



IARA retiree leaders meet with Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-9)

IARA President's Report

Fellow IARA retiree leaders, I hope you're in good health & enjoying the summer. As the widespread distribution of vaccinations enables us to carefully emerge from the isolation of the pandemic, we do so in the midst of a new political & social reality that is full of new potential.

As I write this, IARA & our allies are at the forefront of critical campaigns that are advancing transformational shifts in the areas of caregiving, prescription drug access, and the future of the labor movement.

We are excited to host our upcoming Biennial Convention on September 29th virtually via Zoom and hope that you will join us in this important work of furthering our mission of retirement with dignity and security for every American, and building community, and our movement, together. For more information, contact IARA Executive Director, Louis Goseland, at lgoseland@illinoisretiredamericans.org or at 312.623.5941.

In Solidarity,




*IARA President Don Todd
with his grandson*

Retirees Win Key Provisions in American Rescue Plan

In February, as the country reeled from the devastation brought on by the COVID 19 crisis, retiree leaders organized by IARA met with members of the Illinois congressional delegation to urge them to include provisions important to seniors as part of the recovery bill. We are grateful for our champions in Congress who heard us and worked hard to ensure that the economic stimulus signed by President Biden in March, the American Rescue Plan (ARP), includes significant investment in programs and services that older adults depend on.

ARP supplements funding for programs covered by the Older Americans Act (OAM), including \$750 million for nutrition services, such as home-delivered meals, \$460 million to address social isolation to increase vaccination outreach, and \$44 million for health promotion and disease prevention programs.

Other OAM related investment in ARP includes a \$145 million for caregiver counseling, respite care and other programs through the National Family Caregiver Support Program, as well as \$10 million for the long-term care Ombudsman program. These critical measures are part of a broader investment in care that includes \$12.7 billion to increase access to home care for low-income older adults and a 10% increase in federal support for Medicaid home and community-based services, which was a key ask in IARA visits with members of congress.

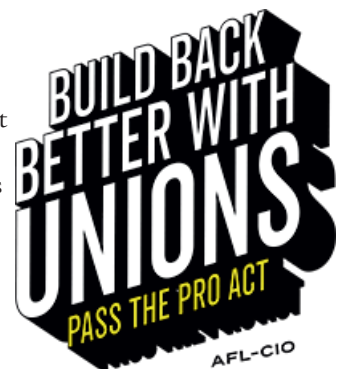
For years, the Alliance has called for support for the multiemployer pension program, & ARP includes a much needed \$86 billion to guarantee benefits under these plans. These provisions are among the many others including rent assistance, and stimulus payments that do much to support seniors in the recovery.

Learn more about what passed in the American Recovery Plan by watching our Older Americans Month Town Hall with Congresswoman Robin Kelly at www.tinyurl.com/oam21

Pass the PRO Act! - The Alliance for Retired Americans endorses the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act & has taken action & met with our elected officials to urge them to co-sponsor the legislation and work toward its enactment. We are proud to have the support of both Senators Duckworth & Durbin and encourage them to keep working with their colleagues to win this historic legislation.

The PRO Act has been called the most important advancement of the labor movement since the Great Depression because it protects the right to strike and protest, strengthens penalties against employers who violate NLRA, ensures first contract agreements, cracks down against misclassification of workers, bans "right to work", and so much more!

Find out more at www.tinyurl.com/proact21



A Word from our New Executive Director— Louis Goseland

This year, our friend Jeanne Cameron moved on from being IARA Executive Director to take on a new post in the movement as a part of the AFSCME Council 31 team. Having served as an organizer with the IARA since 2017, I am honored to have the opportunity to step up into this new role.

A little over 4 years ago, I signed on to IARA to organize towards winning expanded access to home & community based services because I knew first hand the devastating impact that the lack of care infrastructure can have on a family. Growing up, my grandma's care needs required my single mom to leave her union job & relocate our family, imposing an irreversible economic, social, & emotional toll on us. I am grateful for the opportunity to fight back for family caregivers like my mom, for those in need like my grandma, & for the overworked, and undervalued professional caregivers whose labor is essential to the quality of life of those who count on it.

