

# Committee of 13 Newsletter

for your secure future

Spring 2011

## Good news: Key bill attacking pensions laid over after strong opposition from pension administrators, cities and counties.

SF 813 was so far off process that even the conservative members of the Senate committee balked. Introduced by outstate Senators Gretchen Hoffman and Mike Parry, it completely circumvented the usual route to committee through the Pension Commission. The bill would have forced teachers and other public employees to boost their pension contributions by 3 percent—while cutting the employer's share and thus state funding by 3%, tipping the level playing field so that employees pay a much heavier burden. Not surprisingly, C of 13, MFT59, Ed MN, AFSCME, MAPE and all three of the state-wide pension systems opposed the bill. But



*Senators  
Mike Parry  
& Gretchen  
Hoffman*

to the surprise of both Hoffman and Parry, the organizations representing school districts, cities and counties testified against the bill. Dave Bergstrom, executive director of the Minnesota State Retirement System, explained that SF 813 would make a higher portion of the contributions refundable when public employees leave, leading to huge costs down the road for the pension plans. The bill has been laid over and, like seven more pension-cutting bills, is not dead yet. ■

## Government shutdown averted US House works to privatize Medicare, replace it with high-cost vouchers

With a government shutdown averted, the US House is expected to vote soon on Rep. Ryan's (R-WI) proposed budget for fiscal year 2012. Ryan's budget, which has already passed out of committee, would replace Medicare with a costly voucher program. The Congressional Budget Office reports that, in the first year the voucher would apply, health care costs for a typical 65-year-old would be 'almost 40 percent higher with private coverage under the Ryan plan than they would be with a continuation of traditional Medicare.' The voucher scheme would likely double seniors' out-of-pocket healthcare costs, too. Don't let that happen. Join with other MPS retirees, to TAKE ACTION NOW!

Call 877-762-8762, the main congressional switchboard. Ask the operator to transfer you to your congressperson's office. Tell the staffer who answers the phone that you are a voter, you live in the district and you oppose efforts to dismantle Medicare. ■

## Senate majority strives to protect Social Security

Across the Capitol, in the US Senate chambers, the majority leader, Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV), is working to insulate Social Security from the wrecking crew. Reid has co-sponsored a bill, S.582, that would raise the number of Senate votes needed to cut Social Security and that bill needs your support!

Call the Senate Switchboard at 1-866-251-4044. You'll be given a choice of which of our state's two senators (Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken) to talk with. Please call BOTH it only takes a minute for each call.



Please tell the staffer who answers the phone, "I am a voter/constituent living in Minnesota. I am calling to tell the Senator that I vote and I oppose all cuts to Social Security. I urge the Senator to vote to protect Social Security by voting yes on the Sanders/Reid Social Security Protection Amendment S.582. That amendment to protect Social Security from risky cuts requires that any cut to Social Security be approved by a two thirds majority of the Senate." ■

[From President, Jay Ritterson](#)

## Leading the way to a safer, stronger pension— protecting our pension from further attack

The new majority in the MN House & Senate is busily ripping apart much of what we believed in and worked for during our years as educators in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

Across the country, the same destructive forces are using the same corporate playbook to silence community voices and dismantle public institutions. The anti-student, anti-teacher, anti-middle class legislation introduced in Madison, Wisconsin has been introduced in St. Paul, Minnesota and Columbus, Ohio, in Lansing, Michigan and in Washington, D.C.



This struggle, as our colleagues in Wisconsin are forcefully pointing out, isn't really about public budgets and tax rates. It's about power: who has it, how will they wield it and whose principles will define the world that our children and grandchildren inherit.

If we, as retirees with the freedom to work for a better future, want to let the Koch brothers—who are bankrolling the playbook and the players—to shape our shared future, it's time to get out the cribbage boards. However, if we want a vital democracy where an educated and well-informed citizenry shapes the future, it's time for us to again lead the way to a better Minnesota and a better future.



We don't have much time to waste. Potential presidential candidates are dialing for corporate dollars, political parties are trying to control the redistricting decisions that are now being made, and corporations are looking for Congressional candidates who support their agendas.

We know that political advertising budgets are being set and that conservatives will again manipulate our neighbors fear, uncertainty and doubt if we don't intervene. We must lead the way. Here is OUR playbook.

**1. Tell your legislators that a 'cuts only' budget is an outrage** It would mean losses that we cannot live with. Please call your legislators and tell them what

you think. Go to [www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/](http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/) for contact information.

