

## **September 2010 Austin Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) Monthly Update**

### **Membership Update**

231 and holding steady.

### **Next Austin PSR Board Meeting: October 24, 3-5 pm. Potluck After Meeting - Bring the Kids!**

The next board meeting is 3-5 pm on Sunday, October 24, and as usual, all are welcome. Afterwards we'll be having a potluck and welcoming all family members! If interested in attending, please write Marian Morris at [mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org).

## **ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH**

### **Coal**

#### **Join Our Call!**

#### **Organizing Health Professionals Around State on Speaking Up About Health Impacts of Coal**

Austin PSR in partnership with other organizations is mobilizing doctors and other health professionals across Texas to have input on the upcoming 2011 Texas Legislative Session to promote clean air, water and soil (and therefore healthy humans!) in Texas. We are beginning with a **conference call Thursday evening, October 7<sup>th</sup>, from 7 to 8 pm**, and specifically focusing on health impacts of using coal for energy production. If you're interested in being on the call, you can contact Marian Morris at [mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org) for more information.

#### **Latest on Coal – EPA Hearing on Proposed Coal Ash Regulation, Wednesday Sept. 8, Dallas**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) held a hearing in Dallas on Wednesday, September 8, on the topic of regulating the management of coal ash, a waste byproduct of coal-fired power plants. Coal ash, which contains heavy metals linked to neurological damage in humans, among other ill effects, is less regulated than household garbage, and there is a lot of it spread across Texas, possibly seeping into groundwater that eventually makes its way into us. Austin PSR contacted colleagues in Dallas who signed up to testify on the harmful effects of coal ash and ask for regulation by the federal government of its management. To see coverage of Dr. Karen Lewis's remarks to the EPA that day, visit this link at the Austin PSR website:

<http://www.psr.org/chapters/austin/epa-hearings-to-discuss.html>.

## **National PSR Releases Comprehensive Report on Health Impacts of Coal Ash**

The national PSR office released its report, "[Coal Ash: The Toxic Threat to our Health and Environment](#)" this month, and it is a very useful document for getting up to speed about this historically under-noticed aspect of using coal for energy production.

## **How other countries are ending reliance on coal**

Austin PSR thought this was an interesting story to share and perhaps be used to spark ideas and discussion about how to end U.S. reliance on coal for energy production:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/world/europe/16hungary.html>

## **Climate Change**

### **Greening the Clinic – Article in Travis County Medical Society Journal**

Dr. Lisa Doggett and Trish O'Day, Austin PSR co-presidents, along with Director Marian Morris worked with public health nursing students from UT-Austin on a project to explore greening efforts at the Family Wellness Center, which is part of the CommUnity Care network and also run by the UT-Austin School of Nursing. The students wrote up their experience and submitted it to the Travis County Medical Society, where it was accepted and published in their September/October 2010 issue. You can access the article at <http://www.psr.org/chapters/austin/news/in-the-news.html>.

### **Sunset Review of Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)**

December 15 is the day TCEQ undergoes its sunset review process at the Texas Capitol building. Mark your calendars! Austin PSR is a coalition partner in Alliance for a Clean Texas (ACT), which is organizing to give input on the TCEQ sunset review process that will be happening in the 2011 legislative session. There will also be a town hall meeting in Austin some time in November to collect stories and public input about TCEQ's decisions and their impact on the lives and health of Texas residents.

Austin PSR will continue to support the efforts of ACT in reforming this agency so that it can wield its intended potential of keeping air, soil and water clean and safe for Texas citizens. For more information, go to <http://allianceforcleantexas.org/>.

### **Strauss Center Talk on Global Security Challenges, Energy and Climate Change**

The Strauss Center at UT hosted two speakers on the topic of climate change and the global security challenges it presents. Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn, of the U.S. Center for Naval Analyses Military

Advisory Board and Admiral Neil Morisetti, the United Kingdom's Climate and Energy Security Envoy, each spoke and talked with attendees about the role of the military, about alternative energy sources, and the true cost of fossil fuel. For more information about the talk, you can visit here:

<http://www.strausscenter.org/events>.

## **NUCLEAR ISSUES/NATIONAL SECURITY**

### **NRC meeting on physical protection rules for nuclear waste...**

Board member Karen Hadden is keeping tabs on Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) meetings regarding the establishment of guidelines for managing radioactive materials in Texas. This particular meeting regarded aspects such as inventory of materials and licensing of transporters - most of the substances involved would be medical and industrial wastes, but these rules would also cover radioactive waste storage in Texas. Find out more at <http://seedcoalition.org/>.

### **Tell Senators Hutchison And Cornyn – Yes on New START**

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in a moment of bipartisan cooperation, sent the New START legislation to the Senate floor for a vote. Now is the moment to tell our representatives what we would like for them to do – so please contact U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn and let them know that you would like to see the New START ratified, to take action toward eventual nuclear disarmament. You can write them here: <http://hutchison.senate.gov/> and <http://cornyn.senate.gov/public/>.

### **Lecture Series: Jewish Community Association Hosts Speakers on Middle East Relations**

The Jewish Community Association of Austin is holding a free lecture series titled, "Iran Summit: What the Future Holds for the U.S., Israel and Iran. Austin PSR thinks this might be another interesting angle from which to revisit the issue of global nuclear disarmament. Speakers include former Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, Iranian writer, poet and activist Roya Hakakian, and UT-Austin LBJ School Professor Alan Kuperman. For more information, visit [http://shalomaustin.org/index.php?src=events&category=\\*n&srctype=detail&refno=26234](http://shalomaustin.org/index.php?src=events&category=*n&srctype=detail&refno=26234).

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

...the difference between STORAGE and DISPOSAL of nuclear waste? Storage is intended to be short-term and disposal is a long-term solution. For storage of nuclear waste, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission recommends an above-ground, monitored and retrievable situation. The intent is to be able to see the nuclear waste and take action if leakage becomes evident.

Disposal sites, on the other hand, as we know in discussions about Yucca Mountain, are generally planned to be deep underground in stable geological conditions. THERE ARE NO DISPOSAL SITES FOR NUCLEAR WASTE IN THE UNITED STATES. The debate on where to place such disposal sites continues and so we are left with “long-term” storage.

## **Upcoming Events**

October 7: PSR coal impacts conference call 7-8 pm (see first item). Email [mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org) for more info.

October 12, 19 and 26: Iran Summit at Jewish Community Association (see above link)

October 21-22: Children’s Environmental Health Institute’s (CEHI) annual conference, “Prenatal and Early Life Exposures”, Houston – <http://cehi.org>

October 24: Austin PSR board meeting, 3-5 PM, with bring-the-family potluck after, 5-8 pm. Write Marian for more info at [mmorris@psr.org](mailto:mmorris@psr.org).

December 15: TCEQ Sunset Review hearing at the Capitol

Various: ACT Town Hall meetings across Texas. For one near you, go here: <http://www.acttexas.org/>