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Milwaukee, WI 53213  
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[www.wisconsinara.org](http://www.wisconsinara.org)

**NEWSLETTER – September 2010**

*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 protect the health and economic security of seniors, reward work, strengthen families and build thriving communities. Launched 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

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### Message from the President

Leon Burzynski

As we move into the mid-term election season, the political claims are reaching a fever pitch. I would prefer at least some of the rhetoric be based on reality. If the past few months are any indication, that is not a possibility.

With this in mind, I believe retirees and seniors need to take a step back and listen closely to what many candidates are proposing for us. If you missed recent news reports, retirees are in the cross-hairs of several candidates.

There are dozens of candidates campaigning on cutting or discontinuing Social Security and Medicare. Of great importance is the proposal to change the Social Security cost of living calculation to a "progressive price index," rather than continue the method now being used.

Why is this a concern? Take a moment to consider what has happened to payrolls over the past forty years. Every study shows hourly pay has not kept pace with inflation. This means your 2010 dollars are worth less, when adjusted for inflation, than those same dollars in 1972.

Economists Dean Baker and David Rosnick, in their report *The Impact of Social Security Cuts on Retiree Income*, stated the most frequently suggested formula change would result in cuts of 6.2% - 14.6% in monthly benefits, with the higher cuts being to those already receiving benefits.

If you were upset that there were no increases in monthly Social Security payments this year, think how you will fare under a proposed plan that will cut your monthly payment.

In Wisconsin, Congressman Ryan proposes to discontinue Medicare payments and give us vouchers to go buy our insurance from private insurance companies. He wants this to accompany the creation of private Social Security accounts in the stock market.

Under Ryan's plan, we can watch our nest egg turn to scrambled eggs on Wall Street while we attempt to find an insurance company that will provide coverage for medical conditions we may have.

There is hope. The WIARA celebrated the 75th birthday of Social Security with several birthday parties around the state. The

turn-out was great and we had decent media coverage.

I attended the celebration at the Wisconsin State Fair where our birthday cakes co-existed with the cream puffs. Hundreds of fair-goers stopped to get information and sign our petitions to save Social Security.

Theresa, a woman facing severe health challenges, spoke about her experiences with Social Security and how important it is to her. She is unable to work and it is her only source of income.

Since she is not of retirement age, she had to battle the bureaucracy of the SSI system. Theresa is a living testament to the value of Social Security as a social insurance program.

The value of Social Security to retirees is demonstrated in the fact that it is the primary source of income for 50% of its Wisconsin recipients. For over 25% of Wisconsin recipients, it is their only source of income.

On page two, Vivien De Back writes about ways to protect Social Security. Before you cast your vote, please determine how your candidates stand on protecting Social Security and Medicare.

## Celebrate 75 years of Social Security By working to protect and strengthen it.

Vivien De Back

Have you heard these statements? Social Security is broke, or the SS benefit age should be raised to save Social Security.

With all the misinformation floating around, how do we sort through the rhetoric and discover the truth about Social Security? Let's start with the FACTS from the Social Security office and its annual report.

Social Security is not broke. It is currently running a surplus of \$2.5 Trillion and projected to have a surplus of \$4.6 Trillion by 2023. If nothing is done, the Congressional Budget office estimates the fund and payroll taxes will cover full payment of benefits until 2043. This gives us 33 years to resolve the financial issues that may exist.

As for raising the retirement age for Social Security, it is already scheduled to increase from 66 to 67. It would be morally wrong to raise it further. Raising the retirement age is a benefit cut that places the greatest hardship on older Americans in physically demanding jobs or who become unemployed and are unable to find other employment. A recent proposal to raise the retirement age to 70 is, in actuality, a 15 percent cut in benefits.

Those who believe we are in crisis offer solutions ranging from eliminating Social Security altogether to privatizing Social Security and placing the funds in the hands of Wall Street. I think you will agree neither of those are acceptable.

Eliminating Social Security would bring incredible poverty to many in the elder generation. The recent crash in the stock market clearly illustrates why this should be a non-starter. However, there are solutions that make sense.

The simplest solution is to make everyone pay their fair share. If the very rich paid taxes on all of their earned income, Social Security would be sustainable for decades to come.

At the present, high earners only pay Social Security taxes on the first \$106,000 of their earned income. By paying Social Security on all their earnings, like 94% of Americans do, the wealthy would be required to pay their fair share. This proposal would impact only 6% of the wealthiest Americans and extend the solvency of Social Security well beyond 2043.

Living longer has its consequences. One is that more dollars may eventually be needed to assure coverage of retirees by the Social Security Trust Fund. Many wealthy people will yell, "Oh no, not more taxes." In response, I say, "Let's not mince words."

