

## IARA President's Report

Fellow retiree leaders,

The first half of 2022 has been an exciting time for the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans. We hired a new organizer from Central Illinois, we helped mobilize to win big on pension funding and public investment in care in the legislative session, and we continue to build momentum towards the November election.

In the primary elections, we are proud to announce our endorsement of Nikki Budzinski for Congress in the 13th District. Budzinski's commitment to workers' rights, families, and healthcare is aligned with the values and mission of the Illinois Alliance, and we are excited to support her campaign.

When it comes to the General Elections in November, Illinois has a chance to advance our movement by winning the Workers' Rights Amendment (WRA). A "yes" vote for the WRA is a vote to ensure safer workplaces, a stronger bottom-up economy, and protection for the right to organize in Illinois for generations of workers to come.

We are also mobilizing a statewide postcard writing campaign to push back against the billionaires who are campaigning to stack the Illinois Supreme Court with an anti-worker, anti-civil rights majority. IARA and our affiliated organizations are teaming up with leading progressive organizations to educate voters on the importance of the Illinois Supreme Court races which could determine the fate of the Pension Protection Clause, voting rights, criminal justice reform, and more.

Last but not least, I am happy to announce that our Executive Board voted unanimously to host our annual Senior Power Celebration in my hometown, Springfield! Stay tuned for more information about how you can join us!

Solidarity,



IARA President Don Todd  
with his grandson



## IARA Celebrates Older Americans Month

During Older Americans Month this May, 2022, the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans (IARA) hosted town halls with Congresswomen Lauren Underwood and Jan Schakowsky. We were joined by some of our movement leaders as we presented the Congresswomen with the Retiree Hero Award for their flawless voting records on issues impacting seniors and workers.

### Virtual Town Halls w/ Congresswomen

### Jan Schakowsky & Lauren Underwood

[tinyurl.com/OAMTownHalls](http://tinyurl.com/OAMTownHalls)



### Our Retiree Champions on the Issues:

Congresswoman Schakowsky and Underwood both applauded the Build Back Better plan that would allow Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices and cap out of pocket costs. They also spoke on social security, and championed the bill they are co-sponsoring, Social Security 2100 Act, which will repeal GPO & WEP, as well as ensure funding for social security into the year 2100. The social security bill is currently in the Ways and Means Committee for language drafting!

*"[WEP/GPO] is unfair to people who have been in the public sector, teachers, who find out, often at the end of the day when their spouse dies, or they retire, that the money they thought they had earned, by working outside of the public sector, and paying into social security, is not going to be there. Regardless of whatever the cost is, we need to continue to fight for that change."--Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky.*

We also heard from Maureen Dunn, Alliance for Retired Americans Field Director, on the power and importance of storytelling in building our movement. Shante Wolf, Caring Across Generations (CAG), updated us on the status of important key care legislation we've been following and spoke to the upcoming election and CAG's commitment to get out the vote efforts. William McNary of Citizens Action, closed the town halls by reminding us that Illinois is facing two elections in the northern part of the state that will impact the entire state—Illinois Supreme Court races. Electing pro-worker Judges is vital to protecting our pensions and social safety nets.

## Seniors Win Big Budget Victories!

The Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans is celebrating key victories passed in the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget passed by the Illinois General Assembly in April.

Governor Pritzker signed a balanced budget that includes \$1.8 billion in tax relief, a \$1 billion investment in the state's "rainy day fund", as well as increased investments in programs seniors rely on.

IARA successfully mobilized for a budget that includes the first investment in paying down the state's pension debt beyond the minimum requirement since 1994. This **additional \$500 million investment above and beyond the minimum pension payment** was paid for by strong returns from the State's investments, cannabis sales tax revenues, among other sources of unanticipated gains. Over time, this investment is projected to save taxpayers \$1.8 billion by 2045, while keeping our promise to our retired teachers and public service workers who rely on their pensions everyday.

