

AT&T Ameritech /SBC Retirees

Proudly working on behalf of retirees of the Bell System and successor companies of the New AT&T, located worldwide



www.AASBCR.org

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK, DECEMBER 2010

My fellow retirees,

We are at the end of another year. It is hard to believe. Time does go by faster as I get older!! I hope that all of you enjoyed the holidays. Great friends, food, and memories.



I am forming my wish list for 2011. I will share it with you.
I wish:

- AT&T remains a profitable company so that retirees continue to receive benefits.
- AT&T considers retirees when distributing bonuses to its executives and provides a cost of living raise for retirees. Some of these retirees have not seen a raise in twenty years. The spending power of their money has eroded over the years.
- The federal government and our representatives consider seniors and do not "mess with" Medicare.
- Our lawmakers consider the seniors that they represent when passing legislation.
- The NRLN continues to lobby our representatives to provide retiree friendly legislation.
- AASBCR® remains a strong and viable retiree group working for its members.
- AASBCR® officers, directors and state representatives continue to serve our retirees with the same vigor and courage as they do now.
- Retiree members assist AASBCR® by providing email addresses so that AASBCR® can reduce mail costs.

AASBCR® State Representatives

Florida, Louisiana	Pat Reichard	Ohio	Lee Grimes
Illinois	Ralph Kolderup	Ohio	Jim Martin
Illinois	Phil Schelinski	Ohio	Elaine Wolan
Indiana	Loretta McDowell	Texas, Kansas, Missouri	Rene Miller
Michigan	Ron Rhodes	Wisconsin	Bob Ledvina
		Wisconsin	Corey Parollina

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- Retiree members encourage retiree friends to join AASBCR® so that it continues to thrive.

Again, I am asking that each of you sign up just one of your retiree friends. We all have friends who have not joined. Please encourage them to join. The larger our number, the stronger our voice. Where? With AT&T and with Congress. This will enable AASBCR® to better support its' retirees.

Stay warm this winter and be healthy and happy.

Carole Lovell



FROM THE DESK OF RAY STERNOT, VP-LEGISLATION

My role as the AASBCR® VP of Legislation continues to be one of working closely with the National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) and providing input to their Legislative Agenda.



The NRLN Board has recently approved the 2011 Legislative Agenda (see www.nrln.org for details) and will be using that as a tool when communicating with our elected representatives in Washington. As a result of the November 2010 election, there will be many new Senators and Congressmen in the Washington DC who will be working to create the laws of the land. This change in Congressmen and their staffs, including Committee re-assignments, makes our task to educate our elected officials about retiree issues increasingly difficult. Our goal continues to be to get Congress to focus on legislation that will first do no harm to retirees and/or hopefully correct some items that currently have a potential negative impact for retirees. But, since we retirees don't vote on the actual legislation, our Congressmen do, we can only make sure that our representatives, and more importantly their staffs, are knowledgeable about issues that negatively affect retirees (e.g., Medicare D changes, etc). We will need to bring these new members and their staffs up to date with information and our position on these issues. That is the major intent of the Legislative Agenda of the NRLN.

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The NRLN Legislative Agenda includes suggested improvements to healthcare and pension laws, such as Prescription Drug re-importation and legislation that will protect pension assets when companies go bankrupt. We continue to believe that the NRLN will be able to have a positive impact on future retiree legislation because it provides our elected officials with our viewpoint as retirees and not the viewpoint of paid lobbyists.

The NRLN message is clear: ensure that any bill passed by Congress doesn't harm retirees, contains healthcare costs, and preserves employer sponsored, reasonably priced healthcare, and preserves pension assets for retirees.

One other note....this excerpt was from the NRLN's (Bill Kadereit's) holiday publication to members. I think it says it all.

"A recent New York Times article⁽¹⁾ about a new book by two professors carried a paragraph that captured my attention. It stated, "...that politics is largely about organized combat. It's a form of warfare. It's a contest between those who are organized, who can really monitor what government is doing in a very complicated world and bring pressure effectively to bear on politicians. Voters in that kind of system are at a disadvantage when there aren't reliable, organized groups representing them that have clout and can effectively communicate to them what is going on."

All the more reason we need to be engaged as retirees in the political process.

