

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.