



Illinois Alliance *for* Retired Americans

2010 Annual Newsletter

Message from the President



Dear Illinois Alliance member,

The Illinois Alliance had a successful year of rebuilding a strong organization and working towards concrete improvements in retirees' lives. Our primary goals in 2010 were to protect Social Security, educate retirees about the new health care law and fix the state budget. This newsletter includes updates on our activities in 2010 and information about issues that affect retirees. Thanks to all of our members who took action and participated in our events this year. With the continued attack on Social Security and Medicare, now more than ever, the Illinois Alliance will need your support and participation to win concrete victories.

Sincerely,

Barbara Franklin

Illinois Alliance educates senior voters



Seniors represent a significant portion of voters in midterm elections, which is why the Illinois Alliance was on the road this fall making non-partisan educational presentations at senior centers, retirement homes and members' meetings. The Illinois Alliance Retiree Coordinator

Program placed two volunteer Retiree Coordinators in key districts to educate seniors about the attack on Social Security, the new health care reform law and early and absentee voting. In total, the Illinois Alliance educated over 500 seniors at more than 20 presentations. With the buzz already beginning for the 2012 elections, the Illinois Alliance will continue to educate senior voters.

Social Security cuts defeated, but retirees angered by continued attacks on retirement security

Retirees dodged a bullet when the final proposal of the Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, which included lowering benefits for current retirees and increasing the retirement age for future retirees, was defeated. Despite receiving nearly 1,000 letters and dozens of calls from Illinois Alliance members, commission member, Senator Durbin, voted in favor of the proposal. Congresswoman Schakowsky voted against it.

Although the proposal will not go to Congress for a vote, Social Security is still on the chopping block. Congress recently passed a tax cut package that includes a 2% payroll tax holiday that will cost Social Security, causing the government to borrow \$112 billion to make the program whole. Additionally, Congress did not pass a \$250 payment to Social Security beneficiaries who have been denied a benefit increase for the second year in a row. It is the height of hypocrisy that many on Capitol Hill can lead the fight for tax cuts for the rich while deeming it excessive to give \$250 to retirees struggling to heat their homes and put food on the table.

This year, the Illinois Alliance held Social Security forums with Congressmen Phil Hare and Danny Davis. Additionally, Illinois Alliance members and allies turned out strong to protest Congressman Paul Ryan's proposal to privatize Social Security. In 2011, the Illinois Alliance will continue its fight to protect Social Security.



Illinois Alliance Treasurer, Katie Jordan, speaks at the protest of Rep. Ryan's plan to privatize Social Security

The Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans is a statewide coalition of union and community retiree groups organizing to win concrete improvements in retirees' lives. The Illinois Alliance was established in 2001 and has over 220,000 members.

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Rep. Schakowsky addresses the crowd at the Medicare birthday party

Congresswoman Schakowsky celebrates Medicare and Social Security birthdays with Illinois Alliance

In August, the Illinois Alliance celebrated the 45th anniversary of Medicare and 75th anniversary of Social Security by throwing birthday parties with Congresswoman Schakowsky. Speaking to over 60 retirees at Medicare's birthday party in Chicago, Rep.

Schakowsky said "45 years ago this legislation was signed into law and now seniors have a system of support to ensure that everyone has the opportunity for good health care in times of sickness." Later that month, the Illinois Alliance and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare threw a birthday party for Social Security in Evanston. At that event Rep. Schakowsky said "Social Security is the greatest treasure we have in terms of social insurance programs, but it is not out of the goodwill of the Congress it is because it is paid for. People who work pay into Social Security and own the program." The crowd of over 100 retirees was encouraged to sign a postcard to Senator Durbin asking him to protect Social Security.



2010 Senior Truth Tour sets record straight

This summer leaders of the Illinois Alliance traveled to Alton, Bloomington-Normal and Aurora to spread the truth about the new health care reform law and Social Security. At the Alton event, President Barbara Franklin said, "the new health care law improves Medicare and cracks down on insurance company abuses, so that retirees are more protected and better served." Franklin also said, "While some in Washington want to blame Social Security for the deficit, the truth is Social Security has enough money to cover full benefits for the next 30 years and belongs to the people who have worked hard and contributed to it."



Participants at the Truth Tour event in Alton

Retirees descend on Springfield to demand a responsible budget



This spring the Illinois Alliance, AFSCME Chapter 31 and the Illinois AARP held three Save our Senior Lobby Days in order for retirees to ask their state

representative and senator to support raising revenue to fix the state budget.

The state budget crises has forced devastating cuts to services for seniors. If the Illinois General Assembly does not raise revenue the cuts will be even deeper, including those for child care, police and fire departments and

more. The state budget cannot be fixed by cuts alone. There must be new revenue to protect services that seniors rely on to stay healthy and in their homes. As the Illinois General Assembly begins the 2011 legislative session the Illinois Alliance will continue to work with its allies to demand that the assembly pass a responsible budget.