

RETIREE NOTES

Chapter 31 convention goes virtual

AFSCME RETIREES CHAPTER 31 held its 18th Biennial Convention via Zoom on Oct. 13.

"While some of us are not very comfortable with technology, many more of us are concerned with the impact of COVID and the breakthrough cases," said Carol Hadsell, a Chapter 31 Executive Board member and president of Peoria area's sub-chapter 78. "That's why the Board voted to hold the convention virtually. I was very impressed with both the content and organization."

Sub-chapter delegates elected the chapter's statewide officers and passed resolutions guiding the organization for the next two years. Priorities reflected in those resolutions include defending retirement security, supporting compounding COLAs, opposing the social security offsets, protecting Medicare and Social Security, and containing prescription drug costs.

Delegates heard remarks from AFSCME President Lee Saunders, State Senator Doris Turner (D-Springfield), AFSCME Retirees Director Ann Widger and Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch.

"Quite a few of our members weren't going to attend before it went virtual," said Don Todd, an Executive Board member and President of Springfield area's Sub-chapter 86. "We were thrilled with the great speakers, and the ability to take care of business in a safe and accessible way."

Hall of Fame honorees

THE AFSCME CHAPTER 31 Retiree Hall of Fame honors those who have dedicated their time and effort to building the organization, fending off attacks on earned benefits and strengthening retirement security for all. At the convention, Chapter 31 delegates inducted the following individuals into the Hall of Fame.

Charlie Hogan

Charlie was a member of Northern Cook County Sub-chapter 161. Prior to



Charlie Hogan



Jeannette Hosey



Ruth Holmes



Rosemary Rouse

retiring, he worked for the city of Evanston for 20 years as an air conditioning technician and was an active member of AFSCME Local 1891. After Charlie retired in 2007, he worked with Chapter 31 to build a new retiree sub-chapter, becoming president of Sub-chapter 161, which today has nearly 1,000 members. A stalwart activist, Charlie was always either at a picket line, phone-bank or an action, or mobilizing others to join in. A dedicated and patient leader who spent long hours building the organization, Charlie passed away in March 2020.

Ruth Holmes

Ruth joined AFSCME Retirees Sub-chapter 60 in January 2012, immediately after retiring from John Stroger Cook County Hospital's Department of Medical Records

after 30 years as an assistant supervisor. Elected to the executive board and in 2016 as secretary, she serves as the event planner for most activities. Competent, reliable and trustworthy, Ruth has dedicated many hours to serving the members of Sub-chapter 60.

Jeannette Hosey

Jeanette began her career as a state employee in 1976. She worked in several facilities including Joliet Correctional Center and Stateville Correctional Center. In 2008, Jeanette retired but didn't slow down. She joined Retirees Sub-chapter 73 in the Joliet area, where she now serves as treasurer. Thorough and always timely, she regularly works beyond her own duties and responsibilities to ensure the sub-chapter runs

smoothly. Jeanette's resilience, tireless dedication and commitment to the organization have been invaluable.

Rosemary Rouse

Rosemary was in management at the end of her career but knew the importance of the union and joined AFSCME Retiree Sub-chapter 92 in the Vienna area shortly after she retired from the Illinois correctional system. Since then, she has proven herself an energetic and reliable officer who often fills in for others when needed. When the coronavirus pandemic hit and the sub-chapter had to hold meetings by Zoom, Rosemary made sure that members were supplied with the necessary information to join the online meetings. She has been the glue that holds the organization together.

COVID breakthroughs underscore importance of vaccines, booster

"THE DOCTORS SAID I WAS incredibly lucky. If I hadn't been vaccinated, I would have died."

Those are the words of AFSCME Illinois Retiree Chapter 31 President Larry Brown, who was hospitalized for 16

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days in September after being diagnosed with COVID-19. "Unless you go through it, you just can't imagine how difficult it is," Brown said.

Throughout the pandemic, research has clearly demonstrated that older adults have been more likely to suffer from COVID complications. Experts say the same reasons that made them more susceptible from the get-go, including a less robust immune system and higher likelihood of chronic health issues, could be causing them to bear the burden of severe breakthrough cases.

"Everyone I know has lost someone to COVID, yet many people still act like it doesn't exist," Brown said. "We all have a responsibility to care for the more vulnerable members of our community, which means wearing a mask and getting vaccinated to reduce exposure, illness and death. To do otherwise is unacceptable and irresponsible."

Vaccines are critically important to reducing the likelihood of COVID infection, severe illness and death. Unvaccinated individuals are 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and die from the disease than vaccinated people.

To increase their protection, the CDC recommends that everyone age 65 and older who receive the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine more than six months ago should get a booster shot now, as should anyone age 50-64 with underlying medical conditions. 