

MiARA Newsletter



December 2019

MiARA President Dick Long Year End Report

To all our Michigan Alliance members, I wish each and every one of you a very happy holiday season. As 2019 comes to an end, we continue to battle the Republican establishment that continues to attack middle-class Americans with assaults on pensions, Social Security and Medicare. They are still trying to privatize our Brothers and Sisters in the Postal Workers Union and eliminate the Affordable Care Act. Our U.S. House of Representatives, elected in 2018, has been working tirelessly to advance an agenda for working Americans. Much of this agenda has been passed by the House but is blocked by Mitch McConnell and his Republican Senate.

Voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot initiative in 2018 to amend the Michigan Constitution to make voting districts fair. Now, Republican operatives are attempting to take away your vote. They have filed suit and have lost in both District and Appellate court appearances. Their next step is the 6th Circuit which should determine the outcome.

The group leading this effort for the voters of Michigan is called VOTERS NOT POLITICIANS. The MiARA has supported this group since their inception. We ask for your continued support.

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A major bill, Lower Drug Costs Now (H.R.3), is currently in the House. It should clear the House by the end of the year.

If passed, this bill will limit prices on prescription drugs, place an excise tax on drug corporation profits, limit increases on Medicare drug spending, and provide additional benefits resulting from cost savings. We will continue to keep you updated on this important legislation in 2020.

I would again like to thank all of our members who volunteered to support the GM workers during the recent strike. The impression this made on the young auto workers experiencing their first strike was unbelievable. It showed what union and community members working together can achieve. As of today, GM and Ford workers have ratified new agreements. FCA workers are in the ratification process.

Thank you to our members who supported MiARA in 2019. Thank you to our Executive Board members who volunteer their time and energy to making our efforts successful. A special

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MiARA President Dick Long Year End Report *Continued*

Schneider and his daughter, Krista for all their hard work, and to Becky Bridgewater, our executive secretary who makes everything happen.

As our state and federal governments continue to spiral downward, we have our work cut out for us in 2020. We must continue our efforts to support those who believe in MiARA issues of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and Affordable Health Care. The Trump administration and Republicans continue their assault on these programs that are important to all retirees.

Remember our toll-free number that gives direct access to the Federal House and Senate. By calling 1-800-828-4162, retirees can voice their concerns over these issues.

Have a happy and safe holiday. 2020 will be a challenging and busy year.

P.S. If any wants to know what I want for Christmas -- an impeached President would be nice!



MiARA President Dick Long speaking at a 2019 quarterly membership meeting.

Say No to Post Office Privatization

The Alliance for Retired Americans supports a public postal service that is committed to providing quality service to everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, at reasonable and uniform rates.

Our United States Postal Service (USPS) is an essential part of the fabric of the country and a source of good living wage jobs for our communities.

The public service mission of the postal service has made it the most popular federal agency among U.S. citizens. However, this public good is at risk if we don't all act soon.

Last year, the White House announced proposals to privatize the Postal Service, and now that current Postmaster General, Megan Brennan, has announced that she is leaving the agency in January, it's a sure bet that the White House's next pick will have privatization high up on the agenda.

The postmaster general of the United States is the chief executive officer of the postal service. To ensure the USPS can fulfill its mission, we need someone in this position who is fully committed to continuing universal service and the public ownership of the postal service.

The postmaster general has wide powers to shape the mission of the USPS and there is a real risk that Brennan's successor will attempt hand over parts of the service to private, profit-making corporations and prepare it for a wholesale sell off. Unfortunately, this profiteering will result in millions without access to dependable service.

Please make your voice heard and tell your representatives that you want a new postmaster general who will work to preserve and enhance our national treasure. Let them know that the U.S. Mail is not for sale!

MiARA Activist Spotlight

Jack Schneider

Despite being the editor of this newsletter, Jack Schneider has no idea that he is being highlighted in the MiARA activist spotlight this month.

MiARA President Dick Long called me in my capacity as the newsletter copy editor (and Jack's daughter) to surprise my dad with this honor.

"You know how modest he is," said Dick. "He would never allow us to print this if he knew, but I really want him to know how much we appreciate his work on the newsletter and all he does for retirees in the state of Michigan."

This is probably the first time I've tried to sneak something past my dad since I was in high school, but we added this story post-production, after Jack had already completed editing the rest of the newsletter. I'm hoping that at age 88, dad will understand, and that I will not be grounded.

Jack was born in Bay City in 1931. His family soon moved to Detroit where he graduated from Pershing High School. He received both a BA and M. ED from Wayne State University, with a stint in the army in between degrees. He married the love of his life, Merylene in 1959, and a year later they had their first of three daughters. The family moved to Milford in 1972, and in 1976, his son was born.

Before retiring, Jack had an impressive 49-year career in education that included 46 years in the Livonia Public Schools, where he served ten years as both a middle school teacher and counselor and 36 years as an English teacher at Churchill High School. During his tenure at Churchill, he also served as yearbook advisor and senior class sponsor.