**2. Join Clarence Falk's Action Now group** of retirees who are analyzing where to target retiree efforts to help take back the MN House and Senate. Send you email address and willingness to help to [crfalk2000@yahoo.com](mailto:crfalk2000@yahoo.com) or [crfalk2000@gmail.com](mailto:crfalk2000@gmail.com)

**3. Watch for Committee of Thirteen emails asking you to communicate** with your own congressional and legislative representatives regarding pension issues as they come up. If the Committee of Thirteen doesn't have your email address, send it to [crfalk2000@yahoo.com](mailto:crfalk2000@yahoo.com) or [crfalk2000@gmail.com](mailto:crfalk2000@gmail.com) Clarence is the keeper of the C of 13 data base and does not share your email with any other organization. ■



### Facts foil pension cutters for now Hit new song: THE FACTS!

Efforts to replace Minnesotas defined benefit public employee pensions with defined contribution pensions hit a new snag: facts. On March 31, Minnesotas three statewide pension systems released a draft study mandated in last year's pension bill. The study found the shift to defined contribution plans would cost the state \$2.76 billion over the next 10 years. ■

# New MN House, Senate majorities take aim at teachers, schools, pensions, public services and women



The conservative majorities elected in Minnesota and across the country pledged to balance state and federal budgets by cutting public services and payrolls. In Minnesota, the new majority in the MN House and Senate are working to slash safety nets for children, the disabled, the elderly the poor—and women. In fact, one of the most egregious bills of many that have been introduced this session would eliminate equal pay for women (HF7, SF282). Among the sponsors of the Senate version, is Sen. Gretchen Hoffman, who also sponsored SF813, a bill **hiking** active teachers pension contributions by 3% and **lowering** school district employer contributions by 3%.

Corporations and the wealthy are the beneficiaries of this approach. Our state and our children are the losers. Now, MFT 59 and the Committee of 13 have joined with other education and public employee groups to oppose a flood of toxic legislation introduced this session, including:



## Some of the worst anti-teacher bills

- A bill to freeze educators' wages [HF0269].
- A bill to base teacher evaluation, licensure, tenure status and pay on student test scores [HF0945].

## Late Pension Commission appointments don't matter

### Most Republicans boycott first meeting

Midway through the 2011 Session, House Speaker Zellers appointed five members to the 10 member Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (LCPR), which studies and oversees state retirement plans. The Commission's first 2011 meeting was called to order Friday, April 8, by the previous Vice-Chair, Rep. Mary Murphy, who announced that the Commission could not organize (i.e., elect a chair and vice-chair) because there was no quorum present. Five members Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), Smith (R-Mound), Kahn (DFL-Minneapolis), Pogemiller (DFL-Minneapolis) and Pappas, DFL-St. Paul) were present. The others, Kiffmeyer (R-Big Lake), Lanning (R-Moorhead), Rosen (R-FAirmont), Daley (R-Eagan) and Chamberlain (R-Lino Lakes) seemed to have boycotted the meeting. ■

- Bills prohibiting teachers from striking if the local school board offers a contract increase equal to the state's basic revenue increase (Qualified Economic Offer).
- Bills forcing teachers to bargain contracts only in the summer and allowing districts to impose their 'final offers' or go to arbitration.

## Some of the worst anti-student bills

- A bill to model Minnesota schools on Florida's and grade our schools on an A-F scale [HF638].
- Bills eliminating dedicated funding for school counselors, social workers and nurses.
- Bills providing vouchers for early childhood and K-12 education only for Mpls & St. Paul students in low performing schools to go to charters, private, parochial schools.
- Bills cutting integration and compensatory aid and special ed cross-subsidy for school districts in Mpls, St. Paul and Duluth only.

For a more complete review of House and Senate Education Bills, please go to <http://www.parentsunited.org/2011primer.html>. ■

## Unbelievable but true

### 1. Rep calls child labor laws unconstitutional

First Missouri considers a bill that would repeal child labor laws in the state, calling it an interference with how parents choose to raise their kids. Now freshman Republican Congressman Mike Lee of Utah is saying that federal child labor laws are unconstitutional and states should pass rules (if any) regulating local activities like labor and manufacturing.

### 2. Maine Gov. pulls labor history mural from Labor Department.

CNN reports that Maine Gov. Paul LePage (R) ordered a 36-foot mural depicting the state's labor history removed from the lobby of the Department of Labor headquarters in Augusta, Maine, in late March. The LePage Administration said the mural "showed favoritism to certain groups." ■





## Social Security action alert!



### U.S. House:

We have a new bill! Encourage your U.S. Representative to support H.R. 1332, the Social Security Fairness Act of 2011. Introduced by Congressman Buck McKeon of California, the bill would repeal the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provisions that discriminate against middle-income public employees. Go to <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h112-1332> for the bill language and more information.

