

RETIREE

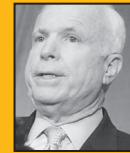
news & views



A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION • VOL. 13 NO. 10 • OCTOBER 2008

2008
ELECTIONSMcCain vs Obama: *Retiree Issues*

The following chart was prepared by the Alliance for Retired Americans. The ARA's Retiree Roadrunner, an eight-passenger van, is traveling through 13 key states, stopping at retiree town hall meetings, pancake breakfasts, candidate forums, and other events with information on the candidates and the issues so that seniors can make an informed decision when they go to the polls November 4. More information on the Retiree Roadrunner is available at www.retiredamericans.org.

Barack
OBAMAJohn
MCCAIN

Privatize Social Security. Convert the money set aside for Social Security into private, risk-based accounts subject to the fluctuations of the stock market

(S. Con. Res. 83, Roll Call No. 68, 3/16/06)

OPPOSES

SUPPORTS

Stop Medicare Advantage Subsidies. Privately run Medicare Advantage plans replace Medicare, drain more than \$10 billion annually from the Medicare Trust Fund, and cost all Medicare beneficiaries an extra \$2 monthly in premiums

(S. Con. Res. 21, Roll Call No. 103, 3/23/07)

SUPPORTS

OPPOSES

Fix Medicare Part D. Extend sign-up period for Part D drug plans to help retirees avoid late enrollment penalties

(H.R. 4297, Roll Call No. 4, 2/2/06)

SUPPORTS

OPPOSES

Protect Pensions. Give employees and retirees priority in bankruptcy claims for the value of company stock held in employee pension plans

(S. Con. Res. 83, Roll Call 68, 3/16/06)

SUPPORTS

OPPOSES

Fund Veterans' Health Care. Increase funding for veterans' health care by \$1.7 billion

(H.R. 1591, Roll Call No. 126, 3/29/07)

SUPPORTS

OPPOSES

Amid the avalanche of news about the collapse of Wall Street, I have some good news. Local 237 has reached a tentative contract with the city for our 9,000 Citywide members.

The contract provides for two 4 percent wage increases, compounded over two years—the first time in recent memory that our wage hike exceeds the rate of inflation. It also includes an additional .25 percent annuity and a \$200 contribution to the welfare funds for both working and retired members. And, very important, there were no givebacks.

Our negotiating committee did a great job. Ballots went out and will be counted October 10, and I am confident that the contract will be approved overwhelmingly.

Timing was crucial. We saw that the economy was deteriorating, and we thought it was important to reach an agreement quickly. We succeeded. And we did it on time—for the first time in at least a decade.

Events since then have confirmed that we were right. Mayor Bloomberg has warned that the money available for this deal may not be available for agreements with other unions because of the market. Since the contract is only for two years, when the city's finances become more stable, we can negotiate for improved benefits as well as higher salaries.

However, while we are pleased about our contract, the fact is we are faced with the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The cause of this crisis is not only greed and corruption, but a failure to regulate the markets and to en-



A Message from the President

force the rules, a failure to detect and punish corruption and greed.

It is important for us to note that Republican presidential candidate John McCain has praised Wall Street deregulation—and said in a recent article that the health care system should be modeled on Wall Street. There is no record of McCain ever voting for regulation, dating back to the early 1980s, a record he told the television program *60 Minutes* he has “no regrets” about.

McCain insists that despite the financial crisis, “the fundamentals of our economy are strong.” He continues to call for deregulation and still supports privatization of Social Security and allowing workers to invest a portion of their Social Security payroll taxes in the stock market. Imagine if your Social Security taxes had been invested in the stock market.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, on the other hand, has long favored stronger regulation and said that “a lack of oversight in Washington and on Wall Street is exactly what got us into this mess.” He opposes privatization of Social Security—and definitely does not believe the health care system should be modeled after

the financial industry, but, rather, supports a system that is regulated so that no one is denied quality, comprehensive health care.

At press time, the tentative agreement reached by Congress and the president on a \$700 billion bailout for the financial industry has been voted down. On one level, some are tempted to say, Why reward incompetence, corruption, and greed; let those responsible for the crisis pay for it. But this crisis is also threatening the homes, jobs, retirement savings, and more, of millions of average families. Local 237 retirees are fortunate to have a strong, defined-benefit city pension in addition to Social Security, but many other retirees depend on investment dividends to supplement to Social Security. This has become increasingly true as more and more employers switch to market-based 401(k) accounts. In addition, many pension funds have been hurt badly.

So the labor movement and retiree organizations agree that the government must intervene. Not by giving a blank check to Wall Street, but with a plan that benefits Main Street as well as Wall Street, that protects workers' pensions and financial security, and establishes regulatory and oversight mechanisms that can prevent future disasters. The plan that was voted down was not ideal, but it was better than the Bush administration's first bailout plan. An emergency rescue package to protect the American people is needed.

