



**2007 Issue 2**

# THE RETIREE GUARDIAN

*“the voice of 48,000 retirees in all 14 U S WEST/Qwest states”*

Newsletter of the Association of U S WEST Retirees  
www.uswestretiree.org or www.qwestretiree.org

*“To preserve and protect those benefits that we worked so hard to earn and that were promised to us.”*

### AUSWR Mission

Achieving this mission directs the actions and decisions of the leaders, the volunteers, and the members of the AUSWR.

- We advocate favorable retiree legislation,
- We pursue legal actions and appeals when necessary, and
- We seek co-sponsorship and common ground with Qwest for retiree-favorable programs.

Mimi Hull, *President*

*Association of U S WEST Retirees*

## ***Qwest and Healthcare: Finding Common Ground***

### **A Common Goal: Health Care Reform**

*Report by Barbara Wilcox, AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming*

It all began at the Annual Meeting of AUSWR CO/WY last October. Qwest CEO Dick Notebaert was the keynote speaker. I had planned to ask him if he felt that comprehensive health care reform was needed in this country, and if so, could we work together towards reform. Then, at the end of his speech, Notebaert announced caps including one on post-1990 retiree health insurance. I felt that my health care questions were even more relevant.

Clearly, Qwest and retirees both are concerned about rising health care costs. Notebaert agreed that health care reform is needed. Since October, there have been three joint meetings at which AUSWR was represented by Legislative Vice President Hazel Floyd and me. Qwest was represented by Teresa Taylor, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer and Erik Ammidown, Director of Health and Disability Benefits.

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*WE WERE THE OPERATORS AND REPAIR CLERKS, THE INSTALLERS AND LINEMEN, THE ENGINEERS AND NETWORK PLANNERS, THE CRAFT AND MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES OF EVERY DESCRIPTION WHO BROUGHT TELECOMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOMES, BUSINESSES, AND INSTITUTIONS OF 14 STATES. NOW WE ARE UNITED IN OUR COMMITMENT TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE RETIREMENT BENEFITS PROMISED TO US AND TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW US AS TODAY'S ACTIVE EMPLOYEES.*

## **Healthcare Reform**

# **Common Ground with Qwest**

*(...continued from page one)*

We have agreed to continue meeting and discussing health care reform issues and proposed legislation, seeing if we can support proposals either as they are or with modification, and tracking healthcare-related legislation as it works its way through Congress. For example, we are looking at proposed legislation on health care information technology, which we agree needs to be improved.

We came away from the latest meeting agreeing that standards for electronic health care records, insurance claims, billing, etc., are essential for improving efficiency and driving down costs, regardless of other changes that are made in the health care system. There have been several bills in Congress that would support this effort including one sponsored by Wyoming's Senator Enzi.

We outlined for each other what our respective organizations are working on to improve health care. We discussed plans of other organizations and alliances with which we are working. For example, Qwest belongs to a number of business alliances, including The Leapfrog Group, the National Business Group on Health, and the National Coalition on Health Care.

Qwest has joined other corporations in providing its support for the Federal Health and Human Services (HHS) Value Driven Health Care initiatives. In addition, Mr. Ammidown is a member of the Colorado Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Reform. [The 24-member Colorado Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform studies expanded health care coverage and decreased health care costs for Colorado residents.]

AUSWR has alliances with retiree organizations, such as the Alliance for Retired Americans, CWA Retirees and the

Rocky Mountain Action Coalition. Hazel and I are members of the Health Care Committee of the NRLN (National Retiree Legislative Network) which uses guidelines for health care reform that were produced by the National Coalition for Health Care, of which Qwest is a member. Hazel, who leads a grassroots legislative network in the 14 Qwest states plus Wisconsin, presented our 2007 legislative agenda to the Qwest executives.

Qwest is in a position to work with other business leaders and with labor leaders. AUSWR can mobilize thousands of retirees to contact their state and national legislators to push for legislative action. We both have access to lobbyists in Washington, but they are different lobbyists with different constituencies. Realize that if Qwest and AUSWR could agree on measures that we both wanted to support, then we might have potential for real impact.

