

# RETIREE NOTES



## Staying strong, apart

*A special message from Chapter 31 President Larry Brown*

THE CORONAVIRUS PAN-  
demic has brought new chal-  
lenges and concerns to all of  
us. I want you to know that  
AFSCME Chapter 31 Retirees is  
still at work every day—even as  
we're complying with Governor  
Pritzker's stay-at-home order—  
to advocate for you and provide  
you with vital information and  
resources.

Thanks to our efforts  
through the Alliance for Retired  
Americans, the Treasury  
Department reversed course  
and announced that Social  
Security beneficiaries who typ-  
ically do not file a tax return  
will automatically get a stimu-  
lus payment. That means that  
all Americans, regardless of  
age, should receive a one-time  
payment of \$1200, as long as  
they do not exceed the \$75,000  
income limit.

Medicare has also changed  
its coverage and payments  
related to Covid-19. Medicare  
already covers its enrollees for  
much of what they might need  
if they contract the virus and  
become seriously ill—and it  
has expanded some services  
and loosened some rules in  
response to the crisis.

Medicare, Social Security  
and the Centers for Disease  
Control (CDC) are all concerned  
about the explosion in scams  
targeting senior citizens. All  
three agencies are urging retir-  
ees to beware of email and  
phone scams claiming they  
have special information about

the virus. In some cases, scam-  
mers might promise to send  
you a coronavirus test, masks  
or other items in exchange for  
personal information like your  
Social Security, Medicare, bank  
account, drivers' license or  
credit card numbers.

Under no circumstances  
should you provide this infor-  
mation to such unknown call-  
ers. Testing is available through  
local and state governments,  
but tests are not delivered to  
your home. Rely on verified  
websites like the CDC.gov or  
AFSCME31.org/COVID19.

Fear and anxiety about the  
COVID-19 pandemic can be  
overwhelming and cause strong  
emotions. Make sure to support  
yourself and your loved ones:

- Follow all CDC recommen-  
dations for self-protection  
against the coronavirus—  
especially staying at home,  
washing your hands, avoid-  
ing close contact with people  
who are sick, disinfecting  
frequently touched surfaces,  
and calling your health care  
provider if you are sick.
- Take breaks from watching,  
reading or listening to news  
stories and social media.
- Take care of your body. Take  
deep breaths, stretch, or  
meditate. Try to eat healthy,  
well-balanced meals, exercise  
regularly and get plenty of  
sleep.
- Make time to unwind. Try to  
do some other activities you  
enjoy.

- Connect with others. Talk  
with people you trust about  
your concerns and how you  
are feeling over the phone or  
by video connection.

While AFSCME Illinois  
Retirees has cancelled all meet-  
ings until the restrictions on  
meetings are lifted, we will  
continue to provide you with  
important information and  
monitor issues related to your  
benefits. Stay safe.

## Retirees demand legislature rein in Rx costs

ON MARCH 3, NEARLY 200  
retirees took part in a lobby day  
at the state capitol in support  
of Chapter 31's efforts to rein in  
the costs of Prescription Drugs.

"We could be heard  
throughout the building as  
we chanted outside the House  
chamber," said Leon Otto, a  
member from the Centralia  
area sub-chapter who attended.  
Retirees were outside the  
House chamber where they  
hoped legislators would be  
able to hear them and support  
House Bill 3493.

HB 3493 would establish a  
five-member Prescription Drug  
Affordability Board that would  
have authority to conduct  
cost reviews and set "upper  
payment limits" for any brand  
name drug with a wholesale  
price of \$30,000 or more for  
a one-year supply or course  
of treatment, or for any drug  
for which the wholesale price  
jumps by \$3,000 or more in a  
single year.

"That kind of upper-pay-  
ment limit is important for  
people like me," said Sharon  
Lockett, a retiree from the



Bonnie Hester (Sub-chapter 78) recognized for her service by Treasurer Frerichs.

Chicago area sub-chapter. "I  
need ten different medications  
for my Lupus/Graves disease  
and my kidney issues. There  
have been months that I've  
had to skip a dose or cut my  
medications because I couldn't  
afford the cost. We need to  
pass meaningful legislation to  
reduce the cost of life-saving  
prescriptions."

Upper payment limits  
are commonly used in private  
insurance and state Medicaid  
programs, but they are typically  
negotiated individually between  
the health plan and drug manu-  
facturers and vary dramatically.  
The board would also have  
authority to regulate generic  
drug prices if those drugs cost  
\$100 or more for a 30-day sup-  
ply or if their prices jump 200  
percent or more in a single year.

While HB 3493 did not  
pass out of the Prescription  
Drug Committee, there may  
be similar legislation in the  
Senate.

## Peoria area retiree honored

BONNIE HESTER, A LONG-  
time Chapter 31 member and  
sub-chapter 78 officer, recently  
received an honorary Black  
History Month Award from Illinois  
Treasurer Michael Frerichs.

"It's wonderful to see someone  
who has been such a dedicated  
public servant receive recog-  
nition," said Carol Hadsell,  
president of the Peoria-area  
sub-chapter.

Hester, a former Peoria  
City/County Health Depart-  
ment employee and Peoria  
County Board Member, has  
been a member of AFSCME  
Illinois Retiree Chapter 31 for  
over 15 years and has served as  
an executive board member in  
her sub-chapter for seven. She  
was honored for her positive  
impact and service in the com-  
munity. 



AFSCME Chapter 31 retirees at the state Capitol on March 3, lobbying to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.