I urge you to examine where candidates stand on this economic crisis and to vote on November 4 for those who stand for you.

The elections are almost upon us and I want to urge you to be sure you're registered (the New York deadline is October 10) and be sure to vote November 4.

While we of course can't tell you how to vote, Local 237, the Teamsters and virtually the entire labor movement as well as the Alliance for Retired Americans and other retiree organizations are supporting Barack Obama for president and Joe Biden for vice president.

I know some of you were disappointed that Hillary Clinton didn't win the nomination. She's been good to us as a senator from New York, and we will continue to work with



Vote November 4. Vote Wisely.

By Nancy B. True
Director, Retiree Division

her. But we should follow her lead and give our strong support to Obama.

In this and past issues of *Retiree News & Views*, we provided the positions of both Obama and Republican candidate John McCain on issues important to retirees to help you make an informed decision based on issues, not “gut instinct.”

After examining their records and proposals, I believe Obama comes out way ahead. Obama's vision for the future and the role of government, and his proposals for action are what working families and retirees need.

Obama gets it. McCain does not.

Obama favors regulation, opposes privatization of Social Security and would eliminate taxes for seniors with incomes under \$50,000 as part of his program for retirement security. He would reform Medicare Part D, he oppos-

es privatization of Medicare, and has a plan for comprehensive, quality health care for all. He opposed the Iraq war from the beginning, when it was unpopular to do so, and calls for a timetable for withdrawal. He would end President Bush's tax cuts for those earning more than \$250,000 and use the money for education, health care, and rebuilding the nation's infrastructure, and lower taxes for almost everyone else; he is strongly committed to education for pre-kindergarten through college; and he has pledged to enact the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) to make it easier for workers to join a union.

McCain does not represent our values. McCain has voted with the Bush administration 90 percent of the time. He said he doesn't know much about economics, but that doesn't stop him from promoting deregulation, posing the “free market” as the path to economic success, and seeking to make Bush's tax cuts for the rich permanent. Like Bush, McCain advocates privatization of Social Security and health care. He supports the war in Iraq and is against setting a timetable to leave. He opposes the EFCA. McCain's policies would be a continuation of the Bush agenda, and we see where that's gotten us.

Vote on November 4, and vote wisely.

RETIREE NEWS & VIEWS

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2008 ELECTIONS

John McCain: No Friend of the American Worker

BY JAMES P. HOFFA

General President

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

John McCain told a real howler on Tuesday when he said American workers are the 'fundamental strength of the U.S. economy.' This is the same John McCain who's been kicking the crap out of American workers for the last 26 years. He voted to cut overtime. He voted against extending unemployment benefits. He voted to kill the minimum wage—19 times.

He called Social Security a "disgrace."

He supports sending American jobs overseas. "Lowering barriers to trade creates more and better jobs," he said. Yeah, that's what's been happening in my home state of Michigan.

He even crossed a strike line in January to appear with Jay Leno on *The Tonight Show*.

So it was amazing to hear John McCain say that workers are the strength of the economy.

The 1.4 million members of the Teamsters Union are the heart and soul of the middle-class of our nation. I understand what workers are going through during this Bush-McCain recession. John McCain has worked during his entire legislative career to undermine American workers.

His newly found respect for the Ameri-

can worker is nothing more than election year pandering.

It was even more unbelievable to hear him say he's going to "put an end to the reckless conduct, corruption and unbridled greed that has caused a crisis on Wall Street."

Did I hear that right? McCain and his pals were the ones responsible for the reckless conduct on Wall Street.

In 1999, John McCain voted for a bill to get rid of safeguards against reckless speculation by banks. That bill became law. It was sponsored by his good friend and top economic adviser, Phil Gramm.

You remember him, Gramm is the guy who said America is a "nation of whiners" facing a "mental recession."

Here's something else you should know about McCain's top economic advisor. In December 2000, Gramm further loosened regulations on risky financial deals by amending a spending bill.

There probably isn't a single person on the planet more responsible than Phil Gramm for the turmoil on Wall Street and the drop in housing values. And if McCain wins, there is no doubt that Phil Gramm would be his first pick as our next Treasury secretary.



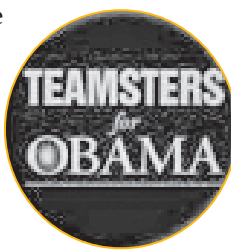
McCain = more of the same

McCain is right when he says we're the victims of greedy Wall Street speculators. Trouble is McCain's been fighting on their side ever since he got to Washington.