AUSWR and Qwest have agreed to review additional health care reform bills, see if we can support them, either as they are or with modification, and work with our respective contacts to further the legislation. Ms. Taylor remarked, "Health care costs and quality are an enormous challenge for everyone - individuals, families, companies and government. We appreciate Barbara and Hazel's generosity with their time and their continual interest in discussing these issues with us."

### **What you can do**

See the Health Care and Legislative Activities pages on the AUSWR web site for more information about health care and legislative proposals. Visit or contact your congressional legislators and tell them that health care reform is vital. When AUSWR asks you to support a particular bill or congressional action, please write, email or make a phone call to urge your senators and representative to act.

## **Qwest joins call for universal health care**

**As reported in the Denver Post — May 9, 2007**

Denver-based Qwest [Communications] and five other companies [joined Walmart Stores, Inc. and two labor groups, the C.W.A. and the Service Employees Int'l,] in a coalition calling for health coverage for all people in the U. S. by 2012.

"Health care reform in this country is everyone's issue," said Dick Notebaert, Qwest chairman and CEO. "We are

pleased to be a part of a group so dedicated to one of our most pressing issues, and we are looking forward to working toward a new American health care system."

[Other companies already included in the health care coalition include AT&T, Emparq, General Mills, Intel, Kelly Services, Maersk Lines, Manpower, Inc., and RR Donnelly].

# AUSWR Plans Amended Action in Denver Federal Court

## Life Insurance Challenge

Curtis L. Kennedy, AUSWR Litigation Attorney, plans an amended filing of the *Kerber v. Qwest* (Group Life Insurance) lawsuit which is pending in Denver Federal Court.

The amended filing will add Prudential Insurance Company as an additional Defendant, plus two additional Named Plaintiffs, Sam Strizich and Marty Lensink, so that we cover all the bases and the best potential claims.

Newly named plaintiff, Samuel G. Strizich, of Scottsdale, Arizona, is the surviving spouse of Sharon Strizich, a former management worker with U S WEST who retired in 1990. Sharon, Sam's wife, died on March 20, 2007. Instead of receiving the full amount of benefits, (approximately \$62,000), as promised by U S WEST when Sharon commenced retirement after 30 years of employment service, Sam has been told by Qwest plan administrators that he will receive a flat payment of only \$10,000.

The second additional named plaintiff is Martha A. Lensink of Prescott, Arizona. Marty is the surviving spouse of Joseph M. Lensink, a former lineman and

occupational worker with U S WEST who retired during February 1997. Joe Lensink died on January 5, 2006. Marty is the beneficiary of Joe's entitlement to Basic Group Life Insurance plan benefits. Instead of receiving the full amount of benefits, (approximately \$42,000), as promised by U S WEST when Mr. Lensink commenced retirement after 30 years of employment service, Marty, as sole beneficiary received a flat payment of \$10,000.

Inclusion of Sam Strizich and Martha Lensink in the life insurance filing demonstrates to all U S WEST and Qwest retirees just how many beneficiaries are potentially harmed by the life insurance cap imposed by Qwest.

The lawsuit was originally filed March 30, 2007. The AUSWR membership was advised of the details in a special edition of the *Retiree Guardian* sent in April.

To read the life insurance filing and other legal developments, go to the AUSWR website: [www.uswestretiree.org/legal2.htm](http://www.uswestretiree.org/legal2.htm) or contact your state newsletter editor for a copy.



**Curtis L. Kennedy**  
AUSWR  
Litigation Attorney

### Editor's Note:

As Qwest continues its efforts to cut, cap, and eliminate retiree benefits, the compensation paid to Qwest executives accelerates at an enormous rate.

Consider the Notebaert compensation as reported in the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Richard Notebaert's Reported Compensation	2005	2006
	\$14,832,811.00	\$24,800,000.00
Assuming a worker's normal hours (2,080) per year, here is how the Qwest CEO's total compensation breaks down		
per year	\$14,832,811.00	\$24,800,000.00
per month	\$1,236,067.58	\$2,066,666.67
per week	\$285,246.37	\$476,923.08
per day	\$57,049.27	\$95,384.62
per hour	\$7,131.16	\$11,923.08
per minute	\$118.85	\$198.72
per second	\$1.98	\$3.31

## **AUSWR Supports *Amicus* in Lucent Case**

# ***NRLN Files Amicus Brief In Appeal Of Lucent's Elimination of Pension Death Benefit***

### **Retiree Group Wants U.S. Appeals Court To Remand Dismissed Case Back To District Court For Further Proceedings**

The National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) announced the April 27, 2007, filing of an *Amicus* Brief with the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia in an effort to assist Lucent Technologies retirees regain the pensioner death benefit eliminated by the company in 2003.