Ray Sternot

(1) Fast Track to Inequality, Bob Herbert, November 1, 2010

NRLN 2011 Legislative Agenda - Top Initiatives Summary

(Excerpted from NRLN President Bill Kadereit's NRLN Holiday E-Mail - NRLN Plans for 2011)

PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF RETIREE INCOME:

PENSION ASSET PROTECTION (PAP)*: The NRLN advocates legislation that stops corporations from taking pension assets from defined pension plan trusts to pay for lump sum severance and early retirement incentives. The NRLN advocates that pension funds not be used to pay executive non-qualified pensions and other deferred compensation. The NRLN advocates that pension plan assets not be transferred to or be taken over by third party financial or other institutions.



PBGC REFORM*: The NRLN advocates that the Pension Benefits Guaranty Corporation be

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required to ensure equitable calculations of benefit payments earned by retirees, as required by ERISA.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM*: The NRLN advocates that bankruptcy reform is needed that places retirees' pensions and benefits on a list of obligations that companies can't shed while in the bankruptcy process. Retirees often lose pension, health care, and other benefits and, unlike secured creditors, rarely have the ability to recover losses.

(* The NRLN has published a whitepaper on this initiative, see at www.nrln.org in *Legislative Agenda link* .)

PROTECT RETIREES IN MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS: The NRLN advocates legislation that clarifies what a parent foreign owner's pension plan obligations are and advocates that the foreign owner must abide by ERISA rules should its' U.S. subsidiary be spun off or dissolved. All U.S. based assets under control of a foreign owner must be able to be seized to satisfy ERISA funding obligations. Pension plan fiduciaries should be required to be American citizens. Clarifications must include situations where foreign corporations that own U.S. subsidiaries are also acquired by a third party, foreign-owned corporation.



SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM: The NRLN advocates legislation that requires that Social Security become financially sound without reducing current and future retiree benefits.

CASH BALANCE PLANS: The NRLN advocates for the elimination of "wear-away" rules contained in cash-balance plans.

TAXING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS: The NRLN advocates that the portion of premiums paid by employers that is currently treated as a tax-free benefit to employees and retirees remain tax free.

DEDUCTIBILITY OF HEALTH CARE COSTS: The NRLN advocates that health care and Medicare premiums paid by individuals be tax deductible in the same manner that health insurance premiums for the self-employed are deductible. Such deductions would be exempt from the 7.5% (AGI) limitation.

HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (HSA's): The NRLN advocates changing the IRS Code of 1986 to allow HSA funding directly from IRAs for all years, not one year, without tax penalties and limits on annual contributions.

WITHDRAWALS TO PAY RETIREE HEALTH PREMIUMS: The NRLN advocates for penalty-free withdrawals from 401k, IRA, SEP and other qualified accounts to pay retiree health care premiums.

TAXING SOCIAL SECURITY INCOME: The NRLN advocates legislation to amend the tax codes to eliminate federal and state taxes on all Social Security income and/or allow a tax credit for taxes withheld.

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PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF RETIREE HEALTH CARE:

MAINTENANCE OF COST PROTECTION (MCP)*: The NRLN advocates a Maintenance of Cost Protection (MCP) proposal that would establish a fixed monthly payment to retirees equivalent to the value of the benefits an employer provided prior to the reduction or cancellation of retirement health care, prescription drugs, life insurance, long-term care or other benefits. Companies would be entitled to tax credits as an offset to MCP payments.



REDUCE THE COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS*: The NRLN advocates for the reduction of prescription drug costs through passage of legislation that: (1) Enables re-importation and importation of safe prescription drugs approved by the FDA; (2) Enables Medicare to develop formularies and take competitive bids for prescription drugs; (3) Staffs and funds the FDA to reduce generic drug approval backlogs; (4) Prevents drug companies from colluding to control pricing or subvert free markets.



MEDICARE BUY-IN FOR AGES 55-64*: The NRLN advocates that people age 55 to 64 be allowed to buy Medicare coverage at a cost that does not burden the Medicare system. Access could be limited to individuals without access to an employer-sponsored or other group health plan that is actuarially equivalent or superior to Medicare.

INCLUSION OF CATASTROPHIC COVERAGE IN MEDICARE*: The NRLN advocates that Congress extend protection against catastrophic medical costs to the Medicare eligible population by setting a reasonable maximum limit on out-of-pocket costs.

(* The NRLN has published a whitepaper on this initiative, see at www.nrln.org in Legislative Agenda link .)

ELIMINATE HEALTH CARE STATUTE INEQUITIES: The NRLN advocates that provisions in statutes such as in Sec 720 of ERISA that allow denial of protections otherwise enacted by Congress must be stricken from such statutes. Denying enacted benefit coverage to retirees, simply because retirees are members of retiree only plans, where such protections are otherwise afforded to younger active employees or retirees is discriminatory, is unjust and is bad policy.