Do you remember the Keating Five? McCain was one of them. He intervened on behalf of his wealthy friend, Charles Keating, who went to prison for making bad loans, looting his own bank and leaving taxpayers holding the billion-dollar bag. McCain was lucky to get off with an admonishment by the Senate Ethics Committee.

So it isn't so easy to believe John McCain when he tells us he's going to clean up Wall Street for the American worker. His record says otherwise.

from the IBT web site, www.teamsters.org



Ayana Johnson to Leave the Retiree Division

After seven years with the Local 237 Retiree Division, Retiree Assistance Coordinator Ayana Johnson will be leaving on October 1 to accept a position as a consultant for a mental health organization in Queens.



Johnson, a professional social worker, helped Local 237 retirees and their families ne-

gotiate the sometimes overwhelming maze at the city retirement systems and health plans, and locate government agencies and community programs, at times visiting homebound retirees and retirees in nursing homes. She organized the Retiree Division's semiannual health benefits seminars and other benefit-related programs, coordinated the Retiree Division's Brooklyn community group, and in the recent period helped assist Local 237 working members who have applied for retirement disability.

In another aspect of the Retiree Division's program, Johnson, who is fluent in Spanish, taught a Spanish class and, more recently,

teamed up with Assistant Director Susan Milisits to teach a scrapbooking class.

In a letter to Local 237 retirees, Johnson wrote:

It is with bittersweet sentiment that I announce my departure from the Retiree Division. When I came to 237, I was a 24-years-young woman, out of graduate school for only one and a half years. I was very green and didn't know what to expect. What I found was a special group of people who have all made tremendous contributions not only to the city of New York, but also to my life.

Although my job is to provide assistance, perhaps unknowingly, you all have helped me in ways unimaginable. Whether it was a thank you card or a letter written in recognition of my efforts to sort out a problem, a word of advice about life, a hug, or just a warm smile, your kindness toward me is appreciated and will always be remembered.

Seven years later, I am an older and wiser young woman, not only shaped by the conversations and experiences that I have shared with many of you, but with a better understanding of what tremendous contributions older people have made to the world in which I live.



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the IBT political action committee

Call the Retiree Division
for enrollment forms, 212-807-0555

Obama on Social Security

"We ... have an obligation to protect Social Security and ensure that it's a safety net the American people can count on today, tomorrow and forever.

"Social Security is the cornerstone of the social compact in this country ... Coming together to meet this challenge won't be easy...

"It will take restoring a sense of shared purpose in Washington and across this country. But if you put your trust in me—if you give me 'your hand and your heart'—then that's exactly what I intend to do as your next President."

Health Plan Transfer Period

November 1-30 is the transfer period for retirees to change their health insurance plan if they wish to do so. The Office of Labor Relations will send retirees an application and information on the insurance plans available.

A transfer period for retirees occurs every two years. For those who choose to change their health insurance, the effective date for their new insurance coverage will be January 1, 2009.

Fla. Meeting with Officials on Health Care & Elections

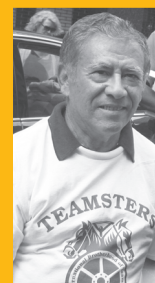
Florida retirees will meet with elected officials October 22 to discuss health care issues and the elections. The meeting, called by the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, will be at 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at the South County Civic Center, 16700 Jog Road, Delray Beach. Many elected officials have been invited and are expected to attend.

"We need a greater focus on our senior issues" in this critical election year, the meeting flyer says. The meeting will discuss how to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities have access to affordable health care and prescription drugs, with an emphasis on achieving single payer health care.

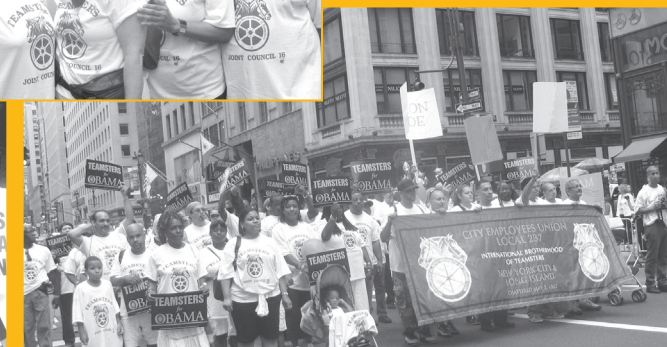
Local 237 retirees are ARA members and are more than welcome to attend the meeting. For more information, call FLARA president Tony Fransetta, 561-792-8799; ARA state organizer Jennifer Kenny, 321-277-9385; or Syd Bykofsky of the ARA Delray Beach chapter, 561-865-0679 or 561-312-4349.

Visit Local 237's web site
www.local237.org

Labor Day Parade 2008



Local 237
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Everyone Welcome!

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23
10:30 a.m.
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