

RETIREE NOTES

A cross-generational family

Charlie Hogan organizes fellow AFSCME retiree activists

CHARLIE HOGAN WORKED FOR THE CITY OF EVANSTON FOR 20 YEARS AS AN AIR CONDITIONING technician and a member of AFSCME Local 1891. "I kept 96 heat pumps running that were not only obsolete, they didn't even make them anymore," Hogan laughed. "I basically had to rebuild them over the years."

Soon after retiring in 2007, Hogan was approached by AFSCME Retirees Chapter 31 to help found a new retiree sub-chapter in the northern suburbs of Chicago. Today, AFSCME Retiree Sub-Chapter 161 has more than 850 members and a solid core of activists. Hogan's goal as president is to expand that core.

"We are all connected—our union is a cross-generational family," he said. "When we're organized, retirees can be a force in politics and in our union."

Organizing for change

HOGAN HAS BEEN WORKING to make a difference with his sub-chapter and other area organizations like ONE Northside, the Jane Addams Senior Caucus and the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans. His focus right now is building public awareness of Gov. Rauner's budget blockade and increasing public pressure to pass a fair budget with adequate revenues.

"While leafletting at a Citizen Action/Illinois event, I met a mother who used to get subsidies for her son's day care. Now she's trying to do it all out of her own pocket. I call it silent misery. You don't necessarily know who is impacted by the governor's actions until you get out there and talk to people."

And that's what Hogan

loves to do. He reaches out to fellow retirees and has one-on-one conversations about getting active.

"It's basic organizing. I listen to their stories and I share our vision at AFSCME. I tell them, if you're frustrated and willing to dip your toe in the water, there's no shortage of work to be done."

As a conversation starter, he brings a recent copy of *On the Move* with him on visits with retirees. "Our union paper lays out the situation in a depth that's not covered in the media. Retirees who know the honest story will be ready to act when we're called on to help."

Solidarity is a core AFSCME value

SOLIDARITY IS WHAT SPURRED Hogan to become a union activ-



Charlie Hogan (left) shares passion for organizing, vision for future with fellow retirees.

ist years ago when a former supervisor attempted to fire him and his co-workers.

"Until then my union contract was in my desk drawer. But that experience made me truly see the value of my union. Between solidarity and a union contract, I kept my job."

Hogan has advice for the active union members of AFSCME: "Reach out to your retiree group. We care. We have a stake in this fight. What's been there for me, I want there for you. I want it there for my daughter."

Top Trump advisors push cuts to Social Security and Medicare

DURING HIS CAMPAIGN LAUNCH last summer, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump made a familiar promise to "save Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security."

But the people closely advising Trump on national policy have different ideas.

Trump's national co-chair and senior policy advisor, Sam Clovis, told the *Des Moines Register* that he is "a strong believer in bringing private models to both Medicare and Social Security." Privatization of Social Security and Medicare would replace the current system with a "voucher program" that does not guarantee full coverage.

Clovis has also been trying to walk back Trump's initial support for retirement benefits. At a Fiscal Summit, Clovis stated that "after the [Trump] administration has been in place, then we will start to take

a look at all of the programs, including entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare."

Trump's Policy Director, John Mashburn, has similarly dangerous views.

Mashburn views Social Security Disability as a "substitute welfare program" and has advocated for "block-granting" the Medicaid program, which would allow states to cut funding to seniors living in

nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Public pension funding levels on the rise

EVEN THOUGH OPPONENTS OF retirement benefits continue to claim that hard-earned pensions are "unsustainable," funding levels for pensions nationwide continue to rise.

Boston College researchers found that the average public

pension trust fund increased its funding ratio by one percent in the last year, and average pension funding is nearing pre-2008 recession levels.

Why then are Illinois' pension funds not rebounding as quickly? For decades Illinois politicians shorted the pension fund to cover infrastructure projects without enacting a tax increase. Since 60-70 percent of pension fund assets come from investments, Illinois has had

difficulty keeping up with rising market performance.

Governor Rauner has continued this practice. In November 2015 the state skipped a \$560 million pension payment. Furthermore, a bill introduced this past session by Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno (R-Lemont), SB 2789, seeks to give the governor unilateral authority to cut pension payments even further.

CHICAGO-AREA RETIREEES EXPRESS SOLIDARITY WITH STATE EMPLOYEES

