



**UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION**  
*of the United States of America*  
**AND THE BUSINESS COUNCIL FOR THE UNITED NATIONS**



## Sonoma County Chapter

108 Chadwick Way, Cotati, CA 94931

[www.unausasonomacounty.org](http://www.unausasonomacounty.org)

January 2009

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## OBAMA AND THE UNITED NATIONS:

Prospects for a New US-UN Relationship

**Monday, January 26 at 6:45 PM**

**At the First United Methodist Church**

1551 Montgomery Drive in Santa Rosa

Admission is free

Presented by

**UNA Sonoma County Chapter**

A new administration will take office on January 20, 2009 and face a host of difficult global challenges, from Iraq to Afghanistan, to global climate change and the worldwide economic meltdown. United Nations Association Board Members **Jim Wilkinson and Chris O'Sullivan\*** will offer their observations, and then lead a discussion, on the incoming Obama administration and the prospects for a new relationship between the United States the United Nations. They will discuss the chief challenges the new administration is likely to face. They will explore the consequences of the passing of the Bush administration and the arrival of the new foreign policy team of the Obama administration, including President Barack Obama himself, but also a new Secretary of State and a new U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. After eight years of tempestuous relations with the Bush administration, will the United States once again find ways to work constructively with the UN? What do the backgrounds and records of these new administration officials tell us about how they will approach the UN? What will the new foreign policy team mean for the United Nations, and what is likely to be the UN's reaction to the new administration?

**What issues will they tackle first?**

**These questions, and more, will be explored at our  
January 26th event.**

\* Speaker Bios on Page 2

**Speakers:** M. James Wilkinson is a retired career U.S. Foreign Service officer. He served as deputy U.S. representative on the UN Security Council with the rank of ambassador. Earlier he was deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs. His recent books include *Our Last Best Hope: Why the United Nations Stumbles and What the United States Should Do About It* (2007); and *The Cyprus Drama: The Last Act* (2002). He is currently the Co-President of the UNA-USA Sonoma County Chapter.

Chris O’Sullivan teaches history at the University of San Francisco and is a fellow at the Center for International Studies at the London School of Economics. He was keynote speaker at the UN’s 60th anniversary in 2005. He is the author of *The United Nations: A Concise History* (2005); *Colin Powell: American Power and Intervention From Vietnam to Iraq* (2009); and *Summer Welles, Postwar Planning, and the Quest for a New World Order* (2003, 2008), which won the American Historical Association’s Gutenberg Prize. He is currently a UNA-USA Sonoma County Chapter Board Member.

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**ADVOCACY ISSUES:**

A recent article in the San Francisco Chronicle (12/1/08) by Bob Egelko, Chronicle staff writer, gives supporters of the United Nations renewed hope that the government of the United States will play a more active and positive role in international affairs. Egelko’s article focuses on important conventions and a treaty that the United States has never approved.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty would prohibit all nuclear explosive testing. It would take effect when ratified by 44 “nuclear-capable” nations. Passed by the General Assembly and signed by President Clinton in 1996, it was rejected by the Senate in 1999.

The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea defines national coastal zone rights and sets rules for the commercial use of international waters and resources. It was passed by the General Assembly in 1982 and took effect in 1994. Signed by Clinton in 1994, it was most recently approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2007 but has not come to a floor vote.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) declares equal rights for women in “economic, political, social, cultural, civil or any other field” and requires nations to take “all appropriate measures” to ensure equality. Passed by the General Assembly in 1979, it took effect in 1981. Signed by President Carter in 1980 and finally approved by

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2002, it hasn’t come to a floor vote.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires nations to abolish legislation, customs and practices that discriminate against the disabled and promote policies for independent living and full community participation. Passed by the General Assembly in 2006 and took effect in 2008 but is not yet signed by the United States.

President-Elect Obama has indicated support for all four measures and with the help of a Senate majority they may finally be approved by the United States.

But don’t get too giddy at that prospect because other conventions and treaties are probably far more difficult in terms of ratification. For example, approval for the International Criminal Court, treaties banning land mines and cluster bombs, and agreements concerning climate control are fraught with controversy and disagreement.

But all in all and looking forward to the New Year, there is a renewal of hope for greater cooperation by the United States in the United Nations.

- Bob Brown, Advocacy Chair

**MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

Welcome to another new member who has joined our chapter recently:

Linda Trodden (of Santa Rosa).

To date we have recruited 18 new members this year. Our current chapter membership stands at about 145 persons. Our UNA chapter treasurer, Daphne Smith, recently renewed her membership at the \$1000 lifetime member level, so we now have five lifetime members in the chapter plus a number of people who have renewed at the sponsor (\$100) level. If you are in a position to follow suit we would be grateful for your contribution.

And do continue to encourage your friends and relatives to join our UNA family so that they also can take pride in knowing they are supporting efforts for a positive US role in building a more effective UN in a more humane world.