AUSWR Litigation Attorney, Curtis L. Kennedy, filed the *amicus curiae* brief at the request of the NRLN. The *amicus* brief was submitted because the Lucent Retirees had their Pensioner Death Benefits' case, *Foss v. Lucent Technologies*, dismissed by a New Jersey federal trial court judge.

"It's in everyone's interest to successfully persuade the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals to reverse the trial court's decision in the *Foss* (Pension Death Benefit) case because of its impacts to the AUSWR *Kerber* case," wrote Kennedy to AUSWR members.

This *amicus* filing will have direct or indirect impact on the AUSWR pending pension death benefit case, aka *Kerber v. Qwest*, which is awaiting rulings from the Denver Federal Court.

An "*amicus* brief" is not a 'shotgun' approach like that most often taken by the losing party to the trial court litigation. An *amicus* brief submitted to the appellate court has to be fairly focused on only a few issues.

"When an employer eliminates our members' retirement benefit that should be protected by law, the NRLN has a duty to seek justice for the affected retire-

es," said Jim Norby, NRLN president. "We believe the U.S. District Court in Newark, N.J. erred in its November 2006 order of dismissal and judgment that the Pension Death Benefits were unprotected welfare benefits subject to post-retirement elimination."

On November 27, 2006, Judge Cavanaugh entered an order of dismissal of the *Foss* case. The Plaintiffs-Retirees' team of lawyers filed for an appeal in the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

Since October 2003, Lucent retirees have been engaged in a legal battle with Lucent over the company's February 1, 2003 elimination of the death benefit that was equivalent to one year's compensation payable to a surviving spouse. Lucent's action impacted approximately 50,000 management retirees.

"While this case focuses on Lucent retiree pension benefits, its outcome could also impact NRLN members retired from other companies across the country," said Norby, whose organization voices the interests of some two million retirees.

"The Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) is intended to protect retirees' interests and we believe that the lower court failed to properly apply the law to the Lucent retirees' case," said Norby.

On November 30, 2006, Lucent merged with France's Alcatel and the company is now known as Alcatel-Lucent.

*Read the amicus filing at: [www.uswestretiree.org/NRLNAmicusBriefCLKSigned.pdf](http://www.uswestretiree.org/NRLNAmicusBriefCLKSigned.pdf)*

## Nels Tells

# What's Happening to Retirees

Excerpts from Nelson Phelps at the retirees' meeting  
April 19, 2007, in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

I don't like to travel. Never did. But I love to travel when it's for an opportunity to meet the people that are in this room. People like the people I work with in Mountain Bell and then U S WEST. People who worked hard to build that business. People that I respect and you respect.

First of all I'm going to give you an overview of where I think we are. These are difficult times. We are literally being attacked by a corporation and a by a few individuals who lead that corporation, who care for only one thing. Personal gain. That's Dick Notebaert. That's Barry Allen. That's Theresa Taylor. And they can smile, and they can give to charity, but I guarantee you, they are on the warpath to fatten their own pockets, and to do it any way that they can.

And if you want proof of that, look at what's happened in the past year. I attended the Colorado-Wyoming Annual Meeting [October 2006]. Dick Notebaert was invited to be the speaker. Dick got up and said, "This is very troubling to me. I've thought about this a long time, but I'm sorry to announce that starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, we will be capping all life insurance at \$10,000 for all retirees. And then he started smiling. Actually smiling. And then he said, "And, Oh yes, we will be capping health care insurance. All additional costs for people who retired after 1991, will be passed on to you effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. And then he looked over at me and smiled, and said, "It's very unfortunate, but you should not expect any more pension increases."

