



Fall 2013

NET news

Penn Center retreat Oct. 19-20; register NOW

Join us for the SC Progressive Network's most important gathering of the year!

Maybe the only thing better than seeing historic Penn Center as a tourist is to experience it as a grassroots activist, in the true spirit of the place. You can do that at the Network's fall retreat Oct. 19-20.

Started as a school for freed enslaved people in 1862, Penn later became a conference center and meeting place for movement organizers. At our retreat, we'll gather in the same hall where Joan Baez once sang to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It was in that hall where the Network was founded in 1996.

"It's been four years since we've been to Penn Center, and I'm looking forward to going back," said Network Co-chair Donna Dewitt. "It is a special place with such a rich history, and the setting always inspires us."

The weekend is a unique chance for the Network's members, friends and allies get away to the bucolic and restorative Lowcountry for a chance

to recharge, reconnect, and refocus.

Knowing that sometimes the most valuable part of the retreat is time spent talking to each other one-on-one, there will be down time for that.

"The weekend will be a mix of workshops, strategy sessions, and taking care of in-house business," said Network Director Brett Bursey.

"We'll also be working on current Network projects, with a special focus on the mass action we're planning for the legislature when it reconvenes in January. We're putting a lot of thought and effort into the event, and

we need all hands on deck to make it as powerful and broad-based as we believe it can be."

Network member groups will be invited to share their victories and challenges in the past year, and to solicit support for projects and campaigns they're working on now.

The weekend package is \$125, and includes conference materials, all meals, and accommodations in one of Penn's refurbished dorms. It also covers Saturday night's fish fry with all the trimmings and entertainment by nationally known singer/organizer Jane Sapp and satirist **Dave Lippman**.

Come for the whole weekend, a day, or just part of the program. See

form on back panel for agenda and prices. **Overnight space is limited, so make your reservations now.** If you need a ride or can share one, call 803-808-3384. ▼



View from MLK retreat cabin



US Sen. Bernie Sanders to kick off weekend retreat

U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I - VT) will fire up the crowd on Saturday morning. Among the most progressive members of Congress, he recently introduced the "Democracy is for People" bill for a constitutional amendment to establish that corporations are not people and money is not speech. He's promoted progressive interests on the Hill since 1991, including Social Security, universal health care and workers' rights. ▼

Grow the grassroots!

The Network, by design, has never been grant-driven. Most of our funding comes from our members. **Please donate what you can.**

Send check to SCPN, POB 8325, Columbia, SC 29202, or call 803-808-3384 to pay with plastic.

Or go to www.scpnet.com and click on the **DONATE** button in the menu bar. Thank **YOU!**

Bus riders organize

Leading up to last November's Richland County referendum on a penny sales tax for transportation, the Network successfully lobbied for public transit to get a bigger cut of the pie. The final measure included an additional \$30 million for the Midlands bus system.

In April, after a year-long organizing campaign by the Network, the Midlands Transit Riders Association was created as an independent voice for bus riders. The Midlands group drew inspiration from the Charleston-based Hungryneck Straphangers, led by William Hamilton (email him at wjhamilton@wjhamilton.com).

The MTRA meets Wednesdays in Columbia at 2pm. It is open to transit riders and advocates. Email Walter Durst at durst11@gmail.com for details. ▼



The Network solicited grant money to send Midlands Transit Riders Association President Walter Durst and advocates Brittany Higgins and Kanika Ajanaku to Atlanta for a transit conference in June.

Policy targets in 2014

The Network's legislative focus in 2013 was on Medicaid expansion, ethics reform, voting rights and passing a moral budget. Since 2014 is the second year of the two-year session, failed bills will be taken up again in January.

Voting Rights

Gerrymandered districts give SC the least-competitive elections in the US, with 80 percent of lawmakers facing no major opposition in general elections.

Real change will require changing the way political districts are drawn, a long fight. The Network is developing a plan to impact the 2020 census and redistricting.

We will continue to work for early voting centers, a state "Sect. 5" registry, high school voter registration, felon re-enfranchisement, and a voter-verifiable voting system.

Moral Budget

You wouldn't know it from the incessant whining by the free-market fundamentalists running the state, but we have the lowest citizen taxes in the country. We also have some of the highest corporate tax breaks.