- Bob Abramson, Membership Chair

## ADVICE TO THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

William H. Luers has been the president of the United Nations Association of the USA since 1999. During his 31-year career in the Foreign Service, he served as ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Venezuela and as a deputy assistant secretary of State for Europe and for Inter-American affairs, among many other postings. In the Foreign Service Journal (December 2008), his article "Beyond the Cold War: A New Multilateral Agenda" offers advice to the Obama administration. A summary of that advice follows.

Luers believes that "most of the core foreign policy issues the United States must address are now under a United Nations' umbrella." He thinks the Bush administration initiated a new type of Cold War in which the struggle against communism was replaced by a war on terror characterized by unilateralism, reliance on military force, and coalitions of the willing. Now the Obama administration has an opportunity to "move carefully to bring the American people and Congress into an era of greater multilateral diplomacy." While much of the world awaits U.S. leadership based on mutual respect and cooperation, Luers notes that "at least half of the American people; and probably a majority of Congress are not ready for any significant shift from the American 'exceptionalist' approach."

Luers hopes that presidential leadership, sensitive to American skepticism concerning the U.N., can change attitudes and policies regarding international organizations. "But this will require a new willingness on the part of Washington to negotiate, sign, and ratify international treaties and legal agreements, and reduce its inclination to approach every international action only in terms of American sovereignty."

Luers then addresses existing issues needing the attention of the Obama administration organized into three categories: Short Term: Urgent Issues, Midterm Objectives: U.N. Renewal, and Long Term Objectives: International Cooperation and the U.N. In the first category, he includes Iraq, Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Climate Change, Peacekeeping and Iran. In Iraq, as a new Status of Forces agreement takes effect, Luers thinks the U.N. can play a unique role engaging regional powers in finding a political solution for Iraq's security; on Nonproliferation, with the upcoming five year review scheduled for 2010, Moscow and Washington should work on major weapons reduction and with member states of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in strengthening the nonproliferation regime; on Climate Change, the U.S. should take a leadership role in the December 2009 conference in Copenhagen on climate change and recognize the need for international cooperation in this area; on Peacekeeping, the U.S. should pay its \$2.5 billion of arrears and offer greater financial, logistic and political support for U.N. peacekeeping, including Darfur; on Iran, the U.S. should deal directly with Iran and work to increase access for IAEA to Iranian nuclear facilities.

In the second category, Luers calls for the "renewal" of the U.N. rather than "reform." He thinks the U.S. has been too begrudging and patronizing and should seize the opportunity to be more constructive towards the Security Council and the Secretariat. He is open to the creation of new U.N. agencies to deal with issues involving natural disasters, pandemics and terrorism.

In the final category, Luers believes that the Obama administration has to emphasize the idea that international cooperation is essential for U.S. interests and security. There are many treaties, conventions and agreements that lack U.S. ratification. The U.S. should seek a seat on the Human Rights Council, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. should also be a member of the President's cabinet, and Washington should give more weight to international diplomacy by sending well-trained professionals to represent the country in all international organizations.

Luers closes by admitting his list constitutes a very full agenda but he is hopeful that such changes will take America where it needs to be - a leader and trusted member of the international community.

(Summarized by Bob Brown)

The next issue of UNA-USA Sonoma County Chapter's Quarterly newsletter will be in April 2009. We welcome Chapter related articles/ news items from our Members. Please send them to newsletter coordinator Maitreyi Siruguri, before 08 April 2009 (Wednesday) via email: [maitreyi2005@gmail.com](mailto:maitreyi2005@gmail.com). Thank You!



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The purpose of this chapter, in cooperation with the national UNA-USA office, is to build public understanding and support for the United Nations and to foster constructive U.S. leadership to make the U.N. more effective.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/ RENEWAL FORM\***

NAME (please print) _____ ADDRESS _____ CITY STATE ZIP _____ HOME PHONE / BUSINESS PHONE E-MAIL _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I have enclosed a check payable to UNA-USA <input type="checkbox"/> Charge my payment of \$ _____ to this credit card <input type="checkbox"/> VISA <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> American Express CREDIT CARD NUMBER EXP. DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____ NAME ON CREDIT CARD _____		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DUES</b></p> <input type="radio"/> NEW MEMBER <input type="radio"/> RENEWAL <input type="radio"/> \$10 Full-time student <input type="radio"/> \$25 Introductory (first year only) <input type="radio"/> \$25 Fixed income <input type="radio"/> \$40 Individual Renewal <input type="radio"/> \$40 Individual or family <input type="radio"/> \$40 Organization or school <input type="radio"/> \$100 UNA Sponsor <input type="radio"/> \$500 UNA Patron <input type="radio"/> \$1000 UNA Life Member Yes! I want to make a donation of \$ _____ to help the work of UNA-USA. I would like to make a donation of \$ _____ to the Sonoma County Chapter. All donations are tax-deductible. Please send form and make checks payable to: Robert Abramson UNA-USA Sonoma County, 108 Chadwick Way Cotati, CA 94931 * Please fill out the form completely and legibly. <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THANK YOU!</b></p>
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