Folks, this is what we're working against. The reality and the facts today are that not just Dick Notebaert, but many corporate CEOs are doing whatever they can when it comes to cutting retiree benefits, retiree commitments, for one reason. To fatten the bottom line. And when you fatten the bottom line, what happens to your compensation as CEO? It increases.

These are extremely difficult times. Our board and our leadership have looked at all the options that we have to either reverse or at least stop the run on our benefits.



**Nelson Phelps,**  
AUSWR Executive Director

And quite frankly folks, the ERISA law, which has been in existence for a number of years does protect some of our benefits. But when it comes to health care, when it comes to life insurance, when it comes to concessions, when it comes to any other benefits other than pension, there's a clause that some smart lawyer thought up in the late 80's in an American corporation that's called the Reservation of Rights law or clause. And the Reservation of Rights Clause simply says—it's written into many of your plans, your health care plan, your insurance plan, your dental plan—you'll find it. You take the plan out, usually at the end, there's a sentence or two that says, "The Corporation reserves the right to delete, change, etc. etc." And that one clause has been taken all the way to the Supreme Court, and has allowed corporations to cancel, to terminate, to lessen benefits. No matter what you and I were promised.

What can we do about it? Number one, [get] involved in the legislative process. Because folks, we've got the best attorney [Curtis L. Kennedy] in the United States in ERISA law. But you can just sue so much. And you can just file so many lawsuits. In the end, the only answer—is to get the laws changed in the United States of America.

Now I do have some good news. One of the things you can count on today is your pension fund. I watched that like a hawk, so to speak. In 2002, when Notebaert arrived, do you know what that pension fund stood at? 92%. Underfunded. (...continued on page 6...)

### **2007 AUSWR Officers**

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Oregon/Washington President — **Judy Stenberg**

Utah/Idaho/Montana Chair — **Donnetta Mitchell**

Litigation Attorney — **Curtis L Kennedy**

# ...hear what's happening

(...continued from page 5...)

Do you know what it was when Joe Nacchio first arrived? 128%! Five-and-a-half billion dollar surplus. Two years — gone!! Who did it? Dirty Joe! [Joseph Nacchio was convicted in April of federal insider trading and awaits sentencing scheduled for July 2007]. What did he do? What did he do with the money?

What he did with it was he started laying people off. Not CWA. Executives! What kind of executive separation bonuses did they get? Fat cat years of pay. Where did it come from? Our pension fund. So in a matter of almost two years —the pension fund fell from 128% —overfunded —down to 98%.

What's the pension fund stand at today? 114%. Is that Dick Notebaert? Yes. Yes. Because Dick Notebaert promised me two months after he arrived, "We're going to stop that stuff. That's not coming out of the pension fund". And he did it.

But it's not all Dick Notebaert. It's the market. The market's up. But we're at 114%, and that's a darned good place to be. We've got a fat, safe pension fund.

Someone said to me, "Well, what if Qwest goes bankrupt?" Qwest isn't going to go bankrupt, thanks to Dick Notebaert. Nobody else. The corporation is not going to go bankrupt. He really did turn that around.

If the corporation were to go bankrupt, we're backed up by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

Health care post-'91, that's another concern. It really should be. Can they do away with the health care plan for post-'91 retirees? Of course.

So these are still troubled times. They're not good times. But I promise you personally—and I say this wherever I go—we're not going to roll over and play dead. I promise you. We have as I said earlier probably the most effective and smartest ERISA attorney in this country. And he is under retainer. And we presently are in Denver Federal District court. We have filed two lawsuits against Qwest. One over a year ago to protect your pension death benefits. ...As long as the lawsuit is active and we haven't got a decision, they can't take that away. So that will stay in effect.

We are on talking terms with the [Qwest] corporation. I'm a believer that no matter where you are with a person or a corporation, you've got to continue talking. Qwest Communications just gave [\$6 million to the city of Denver to bring the Democratic [National] Committee there for the

[2008 national] convention. [Qwest gave \$5 million to the city of Minneapolis to bring the 2008 Republican national convention to their city].

Now we don't have millions of dollars. But Qwest is getting all the time they want. You think we are? And unfortunately that's what's happening in America today. No matter what party you're in, money is buying the time. That is absolutely wrong! Money is buying the drive in corporations. That is absolutely wrong! Don't get tired of saying that. Don't get tired of getting your neighbors worked up about that. We need all the support in America to turn this around, because it's W-R-O-N-G wrong. Dick Notebaert's favorite saying when he goes before a class at CU in ethics—you know what he says?—"My philosophy is, you do what's right. You do the right thing."

