

President Obama holds LA Town Hall meeting



President Barack Obama AP Photo

Responding to a complaint about cuts in jobs and salaries for teachers in California, Obama urged people not to ask the federal and state governments to cut taxes and improve services.

"At some point you've got to make some choices," he told the crowd, which loudly cheered him repeatedly.

Obama also asked the country for patience and forbearance.

"We are not always going to be right," he said. "And I don't want everybody disappointed if we make a mistake."

The important question, he said, is "are we moving in the right direction" and keeping his main campaign promises.

Obama also announced fresh aid to struggling homeowners in California.

He said California was receiving \$145 million to help communities hardest hit by the home foreclosure crisis. He said the money would be used to buy up and rehabilitate vacant homes, and provide loans to poorer and middle-income families to help with home assistance.

He announced a new Web site to help people around the nation. It is called www.makinghomeaffordable.gov/. (AP)

Gates Foundation says Polio grant will go to Rotary International

A World Health Organization expert estimates that it would cost \$2 billion to stamp out the last traces of the polio virus

by MARY ENGEL

IN one of its largest grants ever, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated \$255 million Wednesday, March 11, toward the push to eradicate polio, a goal that has eluded world health agencies for decades but that many still consider doable, possibly within five years.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates made the announcement of the grant to Rotary International at a meeting of the service organization in San Diego. The World Health Organization, in collaboration with other groups, has spent 20 years and \$6 billion trying to eradicate the polio virus, aided by \$600 million raised by Rotary members. The 2000 target for elimination set in 1988 is already eight years overdue.

The number of countries in which the virus is still endemic has dropped since 1988 from more than 125 to four—Nigeria, India, Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan. These four countries accounted for 1,488 of the 1,625 polio cases reported in 2008.

Fifteen other countries in Africa and Asia that once had eliminated the disease reported a total of 137 cases after the virus

was reintroduced by travelers or immigrants.

Dr. Bruce Aylward, director of the WHO polio eradication program, estimated that it would cost \$2 billion to stamp out the last traces of the virus in areas where wars, natural disasters, difficult terrain, extreme poverty and political interference have kept it stubbornly entrenched.

Without eradication, the virus will continue to find unprotected children, said Dr. Stephen L. Cochi of the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Should nations eventually tire of funding mass vaccination campaigns, mathematical models have shown that infections would quickly soar to 200,000 a year.

"The very point of eradication is to go that last mile, or the disease comes roaring back," Cochi said.

Polio is caused by a highly infectious virus that invades the nervous system. Most of those infected do not become ill, but one in 200 develop an irreversible paralysis, usually in the legs, that can set in within hours of infection. Of these, 5 percent to 10 percent can survive only with a ventilator because their breathing muscles become paralyzed.

Gates, who has contributed

millions toward eliminating malaria, said that a victory over polio would energize other global health efforts, in the same way that the 1977 elimination of smallpox did. Eradicating the smallpox virus remains a unique medical accomplishment.

"The kind of energy that came out of the smallpox success and that will come out of the polio success will keep global health on the agenda," Gates said after the Rotary meeting. He also added that, "The money is to be parceled out over five years."

Rotary International, which has members in 170 countries, made ending polio its priority in 1985. Its efforts persuaded the WHO to set eradication as a goal. The group already has matched more than half of a \$100-million challenge grant that the Gates Foundation donated in 2007, and will match another \$100 million of the new grant.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is a partnership of Rotary International, the WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund and the CDC. On Wednesday, Germany and Britain announced new funding for the effort. The United States is the initiative's largest donor, giving about \$133 million a year. (rotary5280.org)

CA jobless rate jumps to 10.5 percent

SACRAMENTO—California's jobless rate climbed to 10.5 percent in February, the second month of double-digit unemployment.

The figures released Friday, March 20 by the state Employment Development Department reflect a severe economic climate last seen in California a quarter-century ago. The rate tops the national rate of 8.1 percent.

"This is really disappointing but not surprising given the national numbers for February. It's horrible here and in nearly every other state," said Stephen Levy, senior economist at the Palo Alto-based Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy.

"We'll see better times when and if the federal policies put in place begin to take effect. But that's not likely for another few months," he said. "Until then, jobless and unemployment will continue to rise."

Sharp declines in construction, manufacturing, finance, trade, transportation, professional services, leisure, health and education are blamed for the losses over the past month. The construction industry alone shed nearly 31,000 jobs in the last month.

The agency said about 1.95 million Californians are unemployed - up by 80,000 residents over the month. January's unemployment rate was 10.1 percent. Since February last year,

the state has lost more than 600,000 jobs, a 4 percent drop.

