of the economic crisis. At the same time in urban areas we face the results from the reduced share for the rest of us in crime, fewer services, school cutbacks, and neighborhood deterioration. Part of the solution is tax policy discussed elsewhere in this issue.

But a big part of the solution is rebuilding the union movement. It is the union movement, after all, which is

*The law in its majestic equality
forbids the rich as well as the poor
to sleep under the bridge and steal bread.*

Victor Hugo

largely responsible for winning decent wages, weekends, holiday pay, for working people. In that sense the union movement built what many call the large middle class which has been rapidly declining. For years employers, with the backing of a Reagan political movement have been on the attack against unions. With the decline of union membership has been the steady erosion of a critical force in both politics and contract bargaining that defended our living standards.

We have already seen how attempts to fix the economic crisis are in part stymied by the power that the corporations have. We will not come out of this economic crisis with equity unless we also rebuild a strong labor movement.

WHAT WE CAN DO

There is a well financed attack on EFCA filled with misstatements and fear mongering. Measure T supporters will recognize the tactics immediately. Newt Gingrich calls it "A mortal threat to American freedom." And the U.S. Chamber of Commerce says that "The fight against Employee Free Choice will be a firestorm bordering on Armageddon."

The fact is that this is an all out political battle and EFCA can only succeed if President Obama and Democratic leaders are willing to fully stand up to the powerful corporations that are pressing to squash the reform. We can write letters with copies to President Obama and Senators Feinstein and Boxer. We can get our organizations to pass resolutions supporting EFCA. On March 13, the Richmond Council passed a Resolution by Mayor McLaughlin.

---Mike Parker

**Brunch/
Discussion/
Fund raiser
with leaders
of the union
sit-in at
Republic
Window and
Door in
Chicago.**



10 am -12:30 pm. At the home of Frank and Alice Fried in Alameda (742 Palmera Court) sponsored by Labor Notes and Labor for Peace & Justice. Call 510-412-3673 (photo:Alan Pollack)

...Gayle McLaughlin continued from page 1

It is quite the opposite. As Chevron becomes a more and more successful corporation benefiting with billions of dollars, the less we have available in our city coffers to meet the growing needs of our community. I'd call this a negative correlation.

The reality is this. While Chevron's profits soar, Richmond residents struggle to find jobs, pay their rent, hold on to their homes, and provide food, health care, and opportunities for their children. The irony in this is that on top of all the growing difficulties our families face, they pay their taxes. April 15th is around the corner and most of our residents and businesses will be making sure their tax payments are in order and their fair share of taxes is paid as required. It is insulting to the people of Richmond that Chevron thinks it has a right to special privilege and continuously resists paying its fair share of taxes. For example, Chevron continues to receive a special perk on its utility user's tax (rather than paying the full 10% that the rest of us pay); they continue to appeal their property tax payment; they have challenged their mandated fee for hazardous waste programs: AND, of course, they continue to challenge the Richmond voters' approved Measure T initiative.

If Chevron wanted to do the right thing it would pay Measure T starting today, which will bring about 21 million dollars into the city's coffers for 2008. Just think of what Richmond can do with that money! Think of the green jobs and

training programs for our residents. Imagine more and more Richmond residents solarizing roofs, fixing-up run-down homes, cleaning up our environment, greening our public spaces and growing more and more local food on urban farms in our city...think of these possibilities and so many more! Now that would be getting a little closer to us seeing a positive correlation with Chevron's success and a significant gain for Richmond.

RPA Activist Info

is for Richmond community members who want to be active in taking on the problems of the environment, racism, joblessness, housing, and crime to create a healthy Richmond. We believe that community involvement means more than voting every two years. It means regular communication with the candidates we elect, letting them know our issues and positions, supporting them as they try to take our issues forward. It means we attend meetings, use the email, phone our neighbors, or go on marches building an organized movement to create real change.

Comments and columns are welcome. Signed articles and columns are the views of the author and not necessarily those of the RPA. Send photos, articles, and comments to RPAactivist@gmail.com or call the RPA at 510-595-4661



What are Richmond priorities for Measure T funds? Mayor McLaughlin's office has held public meetings. The RPA gathered input at the International Women's Day Celebration. The list of ideas in the next issue.

In terms of Mike Coyle's concerns about Chevron staying competitive, it is quite clear that by paying Measure T Chevron will not lose its competitiveness. Take away the 21 million dollars from their 23.8 billion dollar profit in 2008, and Chevron is still skyrocketing upward with record profits in the tens of billions. Mike Coyle and anyone else can simply do the math.

The fact is we are in economically challenging times. Token donations from Chevron, while providing

band-aids, are not significant enough to give Chevron the right to "take pride" about their "place in the community." The dollars that Chevron contributes from time to time, at their whim and pleasure, and for which they seek accolades, are not helping us rebound to a better economy. The reality is that the economy locally, nationally, and globally will recover when the wealthiest taxpayers pay their fair share.

