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 **The Professional Retiree**

 AFT-W Retiree Council

 April 2022

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**From Your Vice-President and WCOA Representative, Bob Beglinger, including news from the Wisconsin Coalition of Annuitants (WCOA):**

With the arrival of spring, we recently completed the spring elections.  Whereas these are notoriously low turnout elections, they are the elections that in many ways most directly impact our lives.  It is the spring elections that elect those local officials that determine such things as the policies of our school district, the availability and quality of our police and firefighting services, the condition of our local roads, the safety of our water and sanitation services, our local property taxes, as well as other local concerns.  Because these tend to be low turnout elections, your vote has even more impact than in high turnout elections, so it is important to familiarize yourself with the candidates and the issues and be sure to get out and vote in all elections.

Along this same line I want to offer a special thanks and congratulations to the growing number of AFTW Retirees who have chosen to continue to lead their life of service to their community by running for local office.

In addition to running for local office, I know many of you continue to put in countless hours serving AFTW on the COPE, working with the local political party, working on campaigns, working for civic minded groups like Veterans For Peace, POWRS, the WIARA, and the list goes on.  For all your efforts I want to offer a special thanks, not only from me but also from your Union.  It is this spirit of service to community and working together that makes our Union strong and helps build a better life for all.

Retirees are seeing a much-appreciated positive adjustment to their annuities this year.  Strong performance by SWIB has generated a 7.4% increase in the CORE fund and a 15% increase in the variable fund annuities.  Moreover, the strong performance in the CORE fund provides reserves which can help to moderate the potential of potential future shortfalls

The Wisconsin Retirement System has seen several changes this past year in terms of the leadership team and the Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Coalition of Annuitants provides members an excellent opportunity to find out more about the system and to ask questions of the leaders of the system.  Again, this year, the conference will be virtual and is free to all WRS participants.  Ordinarily the conference is an all-day event but because it is virtual it has been divided into two sessions, the first on May 5, and the second on May 19.

The May 5 session will feature John Voelker, secretary of the (ETF) Employee Trust Fund, the agency that administers the programs of the Wisconsin Retirement System including pensions and state health programs and a panel on health issues for the aging.  The May 19 session will feature leaders of (SWIB) the State of Wisconsin Investment Board, the agency that manages the investments of the WRS.  Again, registration is free and I would encourage all who are interested to register for these sessions.  Registration links for either or both sessions can be found on the <wicoa.org> website along with more information about the sessions. (See page 5 for the Agenda)

On a sadder note, I regret to inform you of the passing of our longtime friend and leader, Kathy Monaghan.  Her contributions to the Union cannot be overstated and we will all miss her leadership.  A scholarship fund has been established in her name and anyone interested in contributing can do so at AFTW.  Her unfortunate passing has created a vacancy on the retiree board, and anyone interested in serving should contact me or Kathy Kreul at the AFTW office.

I would also like to mention the loss of the services of Tim Hawks, longtime legal counsel for the Union.  Happily, the loss was due, not to Tim’s passing, but to his decision to retire.  Tim provided outstanding legal service to the Union for many years, and he will be missed by the many with whom he worked.  We all wish Tim the very best in his retirement and hope he has more time to enjoy those grandchildren, do a little gardening and perhaps spend a little time in the river fly fishing.

We are now entering a critical election season. It is extremely important that all people take an active role. Take time to meet the candidates, familiarize yourself with the issues, and most important of all, be sure to get out and vote.

**From WIARA, by Bill Franks, WIARA Retiree Council Representative**

On March 29, 2022, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) denied a request from Milwaukee-based Colectivo Coffee to review the contentious election process that resulted in a unionization vote last year. The Company issued the following statement **in response** to the NLRB’s ruling:

“We have decided not to continue our legal appeal and will commence to prepare to bargain in good faith with the union,” the company stated. “We have been, and always will be, committed to the success of our co-workers and bringing an exceptional experience to our customers.” In other words (my words), we have no legal basis to continue to stall and so we won’t.

Prior to the ruling during the week of (March 14-March 19, 2022), The Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans announced a **Week of Action** in which **the Alliance**in concert with the I**nternational Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 494 in Milwaukee and  IBEW Local 1220 in Chicago,** the Union Representing Colectivo Workers, and many others, would take the following actions as indicated **below:**

The week of March 14th: Monday - Wednesday, March 14-16, the WIARA and labor partners had conversations with workers and customers of Colectivo Coffee in Milwaukee. Conversation were had on Thursday, March 17th, with all the Colectivo locations in Madison, and Saturday, March 19th, all locations in Chicago.  Workers were asked to contact the union to join the campaign and customers were asked to sign a petition asking Colectivo to negotiate with the union.