In my first couple of years with IARA, we were on the defensive, fighting to protect the Community Care Program from being cut by the Rauner administration, & the Affordable Care Act from being gutted by the Trump Administration. Now, having fought for & won a different political landscape in DC & Springfield, I am thrilled at the opportunities that we have to win a robust care infrastructure in the American Jobs Act, to improve access to lifesaving drugs with the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, & to build the future of our movement by passing the PRO Act.

These last 4 years have demonstrated the resilience & steadfast commitment to the movement that is held by the retiree leaders of IARA. Together, we have successfully pushed back against threats to our earned benefits, weathered the ravages of a global pandemic, and it is my privilege and great honor to be your Executive Director as we take our movement beyond what could have been imagined in my first days at the Alliance.



Onward,

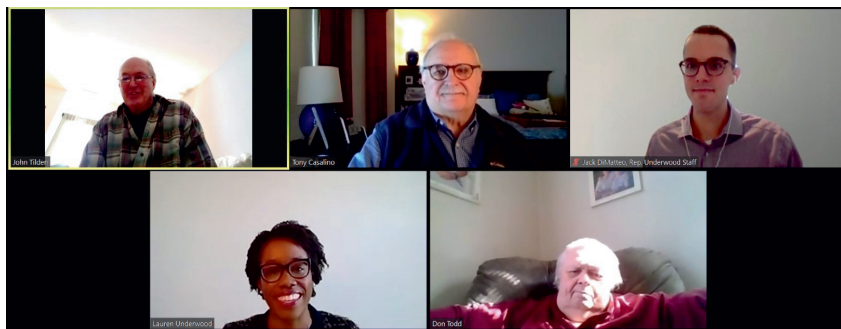
Louis Goseland
Executive Director

Lower Drug Prices Now, Pass HR 3!

IARA continues to work with our champions in Congress and our partners across the country to enact HR3, the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act. HR3 requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services negotiate on up to 250 of the most expensive drugs, including insulin. The negotiated amount would be available to all payers, thus allowing workers covered by employer-sponsored plans to also benefit from the price reductions. It is estimated that negotiated drug prices would save \$450 billion for Medicare annually, strengthening the program overall, and creating the potential for available funds for future expansion of benefits in the future.

In addition to this legislation, we are also following reconciliation as a group of lawmakers have submitted a letter to Democratic leadership to include the drug negotiation provisions of HR3 in the reconciliation package.

With 1 in 4 seniors reporting skipping doses due to cost, we must raise our voices and demand action to lower drug prices now! If you have a story about how the high cost of drugs has impacted you or a loved one, share it with us at www.tinyurl.com/iaradrugstories



IARA Retiree Leaders meet with Rep. Lauren Underwood (IL-14), 1 of 5 Illinois members of Congress who are currently cosponsors of HR3

Care Can't Wait! - "Caregivers need help", said Roger Kennedy, of Springfield, "& if I could change anything about the system, it would be to provide an advocate to help caregivers navigate through". Roger is the main caregiver for his wife, who is currently battling recurrent stage 4 ovarian cancer. "While we have been fortunate to have my state insurance, even then the stress and difficulty accessing care & resources is immense," said Kennedy.

The majority of caregivers, like Roger, are unpaid family. Existing caregiving programs & services can be expensive and are difficult to navigate, with hundreds of thousands left on waiting lists. Given these dire concerns, IARA retiree leaders & our partners at Caring Across Generations have been meeting with members of Congress to share stories & request their support for more funding in this critical area.

Caregivers – both paid & unpaid - who are disproportionately women of color – have been underpaid and undervalued for far too long. Average wages for direct care workers are approximately \$12 per hour, putting them among the lowest paid workers in our economy with 1 in 6 workers in this sector living in poverty.

The good news is that Congress has passed the American Rescue Plan with over \$12.6 billion designated for home and community-based services (HCBS), and there is an opportunity to fight for another \$400 billion that is proposed for HCBS in the American Jobs Plan.

This movement is growing, and we are advancing the call for care, but we need your support. For more information reach out to lgoseland@illinoisretiredamericans.org.