

RETIREE NOTES



Chapter 31 retirees wrote more than 7,400 postcards to voters in targeted judicial districts.

AFSCME Retirees Step up to Protect Court

THIS ELECTION SEASON, AFSCME Retirees Chapter 31 joined an array of groups and individuals to participate in the Protect Our Court campaign of Citizen Action/Illinois.

This effort began because two critical seats on the Illinois Supreme Court were on the ballot—both in judicial

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districts outside Chicago. The outcome of those races would decide the balance of power on the Illinois Supreme Court for years to come, with anti-union billionaires spending millions backing anti-worker candidates to try to gain control of the court. Among their aims was to win a majority that would be prepared to wipe out the Illinois Constitution's pension protection clause.

But the big-money attacks

their own interest.”

IARA Celebrates Female Labor Leaders

THE ILLINOIS ALLIANCE FOR Retired Americans (IARA) celebrated 20 years of organizing on September 13 during the Senior Power Celebration in Springfield. More than 130 labor retiree leaders gathered at the Plumbers & Steamfitters Hall for a new program honoring retiree champions.

Jerry Prete Award

The Jerry Prete Award is given out by the IARA to those who have been strong public advocates for seniors in Illinois. This year, the award was presented to Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch.

“Since her earliest days with AFSCME Council 31, a part of Roberta’s heart has clearly been with retired employees,” said Don Todd, president of the IARA and a longtime AFSCME member.

Lynch has consistently been an advocate for retirement security and has fought to preserve retiree health insurance and pension benefits in the face of repeated attacks.

Retiree Hero Award

Honoring young champions with a proven track record for working to preserve the rights

of seniors and retirees across the state of Illinois, this award was presented to state Rep. Lakesia Collins (D-Chicago), who began her involvement with the labor movement as a nursing home employee.

Collins worked to create a union to fight for the rights of her coworkers. Before she became an advocate for seniors, she took on a challenge of organizing millennials all over the United States.

“I have always believed in order to achieve these great victories, we must bridge the generational gap,” Collins said.

Frank and Beatrice Lumpkin Award

This is a newly established award to recognize the most dedicated seniors who spent their lives building the labor movement and pushing onward for a better life for everyone.

The inaugural awardee was none other than Bea Lumpkin herself, still going strong at age 104. Her long history in the labor movement started at 15 years old when she lied about her age and went to work at a factory, where she helped organize her fellow workers.

She went on to work as an electronic technician in a steel mill during World War II, and she later became a public school teacher and a leader with the Chicago Teachers Union. One of the most dedicated and passionate movement leaders, Lumpkin has inspired generations and been a driving force in the IARA.

GOP Runs on Cutting Social Security and Medicare

“THEY’RE COMING AFTER your Social Security and Medicare, and they’re saying it out loud,” President Biden told a crowd in October. The president was talking about Republican leaders and the implications if they got control of Congress.


At the time OTM went to press, Republicans were in fact poised to take the House of Representatives with a narrow majority, but Democrats retained control of the Senate. Given Republican candidates’ willingness to run on cuts, threats to Social Security still loom.

According to the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM), “the president was not exaggerating. This is not a matter of nuance; it’s truly existential. Whichever party controls Congress will influence whether Social Security and Medicare will continue as we know them—or be weakened and privatized.”

NCPSSM president Max Richtman went on to lay out that Democrats have made earnest efforts to boost Social Security and Medicare in the 117th Congress and to shore up the finances of both programs. They have introduced legislation to strengthen Social Security and expand benefits, and passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which should significantly lower seniors’ prescription drug costs.

Meanwhile, GOP members of Congress have proposed to break the fundamental promises of both programs.

And it’s not just fringe GOP candidates. Last June, the House Republican Study Committee’s budget blueprint included raising Social Security’s full retirement age—a massive benefit cut that ignores the fact that although some people are living longer, many are not able to continue working until age 70.

AFSCME retirees stand ready to join with seniors nationwide to fight for the protection of these programs should any proposed cuts advance in Congress. 



Retirees and guests at the IARA Senior Power Celebration in Springfield on Sept. 13.