

IARA President's Report – Don Todd



IARA Executive Board and staff meet with Rep. Welch on Zoom

Fellow IARA retiree leaders, I hope you're in good health & taking good care. Though this year has brought challenges that none of us could have predicted, I'm proud of our organization & each of our members who have demonstrated a truly remarkable resilience.

From moving through the learning curve of using new technologies, to simply checking in on one another, together we have weathered a truly difficult time while maintaining our work of being Illinois' leading senior power building organization.

With a new administration dedicated to science, stability, & strong government in the White House, & with word of soon-to-come vaccine distribution, let us move united in strength & courage through the final days of this difficult period, and into a new year of hope.

In Solidarity,



*IARA President Don Todd
with his grandson*



IARA Mobilizes Retiree Power in 2020 Elections

The retiree member-leaders of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans were proved an integral role in this historic election. In all parts of the state, many of our more than 250,000 members were educating their community, mobilizing voters, and voting early and by mail to promote the Fair Tax, as well as the 36 candidates for the General Assembly and the 17 candidates for Congress endorsed by IARA and the AFL-CIO.



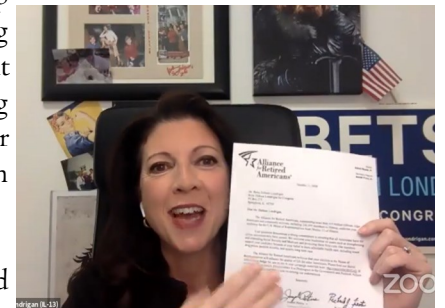
IARA retiree leader, Bea Lumpkin votes by mail suited up in full PPE

The election outcome was a mixed result. All 7 of the endorsed candidates for the Illinois State Senate won their elections, though of the 27 candidates endorsed for the Illinois State House of Representatives, only 11 were elected to office. Of the 17 congressional candidates endorsed by the IARA, 15 were elected to represent Illinois on Capitol Hill.

Perhaps most disappointing to our members was the loss of the Fair Tax ballot referendum. Many of our members began organizing in support of Fair Tax more than a year before the election, and continued all the way until the very end. With tax policy reform already being a hard sell, and the required 60% majority to pass the referendum making for a steep win number, the proposal to change the state from the regressive "flat-tax" model to a graduated income tax structure, ultimately failed to pass.

There is much to be said about why the Fair Tax failed, from the unexpected surge in early voting due to COVID-19, to the tens-of-millions of dollars fueling a misinformation campaign paid for by the Illinois Policy Institute and Ken Griffin. One thing is for sure, IARA grew in many ways in the pursuit of this initiative, from leveling up our digital organizing efforts, reaching tens-of-thousands of voters throughout the state via social media, to working more closely with other leading senior organizations and movement partners in the state.

It is going to take all the strength and momentum we have built over this election to protect our earned benefits from the cuts that the state was warned would follow the failure to pass Fair Tax.



13th Cong. District Candidate, Betsy Dirksen Londrigan, holds up her ARA endorsement letter



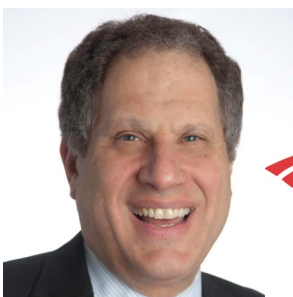
Alliance for Retired Americans Executive Director, Rich Fiesta on Biden/Harris Victory

The 4.4 million members of the Alliance for Retired Americans extend their congratulations to President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris on a hard fought, well-deserved and historic victory.

Vice President Biden put the issues older Americans care about — expanding Social Security, protecting and expanding Medicare, improving retirement security, ending the pandemic, and making coronavirus vaccines and treatments affordable for all who need them — at the center of their campaign.

Older voters compared the Biden record and plan with the Trump record, and four percent fewer older voters supported President Trump this year compared to 2016. This is not a surprise given the toll the coronavirus pandemic has taken on older Americans, the skyrocketing prices of prescription drugs, and President Trump's promise to defund Social Security by eliminating the payroll tax if he is re-elected.

Our members look forward to working with the Biden-Harris administration to strengthen and expand Social Security and Medicare, defend our pensions, lower prescription drug prices and end the pandemic



Lower Drug Prices Now! Campaign

With one-in-four Americans reporting skipping at least one dose of a prescribed drug due to cost in the past year, the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans have joined with partners around the state, and throughout the country, in pushing back against the political influence of big pharmaceutical companies, and for the government to take action to lower the cost of prescription drugs. Over this past year, we have supported measures on the state and federal levels including a proposal to create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board for Illinois, as well as HR 3 in Congress. We also worked with our partners, Citizen Action, in organizing a virtual organizing meeting on the issue, as well as a tele-townhall with State Senator Andy Manar and Claudia Lenhoff, Executive Director of the Champaign County Healthcare Consumers. Stay posted and get involved by contacting [Louis at Lgospeland.ara@gmail.com](mailto:Lgospeland.ara@gmail.com) to share your story or get involved.



Retiree leaders pack a hearing in support of the prescription drug affordability board in Springfield in March

Senior Power Celebration

On October 6th, IARA's annual Senior Power Lunch was held via Zoom as the 2020 Senior Power Celebration. At the event, Governor JB Pritzker received the 2020 Jerry Prete award for his leadership in combating the COVID-19 public health crisis, his commitment to enacting a progressive agenda for Illinois, and his continued efforts towards dignity and economic security for retirees. Reverend

Alvis Martin gave the invocation, Congresswoman Schakowsky spoke and Citizen Action Co-Director William McNary gave an inspirational closing. Other featured speakers included Ai-Jen Poo, cofounder and executive director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and Caring Across Generation, Mack Julion, President of the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch #11, Tim Drea, President of the Illinois AFL-CIO, and Don Villar, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor. Over 50 retirees attended, including members from AFSCME Retirees Chapter 31, UAW Region 4, Chicago Teachers Union, SEIU State Council, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, SEIU Healthcare Illinois and Indiana, 34th Ward Seniors, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, IBEW 134 Retirees and SOAR.

Watch the full event using this link: tinyurl.com/powercelebration20



Gov. JB Pritzker, Ai-Jen Poo, Cong. Jan Schakowsky, Mack Julion