The payments into Social Security today are unfair to those working Americans who pay FICA taxes on all their earned income. Let us all, rich and poor, pay our fair share. By making these small adjustments to Social Security, future generations will be able to receive the entire benefits they have earned and fully deserve. Alternatives such as cuts in benefits or an additional raise in the eligible age should not be on the table.

Finally, let's tackle two myths continuing to surface regarding Social Security.

**Myth One: The SS trust fund has been raided and is full of IOU's.**

**This is False!**

The Social Security Trust Fund contains interest-bearing U.S. Treasury Bonds backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government. This is a legal

requirement Congress instituted when the program was enacted.

The Founders of Social Security were well aware of the risks associated with Wall Street investments. They selected U.S. treasury bonds as a conservative and safe place for reserves for the same reason many Americans do: The government has never missed a single interest payment on its debt.

**Myth Two: Social Security adds to the deficit.**

**This is not just wrong — it's impossible!**

By law, Social Security's funds are separate from the budget, and the program must pay its own way. This means Social Security cannot add one penny to the deficit and never has. It has also never missed a payment to a beneficiary.

President Roosevelt, when he signed the Social Security legislation into law, said "We can never insure one hundred percent of the population against one hundred percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life, but we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age.

Today, millions of retirees live in dignity thanks to their monthly Social Security benefit payment. Over the decades, Social Security expanded to not only protect against the risk of poverty in old age, but also the economic risk of career-ending disability and the premature death of a worker.

Social Security has been an asset for 75 years. We can keep it that way and save millions of Americans from poverty in their last years.

# SENIOR POWER LUNCH

**Monday, October 11, 2010**  
**11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**  
**Wyndham Hotel - Milwaukee Airport**  
4747 S. Howell Avenue

## **Guest Speaker**

Barbara Kennelly, President & CEO  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare

You are cordially invited to join the **WI Alliance's 15th annual Senior Power Luncheon**. This annual event honors those individuals who have made significant contributions to the quality of life of Wisconsin's seniors. Honorees are selected for their contributions to their Community, Organized Labor and Public Service. This year's honorees are:

JERRY LA POINT  
*AFSCME International Retiree Representative*

STATE SENATOR DAVE HANSEN  
*WI State Senator from the 30th Senate District*

MARGARITA GARCIA-GUERRERO  
*Director, Near Southside Neighborhood  
Outreach Program*

JOSEPH KREUSER  
*Founding Member of WIARA, Union and  
Community Activist*

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

DAVID NEWBY  
*President, WI AFL-CIO*

CONGRESSMAN DAVID OBEY  
*Representing WI 7th's Congressional District*

### Sponsors:

Forest County Potawatomi Community Foundation  
WE Energies  
Johnson Law Offices  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare  
Cascino Vaughan Law Offices  
Wisconsin Physicians Service

The **WIARA** is a unique state/national organization working to create an America that protects the health and economic security of retirees and other older Americans. The Wisconsin Alliance is committed to strengthening and protecting Social Security, Medicare, Pensions and the rights of seniors. The annual Power Lunch serves as the major fundraiser for the WIARA.

**WIARA 6333 W. Bluemound Rd. Milwaukee, WI 53213**

**WISCONSIN ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS**  
**15th Annual Senior Power Lunch**  
**October 11, 2010**

**REGISTRATION FORM**

NAME/ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIPCODE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT PERSON NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Advertising - Please return form, payment and camera ready art by September 17, 2010.**

Mail checks to WIARA, 6333 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53213

Phone: 414-771-9511

Email: [wicara@att.net](mailto:wicara@att.net)

Cost for participation in the advertising portion of our booklet:

- Please update my ad from last year and use the same ad at the rate listed below.
- Insert my name to appear as a sponsor \$25
- Insert my organization's name to appear as a sponsor \$100
- Quarter Page Ad (2 wide X 3 ¾ long) \$200
- Half Page Ad (4 ½ wide X 3 ½ long) \$300
- Full Page Ad (4 ¼ wide X 7 ½ long) \$500

**Changes to your 2009 ad or a new ad can be sent electronically to Judy Burnick at [wicara@att.net](mailto:wicara@att.net).**

Camera ready copy artwork should be sized to conform to the dimensions listed. The ad booklet is 5 1/2" by 8 1/2" in size.

**Luncheon -(Lunch served at 11:45 a.m.) Please return by October 4, 2010**

Lunches are \$75.00 per individual (Or) \$600 per reserved table for 8. Please indicate each guest's meal choice. If names are not available at this time, please indicate the number of guests attending and return this form with your payment. Names may be submitted at a later date.