PROTECT ION OF MEDICARE BENEFITS: The NRLN advocates that Congress guard against reductions in Medicare benefits that would negatively impact the care retirees receive from doctors, hospitals, prescription drug suppliers and other providers.

ENCOURAGE RETENTION OF COMPANY-PROVIDED HEALTH CARE FOR RETIREES: The NRLN advocates for increases in the Medicare Part D prescription plan subsidy paid to employers who offer better coverage than required for equivalent coverage in Part D, if they agree to maintain their current plans.

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COMPANY BENEFITS BUNDLING: The NRLN advocates for legislation to prohibit companies from forcing retirees to choose between company pre-determined bundles of plans or none of their sponsored Health Care or Prescription Drug Plans. Bundling practices hold retirees hostage to such plans.

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR?

One time when I (again) unthinkingly remarked “That’s preaching to the choir”, a friend asked me, in all seriousness, “Why DO we preach to the choir?” Having never thought to ask that, I had to admit that I didn’t know. My friend informed me that otherwise the choir might not sing.



A long, roundabout way to share a couple of letters we have received during the last quarter. Read the first from top, down.

Subject: HELP!!!

Date: Sat, 13 Nov 2010 17:52:45 -0500

I am a bargained- for retiree from Brighton, MI since 1998. To date I am now receiving Medicare coverage and have opted for the "company paid-for" United Healthcare Option PPO health care plan as my supplemental coverage. I just received my statement concerning my coverage for next year and my coverage is being switched to an HMO BCBS-option 4350-Detroit* at a monthly cost of \$186.73 plus the \$2.00 Catastrophic organ replacement that I have paid for since it began. I am floored at not only this new cost but the fact that it may mean switching all of my and my husband's current Dr's! WHAT IS GOING ON?????Help!!

Betty

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Betty,

Nice speaking with you. When you call the AT&T Benefit Center, ask them to enroll you in BCBS PPO/NON PPO not the HMO plan. Please record the names of who you speak for future reference. I can be reached with this email address should you have further questions.

Carole Lovell

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Hi Carole,

Thanks so much for your help with my medical coverage problem. I talked to Lakeetha at the Benefits office on Monday and she promised to check into the coverage and get back to me within three days. Today is the third day and I just hung up with her and I am now covered under a BCBS non-PPO as well as my husband at no charge to me.

Thank you for your prompt help in this matter.

Betty

Another member problem resolved. The next is a general "Thank You" – always appreciated!

Thanks for all you do on behalf of the retired. With the current House and Senate in Washington, it appears only those who have money have the ear of our representatives which makes your efforts all the more essential.

Andy

New Alphabet (from Ron Rhodes) :

**A is for apple, and B is for boat, that used to be right, but now it won't float!
Age before beauty is what we once said, but let's be a bit more realistic instead.**

Alphabet:

**A's for arthritis; B's the bad back, C's the chest pains, perhaps car-di-ac?
D is for dental decay and decline, E is for eyesight, can't read that top line!
F is for fissures and fluid retention, G is for gas which I'd rather not mention.
H high blood pressure--I'd rather it low; I for incisions with scars you can show.
J is for joints, out of socket, won't mend, K is for knees that crack when they bend.
L's for libido, what happened to sex? M is for memory, I forget what comes next.
N is neuralgia, in nerves way down low; O is for osteo, bones that don't grow!
P for prescriptions, I have quite a few, just give me a pill and I'll be good as new!
Q is for queasy, is it fatal or flu? R is for reflux, one meal turns to two.
S is for sleepless nights, counting my fears, T is for Tinnitus; bells in my ears!
U is for urinary; troubles with flow; V for vertigo, that's 'dizzy,' you know.
W for worry, now what's going 'round? X is for X ray, and what might be found.
Y for another year I'm left here behind, Z is for zest I still have—in my mind!**

I've survived all the symptoms, my body's deployed, and I'm keeping twenty-six doctors employed!

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QUARTERLY CORRESPONDENCE:

During the past quarter we have sent the following correspondence via e-mail.
(E-mail recipients please click on the following links to the AASBCR® web site.)