There was a glimmer of bright news in several industries. Information jobs were up 7,900 in February over the previous month. And the state added nearly 31,000 teaching and health services jobs since

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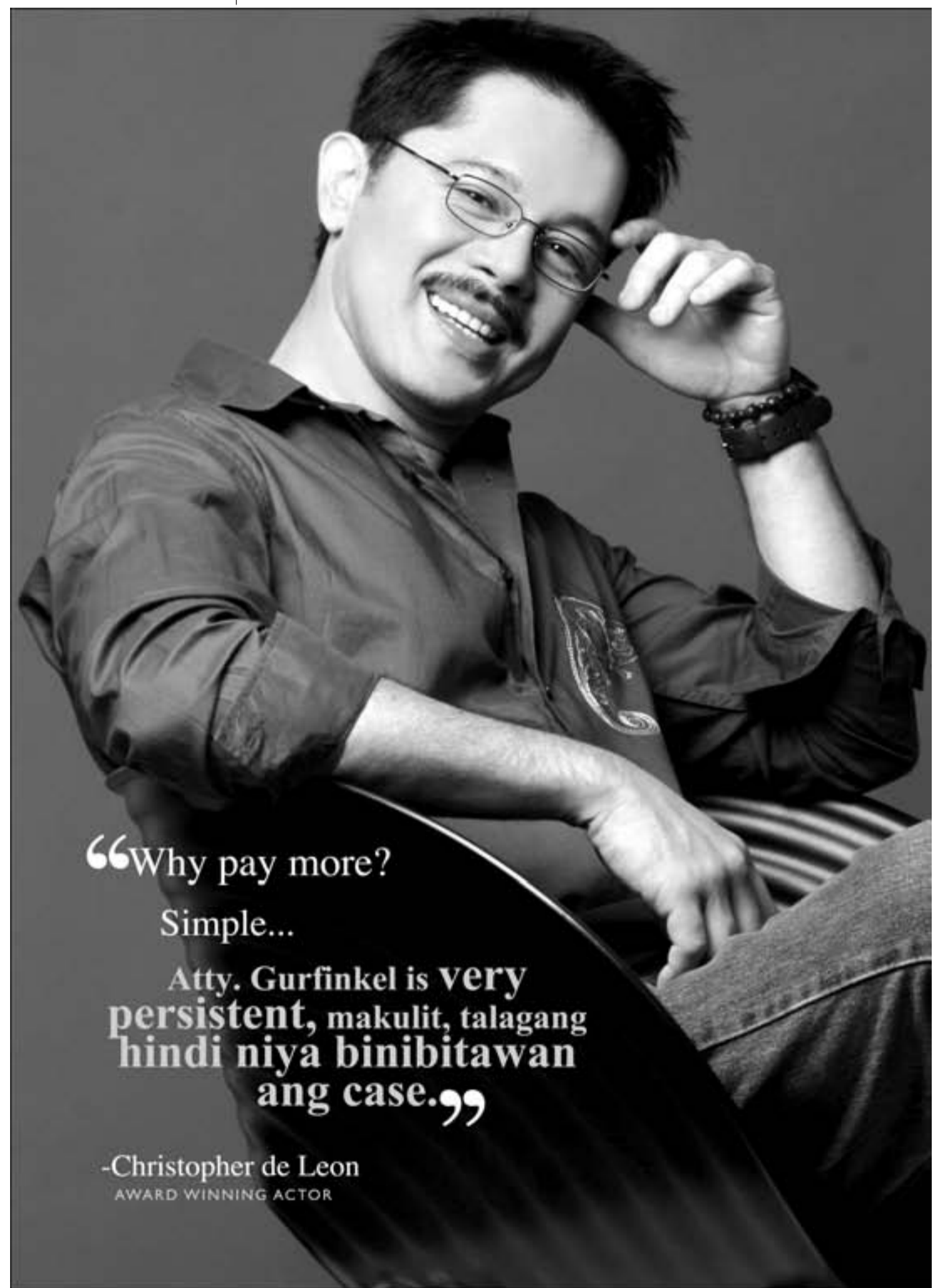
The voice for the people

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choose to return to the Philippines. Because of the 1946 Rescission Act, Filipino soldiers who served in the US Army during WWII were prevented from receiving any sort of military benefits or pensions. Benefits that are made available under the State Supplemental Program (SSP) would be provided as a benefit to veterans eligible to receive SSP. As such, a majority of these Veterans rely on SSI and SSP as their only source of income.

Cedillo is among few of the elected officials with the most Filipinos on staff. Mel Ilomin, his second in command, is a longtime supporter of the Filipino-American community. Cedillo has grown to be a leader not just to a number of specific groups, but to all who needs their voices heard. He will remain committed to addressing the needs of the whole community on the ground level as he supports the people in their struggles. The 32nd Congressional District that covers the areas of Baldwin Park, West Covina, Azusa, South El Monte, Rosemead, Irwindale and Covina has a population that is four to five percent Filipino.

When asked why he was running for Congress, he smiles and points at the photo of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Manny Pacquiao on the front of the March 11-13, 2009 edition of the *Asian Journal*. He says that it'll give him reason to take a picture with Manny Pacquiao too. One thing's for sure: Both Gil Cedillo and Manny Pacquiao are true champions in the Filipino-American community. ■



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