The Network will continue to underscore the moral bankruptcy of

lawmakers claiming the state is too poor to fund core services.

Medicaid Expansion

The business-cozy folks running government have refused to use our own federal tax dollars to fund Medicaid. The rejection of the only two parts of the Affordable Care Act that SC Republicans could veto — Medicaid expansion and a state health exchange — will cost billions in lost aid, and many thousands of jobs. It will also cause an estimated 1,300 unnecessary deaths next year.

Ethics Reform

The Network has long promoted measures to reduce the influence of money in politics. Our Clean Elections Act to create a system of public financing for political campaigns has been introduced every session since 2001, with only one hearing on a pilot program in 2006.

This year, proposals calling for greater financial disclosure died in the session's final days. The Network and Common Cause encouraged senators to kill the gutted bill, and work for a real ethics bill in 2014. ▼

Network to help South Carolinians navigate new health insurance exchange

The Network has received a federal grant to help ease the confusion South Carolinians face trying to navigate the health insurance exchange set up by the Affordable Care Act.

As one of the states to refuse to set up a state exchange, South Carolina will rely on community-based nonprofits to help people get insurance.

Subsidies will limit the cost of insurance. A minimum wage (\$15,400) single person can buy a \$3,018 policy for \$471 per year. Because SC also refused to expand Medicaid, poor folks will have to pay the full \$3,018 for insurance, find a free clinic, or go to the ER.

When major provisions of the ACA take effect on Jan. 1, uninsured individuals and families will be required to obtain health insurance or pay an annual penalty — which increase every year until 2016, when they cap at \$695 per person or 2.5 percent of family income, whichever is greater.

Calculate your subsidy for health insurance at www.kff.org/interactive/subsidy-calculator. ▼



Network launches school in Modjeska Simkins' honor

their communities.

Ms. Simkins (1899-1992) was the godmother of South Carolina's progressive movement. She spent her long life acting

on her belief that civil rights were just part of a larger human rights struggle.

The school will be based in what was once her home in downtown Columbia — which now serves as the

Network's offices and meeting space.

A \$15,000 grant from the Richland County Conservation Commission will be used as seed money for the project. An advisory committee has been meeting to outline a curriculum and oversee the research and production of course materials.

The school will launch on Dec. 5, on what would have been Ms. Simkins' 114th birthday.

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for a big party. The Network has celebrated Modjeska's birthday for many years, but this one promises to be truly special. ▼

To preserve the fighting spirit of Modjeska Monteith Simkins, the Network is establishing a school to teach a new generation of activists the skills to be effective leaders in

Had enough? See you at the State House in January

The Network has issued a call for a major — and possibly sustained — show of moral outrage at the State House when the legislature reconvenes in January.

An estimated 1,300 South Carolinians will die needlessly in 2014 because of the state's refusal to use our tax dollars to support "Obamacare," including giving up nearly free money to expand Medicaid health coverage to over 250,000 of our most vulnerable citizens.

These lawmakers also are attacking organized labor, voting rights, reproductive rights, public education and the environment.

They have rigged the system so that South Carolina has the fewest contested general elections in the nation, with more than 80 percent of our legislators running unopposed.

Our lawmakers need a serious wake-up call. They listened when we rallied for a moral budget in 2011, as the drastic cuts they'd planned were reduced by one-third. It was a huge victory, and an organizing lesson.

We are organizing across the state to get the broad-

based buy-in this needs to be truly effective. Let us know if you want to call a meeting in your town, and we'll help connect your with activists in your area.

We need your talent, your connections, and your good ideas. Let us hear from you. Email network@scpronet.com or call our office at 803-808-3384. For the latest, stay in touch with us on Twitter and Facebook. ▼



Had enough of low wages, failing schools, toxic waste, union bashing, corporate welfare, poor healthcare, unfair taxes, legislated morality, infant mortality, voter suppression and being governed by South Carolina's anti-government government?

Email your photo to becci@scpronet.com, and we'll add it to the growing gallery on our web site. Or you can post it on the Network's Facebook page. We'll use the images in a grassroots ad campaign to promote our mass action. ▼

Building the Network, one city at a time

When the Network was founded in 1995 as a coalition of organizations, we decided against having individual members or chapters, to avoid competing with local groups for members.