Even in the twilight of his career, Jack continued to enjoy going the extra mile with his students, taking them on field trips and helping with

fundraising efforts. As class sponsor, Jack helped the senior class sell donuts to raise money by dressing as the superhero "Donut Man" and chanting, "Yummy, yummy, yummy, get a donut in your tummy! 50 cents each, special—two for a dollar!"

Jack's retirement routine includes naps, watching late-night television, attending the Lions games, and activism. He serves on the board of the New Hope Unitarian Universalist Congregation in New Hudson. Jack also loves spending time with his four children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren after the loss of his wife three years ago.

No doubt, helping his union and attending Democratic Party meetings cuts into Jack's nap time, but he has worked tirelessly to ensure that union-endorsed candidates are elected.

Jack has served as precinct delegate and member of the Oakland County Democratic Party Executive Committee. He has been on the board in the 11th Congressional District and participated as member of the Democratic State Central Committee. Jack has also had the opportunity to go to two national Democratic Conventions as an elected delegate.

Jack's attention to detail is evident in his editing of the MiARA newsletter and serves on their executive board. In addition to being delegate to both the MEA and NEA Representative Assemblies, Jack has served on several MEA-Retired state committees, and he is passionate about his belief in unions.

In a Summer 2018 article in the *MEA Retirement Report*, Jack said, "Union is in my blood. These are hard times for teachers and public sector workers. Right to Work laws hurt unions. We need to fight back. We must work in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in labor, private and public sector alike, or we will perish as a union."

U.S. House to Vote on Bill to Lower Drug Prices

The U.S. House of Representatives is expected to vote next week on the “Lower Drug Prices Now” bill (H.R. 3) to help millions of Americans struggling with the high price of prescriptions.

If the bill passes by a wide margin, it will send a strong and clear signal to Senate Republicans that the American people demand lower drug prices now and they must take swift action.

The bill would:

- Require Medicare to negotiate drug prices on the 250 highest price drugs, including insulin.
- Rein in the outrageous prices charged by the powerful pharmaceutical corporations.
- Make the lower drug prices available to all insured Americans, not just seniors
- Cap out of pocket expenses for Medicare beneficiaries at \$2,000
- Use the savings to expand Medicare coverage to include hearing, dental and vision.

Fifty million Americans say they didn't have enough money to pay for their prescription drugs at least once in the past year. Meanwhile, pharmaceutical corporations are taking in billions of dollars in profits and hiking drug prices at more than five times the rate of inflation.

A bipartisan majority of Americans support this bill, with nearly 9 in 10 people saying they want Medicare to have the ability to negotiate lower price drugs. Nonpartisan experts say that Medicare price negotiations would reduce drug prices by as much as 55 percent.

The National Alliance for Retired Americans is asking members to contact their Representatives to get the bill adopted in the House. Please see the attached fact sheet.



The Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans Executive Board and Newsletter Editors would like to extend all MiARA Members Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year!

MiARA Executive Board Members

Dick Long, President (UAW)

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Jay McMurrin, 1st Vice-President (USW)

Charles Robinson, Treasurer (AFT-MICHIGAN)

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Jack Schneider (MEA)

Editor: Jack Schneider
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House Drug Price Negotiation Bill

On September 19, 2019, House Speaker Pelosi and House Democrats released the **Lower Drug Costs Now Act** (H.R. 3). The bill would allow the government to negotiate lower drug prices for people covered by Medicare and private insurance.

H.R. 3 repeals the so-called "noninterference" clause, which currently prohibits the government from negotiating lower drug prices and requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate on up to 250 of the most expensive drugs, including insulin. The negotiated amount would be available to all payers, thus allowing workers covered by employer-sponsored plans to also benefit from the price reductions.

Limiting Prices to International Drug Index

Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. H.R. 3 would bring drug prices in the U.S. more in line with those in other industrialized nations. Prices would be limited to 120% of the average costs of the drug in six other countries (Canada, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia and Japan).

Excise Tax on Drug Corporation Profits

Drug corporations that refuse to negotiate or those that don't comply with the agreement would be subject to a 65% to 95% excise on their gross sales.

Limit Increase in Drug Prices under Medicare Part B and D

The proposal will also limit the increase in drug prices under Medicare Part B and D to the cost of inflation. The base year is set at 2016; thus, drug companies that have increased their prices since then would have to lower them or pay a rebate to the government.

Cap on Out-of-Pocket Drug Spending under Medicare

The bill caps out-of-pocket spending for Medicare beneficiaries at \$2,000 a year. Currently, there is no cap on out-of-pocket spending. Out-of-pocket spending continues to escalate each year, particularly for specialty drugs -- high-cost prescription medications used to treat complex, chronic conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and cancer. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the average out-of-pocket spending for 28 of 30 specialty drugs is \$8,109 per year.

Additional Medicare Benefits

Savings from the negotiations will be reinvested into Medicare and could be used to expand benefits, such as providing hearing, dental and vision coverage.