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NEWSLETTER – September 2008

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

About the Alliance:

The Alliance is a unique state/national organization working to create an America that protects the health and economic security of seniors, rewards work, strengthens families and builds thriving communities. Launched nationally in 2001 and in Wisconsin in 2005, it is a coalition of AFL-CIO affiliated unions, retiree groups, and community-based organizations dedicated to economic and social justice.

The Alliance is a voice for retirees and older Americans. Our goal is to educate, energize and mobilize seniors to make a difference through activism. The Alliance fights for:

A strong Social Security system that provides guaranteed benefits & protects families for life.

Health care seniors can depend on through Medicare.

Affordable and accessible prescription drugs.

Strengthening pension laws.

Affordable and accessible long term care

Message from the President

Leon Burzynski

By the time this newsletter is distributed, one the nominating conventions for both political parties may be completed. This means the air waves for all versions of media will be inundated with political ads.

The New Rage – Attack Ads

Sadly, the mud-slinging has already begun. Since negative ads that attack the person rather than the issue worked so well for the winner's campaigns in 2000 and 2004, the Rove playbook is in full swing. We have a new word, swift-boating, that has been added to our vocabulary.

We already witnessed an example with the comparing of Barack Obama to a couple of young, white Hollywood starlets. We have book written that is full of false representations about Obama. The author claims this is what he thinks, so it must be true.

Personally, I am totally disgusted with the political ads that sling mud about a person, rather than facts about the issues. I

do not care if the mudslinger is a Republican or Democrat. Either one makes me feel as though somebody ought to take a shower.

What Can Be Done?

First we, as retirees and seniors, can get educated on the facts. Not educated via the ads, but educated by the record.

It is not difficult to determine which candidate wants to dismantle Social Security, Medicare, and other programs so important to retirees. It is not a secret about which candidate knows that perhaps Bin Laden is somewhere in Afghanistan, not Iraq.

Once we gather these necessary pieces of factual information, we need to share them with our family members, especially those younger ones who have bought into the false premise that Social Security is going broke. We must be ready to take the position that we will not tolerate the negative pictures being painted by unscrupulous campaign managers.

How Can It Be Done?

When we were younger, we were warned to not talk politics or religion at parties. When it comes to politics, I suggest the opposite. When an acquaintance, under any circumstance, brings up any malicious slander that is the bread and butter of the mudslingers, I suggest a polite, but firm, correction. Fully armed with simple facts, we can disarm those who thrive on scandalous and salacious sounding details.

I realize there are some folks who live every moment thinking and believing the worst about people. To them, seeing someone in the news in a scandal is a thrill. Perhaps that is why the national Enquirer is the number one selling periodical. That should not prevent us from taking a principled stand against dishonest and false campaign ads.

Senator Russell Feingold has repeatedly demonstrated how to win an election with facts about the issues. It would be exciting and wonderful if the presidential campaigns followed his example.

MEDICARE PART D - The Saga Continues

Vivien De Back

The **Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act, (MMA)** was signed by President George W. Bush on December 8, 2003, after passing in Congress by a close margin of one vote at 3 A.M. Many of us now realize the devastating effect this law had on seniors in the form of Medicare Part D.

One month after passage of the bill, the ten-year cost estimate was boosted to \$534 billion, \$100 billion over the administration figure during debate. The inaccurate (false?) figure helped secure support from fiscally conservative Republicans who promised to vote against the bill if it cost more than \$400 billion. Later, it was learned an administration official concealed the higher estimate. By early 2005, the White House Budget Office increased the 10-year estimate to \$1.2 trillion.

From January 2006, when the program was launched by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, to October 2007, nearly 630,000 complaints were filed. That is not a surprise to many of you. The underlying issue is, what exactly are the problems with Medicare part D?

THE PROBLEMS:

- **The law prohibits Medicare from negotiating drug prices with manufacturers.** The results: cost of drugs under Part D are 48% higher than those negotiated by the Veterans Administration.

- **Drug companies are reporting record profits.** Since Part D was implemented, drug costs are much higher than predicted and these profits are gained at the expense of seniors.
- **Drug companies are charging seniors 20% more than they charge the state for people under Medicaid.** For each of the last three years, prices increased at more than twice the rate of inflation.
- **The system is so complex and confusing that few can understand it.** In Wisconsin, there are over 50 different plans from which to choose.
- **You are locked in for a year.** Once you figure out which plan is best for you, even though companies can change formularies and prices every seven days or go out of business, you are stuck with the plan.
- **There is the infamous "coverage gap", now called the "donut hole."** Seniors are required to spend \$4,050 out-of-pocket on drugs. And nowhere in the 2008 edition of "Medicare and You", will you find this information about the gap.

THE SOLUTIONS

1. **Create a Medicare-operated drug plan that mandates drug price negotiation.** This will reduce the cost of covered medicines. The plan also will encourage the use of more affordable drug equivalents consistent with safety and effectiveness of such medications.
2. **Reduce administrative costs.** Private insurers spend

9.8 to 15 percent of the drug benefit's total dollars to administer their programs, while it cost Medicare less than 2 percent of the total cost to administer hospital and outpatient coverage.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ❖ Ask your Senator and Congressperson to support these solutions.
- ❖ Ask the Congressional candidates running in November if they are willing sponsor bills to address the problems of Medicare part D.
- ❖ Write a letter to your local paper. Tell the story of your problems with Medicare part D.
- ❖ Ask neighbors to support candidates willing to commit to correction of the Medicare part D problems.
- ❖ Register to vote or, if you moved since you last voted, inform the Board of Elections in your community.
- ❖ Vote by absentee ballot to avoid the long lines in November.
- ❖ **November 4, 2008 is Election Day:** Please Vote and consider the congressional and presidential candidates who will strengthen and improve our "safety net" programs - Social Security and Medicare.

