

RETIREE NOTES

Retirees provide major boost for AFSCME political program.

AFSCME RETIREES ACROSS THE state worked on mailers, phone banks and Saturday walk programs to get out the Election 2016 union vote. Hundreds of retiree-to-retiree phone calls were made for AFSCME-endorsed candidates.

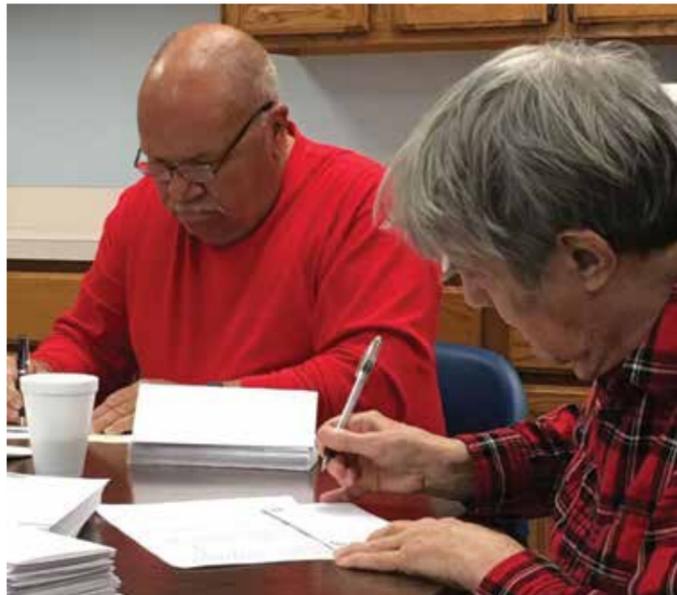
Members are working daily towards a favorable election, said Bob Lovell, a Sub-chapter 86 member. I've been volunteering for weeks. It's a great feeling to have an impact on the election. He was not alone. Retirees called and conversed about the political climate and received feedback on candidates.



Ken Rhinehart calls union members and retirees on behalf of AFSCME-endorsed candidates.

Some retirees are older and our phone calls make them aware of current political issues and it motivates them to vote, said Gary Mazzotti, also a Sub-chapter 86 member. A friends-and-family mailer from chapter members discussed each district's AFSCME-endorsed state representative. Sub-chapters around the state stuffed, sealed, stamped and mailed thousands of letters to AFSCME members.

Retirees placed their boots on the ground in Saturday walk



Mike Woodcox and Frank Looney get a political mailing to retirees ready to go.

events and on Election Day, discussing political campaigns at the doors of active and retired union members. For local races, the more contact you have with citizens, the better off you will be, said Larry Blum, a Sub-chapter 86 member said. People are tired of negative television ads. When it comes down to it, people need good old-fashioned human contact.

AFSCME's PEOPLE Program is fueled by passionate and committed retirees. We are helping because we care, Lovell said. We want candidates in office who will help middle class families and support the unions. We are here to try and make Illinois better.

Republicans target Medicare

ACCORDING TO EARLY REPORTS, Medicare reform is a top priority for president-elect Donald Trump and the Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, has been pushing hard to shift Medicare to

a voucher program and it appears likely that Republicans will quickly move forward to try to enact such a plan. Such a voucher program would effectively privatize Medicare, making it less affordable and less reliable. The president-elect said on the campaign trail that he opposed any changes to Medicare and Social Security. But his new transition website includes a revised health policy agenda that could encompass the sorts of changes that Ryan has proposed, according to the Washington Post. That policy calls for legislation to, Modernize Medicare, so that it will be ready for the challenges with the coming retirement of the Baby Boom generation — and beyond.

There is precedent for the assault on Medicare and Social Security, according to Michael Phelan of the Social Security Works group. In 2005, a reelected President George W. Bush and a unified Republican Congress set out on a plan to privatize our Social Security system. The American people stood up and protected a system that has never

missed a payment, doesn't add a penny to the deficit, and can pay full benefits for nearly two decades.

Phelan said the same kind of mass organizing effort will need to be launched this time around: The only thing standing in (Ryan's) way will be a united American public who know that our Social Security system must be expanded, never cut, and that Medicare is a vital lifeline for seniors.

Affordable health care at risk for Chicago retirees

IF THE EMANUEL ADMINISTRATION follows through on its planned phase out of all City of Chicago health care plans for City retirees, many retirees could find themselves without any health insurance coverage at all on January 1. The City is telling retirees they can purchase coverage on the health care exchanges under the Affordable Care Act. But even those plans are unaffordable for many. Moreover,

continue to press for a solution that ensures Chicago retirees have affordable health care in their retirement.

New law brings benefits to certain married retirees

RECENT STATE LEGISLATION NOW gives certain IMRF, SURS and TRF annuitants who were not married at the time they retired, but have entered into a marriage or other legal relationship since, the option to establish and fund a spousal benefit. This benefit is an amount, roughly 50 percent of the retiree's pension payment, which is paid for the lifetime of an eligible surviving spouse. If the annuitant in one of these systems did not have a spouse eligible for a surviving spouse pension, he or she received a refund of surviving spouse contributions. To establish this benefit, the annuitant will have to pay back the amount of this refund.

This legislation applies to retirees who:



Harriet Baker.

Trump has vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act as one of his first acts in office. Retirees who are not eligible for Medicare will be especially hard hit. For example, city retirees who are not Medicare eligible currently pay \$876 dollars a month for health care. The new plans could cost as much as \$1,400.

It's like the city of Chicago tied cement blocks to our feet dropped us in Lake Michigan to drown, said Dorothy Harding, a sub-chapter 60 member.

AFSCME continues to press the Emanuel administration and the Chicago City Council to provide adequate and affordable health care coverage for retirees.

The city's decision to ignore its responsibility to retirees is unconscionable, said Martha Merrill, the director of research and benefits for AFSCME. We

- Married in Illinois on or after Feb. 26, 2014; or
- Entered into an Illinois civil union on or after June 11, 2011; or
- Entered into a legal relationship in another state or jurisdiction that was not recognized in Illinois until after June 11, 2011, or Feb. 26, 2014; and
- Are still in this same marriage, civil union or legal relationship. Those eligible for this benefit can contact their pension system to request an application. The numbers for each pension system: SURS, 217-378-8800; IMRF, 800-275-4673; TRS, 800-877-7896. The refund may be paid in a lump sum or spread those payments out. No one is obligated to re-establish this benefit. For all systems, the window to apply for this benefit is Dec. 29, 2016, through Dec. 28, 2017.



Larry Blum (from left), Bill Voss, Linda Blum and Frank Looney stuff envelopes.