We will be on the Qwest shareowner floor [in Denver] on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. We have three proxies that we will be supporting. [Here's what we are asking shareowners to support: ] ...Proposal Four: performance-based equity compensation; Proposal Five, advisory vote on executive compensation; and Proposal Six, supplemental executive retirement plan.

Okay I just want to end with this. Dick Notebaert said to a bunch of us "We will follow the law and we will do what is right." Amen. Thank you.

To read a transcript of Nelson Phelps full speech to retirees at the AUSWR NWB meeting, go to our website: [www.uswestretiree.org](http://www.uswestretiree.org) or [www.qwestretiree.org](http://www.qwestretiree.org)

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# AUSWR President's Message

Dear Fellow Retirees,

My message is to give you updates, give you thanks, and ask for more: —your time and talents to help your state organizations.

## Litigation actions

Two major lawsuits with Qwest are pending in Denver Federal Court. Our litigation attorney, Curtis Kennedy, continues to perform his professional best for all AUSWR retirees, —just as he has done for over 20 years.

First is the Pension Death Benefit Litigation - *Kerber, et al, v. Qwest* case which is asking the court to rule that the death benefit in the pension plan is a vested benefit, and Qwest cannot take it away.

Second, the Group Life Insurance Litigation - *Kerber, et al, v. Qwest* challenges the Company's unilateral reduction of life insurance. We are asking the Court to restore some of the promised benefit.

Funding these legal actions requires a major financial commitment. When we have asked you to financially support these efforts, you have generously come through for all of us.

## Legislative Advocacy

In addition to our legal actions, AUSWR is making a tremendous effort in the Legislative area. Our commitment is to create actions so that our retiree voices are heard by those who introduce and pass legislation which has a major impact on retirees and their promised pensions and benefits.

Our legislative Grassroots plans are on page 9.

## Can you help with your time and talents?

The AUSWR runs on the engines of the many, many retirees who give selflessly of their time and talents to keep the organization functioning at a high level. They make it possible for

AUSWR to achieve its goals of preserving and enhancing the benefits in retirement which were earned and promised when we were employees .

Year after year, I tend to see the same faces who "step up to the plate" to carry on this important work.

Some of our volunteers are now experiencing "burnout" or have encountered health problems themselves, or their spouses have encountered difficulties which have caused them to have to pull

back from their previous level of participation. We need to give the faithful leaders in all of our states more time for their retirement years too.

Many of our newer retirees are unable to do much because they have had to return to the workforce. They do not have the time available to many of us who are fully retired.

## Hear the call to help...

I am asking you to assess where your time and talents could best be utilized. Please contact your state leaders to tell them that you are ready to "step up to the plate" and give of your time and talent. We will all benefit. Thank you in advance for being willing to "sign on."



**Mimi Hull**  
President, Association of  
U S WEST (Qwest) Retirees

*Mimi Hull*

# Qwest Pension Fund Status — 2006

Report by Curtis L. Kennedy, AUSWR Litigation Attorney

Many retirees often ask AUSWR leadership to provide information about the current financial status of the Qwest Pension Plan. Each year we make a formal written ERISA disclosure request to Qwest Pension Plan Administrators for the latest updated financial information, and the last response provided to such request was near the end of October

2006. Qwest gave us a copy of the formal report the company must file each year with federal agencies, the Department of Labor and Internal Revenue Service. A copy of the year end 2006 Form 5500 Report with Independent Auditor's Accounting Report and Financial Summary

Statements is posted at: <http://www.uswestretiree.org/5500%20for%202005.pdf>

Unfortunately, due to archaic 1970's federal rules and regulations, that report dated October 10, 2006 tells us only part of what happened to the pension plan during year 2005. Yes, the formal reports are always filed 10 months *after* the year the report covers. Can you imagine receiving either a bank account statement or credit card statement 10 months after the fact? Anyhow, we will have to wait until mid-October 2007 to see a formal report for the financial status of the Qwest Pension Plan as of the end of year 2006. Alas, there are new federal regulations that go into effect after next year, speeding up the formal reporting process.

