

## **GOPHER RETIREE**

**Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO**

Volume 16, Issue 6

November-Dec. 2014

## **2015 Retiree Council Fun(d) Raiser**

The Twelfth Annual Fun(d) Raiser of the Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO, will be on  
Saturday, April 25, 2015, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
***FREE PARKING, FREE FOOD, FREE MUSIC!***  
*For Details See Story on Page 4.....*

## **GOP Now Controls US Senate, Minnesota House of Representatives**

This past November 4, voters decided to turn control of the United States Senate over to the GOP, leaving us with totally divided federal government. The US House and Senate are now Republican, the President a Democrat. Hang on for the ride!  
*(See "Eye on the New Senate," page 3.)*

At the same time, Minnesota voters handed the Minnesota House to Republicans, while the Senate and Governorship remain DFL. The Minnesota Senate was not up for election, but all Executive Offices stayed with the DFL. Senator Al Franken, Governor Mark Dayton, Attorney General Lori Swanson and Auditor Rebecca Otto all won re-election while DFL candidate Steve Simon will replace Mark Ritchie as Secretary of State. *(See Election Roundup Page 5.)*

## **Medicare Open Enrollment**

This year's open enrollment period for Medicare supplemental insurance will last until Sunday, December 7. For enrollees who encounter the "donut hole," there continue to be some improvements under the Affordable Care Act. For help in evaluating the best Medicare supplemental insurance for yourself and/or your spouse, contact the

**SENIOR LINKAGE LINE — 1-800-333-2433**



## **Dates of Interest**

**Retiree Council  
Board Meeting  
December 3**

**MN Legislature  
Convenes  
January 6, 2015**

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# Alienation-Driving Voting Decisions

“GOP tightens grip on white working class,” read the headline on an Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> *Wall Street Journal* story datelined, Aitkin, Minn. The story reported how Democrats have lost their hold on rural Congressional districts with largely white populations, where incomes lag the national average and college graduates are relatively sparse. The authors quoted men at Aitkin’s Birchwood Café who said they used to be Democrats, but planned to vote for Stewart Mills over Rep. Rick Nolan, in the 8<sup>th</sup> District Congressional election.

Rick Nolan won that election. But he didn’t win in House District 10B, and the state representative from the Aitkin area, labor champion Joe Radinovich, lost his seat. So the question remains: Why does the GOP, which opposes affordable universal health care and livable wages and would prefer privatization of Social Security and Medicare have any grip at all on working class voters? And why did so many working people in Greater Minnesota – not just around Aitkin – vote against their own economic interests, or not vote at all?

It wasn’t for lack of communication with labor voters. The Minnesota Labor 2014 program generated more home visits, phone calls, worksite conversations and mail than ever before. And the DFL voter outreach program was as strong as it’s ever been. But smaller union memberships in rural districts means that, however vigorous our effort, there may not be enough union voters to turn the tide. Same for the DFL.

But there’s more to the story. I don’t think enough people, whether in Greater Minnesota, the suburbs or the cities, belong to organizations where they think and act together on issues relating to their economic life.

Many people belong to congregations where they reflect, pray and act on matters of faith – often relating to sexuality and marriage. NRA chapters bring folks together around their 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights and Legion and VFW posts focus on veterans’ issues. But there are nowhere near as many citizen organizations addressing economic issues. Our

unions do that, drawing workers together to deliberate and act to make life better at work and in their communities.

But, if you don’t belong to a labor (or farmers’) union, where do you reflect and act together to assure a just reward for work, workplace safety, good health care and education, a healthy environment, decent transportation and a secure retirement for all? And where do you get accurate information about these and other matters?

Many complain about negative media ads and the deluge of viciously false mailers. But, if people aren’t receiving more accurate information somewhere else, on a regular basis – not just during campaign season – it’s easy to see how they could be swayed or, at least, confused or discouraged from voting.

I heard Sister Simone Campbell, one of the Nuns on the Bus, describe recent conversations with people who were confused and discouraged, felt alienated from politicians and weren’t going to vote.

“It’s that alienation, separation, division that’s driving people apart,” she said. And “We’ve gotta get into community so we’re connected to each other; so that there is an antidote from all of the money, all of the negativity, all of the ferocious stuff.”

Getting into community and connecting with each other: That’s called organizing. As union retirees, helping workers connect in unions is our focus. But, where that’s not timely or possible right now, we need to help form other kinds of democratic citizen organizations where working people can join together to learn and act to free themselves from the GOP grip.

In Solidarity,

*Bill Moore*

Bill Moore  
President

# EYE ON THE NEW SENATE

by Ed Rapp

We are not going to cry over the results of the election because we knew in advance what we were getting: *screwed* and we forget the other reasons.

