



## Message from Martha Deahl, NRLN Regional Grassroots VP for AZ/NM/NV



*In front of Jefferson Building – Library of Congress*

As I described in the last NM FOCUS (Fall 2016), scheduling personal meetings with NM Congressional Leaders and their staff are very important because it brings your issues directly to the ones who can impact legislative decisions that affect your income security and healthcare benefits.

Returning from 19 meetings representing (AZ, NM, and NV) NRLN advocates in Washington, D.C. on March 17 with a bad case of bronchitis was not something I had in mind for my trip. Seeing the new snow was beautiful-- the wind and cold not so much.

I have been representing the NRLN NM Chapter leaders and advocates (former TRA-NM, AUSWR-NM) while attending the NRLN Leadership Conferences in Washington, D.C. The NRLN NM Grassroots Chapter was formed in 2014 after TRA-NM (AUSWR-NM) disbanded. At that time, I became Desert Southwest Regional leader for AZ, NM and NV. Cassie Kelley, Marlene Tricoli, Jack Ferguson, and Emil Sommerlad have been actively involved locally with all Congressional offices and I have had an opportunity to schedule Capitol Hill meetings while in Washington, D.C.

### **Building Relationships on Capitol Hill**

Since 2014, I have been in the process of building relationships on Capitol Hill with NM Congressional members and their staff. We need your continued support by remaining with or joining the NRLN as an Individual Contributor. When you receive an appeal letter please continue to support our efforts to protect your earned benefits, and fight the rising cost of prescription drugs. Share this newsletter with all your friends. All retirees/seniors no matter from which company they retired are welcome to join the NRLN. This is the only way we can keep going to Washington D.C. making sure our NM Congressional Leaders hear retirees' needs.

### **Congress Needs to Understand Our Concerns**

The purpose of my visits to Capitol Hill was to advocate the issues recently shared in Bill Kadereit's President Forum email and to make sure NM Congressional leaders understand retirees are concerned for the future and the changes that may take place affecting our ability to continue our various lifestyles. We retired with benefits we thought were guaranteed and now are fearful they may be taken away because of the action our former employers have taken (if not already) regarding medical insurance and pensions over recent years, and today's threats to the future of Social Security and Medicare. I shared the uncertainty that retirees feel with the various changes bantered back and forth between political parties. Retirees begin to wonder "who really cares". "Compromise" is a word never spoken. With that said, this year I was encouraged to see more focus on retirees and our concerns.

(Over)

## Visited All NM Members of Congress

All 3 NM Representatives and both Senators' offices were visited. I presented them with an NRLN NM Report Card which represents current pending legislative bills showing whether their representative or senator had co-sponsored a current bill the NRLN has supported. If they hadn't, I asked the hard question "Why haven't they"? I will address their answers when I send them follow-up emails providing a link to this newsletter and the NRLN FOCUS. I represent you as a member of the NRLN and I truly feel they were acutely listening this year especially with all the chaos that is currently taking place within our political environment.

**Senator Martin Heinrich** – This was my first hill visit with the staff of Senator Marvin Heinrich. Virgilio Barrera (Lio), Legislative Director, Louis Agnello, Legislative Counsel (HealthCare), and Simon Boyce, Legislative Counsel (Income Security) attended the meeting. I was most impressed with Simon Boyce who manages pension issues. Simon was definitely interested in the two documents which specially spell-out what language needed to change in the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) to protect retirees in corporate bankruptcies, mergers, acquisitions and spin-offs which can affect their income security. I had previously met Louis Agnello in September 2016. Louis and I had a lively discussion about the pending healthcare plan replacing the Affordable HealthCare Act (Obamacare). Senator Heinrich voted "No" in January on Senator Bernie Sanders' amendment to a budget bill which would have allowed for the importation of drugs from Canada. I was quite surprised, and pleased, during this visit to see Senator Heinrich is now a co-sponsor of S.469 (Affordable and Safe Prescription Drug Importation Act) to allow the importation of drugs from Canada. The reason he didn't vote "YES" originally was because he felt there was insufficient safeguards in the amendment that are now in the bill. Senator Heinrich's D.C. office is right next to the office of Senator Klobuchar (MN), who has been very supportive of importation of prescription drugs. Louis said she influenced his current position. No photo was taken as I wasn't feeling well at the time of the meeting.

Other meetings were scheduled with:

**Senator Tom Udall** – Biana Cortez-Wertheim, Chief of Staff, and Clinton Cowan, Legislative Correspondent

**Representative Michelle Lujan-Grisham (NM01)**- Dominic Gabello, Chief of Staff

**Representative Steve Pierce (NM02)** – Robert McGregor, Senior Legislative Assistant

**Representative Ben Ray-Lujan (NM03)** – Kimberly Espinoza, Legislative Assistant/Special Project Director



Dominic Gabello Chief of Staff, for  
Michello Lujan-Grisham (NM01)



Biana Ortiz-Wertheim Chief of Staff,  
and Clinton Cowan, Legislative  
Correspondent, for Senator Udall



Kimberly Espinoza, Legislative Assistant,  
for Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (NM03)