Fortunately, there is an internationally renowned actuarial and consulting company that performs an annual study of defined pension

plans every year and releases a report in mid-April. Milliman Consultants, based in Washington DC, completed its *seventh* annual study of the financial reports of 100 large U.S. corporations that sponsor defined benefit pension plans. Of course, the study *always* includes the Qwest Pension Plan. The following link will get you to the "Milliman 2007 Pension Funding Study," an excellently prepared and easily understood 22 page report:

[http://www.milliman.com/pension\\_fund\\_survey/Pension-Funding-Study-04-11-07.pdf](http://www.milliman.com/pension_fund_survey/Pension-Funding-Study-04-11-07.pdf)

On page 8, this latest report states the Qwest Pension Plan had a Pension Benefit Obligation (PBO)

funded ratio of 114% as of the end of December 2006. *This is good news!* The Qwest Pension Plan has recovered significantly since the low point reached in December 2002 when its PBO Funded Ratio was 95.6%.

However, not all of this financial recovery has been accomplished without controversy. As you know, Qwest leadership passed what we consider to be an illegal pension plan amendment to take out the Pension Death Benefit for service eligible persons who retired (both voluntarily and surplus-involuntarily) on or after January 1, 2004, an issue vigorously contested in the pending *Kerber v. Qwest* (Pension Death Benefits) case. We are still awaiting rulings by Judge Boland of the Denver Federal Court.

You can keep informed by checking postings on the Legal Development page at the AUSWR website:

<http://www.uswestretiree.org/legal2.htm#death>

***“funded ratio of 114% as of the end of December 2006. This is good news!”***

## **2007 Milliman Pension Funding Study**



# Grassroots Network

## Developing A Relationship With Members of Congress

by Hazel Floyd, AUSWR Legislative Affairs VP  
[hafloyd1@msn.com](mailto:hafloyd1@msn.com) tel. 303-455-1535

The AUSWR/NRLN Grassroots Network is for the 14 Regional States of the West and former U S West corporate area, plus Wisconsin. For more information or to discuss state and national plans, please contact Hazel Floyd at the address above.

We recognize that not all members are located where it would be convenient to have face-to-face contact with their elected representatives and their staff members. However, when logistics afford the opportunity, we hope the following pointers will be useful.

### Personal contact. Personal contact. Personal contact.

This is the only way that you can be a fully effective member of a Grassroots Network to gain support for retiree issues.

—Visit the local office of your Congressman or Senators to introduce yourself to the ranking staff member in the office.

—Identify yourself as a telephone retiree and a member of the Association of U S WEST Retirees (AUSWR) or as a member of another retiree organization.

—Explain that you embrace the interests of all retirees and their dependents in the district or state and all retirees nationally, such as the NRLN or the Alliance of Retired Americans.

The NRLN is a non-partisan coalition of retiree organizations with nearly 2 million

members. The Alliance consists of organized AFL-CIO retirees. These organizations are dedicated to protecting pension plans and other retirement benefits.

—Ask when the Congressman or Senator will be in the district and inquire whether there might be an opportunity to meet with him/her.

If a one-on-one meeting cannot be arranged, ask if he/she is going to be conducting Town Hall Meetings or making a public speech that you can attend. Ask for a business card from the staff member as a contact.

—Watch for any opportunity to attend functions where your elected representative will be present such as Town Hall meetings.

If there is a Q&A session, ask a question related to an important retiree issue, —but be careful not to attack or embarrass your elected legislator in front of an audience. At the end of the meeting, always make the effort to talk with him/her—even if it is only for a few seconds.

—Thank him/her for meeting with his/her constituents. With repeated personal contact, he/she will begin to recognize you and associate you with whichever retiree organization you belong to, along with the pension and health care issues you are supporting.

### Prepare for your visit or phone call

Before visits with Congressional staffers, or Representatives or Senators, learn as much as you can about your elected legislator's votes, actions and position on important issues.