Chevron should drop its Measure T lawsuit; they should pay these taxes NOW rather than trying to tie us up in court for a couple of years. Richmond needs the money now and if Chevron pays its fair share now, it will begin to help close the growing disparity gap now. It is all too painful to many that the "trickle down" theory does not work. Chevron's success has not "trickled down" to Richmond. We need a "spiraling up" theory that begins with fair taxation from those who can afford it most.

Despite Measure T, Chevron will continue to roll in its big profits. But Measure T will allow our local economy to spiral upwards. For those of us anchored solidly in the community, this will provide a long-awaited and sorely needed rise from difficult and often despairing situations.

This additional revenue from Measure T needs to be made available to serve our residents as soon as possible, as per the will of the Richmond voters. The people of Richmond and OUR "place in the community" depends on it.

—Gayle McLaughlin

Richmond Reality Ride

The First Ever RICHMOND REALITY RIDE met at the main library on March 28, 2009 to assess bike routes for the upcoming comprehensive Richmond bicycle plan. The Ride was organized and conducted by Brian Drayton and Doria Robinson of [Richmond Spokes](#) in order to "...get out and ride together while envisioning and co-creating a different, more sustainable future for Richmond..."

From the library we rode out 23rd St. to the Bay Trail, then down Cutting to the Parkway and back up the Greenway, where we encountered community gardeners in action growing food (see photo). On the streets connecting dedicated bike trails we evaluated a variety of conditions (e.g. hazards, signage, striping, safety for kids, etc.) . Results will be posted by Richmond Spokes who are documenting the entire process with video. More photos of Saturday's ride are at the [Richmond Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee web-site](#).

Richmond SPOKES

Richmond SPOKES is a new non-profit, youth focused business located in Richmond, California providing professional bicycle service, sales and accessories to the San Francisco Bay Area, national, and international cyclists. Richmond spokes delivers this service by empowering young entrepreneurs to design, plan, market and execute their own ideas on how to promote cycling through their own bike culture and within the cycling industry.

Our staff consists of cycle cultured adults working in partnership with youth to make Richmond and beyond,



Cyclists and gardeners on the Richmond Greenway, from left: Doria Robinson and Brian Drayton of Richmond SPOKES, RPA member Tony Sustak, community gardener Iyalode Kinney of Communities United Restoring Mother Earth (CURME) & 5% Local Coalition, Richmond Park & Rec Commissioner Mike Leedie, RPA member Marilyn Langlois, and Jimmy of CURME.

greener, safer and more sustainable, while creating jobs, educational opportunities and a culture of stewards that believe that "Yes we can" have fun, be mobile, safe and healthy, and care for our world through conscious choices about our personal and our global footprint in relation to transportation.

Through Education, Empowerment, Employment, and Engagement Richmond Spokes encourages self sufficiency while developing the whole youth on the path to independence.

Stay tuned for more information about the next Richmond Reality Ride!

—Marilyn Langlois

Events to Note:

Thur 4/16, **Hearing on Off-Shore Drilling** Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar holding public hearings
9 AM Mission Bay Conference Center at UCSF, Robertson Auditorium, 1675 Owens Street, San Francisco, CA Info (510) 834-0420 www.baylocalize.org/ contact judithpiper@sbcglobal.net

Fri 4/17, **RPA Get-together**
5:30-8:00, Angel's Restaurant, 12469 San Pablo Avenue. Call 596-4661

Wed 4/22, **Hearing on Chevron Expansion Lawsuit.**
8:00 AM, Contra Costa Cnty Superior Court, Martinez, Lawsuit brought by CBE, APEN, Toxic Coalition

Wed 4/22, **Poetry Month celebration**
6:30 PM, Poets Raymond Nat Turner, Clive Matson, and Cesar A. Preciado-

Cruz; Light refreshments; Open mic readings. Contact: Tarnel Abbott, Richmond Public Library, (510) 620-6561

Sat 4/25, **Picnic/Fun Day for "Turn Off the TV Week"**
11AM-2PM, Nevin Park
Gayle and Jeff will be there.
Sports, activities and games
Healthy walk to Richmond Greenway and community gardens, Health Fair
Sponsors: Kaiser, Weigh of Life, Brookside Clinic, City of Richmond Recreation Dept. HEAL collaborative, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, and more

Sat 4/25, **Earth Day festivities**
11 AM-3PM West County Recycling Center, 101 Pittsburg Ave; Live music, recycle friendly children's games, food, information and a lot more.
Contact: 510-235-3021

Sun 4/26, **Brunch/Discussion/Fundraiser with leaders of the union sit-in**

at Republic Window and Door in Chicago.

10 am –12:30 pm. At the home of Frank and Alice Fried in Alameda (742 Palmeta Court) sponsored by Labor Notes and Labor for Peace & Justice. Call 510-412-3673

Sat 5/2, **Cinco de Mayo Parade**
10 AM Start at 24th and Barrett. Call 510-620-6511

Current Details and other events are listed on

[RPA Info on Public Events Calendar](#)

If you want your event listed send it to RPAactivist@gmail.com