The people also must have known what they were getting, since they rated Congress lower than either the Communist Party or used car salesmen, yet returned almost all Congresspersons to Washington in order to stop governmental operations and sell off vital national resources.

(These are the same voters who elected Obama to stop the wars and rescue the economy ... and now blame him for actually doing it.)

But, the EYE COLUMN has come across some secret plans of the Republican Party (A.K.A. the Koch Brothers Boardroom) to change the entire *standing committee* structure of the U.S. Senate.

(This is not exactly whistle-blowing since the Supreme Court also secretly plans to define these reports to the public as both treason and profanity.)

Here is the new structure as we discovered it (and as most Republicans are able to understand it):

THE HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR AND PENSION COMMITTEE becomes the new *Prevent Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee*.

THE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE becomes the new *Oil, Gas, Coal and Fracking Committee*.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE becomes the new *Destroy The Environment and National Infrastructure Committee*.

THE AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY COMMITTEE becomes the new *Anti Family Farm, School Lunch and Polluting Trees Committee*.

THE HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE becomes the new *Barbed Wire Fence and Privatized Government Affairs Committee*.

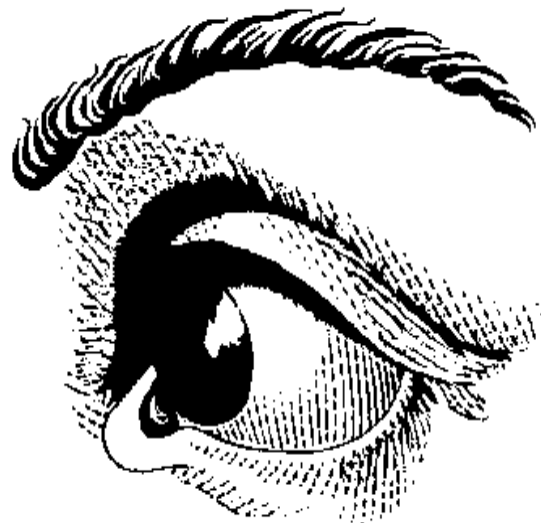
THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE becomes the new *Impeach Obama Committee*.

THE BUDGET COMMITTEE becomes the new *Spend The Trust Fund Committee*.

THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE becomes the new *Don't Tax When You Can Borrow Committee*, and

*All committees dealing with voting rights, civil liberties, healthcare, immigration, poverty and individual freedoms are hereby abolished.*

###



# Twelfth Annual Fun(d) Raiser To Be April 25, 2015...

The Twelfth Annual Fun(d) Raiser of the Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO, will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2015. It will again be at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 Hall, 1681 Cope Avenue, Maplewood, MN 55109. Thanks again to the Sheet Metal Workers for the use of their hall.

## NOTE CHANGE OF TIME!

This year the event will start at 3 p.m. and end at 7 p.m. Last year we tried 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., a change from prior years. This year we'll try yet another option.

All of the other traditional aspects of the event will remain much the same — probably one or two items added to the **free food** menu, but **free parking** and **live music** will continue, as well as the **hourly raffles** and the **silent auction**.

## RAFFLE TICKETS AVAILABLE!

Tickets for the **Statewide Raffle** should be available by the time you receive this **GOPHER**. Prizes for the raffle remain the same:

**First prize—\$300**

**Second prize—\$200**

**Third prize—\$100**

**Fourth prize—Two \$50**

The drawing for these prizes will be held just before the conclusion of the Fun(d) Raiser. If you have holiday parties coming up and would like to have tickets, please contact the Retiree Council office at 651-227-7647, ext. 121 or 1-800-652-9004, ext. 121.

Affiliates will be receiving a letter with a copy of the flyer and a book of tickets but probably not until after the beginning of the year. But it is **TOTALLY APPROPRIATE** to get raffle tickets early and sell them at your holiday events.

Lois Wendt and her large committee of volunteers are busy planning — **Thanks To Them!!**

###

## RETIREE COUNCIL ON-LINE

### WATCH THESE VIDEOS

- **Six Day Mail Delivery**
- **Is Medicare At Risk?**
- **Public Pensions At Risk**
- **Dayton's Record on Education**
- **The Minnesota State Capitol Restoration**
- **The New Legislative Office Building**
- **Why the Minnesota Capitol Restoration Project Is Needed NOW**
- **Retirees Stay Involved**

To view these videos and others—

Go to: [www.youtube.com/MNRetired/videos](http://www.youtube.com/MNRetired/videos)

The Retiree Council's *Facebook* site:

<http://www.facebook.com/mnaflcioretired> is a good place for labor retirees to get together.

You can also see excerpts of the old—and new—*Voices* on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/mnretired](http://www.youtube.com/mnretired)

Basic information about the Retiree Council, as well as certain timely news, is also on-line at [www.mnaflcio.org](http://www.mnaflcio.org) — click on “About Us” and then on “State Retiree Council.” You will find the *Gopher Retiree* there too.