Number of guests attending.       We are reserving a table.

**Petite Top Sirloin Steak** (6oz) with mashed potatoes ,scallions and blend vegetables

**Baked Vegetable Lasagna** Baked in a marinara sauce with Italian vegetables

**Names of Guests: (Names & food order must be submitted by October 4, 2010)**

_____	<input type="radio"/> Steak <input type="radio"/> Lasagna	_____	<input type="radio"/> Steak <input type="radio"/> Lasagna
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No, I can't attend, please kindly accept this donation to WIARA \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# WIARA 15th Annual Senior Power Lunch

On Monday, October 11 2010, the **Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans** will celebrate its 15<sup>th</sup> annual Senior Power Luncheon. The Senior Power Luncheon honors individuals who have worked to enhance the quality of life for retirees and Wisconsin's working families. Receiving special recognition for their extraordinary dedication and service are *WI Congressman David Obey* and *WI AFL-CIO President David Newby*. The Power Luncheon will take place at the Wyndham Hotel by the airport from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Power Lunch is the Alliance's major fundraiser for the year. Money raised from the Power Luncheon is used to advocate on behalf of seniors on issues such as health care and Social Security. With Social Security now under attack by the bipartisan Fiscal Commission, *WI Alliance* is focused on educating and mobilizing retirees to fight back.

Leon Burzynski, president of the WIARA stated: "Educating the public that Social Security has never contributed one cent to the

federal deficit is one of our biggest challenges. Seniors need to know that, by law, Social Security cannot contribute to the federal deficit. We cannot and will not be railroaded out of earned Social Security benefits by individuals, including Congressman Paul Ryan, who want to cut benefits to balance the federal deficit".

With that in mind, Barbara Kennelly, CEO and President of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, will be the guest speaker at the Power Luncheon. She will join the Alliance as it recognizes and honors Joe Kreuser, Jerry LaPoint, Dave Hansen, and Margarita Garcia Guerrero, who have worked to enhance the quality of life for retirees and working families.

The cost of lunch is \$75 and to reserve a table for eight is \$600. Organizations/businesses can reserve an exhibit booth or place an ad in the Power Lunch Ad Booklet.

The **Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans**, an affiliate of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, is a unique

state/national organization working to create an America that protects the health and economic security of retirees, rewards work, strengthens families and builds thriving communities. It was launched nationally in 2001, and in Wisconsin in 2005, by a coalition of AFL-CIO affiliated unions and community-based organizations dedicated to economic and social justice for current and future retirees. The WIARA represents over 89,000 Wisconsin retirees. For further information regarding the Power Lunch or to become a member of WIARA please contact the WIARA office at 414-771-9511 or visit our website:

[www.wisconsinara.org](http://www.wisconsinara.org)

We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill  
(1874 - 1965)

## JOIN THE WISCONSIN ALLIANCE RETIREES CAN AND DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

**Our Mission** is to advance public policy that protects the health and economic security of older Americans.

**Our Goal** is to educate, energize, and mobilize retirees to make a difference through activism.

**JOIN** us on the **front line fighting** to preserve **Pensions, Social Security, Medicare**, and issues important to retirees!

Send your membership to: WI Alliance for Retired Americans 6333 W. Bluemound Road Milw., WI 53213

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10 Annual Membership Fee Enclosed Additional Donation: \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25

## CWAG Awards to Billy Feitlinger and David Newby

Leon Burzynski

Wisconsin Alliance Executive Director Billy Feitlinger was recently honored by the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) with the Alfred Hirsch Award for Outstanding Work as a Legislative Advocate. He has been the WIARA Executive Director since its founding in 2005.

As President, I have come to know Billy as a tireless worker in establishing the WIARA as a trusted voice on senior and retiree issues in Wisconsin. His organizational skills have been a key component in our successes at moving forward on issues such as Social Security, Medicare Part D, and health insurance coverage for retirees.

Congratulations, Billy, on the recognition of your lifetime of working for the interests of all of us.



Newby and Feitlinger with their awards from CWAG  
David Newby, the President of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, received the H. Conrad Hoyer Leadership Award. Under his leadership, the State AFL-CIO is recognized as a national leader in political action, innovative

workforce training, and economic development. He has dedicated his life to working for the interests of working people and their families.

He also was the prime mover behind the founding of the WIARA. It was his foresight that recognized the need to continue having a contact with union retirees. He realized the value of an organization that could mobilize retirees on the issues.

The WIARA appreciates the strong support we have received from David and the State AFL-CIO. Congratulations, David on your leadership award from CWAG.

September 2010 Newsletter



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