



UUJEC News & Views: Summer 2024



| newsletter@uujec.org | Sally Jane Gellert, editor

UUJEC Goes to GA—Join us on whova!

Our On-Demand Workshops

Organizing for Health Equity

People want to have control over their bodies. Health equity work empowers individuals who are abused or ignored in healthcare. How can congregations be helpful? Hunger, homelessness, and climate change are the 3 major topics addressed in this skill-building workshop. Whova workshop #D-33.

Speakers:

- Rev. Robert Murphy, Moderator, UU Minister Emeritus, Florida
- Dr. Rashid Shaikh, Board Member, UU Ministry for Earth
- Rev. Ben Atherton-Zeman, Minister UU Church of St. Petersburg
- Lisa Pineda, President, Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coalition
- Sally Jane Gellert, Cochair, UUJEC

Sustaining and Growing Democracy in 2024

A skill-building workshop to make good on the promise of democracy. Includes information about get out the vote activities, election defense, and how to expand democratic practices and institutions. Includes UU the Vote, union organizing, and abortion rights presentations. Whova workshop #D-51.

Speakers:

- Terry Lowman, Moderator and Cochair, UUJEC
- Nora Rasman, Director, UU the Vote
- Amy Weintraub, Director, Progress Florida Reproductive Rights Program
- Dean Wanderer, Co-Chair, UU Legislative Ministry of Virginia
- Rev. Robert Murphy, UU Minister Emeritus

Music for both workshops: Joseph Talleda, De Colores

Actions of Immediate Witness

We are sponsoring an Action of Immediate Witness, *World on Fire: Humanitarian Aid and Climate Change*, building on last year's *Organizing for Health Equity*. The text is here: <https://tinyurl.com/3cwzx2es>.

We are disappointed that the second AIW that we endorsed was rejected by the Commission on Social Witness, as they felt that UU groups are already

working on protecting democracy through UU the Vote and other means. We feel that the situation is dire, closer to fascism and authoritarianism than we have seen in our lifetimes, so expect to hear more from us on the subject. We encourage all who are interested in this important topic to check out our on-demand workshop, listed above, and to work with UU the Vote for the November election. The CSW has also approved these 2 additional Actions of Immediate Witness: *Centering Love Amidst the Ongoing Impact of COVID-19*, text at <https://tinyurl.com/2jcm9yhx>, and *Solidarity with Palestinians*, text at <https://tinyurl.com/ar3dd9u3>. We support these documents, and we look forward to discussion on all of these important issues. All 3 AsIW have pages on <https://discuss.uua.org>.

Poster Sessions

In lieu of an electronic booth in the virtual Exhibit Hall, we have 2 poster sessions and have collaborated with Class Aware on a third. They are listed alphabetically on the site; ours are

- ♦ Peace for Intergenerational and Climate Justice (Poster 14)
- ♦ Stopping Medicare's Privatization: Hands Off Our Public Plan! (Poster 18)

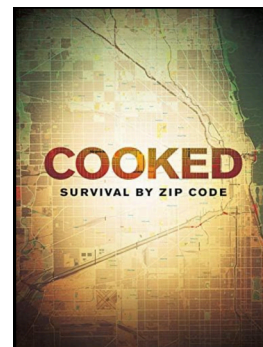
and, with Suzanne Zilber,

- ♦ Class Aware: Class and Classism in Congregational Life (Poster4)

We'll be adding materials as we get closer to GA, and look forward to interacting on Whova and on our own forum, on our new site-in-progress, uujec.net.

Next Up for UUJEC

We are planning 2 events this summer: our annual meeting, on Zoom on Saturday, July 13th, and a screening of *COOKED: Survival by ZIP Code*, which we are co-sponsoring with Radical Elders on Thursday, June 27th. Watch our calendar for upcoming seminars, and look for e-mails with registration links as well as our 2024 annual report. We look forward to connecting on uujec.net/forum.



Illinois' Citizen Climate Bills

In 2021, Illinois passed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA). The bill incentivized many initiatives, among them:

- ◆ Renewable energy development;
- ◆ Electric vehicle (EV) adoption and charging station infrastructure;
- ◆ Creation of a statewide clean energy workforce and training programs to ensure that workers are prepared for the jobs of the future; and
- ◆ Support for communities facing energy and environmental transitions.

Though the specifics of the legislation are impressive, the development of the bill through an extensive series of community meetings and through broad-ranging coalition building is perhaps even more remarkable. The work began in 2015 when hundreds of community stakeholders first joined together to design statewide clean-energy legislation. Participants included environmental justice leaders from such groups as Faith in Place, the Unitarian Universalist Action Network of Illinois (UUANI) and Chicago's Little Village Environmental Justice Organization.

Now, plans are underway to use the same process a second time to develop a wide-reaching climate bill that prioritizes clean & equitable transportation, healthy buildings, and a clean & reliable energy grid. Interested groups will convene across Illinois to accelerate the transition started in 2021 and assure that the power grid; personal and public transit; and the heating, cooling, and construction of our buildings is as energy-efficient as possible.