ALREADY IN THE DONUT HOLE?

See the article on page three about the **CWAG One Stop Shop** program to provide members with the lowest prescription drug prices from the United States, Canada and other approved international pharmacies.

ALREADY IN THE DONUT HOLE?

There is something you can do if you are already in the donut hole or will get there before December. You can take advantage of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) **One Stop Shop** program to provide **members** the lowest prescription drug prices from the United States, Canada and other approved international pharmacies.

One Stop Shop is brought to you in partnership with two existing Canadian suppliers, Canadian Pharmacy Services and Extended Care Pharmacy. They joined forces to better serve members of all ages. Now you have options when you hit the Donut Hole or if a medication is not covered by your plan. This new **One Stop Shop** will meet all your needs. **You must be a member of CWAG to take advantage of this program.** It will cost you \$25 per household, per year to join.

Individual Membership

People of all ages are encouraged to support CWAG as an individual member. Members will receive up-to-the-minute legal and legislative information as well as information about CWAG events and programs. Cost: \$25 annually for a household.

The CWAG Member Services team focuses on leadership development, information sharing and empowerment of seniors to further establish and maintain the CWAG's grassroots advocacy efforts. The Member Services team provides assistance and advocacy to members in dealing with the high cost of prescription drugs.

For member information contact Glenna Schumann at 800.366.2990 or 608.224.0606, ext. 326. You can also email glennas@cwag.org.

13TH ANNUAL SENIOR POWER LUNCHEON FOR WISCONSIN ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS

DATE: Monday, October 13, 2008
TIME: 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
(Lunch at 11:45 a.m.)
PLACE: Wyndham Milwaukee Airport Hotel and Convention Center
4747 South Howell Ave,
Milwaukee, WI

The honorable United States Senator, Russ Feingold, will be the guest speaker. The Power Luncheon is the major annual fundraising event for the WIARA. It will honor people active in three categories: Community, Labor and Public Service. This year's honorees are:
Leslie "Buzz" Davis, Patricia Jerominski, Congressman Steve Kagen, Marilyn "Mike" Nemeth, and Ronald "Red" Platz.

The Power Luncheon is sponsored by the Independent Care Health Plan (iCARE), and the Forest County Potawatomi Community Foundation.

The cost of the lunch is \$75.00. A table of eight (8) can be reserved for \$600.00. Organizations can reserve an exhibit table for \$150.00. There will also be an ad booklet for the Power Lunch. To participate in the Senior Power Lunch or receive additional information, please contact Cher Kuss at the WIARA office (414-771-9511).

Visit our website at www.wisconsinara.org

JOIN THE WISCONSIN ALLIANCE HELP SUPPORT OUR ACTIVISM FOR SENIORS

The Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans is a senior activist organization. Your membership means you are supporting an organization with volunteers on the front line fighting for improving Medicare Part D under Medicare and to preserve Social Security.

Send your membership to:

WI ARA, 6333 West Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI 53213

Name _____ Phone _____

Address, city, zip _____

Email address _____

_____ \$10 membership

Additional Donation _____ \$10 _____ \$20 _____ \$30

Wisconsin Alliance Plans 2008 Fall Election Activities

The Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans (WIARA) has been preparing for the upcoming 2008 state and federal elections. We are a member of WI AFL-CIO Labor 2008. The WIARA will communicate election activities and endorsements to its 65 affiliates and individual members through the bimonthly newsletter, the mailing database, the website, and its "quick response" master email list.

The following forums have been scheduled in partnership with the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups. All candidates have been invited to attend the forum in their district. Some candidates have not confirmed their attendance.

- **47th State Assembly**, Friday, September 12th, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m., Deforest Community and Senior Center, 505 N. Main St. - winners of Democratic and Republican primaries.
- **8th Senate District**, Monday, September 15th, 9 a.m. - 10 a.m., Washington Park Senior Center, 4420 West Vliet St., Milwaukee - Sheldon Wasserman vs. Alberta Darling.
- **18th Senate District**, Thursday, September 18th, 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m., Oshkosh Senior Center, 200 North Campbell - Jessica King vs. Randy Hopper.
- **54th Assembly District**, Sept. 18th, 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Oshkosh Senior Center, 200 North Campbell, Gordon Hintz vs. Mark Reiff.
- **57th Assembly District**, Monday, September 22nd, 10 a.m.-11 a.m., at the Appleton Public Library, 225 N. Oneida St. - Penny Bernard Schaber vs. winner of Republican primary.
- **80th Assembly District**, Tuesday, September 23rd, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m., at the Monroe Public Library, 925 16th Ave. - Brett Davis vs. winner of Democratic primary.
- **30th Senate District**, Monday, September 29th, 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., at the Brown County Public Library, 515 Pine St., Green Bay – David Hansen vs. Chad Fradette, **followed by the 90th State Assembly** from 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - Karl Van Roy vs. Lou Ann Weix.
- **47th Assembly District**, Thursday, October 2nd, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m., at the Columbus Senior Center, 125 N. Dickason Blvd. - winners of Democratic and Republican primaries.
- **8th Congressional District**, Monday, October 6th, 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at the Thompson Community Center, 820 West College Ave., Appleton - Dr. Steve Kagen vs. John Gard.

If you are interested in getting involved with our election efforts, please contact Billy Feitlinger, Executive Director, at 414-771-9511 or email bfeitlinger@hotmail.com.

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