

IARA President's Report

Fellow retiree leaders, 2021 was an exciting & challenging year of growth for the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans. Our nimble & careful approach enabled us to remain effective in building our power while keeping safe amidst new COVID-19 variants.

This past year, IARA focused on building strength from the inside, out. At our biennial convention, we voted our leadership, including two newly elected board members, as well as our Executive Vice President and Treasurer. Together, our board of directors have revisited & revamped our bylaws, drafted new internal policies, & are working together to carry out a powerful electoral plan in 2022.

With public health still at risk, we cosponsored many virtual & hybrid mobilizations throughout 2021 for issues including voter rights, the PRO ACT, strike support, Build Back Better, and more. With so much happening online, we even gave our website a much-needed touch up!

With an emboldened labor movement, we enter 2022 with the opportunity of passing the Workers' Rights Amendment to the Illinois State Constitution, as well as the challenge of maintaining & growing the governing power of our champions.

We rely on the strength of retiree voices and the collective power of seniors to continue pushing onward toward retirement with dignity and economic security for every worker. We hope you will be with us for the victories to come in 2022.

In Solidarity,



*IARA President Don Todd
with his grandson*

Tell the Senate: "Pass Build Back Better for Seniors!"

On November 19th, 2021, the House voted 220-213 to pass the Build Back Better Act, H.R. 5376, sending President Biden's sweeping plan to invest in middle class families and expand long-awaited social programs to the U.S. Senate.

The much anticipated bill lingered in the Senate before Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) stated in an interview on Sunday, December 19th, exactly one month after it passed the House, that he would vote down the Build Back Better Act, but has since reentered negotiations. With 50 Republican Senators already committed to vote it down, Senator Manchin's vote would be the deciding factor in whether or not it passes.

Why does Build Back Better Matter for Seniors?

The bill contains numerous benefits for older Americans, including:

- \$150 billion to expand home health care services for seniors and people with disabilities, along with increased wages and benefits for caregiving workers.
- Lower prescription drug prices for all Americans by allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prices for some medicines.
- A \$35 per-month limit on the cost of insulin under Medicare and a cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs at \$2,000 per year.
- Guaranteed hearing benefits for Medicare beneficiaries, including coverage for new hearing aids every five years.
- Medicare coverage of all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) — such as shingles, which would be covered at no cost.
- Extended Affordable Care Act subsidies, which would be especially helpful to older Americans who are not yet eligible for Medicare.

The big pharmaceutical corporations have spent more money lobbying this year than any other year in history, joining an army of big money interests that are dumping hundreds of millions of dollars to kill Build Back Better.

Visit tinyurl.com/buildbackaction for a quick & easy way to contact your Senators electronically!

**PASS BUILD BACK
BETTER FOR
SENIORS!**

INVEST IN HOME & COMMUNITY CARE!

LOWER DRUG PRICES NOW!

EXPAND AND IMPROVE MEDICARE!

CALL SENATORS NOW!

(202) 224-3121

Learn more at

tinyurl.com/buildbackaction

Mobilizing the Senior Vote in '22

Retirees across the state are ready to mobilize Illinois voters in the 2022 elections.

US Senate: With the consequences of a near 50-50 split holding up Build Back Better in the Senate, it goes without saying that Senator Tammy Duckworth's race will be an important one for the entire nation.

US House of Representatives: Vacancies, redistricting, & narrow margins in recent elections have created big opportunities & high stakes races throughout Illinois' Congressional districts. Longtime retiree champion, Rep. Cheri Bustos is vacating IL-17, & Rep. Rodney Davis is vacating his former IL-13 to run in the newly drawn IL-15. Rep. Lauren Underwood has a race many are watching in the IL-14 as she won her last election by just over 1%. These open seats & narrow margins could create the opening to elevate the issues that matter most to Seniors.

Statewide Offices: Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, and Comptroller will also be on the ballot this year. Gov. JB Pritzker will have his bold, progressive agenda ballot tested, and after 2 decades of service, Secretary of State Jesse White is vacating his seat, creating an opening in an office that currently prioritizes accessibility for Illinois Seniors.

IL General Assembly: At the time that this is being written, the proposed redistricting of the state legislative maps are being disputed in the courts. Regardless of the court outcome, new districts will mean new dynamics in the coming election.

IL Supreme Court: There are 4 seats up for election on the Illinois Supreme Court. This is particularly important to retirees as it relates to the continuation of the Pension Protection Clause of the Illinois State Constitution, among other issues.

Workers' Rights Amendment: This amendment to the Illinois State Constitution will grant workers the **fundamental right to organize** and to bargain collectively through a union. It will prohibit any law from passing that would interfere, negate, or diminish the right of workers to organize & collectively bargain for better wages, hours, and other conditions.

Find out more at www.workersrights.com



2021 IARA Biennial Convention

This year IARA held our Biennial Convention virtually, electing our board of directors, & featuring movement leaders on the challenges & opportunities for the labor movement & retirees. Speakers included Illinois AFL-CIO's Political Director Bill Looby, as well as their Legislative Director Magda Derisma, Executive Director of the national Alliance for Retired Americans Rich Fiesta, Co-Director of Citizen Action Illinois William McNary, & Illinois Senate President Don Harmon.



*Newly elected IARA Director
Charlotte Sanders of
Chicago Teachers Union*

Members of the Chicago Metro Retiree Chapter of IARA presented Representative Lakesia Collins with an award in recognition of her leadership in the labor movement and the Intergen Alliance, and her rise to becoming a champion for seniors and working people in the General Assembly.



*Newly elected IARA Director
Gail Donnelly Bader of
YWCA of Southwestern IL*

Delegates representing IARA affiliated retiree organizations elected members of our Executive Board of Directors, including two new members, Charlotte Sanders of Chicago Teachers Union, and Gail Donnelly Bader of YWCA Southwestern IL.

Find a full list of the IARA Board of Directors at:
illinois.retiredamericans.org/about-us/leadership

2021 Senior Power Celebration—We are proud to have honored Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch with the 2021 Jerry Prete Award at this year's IARA 2021 Senior Power Celebration for his accomplished leadership and steadfast commitment to seniors, workers, and a bold progressive vision for Illinois.

For years, Speaker Welch has been a champion for older adults in the General Assembly, successfully passing policy to expand access to healthcare services for seniors, improve working conditions for in-home care workers, and implement requirements for Alzheimer's education for medical professionals. We applaud his stewardship during the COVID-19 pandemic and his leadership in advancing racial justice and a sustainable future for Illinois.

This year's program included distinguished guests such as Rich Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, William McNary, Co-Director of Citizen Action Illinois, Don Villar, Secretary-Treasurer of the Chicago Federation of Labor, Tim Drea, President of the Illinois AFL-CIO, Ron McNroy, Director of United Auto Workers Region 4, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky.

We are grateful to all who supported our biggest fundraiser of the year. We invite you to contribute to our mission of retirement with dignity and economic security for every worker at:
tinyurl.com/iaradonate



Watch the full 2021 Senior Power Celebration at:
tinyurl.com/seniorpower21

*Jerry Prete Award Recipient
Illinois House of
Representatives Speaker
Emanuel "Chris" Welch*