

# RETIREE NOTES

## Protect our pensions: Vote in SERS trustee election

ALL RETIREES IN THE STATE Employees Retirement System (SERS) are eligible to vote in the upcoming election for Annuitant Trustee. AFSCME recommends John Tilden for this position. The voting period begins on May 1 and runs through June 1, 2016.

"When retirees receive their SERS ballot on or around May 1, they should mark it for John Tilden," said David Amerson, Chapter 31 retiree coordinator.

An experienced and proven advocate for retirement security, John Tilden serves as the president of AFSCME Retiree Sub-chapter 66 (Lake and McHenry County) and on the statewide executive board for Chapter 31. He is retired from the Illinois Department of Human Services where he worked as a psychologist for more than 30 years.

At a time when public pension systems are threatened, it is critical that SERS members have a voice in the decisions that affect their retirement. Tilden serves on the finance and legislative committees of Chapter 31. He knows that politicians mismanaging pension funding caused the SERS to be underfunded—not retirees who faithfully paid their contribution every month.

Ballots must be received at SERS by June 1. Retirees must follow voting instructions exactly to ensure every vote is counted.

## Retirees help secure big wins in primary election

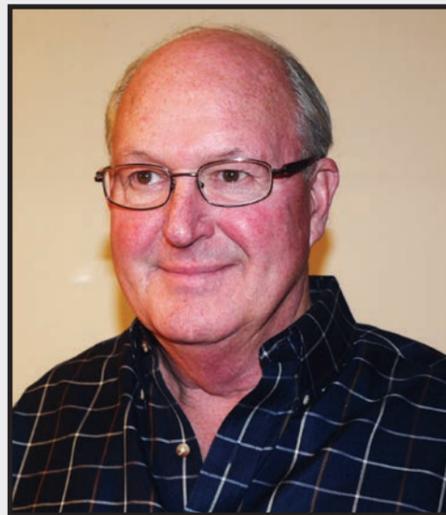
IN TWO OF THE MOST HOTLY contested elections of the March primary, AFSCME Chapter 31 retirees led the grassroots charge that resulted in big wins for union-backed candidates.

In Springfield, where AFSCME-backed incumbent senator Sam McCann was running against a Rauner super PAC backed challenger, volunteers called their fellow AFSCME retirees and knocked on doors in the 50th District to help get out the vote.

"Sam was the only Republican in the General Assembly

**VOTE FOR  
JOHN TILDEN  
in the SERS Annuitant  
Trustee election.**

**BALLOTS ARE MAILED MAY 1.**



with the courage to stand up to Bruce Rauner's destructive agenda," said Don Todd, president of Retiree Sub-chapter 86 (Sangamon County). "We wanted to send a message to other Republicans that you don't have to be afraid of all the campaign cash Rauner and his buddies are spending on elections. Union activism can beat dirty money any day of the week."

In Chicago, AFSCME-backed challenger Juliana Stratton was running against incumbent state representative Ken Dunkin. AFSCME Retiree Sub-chapter 60 (Chicago) staffed some of the first phone banks to get the word out about Stratton.

"When we needed Ken Dunkin the most, he was out of town on vacation," said Mary Jones, president of the Chicago sub-chapter, referring to Dunkin's absence from a veto override vote on SB 1229, which caused the fair arbitration bill to fail. "Dunkin stood with Rauner against active and retired public employees, so now we stand together against Dunkin."

## Failing 401(k) plans reaching national crisis

WHEN FIRST INTRODUCED, defined contribution retirement plans known as 401(k) plans were intended to be one leg of a "three-legged stool" along with Social Security and pensions.

The decline of defined benefit worker pensions coupled with steady cuts to Social Security since the 1980s mean

that retired Americans are more and more dependent on their personal savings and 401(k) accounts. But an alarming new study by the Economic Policy Institute points to the widespread failure of 401(k)s to provide retirement security.

Almost half of all working-age families have no money in retirement accounts at all, according to the study, with the median amount of savings being a paltry \$5,000. Even older workers approaching

retirement have little to show for their 401(k), with people between the ages of 56 and 61 having a median retirement savings of only \$17,000.

Mirroring the national conversation on wealth inequality, the study found massive inequality in retirement savings, with the wealthiest ten percent saving over \$274,000 and the bottom 50 percent saving next to nothing.

Disparities in retirement savings result from stagnating wages as well as decreasing

employer participation in retirement benefit plans for their workers. Americans with lower incomes are ten times less likely than families with higher incomes to have jobs that offer 401(k) plans.

Originally designed to supplement the retirement income workers received from Social Security and their pensions, 401(k)s have been used to replace pensions.

One of the main reasons that 401(k)s are so popular, despite their widespread failure, is that they are extremely lucrative for Wall Street fund managers and other big money interests: 401(k) plans carry much higher fees and administrative overhead. In order to protect their own profits, these fund managers and banks use their wealth to push for policies that attack traditional pension plans.

"The EPI study is the latest in a growing pile of evidence that 401(k)s have failed working families in America," said Bailey Childers, Executive Director of the National Public Pension Coalition. "It's more vital than ever to protect and expand access to defined benefit pensions—the best vehicle to provide real retirement security."



AFSCME retiree Eva Gregory volunteers with her fellow Sub-chapter 60 members at a union phone bank to support Juliana Stratton in Chicago.