

RETIREE NOTES



Chapter 31 executive board members (top); President Larry Brown (bottom).



AFSCME Retirees set bold agenda

HUNDREDS OF AFSCME Illinois Chapter 31 retirees gathered in Springfield on October 16 and 17 for the organization's annual convention.

"After years of unrelenting attacks on both our retirement benefits and our ability to organize a union to protect those benefits, we have come out on the other side even stronger," said AFSCME Illinois Chapter 31 President Larry Brown. "Our members have spoken and set before us a bold agenda, including action to address our state's structural deficit, reduce the cost of prescription drugs and safeguard our members and our ability to organize."

Retirees expressed frustration with the continual attacks on their benefits, when the clear, underlying problem with pensions is the gross underfunding by the legislature. They pledged to continue fighting for retirement security for all public employees and retirees.

"The big secret," Center for Tax and Budget Accountability Executive Director Ralph Martire told delegates, "is that pensions have subsidized state budgets for many years. When you do the math, we see that state spending is not the culprit, rather there is an unmistakable structural deficit that must be fixed by addressing our tax policy in a rational way with the Fair Tax amendment."

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky also addressed delegates, explaining that she will be joining the retirees' state campaign to combat out-of-control prescription drug costs for seniors.

Council 31 Executive Director Roberta Lynch thanked delegates for their efforts to beat back each attack by Bruce Rauner's administration and his cohorts, including the Illinois Policy Institute.

"We understand, however, that our work is not finished," Lynch said. "We must continue to educate and build our retiree membership every day."

For a full list of resolutions passed by the delegates, attend your local sub-chapter meeting, call (217) 788-2800 or email mbritton-sipe@afscme31.org.

Lower drug prices now!

AFTER A LIFETIME OF WORKING to make our communities a better place, every retiree deserves respect. AFSCME has long held that access to

affordable health insurance is a form of respect, but access means nothing when the price of daily prescription drugs is out of reach.

That's why AFSCME joined the Lower Drug Prices Now Coalition (LDPNC), a group of advocacy organizations focusing on reducing the cost of prescription drugs.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimates that prescription drug expenditures in the U.S. totaled \$333 billion in 2017, up from \$121 billion in 2000. Drug prices have increased faster than inflation for at least 12 straight years.

The coalition is working in the US Congress to pass H.R. 3, which addresses one of the leading causes for high drug prices: the lack of cost controls. The government doesn't regulate prices, unlike many countries where governmental agencies negotiate prices for every drug.

H.R. 3 puts the federal government on the side of all Americans by negotiating directly with prescription drug corporations for lower prices. The legislation will lower drug prices, including insulin, regardless of where a person gets their health insurance plan.

"We must limit drug companies' power to extract profits at the expense of people's health by harnessing the government's power to improve patients' lives," said Chapter 31 Retiree Coordinator Maria Britton-Sipe. "Urge your member of Congress to support H.R. 3."

Hall of Fame Honorees

INDUCTION TO THE CHAPTER 31 Hall of Fame is an honor bestowed on members who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, dedicating their time, energy and passion to keeping members informed, while also defending retirement benefits and maintaining strong sub-chapters. Five members were enshrined at the October convention.

HARRIET BAKER (Sub-chapter 93, Marion)

As an active employee, she overcame harassment from management to help organize AFSCME Local 3237 at United Cerebral Palsy of Will County and Easter Seals where she served as local president for nearly a decade. In Chapter 31 she has served as vice president and PEOPLE chair for her sub-chapter.

KATHY BREEDEN (Sub-chapter 77, Galesburg)

She was a longtime chief steward at her local, setting a high bar for activism. In retirement, she was elected president of her sub-chapter and served on the statewide executive board. She's dedicated to political organizing on behalf of AFSCME-endorsed candidates.

SHARON HEITKAMP (Sub-chapter 85, Centralia)

She served on the state negotiating committee while working, then became heavily involved in her sub-chapter after she retired. She is still vice-president and PEOPLE chair.

MARY LAURENT

(Sub-chapter 59, Alton) She is known both in AFSCME and her Central Labor Council as a relentless activist. She serves as a liaison to other community organizations, educating them on the importance of the labor movement. She continues to be her sub-chapter's vice president and PEOPLE chair.

REBECCA SPINNER

(Sub-chapter 87, Decatur) A cornerstone of the AFSCME and AFL-CIO political programs, she can always be counted upon to assist members with complicated health care questions and is the secretary-treasurer in her sub-chapter.

Barb Franklin recognized with Lifetime Achievement Award

LONGTIME AFSCME ACTIVIST Barb Franklin helped steer the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans for the last 10 years as president. As she handed over the gavel to Don Todd, an AFSCME retiree activist from Springfield, she was honored with the organization's Lifetime Achievement Award.

"After serving on the frontlines of the battle to preserve retirement security, I am proud of our efforts and believe that I am handing over the baton to another strong leader," Franklin said. 🦅



Retiree Barb Franklin receives IARA's Lifetime Achievement Award.