



Johns
Manville
Retirees
Association

September 2004

www.jmretirees.org

NRLN Writes Bush

The following is a July 25, 2004 letter from National Retiree Legislative Network president Jim Norby to President Bush concerning retiree medical and pension benefits.

Dear Mr. President:

...we are a relatively large, diversified, and dedicated group of retirees and pre-retirees. As such, we have made ourselves privy to, and become active in, the political process. A quick review of our Web site will inform you and the staff of who we are and what we do. (www.NRLN.org)

We must inform you of the following facts:

Older American retirees are not going to stand aside and let their former employers take what they have earned away from them now that they are in retirement. – We're talking millions of retirees, Mr. President.

They are madder than hell and are resolved to do something about it.

If you haven't been told, let us do so now – there are thousands and thousands of Republicans switching their party affiliation. May we suggest the staff take a close look at Florida in that regard? As we recall, that was a very, very close win for you in the last election.

The most recent polls have the election at nearly dead even. Without some action on your part to address the issues of retirees, you are going to lose a large number of voters that you, at one time, had safely in your camp. They feel that you have betrayed them, and we believe they are going to let you know their feelings in the polling place. It is very late. It is critical that you get on with it.

What do we suggest?

Sign the following pledge:

"I, George W. Bush, if reelected President of the United States, will support measures that will ensure that pension and retiree health insurance promises will be honored. I further pledge that I will support other measures that will provide retirement security for present and future retirees."

Send a clear message that you will undertake the task of overhauling the recently passed Medicare Prescription Drug Act. We can, and will, assist in that task.

Place language in your party's Convention Platform that supports the position outlined in the pledge.

Thank you, Mr. President. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A. J. (Jim) Norby

Join NRLN Jack Woodall

The Johns Manville Retiree Association is a member of the National Retiree Legislative Network and is looking for JM

retirees interested in becoming involved in the activities of this organization. The NRLN represents nearly 2 million retirees from US West, BellTel, Prudential, Raytheon, Monsanto, IBM and many more.

The NRLN seeks to secure federal legislation that will guarantee the fair and equitable treatment of retirees in private and public sector health and pension programs and which will improve the adequacy of benefits provided by such programs. NRLN is committed to

securing fair treatment for all retirees, regardless of the type of benefit program involved.

NRLN is setting up a grass roots program across the country, with a leader in each state who will be responsible for the advocacy of retiree issues with congressional candidates, incumbents, and the press. This is the heart and soul of NRLN - a grass roots advocacy network.

The JM Retirees Association has been assigned the states of CA, IN, LA and MS to locate JM retirees who are willing to serve as state leaders to promote the goals of the NRLN. So far, we have located two leaders from CA and one leader for IN. These leaders are: John Turbeville - Southern CA, Howard Harvey - Northern CA, and Richard Pierce for the IN.

Although several retirees in MS and LA have been contacted, no one has agreed to serve as a state leader for these states. If anyone is interested in serving as a state leader in MS and LA, they should contact Burt Emery at abemory@iopener.net, or Jack Woodall at iwoodall@du.edu. The NRLN will provide a booklet outlining the responsibilities of a state leader and the objectives of the NRLN to anyone agreeing to serve. Additional information on current objectives will be provided on a regular basis.

Help protect your health and retirement benefits and become a state leader. Contact Burt or Jack immediately.

And if you live in a state other than the above, also let Burt or Jack know if you are willing to serve. and they will pass your name on to the NRLN leader in that state.

HMOs to Reap Huge Profits

Alliance for Retired Americans

Medicare Advantage (MA) plans will receive “significant benefits” as a result of government payments to participating plans provided by the 2003 Medicare law. Draft regulations estimate that between 2004 and 2009 the law will pay Medicare HMOs \$23.4 billion more than what they would receive without the law. Medicare beneficiaries are not expected to fare nearly as well.

During the same period, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services projects that the benefits beyond traditional Medicare for beneficiaries enrolling in MA plans will be valued at only \$1.4 billion.

“This is proving once again that the Medicare law favors HMOs and pharmaceutical companies at the expense of Medicare beneficiaries,” said George Kourpias, president of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

“HMOs will get \$23.4 billion from the federal government while beneficiaries will get only \$1.4 billion in benefits. This kind of wacky distribution of resources has to end. Seniors are going to strike back against this outrage when they vote in November.”