With activist groups dwindling in many parts of the state, 10 years

ago we changed the Network to an individual membership organization, and moved the nonprofit groups to the SCPN Education Fund.

Last year, Network chapters were started in Charleston and Rock Hill. Others are under construction. In October, we'll discuss amending our

bylaws to define Network chapters. In the meantime, consider starting a chapter in your town. Call the office at 803-808-3384, and we'll connect you with people in your area and other resources to help you get started.

Don't forget that wherever you are in the state, you can **stay in touch with us at www.scpronet.com**, and on Facebook and Twitter. ▼

SC Progressive Network Penn Center Retreat

Oct. 19-20 • St Helena Island, SC

On stage!

JANE SAPP, a nationally known musician, will perform Saturday evening and hold a workshop on Sunday. She recorded *Carry It On*, an album of movement songs, with Pete Seeger. She was a civil rights movement leader, former director of Highlander Center and established the first museum at Penn Center in 1971. She now heads the cultural committee of the Southern Partners Fund, which helped fund our retreat.



Satirical songster **DAVE LIPPMAN** afflicts the complacent, takes the air out of windbags, and updates worn-out songs with parody. Samples: *All We Are Saying is End Corporate Crime, and I Hate Wal-Mart.* ▼

Plug into the Network!

Join us for monthly meetings. If there isn't one in your town, we can help you start one. Call our office at 803-808-3384 for details.

- ◆ **CHARLESTON**—3rd Mondays, 7pm, ILA Hall, 1142 Morrison Dr. Contact George Hopkins at hopkings@cofc.edu
- ◆ **COLUMBIA**—2nd Tuesdays, 7pm, 2025 Marion St. Contact the Network at network@scpronet.com
- ◆ **ROCK HILL**—1st Wednesdays, non, Sila, Anderson Rd. Contact Mary Keenan at keenanmsc@gmail.com

Movie night—4th Tuesdays, Conundrum Music Hall, 626 Meeting St., West Columbia. **FREE screenings, snacks and beverages for purchase, open to the public.**

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Saturday, Oct. 19

- 9 am **Registration**, Frissell Hall
- 10 **Welcome and introductions.** Who's at the table?
- 10:15 **US Sen. Bernie Sanders fires us up**, followed by Q&A
- 11:15 **The SC Progressive Network: Who we are, why we are, how we win**
- 11:45 **Current policy priorities:** voting rights, ethics reform, Medicaid expansion, moral budget
- 12:30 **Catered lunch** and free time for networking, policy caucuses, or sight-seeing
- 2pm **Network member organizations report** on the what they're doing and how we can help
- 2:30 **Mass action planning**, plenary session
- 4:30 **Breakout caucuses**, to be decided by retreat-goers. Possible topics: public transit, labor organizing, gay rights, homeless policies, reproductive rights, animal welfare, immigration reform, environmental protection
- 6:30 **Fish fry; music by Jane Sapp and Dave Lippman**

Sunday, Oct. 20

- 8 am **Breakfast** in cafeteria
- 9 **Sunday service.** The proletarian vanguard, spiritual seekers, peace warriors, the curious are all welcome.
- 9:30 **Cultural workshop with Jane Sapp**
- 10:30 **Network business:** elections, treasurer's report, new Network chapters' form and function
- Noon **Lunch** in cafeteria
- 1pm **Homework assignments:** action plan recap and caucus reports. Adjourn c-3 portion of program.
- 2 **Progressive Voter Coalition update**, projections and election strategies
- 3 **Adjourn.** And the *real* work begins.

REGISTRATION

FULL WEEKEND package	\$125
Day registration, no meals	\$10
Saturday w/lunch & dinner	\$35
Fish fry & entertainment:	\$15
Sunday registration & lunch	\$20
(Add \$50 for Friday night room & Sat. breakfast.)	

USE THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE

Mail check to SCPN, POB 8325, Columbia, SC 29202.
Or call 803-808-3384 to pay by credit card. To join the Network or update your membership, include \$25 (\$10 for students and seniors) in your fee.