When Illinois environmental groups used this approach 3 years ago, leaders stressed that justice is not only an outcome, but a process requiring inclusive, democratic decision-making. Their leaders recognized that "other people have been making decisions for [our families] for too long," leading them to adopt "Listen, Lead, Share" as their method for developing legislation.

In 2018, the coalition established 4 high-level goals for their climate bill: 100% clean energy, clean transportation, job creation, and a just transition. Their approach for achieving these goals was developed through listening sessions held across the state in religious congregations, school gymnasiums, and recreation centers. Meetings ranged from small focus groups to full auditoriums. Organizers asked about people's challenges and worries regarding climate change and gathered ideas for programs and investments to ensure substantial benefits to individuals and neighborhoods across the state during and after the transition.

In September 2021, after 3 years of organizing and months of negotiations, the Climate Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) passed the Illinois State Legislature by an overwhelming majority. It was signed into law by Gov. J.B. Pritzker just a few days after its passage. Various aspects of the bill are now being implemented: state rebates for solar panels, tax incentives on electric vehicles, and job-training programs for clean-energy workers are all currently underway.

Gearing up for the 2024 election and the fall legislative session, Illinois environmental groups and citizen activists know that their work to solve the state's climate problems is only beginning. Both UUANI and Faith in Place have signed on to help with this effort, along with most of the major environmental groups active in the state. Plans are being drawn up to include UU summit meetings this fall or winter as part of the development of the new climate bill.

To find out more about this process and whether it might be applicable to your state, contact UUANI Executive Director Scott Aaseng at <https://www.uuani.org/contact-us>.

Wendell Potter's Magic Translation Box: A Review

Wendell Potter, former Cigna VP of Corporate Communications, became an industry whistleblower in June 2009, publishing his first book, *Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR Is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans*, in 2010. After decades as a journalist and corporate executive, in 2008 he had an epiphany at a "health fair" near his family home, where he was shocked to see people lined up to be treated in animal stalls.

Money in politics is the elephant in any Congressional hearing room or executive office. You will hear plenty of sound and fury, but don't hold your breath waiting for relief from ever-increasing premiums, out-of-pocket requirements and the many other barriers Big Insurance has erected to keep you from getting the care you need.

—Wendell Potter,
Substack, 13 May 2024

Center for Medicare Advocacy says about him, "Wendell Potter is a former health insurance company executive who became that industry's worst nightmare. *Time Magazine* called Wendell "the ideal whistleblower." Bill Moyers called him a straight shooter. Michael Moore called him 'the Daniel Ellsberg of corporate America.'"

In his latest column on substack.com, Mr.

Potter discusses how executives and politicians use language to obfuscate and mislead. He discusses how the stock market is rewarding the United

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Magic Translation Box

Health Group, which is a “vertically integrated*” company that owns a large portion of the healthcare industry in this country, despite a data breach that had some people unable to get medication for 2 weeks, and how CVS/Aetna apologized to investors for not doing enough to maximize profits, sending their share price plummeting. Those insured by CVS/Aetna can thus expect higher costs and less care. Profit comes first, and a significant percentage of people will likely lose insurance as a result of companies’ “lemon-dropping” expensive-to-insure counties—or see cuts in the extras that enticed folks to join, such as vision or dental coverage. Getting into Original Medicare and Medigap from Medicare (dis) Advantage can be cost-prohibitive, as underwriters are part of the picture, which is not the case for those

who sign up for Original Medicare and a supplemental Medigap policy when they are first eligible.

Meanwhile, “vertical integration” of the industry gets little reaction from Wall Street. Prescription benefits managers are supposed to ensure that Medicare Advantage costs are held down, but actually have driven up prices. Don’t expect Congress to help without a LOT of public pressure; as Mr. Potter points out, politicians are good at rhetoric, poor on action.

| Sally Jane Gellert

To discuss this article and more, go to uujec.net/forum

*a single corporation controlling most of the processes in an industry; in the healthcare industry, that is covering everything from diagnosis to cure, in the case of United Healthcare Group excepting only hospitals and pharmacies.

Letters!

UUJEC gets requests from various organizations to sign on to a variety of letters. Independently-active board members also suggest sign-ons for consideration by the UUJEC. Since the Spring ‘24 issue of *News & Views*, we have supported the following items, mainly through sign-on letters:

- Requested full funding for **Environmental Justice** (\$1.5 billion) and the **EPA** (~\$11 billion) in FY2025 appropriations in a letter to John Podesta
- Supported EPA’s proposal to **strengthen its emission standards** for large municipal-waste combustors, almost 80% of which are in Environmental Justice communities,
- Endorsed the **Fossil Fuel Finance Report Card 2024** from Banking on Climate Chaos
- Wrote to EPA about the disposal of radioactive waste at **Oak Ridge**, which continues be out of compliance with regulations
- Wrote to **Starbucks** CEO supporting union progress and urging good-faith negotiations
- Requested the extension of TPS status and other support for **Haitian Migrants**
- Supported a governmental direct **free income-tax program**
- Signed a letter from people of faith to the president of Tanzania and CEOs of the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation and TotalEnergies: **Stop harassing local opponents of the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline**
- Asked Pres. Biden to require the State Department to negotiate a global plastic treaty that **makes public health a top priority**
- Expressed our strong support for H.R. 2930, the **Clean Slate Act of 2023**, and urging its passage to be a priority, to remove barriers and foster successful reintegration for individuals with criminal records.
- Joined a public-comment submission to USTR regarding **"Promoting Supply Chain Resilience"**, covering topics of critical-mineral circularity, sustainable development and job creation, ensuring real prior consent, advancing environmental protections, and requiring ownership transparency
- Department of Energy’s (DOE) *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for DOE Activities in Support of Commercial Production of High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium (HALEU)*, asking for a no-action option, to forego the acquisition of such fuel, even more dangerous and risky than standard nuclear fuel.
- Asked the Biden administration to “declare a **national climate emergency**, protect front-line communities and workers, and advance your . . . historic commitments to ‘transition away from fossil fuels’ to a just and renewable energy future”
- Urged Congress to **zero out funding** for the permitting of fossil-fuel projects
- Joined a statement by Side With Love and CSJ **supporting student activism** on Gaza,
- Signed onto a statement of faith leaders at the **National Rifle Association’s** annual meeting admonishing the organization for being an agent of the firearm industry and having lost its moral compass long ago, calling it to reject its “platform of fear and hate”

[Write icon created by Freepik - Flaticon](#)

About Health: News from Across the Country

California Takes Step toward Single Payer

Gov. Newsom signed Senate Bill 770 in October, a bill that could help California obtain a waiver allowing federal Medicaid and Medicare funds to be used for a system to cover every California resident, financed entirely by state and federal funds. California's health secretary will have to offer recommendations on crafting the federal waiver by June 1, 2024.

Biden Administration Lifts ACA Restrictions for DACA Recipients

In May, the Biden Administration opened ACA to "Dreamers"—DACA Recipients. Open enrollment dates and next steps are still to be announced. In the meantime, it is important to let DACA recipients know that this is coming.

Community Health Centers

Individuals who are part of a community health setting strive to implement programs that focus on the

promotion of healthy living and prevention of diseases. Their emphasis is primarily on reaching out to specific populations within a community through efforts such as counseling, education and events.

Federal funding is allocated to Community Health Centers through the annual appropriation process and the Community Health Center Fund.

Corporate Health Insurers Are Harming Patients

They restrict access to medical providers through limited networks, demand prior authorization for routine, medically necessary care, place limits on medical benefits, require high out-of-pocket spending (especially for sickest patients), trap patients in Medicare Advantage programs

Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) had a webinar about this situation, "Taking Advantage," on June 3, and released a detailed report.

Judy Deutsch
chair, UUJEC healthcare team

CEO Pay Ratio: The Rich Get Richer

Unless they are women

Finding the graphic to the right, showing Broadcom CEO's extreme compensation, led me to search the 'Net, where I found a *Harvard Law Review* article by two researchers from Equifax that seems to be the source of the statistics cited in the graphic. CEO pay increased from 2019 until 2023 (based on early 2024 figures)—except for women. Women CEOs' pay has decreased by 26.1%, as men's has gone up 17.3%. Women CEOs' pay was almost the same as men's in 2019: \$12.2 million vs. \$12.5 million. In 2023, they are \$11.6 million and \$16.5 million, respectively. Find the article here: <https://tinyurl.com/yvjfc5sp>



\$161,826,161

Broadcom CEO Hock Tan's 2023 compensation

The tech exec's payout ranks #1 among firms reporting data by March 31. CEO pay at these corporations jumped 11.3% over 2022, while median worker pay sunk by 9.3%.

Source: Equilar, April 19 and 26, 2024



**Join UUJEC at GA—
we're on Whova with poster sessions and workshops!**

Important Dates for UUJEC & GA

We'd like to let you know about 2 upcoming **preGA** events and 2 later events: our annual meeting, a film screening that we cosponsor, and a preGA discussion event (the 1st is past already):

- Official UUA preGA "What to expect" Web seminar was May 29th: find the recording, slides, and other governance info on this page: <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/board/ga-governance>
- For an outside perspective, the final in a 4-part series from UU the Conversation is on June 11th at 2 P.M.:

- June 27, *COOKED: Survival by ZIP Code*, screening and panel discussion. See uujec.net/calendar to register.
 - July 13, UUJEC Annual Meeting: speaker to be announced. See uujec.net/calendar to register.
- Mark your calendar to join these programs. Also, the 1st official miniassembly for delegates was held as this issue "goes to press", on Monday, June 3rd. The subject was amending the rules of procedure, and a couple of amendments were considered. The second miniassembly, on business resolutions, was set for Wednesday, June 5th. As busy as GA week is, for delegates it starts early!