I was at the Madison, State Street location. Labor Radio News covered the action and broadcast interviews the following day on FM 89.9 (WORT Labor Radio). The Building Trades Convention spilled over after their morning break and swole our ranks. Many different Unions and many of the usual suspects were there such as the South-Central Federation of Labor (SCFL) the Postal Workers and Building Trades.  The Alliance’s President Gary Mitchell and Executive Director Alex Brower lead these numerous actions. I represented the AFT-W Retirees Council, the NAACP & AFT-W 4848 (WPEC).

Since being designated by the AFT-W Retiree Council as a Liaison to the Alliance, I have attended (virtually) every Board Meeting and forwarded all Agendas, Minutes and Financial Statements to the Council. It it’s also my intention to have the Alliances Executive Director, Alex Brower, and President, Gary Mitchell, available to address our Council as well as the AFT-W State Federation at our earliest possible opportunity so that we may re engage with the work of the Alliance.

**COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) By Jeff Richter, Retiree Council Legislative/COPE Representative**

Hello fellow retirees! I’m Jeff Richter and I have been actively participating in the AFT-WI Committee on Political Education (COPE) on behalf of the Retiree Council. COPE is our venue as members to build our collective union voice in the state's political arena. COPE focuses on building relationships with political candidates and officeholders who share our values and will fight with us to realize them. COPE develops communication, information and activation efforts for connecting our fellow members and community allies with action opportunities for these political candidates and officeholders and our broader legislative objectives. We endorse those candidates, we support their efforts to win office, we connect our members to these efforts, and we co-govern with them when they win office. COPE also helps to coordinate strategy, ensuring that locals have the information (including on tactics) they need to advocate for worker-friendly budgets and other legislation.

So, I know that sounds like a vision statement and a high objective. It is! But I have to say of our COPE committee that it is a dedicated group that actively works throughout the year to refine our political reach and impact—both locally and statewide. In fact, as just one of those efforts, we have worked on recruiting and electing our AFTW members into local offices like school board members, city alders, county board members, and even mayors—with many successes!

The biggest challenge facing us in 2022 is activating our members and collaborating with our partners for the Fall elections that will cover Wisconsin’s state legislative seats, governor, and its eight US representatives and one of its US Senators. While most members think elections like these are all COPE does; it is not. We are constantly refining a layered communication campaign and, simultaneously, we are also implementing it. The COPE Committee is having a retreat at the end of April to work on bolstering COPE’s focus and finesse in the areas of member engagement and assuring our COPE structure, strategies and support resources are matched to the task of assuring our members are equipped for engaging and prevailing in the current political challenges.

“How can I be involved?” you ask. One way is to engage in the COPE Committee’s work directly by becoming a member of the COPE committee. Another way is to let me or John Yaggi (AFTW Program Director) know of your interest in engaging regionally so your former local, or other AFTW locals in your vicinity, know they can reach out for your help in the efforts they engage in as they come up.

Last, but not least, as retirees we may not find ourselves always available, emboldened, or physically able to do the boots on the ground tasks, phone work, etc., but we can provide donations to keep the political efforts we back funded for the battles as they arise. I personally consider it a privilege to be able to engage in COPE at all of these levels. Nevertheless, I was discouraged to find that without my monthly active member dues draw for draws of my monthly COPE contributions I now only receive a request for COPE contributions once a year with my retiree membership. Yes, I know I can contribute anytime, but it always seems to slip my mind until the annual reminder comes. Well now we have a link that we can go to anytime and make a COPE contribution by Credit or Debit Card or from a checking account via ACH: <http://donate.billhighway.com/AFTWICOPE>. I’m ADHD so I have set up a monthly reminder on my smartphone to donate; this frees my seemingly unlimited (though unfocused) attention capacity for the important other needs of COPE. Please consider joining me and the many other retirees active in the mission-critical work of COPE in whatever way you can.

In Solidarity, Jeff.

**AFT AD&D (Accidental Death and Dismemberment) Insurance Program now includes retirees.**

AFT officers have approved the inclusion of retired AFT members in the AFT’s AD&D program at the same coverage rate ($5,000) as active members.  This coverage is effective on January 1, 2022. The retired member needs to be in the AFT systems as a retired member.