If you need help or have questions about accessing any of the internet sites, contact LES Webmaster John See at 612-624-6039.

# ELECTION ROUND-UP ITEMS

## **How Did Retiree Volunteers Do?**

Thanks to all who door-knocked, phoned, wrote postcards, pounded lawn signs, wrote letters to the editor or otherwise devoted time and energy to the Minnesota Labor 2014 campaign. All the numbers aren't in yet, but it's reliably estimated that, during the final GOTV phase alone, retirees filled over 400 volunteer shifts. During September and October, records show 154 shifts worked by 31 people who listed their organization as the Minnesota State Retiree Council. Beyond that, the member communication efforts of individual unions relied heavily on retiree volunteers, and many regular volunteers at area/regional labor federation phone banks were retirees – to say nothing of those who took packets of postcards to write at home.

The Political Team met after the election to assess the retirees performance in Labor 2014. Some of the points that emerged:

Campaign Schools and our abbreviated Convention version of the Campaign School. A number of retiree activists attended the full-day sessions held around the state and felt it to be an excellent program. The abbreviated version at our convention enjoyed enthusiastic participation by most delegates.

Phone banks. Lots of the phone bankers all around the state were retirees. Many say they liked using the new virtual phone bank technology which eliminates the need to fiddle with paper lists and speeds data entry, but doesn't rush the caller and cause dropped calls like the predictive dialer system. Even more than in the past, many calls went unanswered either because people declined to answer or really weren't home.

Brief YouTube video election pieces. The transition of *Voices of Experience* to short YouTube videos rolled over into the elections with a number of issue spots. The most "views" went to the bits on the State Capitol Renovation and the new State Office Building featuring retired Supreme Court Justice Paul Anderson. Grateful applause to tireless videographer Rod Anderson for his work on the videos. (*See previous page for listing of videos and how to get to them.*) This is certainly a project to continue work on between now and 2016, and hopefully it will be even more exciting by then.

Post Card Project. This involved sending hand-written post cards to union retirees in the 18 Minnesota AFL-CIO targeted legislative districts. Retiree volunteers who do not like to phone and/or cannot door-knock

appreciated being able to participate in the election effort. For the future, if we send a recruitment post card to known volunteers or likely volunteers, it needs to be sent really early.

Other. The Retiree Council senior days at the Minnesota State Fair were deemed very successful.

###

## **And Now, Republicans "At Work" In The Minnesota House...**

When the final tally was in, Republicans had picked up eleven seats in the Minnesota House of Representatives, resulting in a 72-62 majority for the GOP. They elected former Minority Leader Kurt Daudt to be Speaker of the House, and Representative Joyce Peppin to be Majority Leader. DFLers elected former Majority Leader Paul Thissen to be Minority Leader for the next session starting January 6, 2015.

The soon-to-be Speaker Daudt said Republican priorities in the session will be jobs and the economy, transportation, and loosening state regulations.

On November 18, Speaker Daudt announced a new committee structure that reduces the number of committees and divisions to 26 from the 30 that the DFLers had. Chairs of the committees were also announced.

Minority Leader Thissen immediately commented on the elimination of the Early Childhood Committee which had been so important in making improvements for the young during the 2013-14 session.

Some of the new committees seem to flow from campaign themes or long-standing Republican agenda concerns. For example:

GREATER MINNESOTA ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE to be chaired by Rep. Bob Gunther. The rural vs. urban theme perhaps? Ten of the eleven GOP seats picked up were in rural areas.

JOB GROWTH AND ENERGY AFFORDABILITY POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE to be chaired by Rep. Pat Garofalo. What mischief will this committee be up to? The mind boggles.

It will probably be a very long two years ahead of us...

###

## **THE SILVER SCAM**

# **“ Earnings Stripping”**

By Ed Rapp

What scam probably has more victims than any of the rest of the hundreds of swindles perpetrated on the public?

**No, you’re wrong! It’s not *identity theft* or even *pyramid* schemes. In fact, it’s not even illegal, although President Obama called it “gaming the system,” and added, “I don’t care if it’s legal, it’s wrong.”**

It’s a thing called *tax inversion*, which involves moving your headquarters (but not your actual corporation) overseas.

It affects every American taxpayer because they each must make up the billions of dollars of tax revenue lost. It has an additional cost in jobs lost by the people who built and refined the organization that is now letting them go.

A study by *Citizens for Tax Justice* looked at 288 Fortune 500 companies that turned a profit in each of a recent four-year period. Although the corporate tax rate in this country is 35 percent, those companies paid an *effective rate* of 19.4 percent.

And it further found that two-thirds of the corporate tax dodgers “paid higher *corporate tax rates* to the foreign governments than they paid to ours.” (Italics ours).