Under the new Medicare law, Medicare Advantage plans, formerly known as Medicare + Choice, are managed care plans that will offer Medicare beneficiaries all Medicare-covered benefits including drugs and can provide additional benefits. They will receive substantial subsidies to compete with traditional Medicare.

President’s Corner

John Leasher

I recently came across the following Benjamin Franklin quotation: “Make yourselves sheep and the wolves will eat you.”

Have we retirees made ourselves into sheep? Certainly the wolves seem to be out to eat us.

Almost every day we read about yet another company cutting retiree health benefits, increasing retirees’ health premiums and co-pays, cutting out retiree health benefits altogether, unloading pension obligations onto the already under-funded federal agency that insures our pensions, and more.

And what is our government’s response to these actions? More breaks for corporations. For example, the recently-modified Medicare Law gives subsidies and tax credits to employers even if they reduce or eliminate prescription drug benefits. Another example is the recent legislation that gave companies temporary pension funding relief through more liberal formulas, saving employers billions of dollars in payments.

While I could cite numerous other examples of retirees being harmed and corporations being helped, I think you get the picture.

So what should you do about this?

- Get passionate.
- Say, “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore.”
- Join NRLN—see Jack Woodall’s article.
- Volunteer for the national grassroots legislative committee (see Jack Woodall’s article in this issue).

- Call, write and visit your legislator to get his or her attention. Point out that the power of the senior vote should not be underestimated. (In 2000, 72% of registered seniors ages 65 to 72 voted, and this same group accounted for 25% of all the votes cast for president that year. Compare this with the fact that only 36% of registered voters ages 18 to 34 voted!)
- Write to your local newspapers and tell them what you think about what's happening to the 45 million current and future retirees in this country.

Or, be a sheep and let the wolves devour you.

Retiree Goes Into Politics

After a 33 year career with JM, Jared Ingwalson, Littleton, Colorado, is now a candidate for the Colorado State Senate and will be on the ballot in November. His Senate District 26 encompasses the South metro Denver area including Englewood, Littleton, Sheridan, Cherry Hills Village, and western Centennial.

When asked about why he chose to enter politics Jared said, "I had a great career with JM and many of the skill sets I learned working with talented people are applicable in the public sector as well." He further stated, "I have perspective that comes through experience and know I have more to contribute."

We wish him well.

Edward Bala (Waukegan 7/02)
 Barbara Etccl (WHQ, NY)
 Marian Selinski (Michigan)
 Don Thurber (Indiana)

Annual Meeting Fern Balaun

The annual meeting of the Johns Manville Retirees Association was held at the JM Credit Union Office, 8331 Continental Road, Littleton, CO at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 19, 2004. Members represented by over 900 proxies constituted a quorum and the meeting was called to order by President John Leasher.

A motion was made by Ann Rogers to approve the minutes of the prior annual meeting as presented. This was seconded by Burt Emory and approved unanimously by the board.

The president asked the acting secretary to cast one vote for the slate of officers and directors proposed by the nominating committee. This slate was unopposed. The following were elected to serve for two years:

Vice-President & Director	Bob Feeney
Treasurer & Director	Lou Stravato
Director	Burt Emory
Director	Rocco Russo
Director	Mike Sivetts

Many thanks to these people for agreeing to serve for the coming two years. A special thanks to the Nominating Committee for their work this year. In addition to those elected for the next two years, the following continue to serve terms which run to 2005:

President & Director	John Leasher
Secretary & Director	Bill Snyder
Director & Newsletter Editor	Fern Balaun
Director	George Kinzer
Director	Andy Sokal
Director	Jack Woodall

Many thanks to those of you who returned your proxy. This enables the Association to have the necessary representation of an official annual meeting and election.

The only item of business was a unanimous vote for Lou Stravato as Treasurer of the board and Rocco Russo to serve as a board member. Since there was no other business, the annual meeting was declared adjourned by President John Leasher.

In Memory

Denver:
 Russ Henderson
 Claude "Goldie" Mulholland
 Warren Parmenter
 Larry Romans
 Jack Verschoor

Manville:

Samuel Brazinsky, Sr.

Wilbur Brower

Alex Chunko

Ida Gaverick

Felix Gleason

Rance Kay

Rosario Rina