No MN House members have yet signed on to the new bill. Write, email or call to tell them it is time to get on board to support Buck McKeon's bill on behalf of their MN retirees to repeal these grossly unfair provisions. There are more than 250 co-signers from last year who are back in Congress. We expect to see them all as co-signers again, and then to add more. It is referred to the Ways and Means Committee. With all the budget noise going on, they might be curious about people asking for something different.

The GPO/WEP provisions were poorly designed and they have ended up discriminating against middle-income public servants including Minneapolis teachers who retired in the Basic Plan who earned Social Security benefits in a different career or moonlighting while teaching. People who have had two careers lose a large part of the Social Security benefits they have paid for. Women who stayed home to raise children half their lives usually lose all of the spousal benefits they have earned. These provisions are BAD POLICY!

## We are ONE community with a common destiny

Leadership is required at this moment. This is NOT the time to say "Everyone for themselves" but a time to affirm much older Minnesota values. Values that say... We are in this together! All of the children are our children! Leadership is not, "here are some coupons, good luck to you". Leadership is setting the standard and the expectation that as we grow as a state we will grow together, we will prosper together, everyone will matter and everyone will succeed!



Taken from March 2011 legislative testimony by Grant Steven-sen, a Lutheran pastor at St. Matthews Spirit of Truth Community and president of ISAIAH, an organization of over 100 congregations committed to social and racial equity and justice. ■

### U.S. Senate:

Tell your Senator to vote for the Social Security Protection Act. Introduced by Independent, Bernie Sanders, S.582 would institute a requirement that any cut to SS benefits must be approved by a two thirds majority (see article on page 1). Support the Social Security Protection Act S.582 and then repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset for Social Security fairness for all Americans! Thank you for joining us as we continue to remind Congress about the injustice of the WEP and the GPO!

While you are at it, be sure to bookmark your Member of Congress' website "contact" page, so you can become a frequent mailer. Some of our members send emails every week. Thank you to them! Write your story briefly and be sure to sign your complete name and mailing address. ■

## In memoriam



Geraldine Ferraro—first woman candidate for vice-president—died March 26, 2011. She opened doors for women candidates who followed when our own Fritz Mondale took the gutsy step of choosing her as his running mate in the 1984 presidential campaign. She showed her mettle during a bruising campaign that brought defeat at the polls—and changed the course of American politics. Read more about Ferraro and MPS retirees who died in 2010 at <http://www.committeeof13.org> ■

## Your Committee of Thirteen

Check the C of 13 website at [Committeeof13.org](http://Committeeof13.org)



### You may contact any of the C of 13 members:

- Jay Ritterson, Chair ..... [jcritterson@earthlink.net](mailto:jcritterson@earthlink.net)
- Denny Lander, Vice-Chair, Web ..... [dlander222@gmail.com](mailto:dlander222@gmail.com)
- Janet Kujat, Secretary ..... [heartladyk@yahoo.com](mailto:heartladyk@yahoo.com)
- Bill Kostick, Treasurer ..... [wkostick@comcast.net](mailto:wkostick@comcast.net)
- Susan Alfson ..... [susan.alfson@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:susan.alfson@mpls.k12.mn.us)
- Ed Andersen, RTC59 President ..... [ander630@umn.edu](mailto:ander630@umn.edu)
- Lyle Baker, RTC59. .... [lylebaker@live.com](mailto:lylebaker@live.com)
- Barb Boerboon ..... [barb.boerboon@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:barb.boerboon@mpls.k12.mn.us)
- Ron Bragg, Adm. .... [elizabeth.bragg@mpls.k12.mmn.us](mailto:elizabeth.bragg@mpls.k12.mmn.us)
- Mary Michael Connolly, Adm .... [mmichaelconnolly@aol.com](mailto:mmichaelconnolly@aol.com)
- Clarence Falk, Data ..... [crfalk2000@yahoo.com](mailto:crfalk2000@yahoo.com)
- Mary Roffers ..... [mary.roffers@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:mary.roffers@mpls.k12.mn.us)
- Gary Stenerson, Fundraising ..... [gs3526@earthlink.net](mailto:gs3526@earthlink.net)
- Frank Suppa ..... [frank.suppa@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:frank.suppa@mpls.k12.mn.us)
- Louise Sundin ..... [Lobbyist,lsundin@mft59.org](mailto:Lobbyist,lsundin@mft59.org) or, 612-926-1454 or 612-868-6042 cell