This happened very quickly at the end of the 2021 year. AFT will be putting together communications and documents to explain the new benefit for retired members. We will send those out when we receive them.

**Article on Medicare by Roger Springman, AFTW Retiree Council Member**

Medicare: Where is it Headed?

"All is not well in River City" . . . to paraphrase a line from the "Music Man". Medicare is well known to seniors as it underpins health care planning and delivery in America. It sets the tone and standards for health care provided to 64 million Americans. What happens or doesn't happen to Medicare is a big deal.

Well, what is happening is not good . . . and Congress along with the President are "throwing it under the carpet" until forced to deal with it, again. Sound familiar? Ever since it was created in 1965, funding, administrative, and health care patches have been applied as the program increases in size, popularity, and sophistication. Annual spending for Medicare reached $776 billion in 2020 and will certainly reach $1 trillion around mid-century. With so much at stake, where is the program headed?

One of the biggest hopes for Medicare has always been privatizing; can't the private sector do health care cheaper and better? Not any real evidence of this. Do you remember the days of HMOs or Health Maintenance Organizations? That was a trendy option of 1990s. Now, Part C or Medicare Advantage programs are all the rage. Have you seen the ads? For a price, and a large one, they will take over your Medicare Traditional program and offer some added perks, (e.g. eyes, dental, exercise). Thanks to what is called "upcoding", one study found that Part C plan managers received $9 billion more than if their enrollees stayed in Traditional Medicare.

There is big money in health care and privatizing isn't stopping. The Trump administration began experimenting with something called DCEs . . . Direct Contracting Entities. These third party entities receive direct payments from Medicare to serve seniors, and they get to keep "risk sharing profits". Although aware of DCE dangers, the Biden administration has not taken action to stop this experiment . . .only manage it at the edges.

One of the big concerns of health care advocacy organizations is the sustained erosion of Traditional Medicare. Already, 26 million seniors have signed up for Part C programs and there may come a point when Congress and the hundreds of Wall Street and K Street lobbyists argue for complete privatization.

That would be a bad day for America and its seniors. We are a Nation "of, by, and for the people" and turning Medicare over to the private sector is the wrong direction for our future.

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Wisconsin Coalition of Annuitants
**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

Thursday, May 5, 2022 | 9:30am - 12:00pm
**AND**
Thursday, May 19, 2022 | 9:30am - 12:00pm

Please join us for this FREE 2-day event where we will be hearing from:

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| Edwin Denson | Executive Director/Chief Investment Officer, State of Wisconsin Investment Board |
| Laura Dresser | Associate Director of COWS, UW-Madison |
| John Voelker | Secretary of Employee Trust Funds |
| Jonette Arms | Asst. Administrator, Division of Public Health, Dept. of Health Services |
| Carrie Molke | Dir. Bureau of Aging & Disability Resources, Div. of Medicaid Services, Dept. of Health Services |

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| **AGENDA - May 5** |
| 9:30 | Welcome - Bob Schaefer, WCOA Chairman |
| 9:35 | *'WI Retirement System - Spring 2022 Update'*John Voelker, Secretary of Employee Trust Funds |
|   | *Question & Answer Session with Secretary Voelker* |
| 10:45 | *'Resources for Living Well as We Age'*Jonette Arms, Dept. of Health ServicesCarrie Molke, Dept. of Health Services |
|   | *Question & Answer Session with Director Molke and Administrator Arms.* |
| 11:45 | Closing Remarks - Bob Schaefer, WCOA Chairman |

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| **AGENDA - May 19** |
| 9:30 | Welcome - Bob Schaefer, WCOA Chairman |
| 9:35 | *'An Update for Today & Tomorrow'*Edwin Denson, State of Wisconsin Investment Board |
|   | *Question & Answer Session with Executive Director Denson* |
| 10:45 | *'Workers in the Wisconsin Economy:What’s Changing? What’s Next?'*Laura Dresser, UW-Madison |
|   | *Question & Answer Session with Director Dresser* |
| 11:45 | Blair Testin Award |
| 12:00 | Closing Remarks - Bob Schaefer, WCOA Chairman |

Go to wicoa.org for more information and to register for this free, online conference.

**FRIENDLY REMINDER**: If you have not paid your 2022 dues of $20 per year or life membership of $200, they are now due. Thank you for your continued support of our Retiree Council. Any changes in your email addresses are appreciated so we can communicate quickly with you in our rapidly changing environment.

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**please send Us your email address**