- [12/22/2010 NEW REGISTER - Contains information about "Say on Pay" 12/23/10](#)
 - [2011 NRLN LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 12/22/10](#)
 - [12/15/2010 NEWS REGISTER - Provides AASBCR® members with information about improvements in operations made possible through mechanization 12/16/2010](#)
 - [11/14/2010 NEWS REGISTER - Provides AASBCR® members with information about the NRLN Insurance plans and links to secure detailed information 11/14/2010](#)
 - [AASBCR® BLUE BULLETIN VOL.5 NO.4](#) Value Options will continue as the AT&T provider for emotional and behavioral health issues for 2011 - 11/12/2010
 - [AASBCR® BLUE BULLETIN VOL.5 NO.3](#) 2010 Annual Health Care enrollment starts as early as October 18, 2010 - 10/19/2010
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National High Blood Pressure Education. Almost one-third of people with high blood pressure don't even realize they have this potentially dangerous condition. For health information, see the Web site of the National Heart, Blood, and Lung Health Information Center, www.hnlbi.nih.gov.

Grandma changed:

In the dim and distant past
When life's tempo wasn't so fast,
Grandma used to rock and knit,
Crochet, tat and baby sit.

When the kids were in a jam,
They could always call on Gram.

But today she's in the gym
Exercising to keep slim.

She's checking the web or surfing the net,
Sending some e-mail or placing a bet.
Nothing seems to stop or block her,
Now that Grandma's off her rocker.

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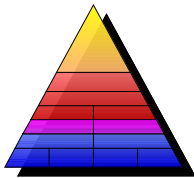
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**Many of our clients are retired telecommunications employees
and we are committed to understanding their
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**If you would like a review of your retirement plans or an
analysis of your portfolio, I can be reached at:**



Strategic Planning Group
16 N 486 Penny Road
Barrington Hills, IL 60010
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bob@IRAPRO.net

The Jim Kempe AASBCR[®] Memorial Fund

A founding AASBCR[®] Member and our first attorney, Jim took care of all the forms necessary to launch and maintain the AASBCR[®]. And he did it Pro Bono (without charging the Association). A Memorial Fund has been established to help defray future legal costs incurred by the AASBCR[®].

Contributions to the fund may be made at any Harris Bank branch by stating the contribution is for the *Jim Kempe Memorial Fund*, or by mail (make the check payable to the *Jim Kempe Memorial Fund*) and mail to any Harris Bank Location.

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The Final Word



When we moved to Elmhurst in 1979 I was recruited by the Elmhurst Jaycees. They had beer and pizza and several gung-ho members who really enjoyed personal development AND community service. I was invited to an “organizational party” that had beer and pizza and several gung-ho members. It was sort-of speed dating for the community projects they had planned for that year. I ended up co-chair of one committee and on two others. And they found out we were bridge players and had season tickets to the Blackhawks. Soon we were in the Bridge Marathon (destined to chair it next year) and I was ‘Dignitaries Chair’ for the Fourth of July Parade – and recruited (and got to meet) Stan Mikita as Grand Marshall. Over my protestations I was on the Board the next year and ended up as a Past President. (And general Bicentennial Fourth of July Chairman as a swan song.) Busy a lot, I joined Indian Guides with all 3 sons – so I could schedule time to spend with them. I was recruited for Tom Tom Beater (newsletter editor), then Nation Chief. Several activities later Marv Rubeck ‘invited’ me to an AASBCR Board Meeting and I dragged Joel along. Bruce asked me to write something for the newsletter. Next newsletter I was Editor. I JUST CAN’T KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT – I can’t say “NO”! I know I’m not unique. Look at the letterhead on the first page – top and bottom. There are people there who believe enough in AASBCR[®] that they are willing to put in large amounts of time. We all want to be able to ENJOY our retirement, without financial and healthcare worries. Andy said it well on page 7. Somebody has to watch “Washington” – to pay attention to our needs. It is difficult to find Representatives and Senators who will watch out for us. There are a few. I feel that most are much more interested in raising money for their next campaigns. We also have to let AT&T know we are here and we are watching. And convince them that we can make some noise – generate unfavorable publicity – if they take away those benefits they promised and we worked for. I was an easy recruit for the Jaycees. We were all in the same room (with the beer and pizza), and the gung-ho members could attack us in waves. And they did, with infectious enthusiasm. We can’t invigorate our membership that way. We can’t get everyone in the same room (with beer and pizza). We can only use words in a one-way communication. Carole is asking each of us to sign up one retiree friend. If we do this face to face, we can have beer and pizza. In fact, I’ll reimburse the first 5 people that send me receipts for a 6-pack and a pizza, as long as they sign up at least one new member.

Art Comings

AASBCR[®] Newsletter Editor

The opinions expressed above are NOT the position of the AASBCR[®] or the Board of Directors, and may not even be the position of the Editor by the time you are reading this

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