# “*Speak your opinions...*”

If you have Internet access, regularly access the AUSWR website at [www.uswestretiree.org/legislative2.htm](http://www.uswestretiree.org/legislative2.htm). Click on **Legislative Directory** and you will reach the following links:

- **CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTORY**

Find your Senators and House Representatives by state and zip code. If your members of Congress offer the opportunity to sign up to receive e-mails, please do so. Note the Congressional Committees your Legislator serves on.

Click on **ADDITIONAL CONGRESSIONAL LINKS**, and it will take you to **CONGRESS VOTES**, where you type in your Zip Code, and learn how your elected representatives voted on legislation.

To learn about or read any legislative bill, go to **THOMAS WEB SITE**. Bill texts by Word/Phrase or Number, or by Sponsor are available. Make a list of the bills your Legislator has endorsed. Check committee schedules and agendas for relevant topics, advise them of your interest and request support for the retirees' side of such issues.

- Keep a news clippings file on articles, TV and radio news reports about your elected representative. Information from this file can be useful when you talk with your elected representative or his/her staffers.
- Be informed about retirement issues, such as health care, in your district/state through news media reports.
- Keep abreast of national retiree issues by regularly visiting our website: [www.uswestretiree.org](http://www.uswestretiree.org). In Colorado see where

the latest Rocky Mountain Action Coalition (RMAC) meetings are scheduled.

- Sign up for the Friday e-mail Alerts from the Alliance of Retired Americans.

Not only is it important to be well-versed on our retiree position on issues, but also know the opposing views, so you can be conversant about the other side and speak as to why it should not be supported. Request information from your AUSWR State Legislative Leader if you have questions.

If the elected officials are of your political persuasion or have been good supporters of retiree issues, consider giving your time. Volunteer to serve on information gathering committees, or other issues-based groups for him/her or the

staff. Be careful not to offer to campaign for him/her unless it is on your own as a party or candidate supporter and —not as an AUSWR representative.

When the situation merits, contact your elected representative to commend him/her on a vote, stand on an issue or a personal accomplishment.

***Regularly make phone calls and mail letters to your elected representative and his/her staffers.***

***Letters are especially helpful if you do not live close to your Legislator's Local Office.***

When you voice your position on an issue or proposed legislation, be sure to state your AUSWR or other retiree affiliation, such as the NRLN, and why your position is important to the retirees in his/her district or state. Note how many retirees the issue could impact.

When you have a question concerning your Legislator, please call your State AUSWR Legislative Leader.

# ***Legislative Agenda for 110<sup>th</sup> Congress***

## **NATIONAL HEALTH CARE REFORM**

Consider your position for new legislation that offers:

- (1) healthcare coverage for all, including catastrophic coverage;
- (2) effective cost management disciplines;
- (3) better information technology systems and quality and safety discipline;
- (4) equitable financing;
- (5) simplified administration.

Reform should not focus on health care for just the uninsured, underinsured and Medicaid enrollees. New legislation must protect the health care benefits of retirees already covered by corporate plans .

The "Medicare for All Act" bills introduced in the 109th Congress as **S.2229** (Sen. Kennedy) and **H.R. 4683** ( Rep. Dingell) as proposed for the 110th Congress must be improved.

Consider your support of bills **S.1418** (Sen. Enzi) and **H.R. 4157** (Rep. Johnson) scheduled for reintroduction in the 110th Congress that call for improved national health care system planning, quality and information technology mechanisms.

## **PRESCRIPTION DRUGS -**

**Revision of Medicare Part D: Price Negotiations - H.R. 4** (Rep. Dingell) "Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiations Act of 2007" which has passed the House and is waiting for **S.3**, the Sen. Wyden / Sen. Snowe version to be taken up in the Senate.

Consider your support of the general principles in **S.137** (Sen.Cardin) the "Preserving Medicare for All Act," including support establishment of a government-run prescription drug program as an alternative to private drug programs, such as **S.345** (Sen. Durbin) the "Medicare Prescription Drug Savings Act," introduced in the last Congress.

**Importation** - Consider support of the importation of prescription drugs through **S.242** (Sen. Dorgan /

Sen. Snowe) "Pharmaceutical Market Access and Drug Safety Act of 2007, which has been reintroduced in the Senate, and in the House as **H.R. 380** (Rep Emerson / Rep Emanuel).