**So where are they saving money? Well, it’s a thing called *earnings stripping*, whereby a foreign parent organization loans large amounts of money to its *subsidiaries* back in the US. Then they take a dollar-for-dollar INTEREST DEDUCTION ON THE MONEY IT LOANED TO ITSELF.**

This fits every available definition of outright fraud. Someone has to get the SILVER SCAM AWARD for scamming every taxpayer in the country.

We have selected Burger King, because the *whoppers told* by the US Chamber of Commerce in their defense dwarf the *whoppers sold* by the fast food company itself.

In a recent poll conducted by CNBC, 70 percent of the respondents said it was “very important” that corporations pay their “fair share” of the tax burden. If the Democrats had run on this issue alone, the Senate may not have fallen to the Republicans.

###



## **A hidden benefit in door knocking and phoning: a good laugh.**

By Tom Beer

It's said that money is the mother's milk of politics. So door knocking and phone banks must be the white residues on the upper lip, the dribbles down the chin.

Us union volunteers, retired and otherwise, do what we often don't want to do – phone and walk and speak to total strangers. Talking to one's own union members is easier, but not always practical if many unions are involved, such as in the recent general elections. And talking to strangers is often, well, challenging.

The necessary conversations with voters start with a democratic premise. We are all voters. Usually a way can be found to connect. Something clicks; perhaps it's a mutual friend, or a dislike or deeply felt belief you share. Then you're off and running, talking like old friends.

I was helping an endorsed state senator some years ago canvas a big piece of his district using an elaborate scheme of leapfrogging up and down the city blocks, three or four or five of us covering as many houses as possible, the candidate running behind us and ahead of us ready to persuade.

A short script had been provided. It contained icebreaker things to say, the candidate's message, and space for feedback - "Are you a registered voter?" "Any particular issue you are concerned about?" "Would you like to speak to the candidate?"

As I trudged block after block, passing and being overtaken by campaign workers and the candidate, I came to a modest home where a man looked out through his front screen door. I didn't need to knock.

"Good morning sir," I began. "I'm a volunteer for state senator X." "Are you a registered voter?" He was. He had a serious face, open and intelligent. I prepped my clipboard questions and rapidly went through them. He seemed informed, interested and friendly; his responses cued my brain to ask a last question in slightly altered form. "Senator X is in the neighborhood today. Would you like to see him?"

A half smile crossed came over his face. As he leaned closer to the door screen he said in a low voice: "Only if it's at the end of a rope."

I almost laughed, but found a come back. "Well then, how about a lawn sign." He chuckled. "No, certainly not."

The senator went on to win the election; in fact he's still in the Legislature, and the canvas that day helped him win. But what I remember most about the day was the man at the door and his wry remarks. Talking to strangers, even ones who disagree, isn't always so bad.

# # #

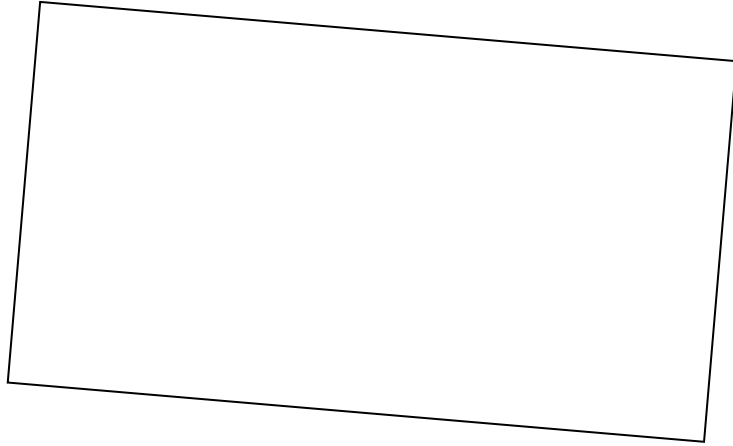
### **GOPHER RETIREE**

We need your help in getting the ***Gopher Retiree*** to your members. If you can run a few copies of the ***Gopher Retiree*** for the labor retirees who don't have a computer, and then find out from them if they would like to get it by US mail, or can get it by internet, that is a great help.

Then we need to get addresses for mail or email. If email would work, send the email address to:

**lwilliams@mnaflcio.org**

Lori Williams can also take US mail addresses to add to the mailing list.



A strong, united voice for Minnesota's retired workers.

E-mail: [retirees@mnaflcio.org](mailto:retirees@mnaflcio.org)

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**Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO**

### **Editor's Note:**

This is an informational publication — and is the official newsletter and property of the Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO. For information, contact the Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO. Address: 175 Aurora Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55103. Phone: 651-227-7647 or toll-free 1-800-652-9004.

### **Volunteer!**

Join our Rapid Response Political Action Volunteers. Contact information below!

Call: 651-227-7647

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