Seniors will benefit from the \$1.8 billion in tax relief that passed in the budget, which includes expansion of the earned income tax credit to those 65 and older, a one year grocery tax freeze, a 6 month freeze on the scheduled gas tax increase, as well as a 5% one time property tax rebate to homeowners.

We are also proud that our work, along with that of our allies, was successful in increasing the investment in aging services by 14% in the overall Health & Human Services budget for FY23.

- **The Department on Aging** budget saw a significant increase from FY22 - \$198 million (13.5%) over FY22
- **Community Care Program** - \$100.7M for caseload growth & a \$.70/hour rate increase starting 1/1/23 to accommodate caseload growth & utilization, with the assistance of increased federal aid & \$14 million to fund a rate increase for CCP providers.
- **Adult Protective Services** - \$9.3 million increase (+28% over FY22) to expand capacity of APS through a combination of grants & new staff.
- **Home Delivered Meals** - \$14 million increase (+47% over FY22) to cover expansion in home delivered meals, covering an additional 260,000 meals to seniors.
- **Long Term Care Ombudsman** - \$2.3 million increase (+10% over FY22) to expand capacity of the LTC ombudsman program through a combination of payroll increases and conversion of some existing contract staff to full time employees.
- **Family Caregiver Program** - new \$4 million for the Family Caregiver Program, to provide support to spouses & family members caring for older adults.

Its going to take all of us to keep up our momentum in achieving our mission of retirement with dignity & economic security for every worker.

Visit [tinyurl.com/iara2022](https://tinyurl.com/iara2022) to get involved

## Mobilizing to Repeal GPO & WEP

The Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans joined national mobilizations, including the National Education Association for a day of action on May 24th, to call for the repeal of GPO & WEP.

The Government Pension Offset (GPO) reduces the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who receive a government pension (federal, state or local) but did NOT pay Social Security taxes themselves.

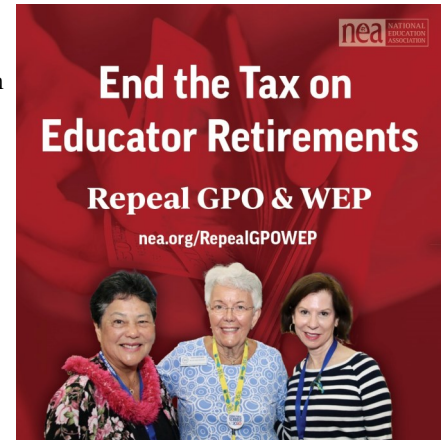
The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) reduces the Social Security benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs NOT covered by Social Security over the course of their careers—for example, educators compelled to take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet.

Members of the IARA want you to know that social security payments are earned. Many educators, and other public servants have earned this benefit through taking jobs that paid into Social Security throughout their lives, in addition to their jobs in the public sector. Their spouses paid into Social Security as well, and survivor benefits can sometimes mean the difference between living in poverty, and making ends meet for many survivors.

GPO & WEP penalizes workers who dedicate their careers to serving the needs of the public. More than 2.5 million people are currently denied all or part of their earned and promised benefits because of these provisions.

We must pass the Social Security 2100 Act and the Social Security Fairness Act which would eliminate GPO & WEP, expands benefits for Social Security recipients, and extend the solvency on the program by raising the taxable income cap that currently allows billionaires to get away with paying a lower rate than the lowest income earners.

Email your elected officials and demand a repeal of GPO & WEP here: [www.nea.org/RepealGPOWEP](http://www.nea.org/RepealGPOWEP)



**BIG ANNOUNCEMENT!**  
**The 2022 Senior Power Celebration is being hosted in...**

*Springfield!*

Join us on Tuesday, September 13th, 2022  
UA Local 137 Plumbers & Steamfitters Hall  
2880 E Cook St, Springfield, IL 62703

Doors open at 11:30am - Program Begins at 12:00pm

Details including tickets & virtual options at  
[illinois.retiredamericans.org/2022seniorpowercelebration](http://illinois.retiredamericans.org/2022seniorpowercelebration)