## **Prevent In-Year Coverage Interruptions -**

Consider your support of **H.R. 4685** "Medicare Prescription Drug Emergency Guarantee Act of 2006" (Rep. Dingell) introduced in the last Congress - prevents in-year interruption of Medicare-D coverage and formulary changes.

Consider your support of new legislation that would increase the **Part D subsidy** to be paid to employers who offer better coverage than provided in Part D, and who agree to maintain their current plans.

## **Acceleration of Generic Drug Approval and Advancement to Market**

Consider your support of new legislation:

- that would fund FDA staffing and the systems needed to clear the generic drug approval backlog and require elimination of manufacturer "user fees".
- that bans litigation or other practices that require/encourage brand manufacturers to pay generic manufacturers to pull generic brands off the market.

## **HEALTH CARE TAX RELIEF:**

**Deductibility of Health Care Costs:** Consider your support of new legislation that would enable health care premiums (including Medicare premiums) to be tax deductible, similar to the way health insurance premiums for workers and self-employed individuals are deductible. Such deductions would be exempt from the 7.5% (AGI) limitation on deductible medical expenses.

## **Withdrawals To Pay Retiree Health Premiums:**

Consider your support of new legislation that would enable tax free and penalty free withdrawals from 401k, IRA, SEP and other qualified retirement accounts for the exclusive purpose of paying retiree health care premiums.

# NRLN Retiree Survey



*The National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) is a non-partisan, grassroots coalition of retiree associations, individual retirees and pre-retirees devoted to enacting federal legislation to protect pension plans and retirement healthcare benefits. With support from its more than 2 million members and Washington, DC-based staff, the NRLN identifies and rallies support for Federal legislation that will guarantee fair and equitable treatment of retirees from the private and public sectors. [Members are retirees from Aetna, Ameritech/SBC, AT&T, Boeing, Daimler-Chrysler, Detroit Edison, General Motors, Johns Manville, Lucent, Pac Bell Telephone, Prudential, SNET, Verizon, and more. AUSWR members have annually supported the NRLN].*

The Board of Directors for the NRLN expresses its appreciation to those who participated in a national on-line membership survey.

Respondents gave opinions on current and future plans, directions, and priorities for the NRLN organization. 17% of those answering questions were from the U S WEST/Qwest 14-state AUSWR organizations.

The NRLN Board received excellent insights into issues important to the NRLN's constituency. Here are some of the responses to important issues in the survey:

- 99% strongly agree or agree the NRLN should direct its priorities/efforts/resources towards assuring that companies are able to pay pensions as promised by getting stronger pension laws passed.
- 99% replied "inform members of Congress when a company's actions harm retirees"
- 97% strongly agree or agree the NRLN should try to advocate retirees' rights with Congress by con-

tinuing its current lobbying to pass legislation to protect pensions and benefits.

- 97% replied "hold companies accountable in the news media for actions that harm retirees"
  - 92% strongly agree or agree the NRLN should continue to exist.
  - 87% believe the NRLN should direct its priorities/efforts/resources toward healthcare retirement benefits by endeavoring to pass laws to require employers to continue healthcare coverage for retirees.
  - 87% answered by agreeing that [the NRLN should] "encourage the NRLN members to become politically active with members of Congress".
  - 80% thought the NRLN should assist retirees/spouses with information on benefits and pension problems
  - 71% strongly agree or agree the NRLN should make them aware of other healthcare insurance plans that could supplement or replace their former employer's plans.
  - 63% either strongly agreed or agreed that their former employer will "try to avoid properly funding my pension". On the same related question, 46% believed that their former employer will "try to get the Federal Government to take over [pensions]."
  - 57% strongly agree or agree the NRLN should make them aware of life insurance plans that could supplement or replace their former employer's plan.
  - 50% have had their death benefit for his/her surviving spouse reduced or eliminated.
- 44% have had their life insurance benefit from their former employer reduced or eliminated.

To review more results go to <http://www.nrln.org/SURVEY/Summary.html>. Or go to the NRLN website at <http://www.nrln.org> and click on the survey link at the bottom of the page.

*Survey results were compiled from information by Jim Norby, NRLN President, and Bill Kadereit, NRLN Vice President of Legislative Affairs.*