

## November/December 2010 Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) Monthly Update

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### **Sunset Advisory Commission Review of TCEQ Wednesday, December 15, starting 9:00 am, Texas State Capitol**

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The sunset review of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is a once-in-12-year chance to re-shape an important state agency. The TCEQ controls permitting for energy-producing projects and waste management in Texas. Texas faces many challenges in keeping our air, soil and water clean so that Texas residents stay healthy. Please come – listen, talk with others, speak up, bring friends and colleagues, and testify on December 15. A bill has to pass through the spring legislative session in order for TCEQ to continue to exist.

The November 17 town hall meeting we publicized in October and November saw about 60 attendees, who spoke about the issues they wanted to see come before the Sunset Advisory Commission. Dr. Elliot Trester, Austin PSR Treasurer, and Trish O'Day, MSN, RN, Austin PSR Co-President, participated in the meeting – Dr. Trester as a panelist and Ms. O'Day as an open-mike speaker, both on the topic of the human health impacts of TCEQ process. Asking for substantive reform to how TCEQ currently operates can affect the lives and health of tens of thousands of Texas residents. Part of the process involves the agency doing a self-report, which can be accessed here: [TCEQ Self-Report](#).

***We still need doctors and nurses to sign our letter to the Sunset Advisory Commission asking for substantive change to the TCEQ.*** Please look at the attached pdf accompanying this email, consider adding your name (by replying to me requesting to add your name, credentials, and city), and consider asking colleagues to do the same. The letter will be sent to the Sunset Advisory Commission next week!

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### **Membership Update**

Up to 243 on our email list, partially as a result of conference call activities and our letter-signing campaign about reform needed at TCEQ.

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### **Other Gatherings**

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Holiday Green Party Coming Soon! – Thursday, December 16, 5:30 to 9:00 pm**

It's time to give thanks, celebrate and reflect on the year that's passed – come do it at this holiday party we're co-sponsoring! The party will be at Fiesta Gardens, with food catered by Barr Mansion, an

assortment of beverages, and music by Tribal Nation, Bill Oliver and Frank Meyer! And if you are on our email list as of this newsletter, you are eligible for discount \$20 tickets – and they do have to be purchased in advance! More details at our Austin PSR website - [Austin PSR Green Holiday Party](#).

### **And in January....**

Save this date too: **Wednesday, January 19, 2011, 6:00 to 7:30 pm, Central Market Café at 38<sup>th</sup> and North Lamar** – for a **PSR Meet and Greet!** Come and hear briefly about what Austin PSR is up to, especially with regard to the upcoming legislative session, and meet other PSR members, and have a beer or drink of your choice from Central Market. More details to come in December's update.

### **Next Austin PSR Board Meeting: Sunday, January 30, 2011, 3:00 to 5:00 pm**

The next board meeting is 3-5 pm on Sunday, January 30, 2011, and as usual, all are welcome. If interested in attending, please write Marian Morris at [mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org).

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## **ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH**

### **Climate Change and Coal**

Most of Austin PSR's work on climate change and coal this month has been centered in the activity around TCEQ. There's been a lot of coal and climate change news, though, and we're going to point some of it out to you.

### **Coal and Climate Change in the News**

Mining interests are spending millions in lobbying and campaign donations to beat back anticipated health and safety regulations in Washington.

[NYT Coal Industry Spending to Sway Next Congress](#)

James Fallows contends that coal must continue to be used in order to meet energy needs, even with improvements in the use of alternative energy sources and efficiency.

[The Atlantic - Dirty Coal, Clean Future](#)

Asher Price covers TCEQ reform and current standard practice in the *Austin American-Statesman*.

[Statesman - Texas environmental agency keep soft touch in regulating industry](#)

Asher Price again gives some more ackground on how TCEQ came to operate the way it does.

[Statesman - Lawyer for industry played key role establishing Texas environmental laws](#)

The Jackson School of Geosciences addresses 8 common myths about climate change.

[UT - Climate Myths: Jackson School sets the record straight](#)

## Clean Water

### **UT Nursing Students With PSR's Trish O'Day Research Disposal of Pharmaceuticals**

Public health nursing students Emily Bickle and Jennifer Markley, with Austin PSR Co-President Trish O'Day, conducted a survey of customers leaving drugstore pharmacies on how they disposed of unused medications. Here is a UT piece on their activities: [Drug disposal perplexes public](#)

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## **NUCLEAR ISSUES/NATIONAL SECURITY**

### **Stop Texas From Becoming the Nation's Radioactive Waste Dump!**

The Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact Commission is rushing to approve the Subchapter B rule that would open Andrews County in West Texas to accept radioactive waste from around the country (more information on the rule-making [here](#)). TCEQ staff members unanimously recommended denying the licensing of storage because of the high risk of radioactive contamination of water. Three TCEQ staff members have resigned over the licensing of the site. **Call your Texas Representative and Senator today** and urge that the Compact Commission vote on the radioactive waste import rule be *halted* until the Legislature has had time to review the financial and environmental risks, and until hearings have been held in communities that would be impacted by increased radioactive waste transport shipments. To find out who represents you, go to [Who Represents Me](#). There is also a public input hearing, on Thursday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, starting at 10:00 am, at 12100 Park 35 Circle, Building E, Room 201, Austin 78753. If you would be willing to come and state your opposition to approving the rule, it would be very helpful!

### **New START Delayed by Politics - Tell Senators Hutchison And Cornyn to Push for a Vote!**

New START legislation is on the Senate floor waiting for a vote. Unfortunately, the vote may be being stalled until the new Congress convenes in 2011. Please tell our representatives what we would like for them to do – contact U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn and let them know that you would like to see the New START ratified now, to take action toward eventual nuclear disarmament. You can write them here: [Kay Bailey Hutchison](#) and [John Cornyn](#).

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### **PSR Supports Uresti Bill to Raise Smoking Age to 19**

Senator Uresti will be introducing legislation to support raising the smoking age to 19 in the upcoming legislative session. Austin PSR has given its support to Senator Uresti's efforts to curb smoking in young people. More information to come in the spring....

## **Did you know...?**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is planning new cigarette warning labels. You can help! The American Lung Association (ALA) is asking that you check out the new graphics and then email the FDA telling them what you would like for them to approve. The ALA is also suggesting that you ask the FDA to require that the packs show the hotline quit number, 1-800-QUIT-NOW. For more details, you can go here: [ALA Action on New Cigarette Graphics](#).

## **Upcoming Events**

December 9: Texas Low Level Radioactive Waste Compact Commission public input hearing on import/export rule, 10:00 am

December 15: TCEQ Sunset Review hearing at the Capitol, starting at 9:00 am

December 16: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Green Holiday Party, Fiesta Gardens, 5:30 to 9:00 pm

January 19, 2011, 6:00 to 7:30 pm: Austin PSR Meet and Greet, Central Market Café, 38<sup>th</sup> and Lamar

January 30, 2011: Austin PSR board meeting, Sunday, 3-5 PM. Write Marian for more info at [mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org).