

**February 29, 2020**

**To: NRLN DuPont Retirees Chapter**

**From: Jim Odle, President, DuPont Retirees Chapter**

**Subject: February 2020 NRLN Meeting in Washington, DC**

I attended the NRLN late Winter meeting in Washington, D.C. on February 24-26, 2020 with about 20 other NRLN association and chapter members from all over the country. On the first day, Monday, we heard presentations from the NRLN staff on details for the focus areas for the meeting (more about these below). We also had an excellent presentation on Medicare from a representative from the Kaiser Family Foundation

On Tuesday and Wednesday, attendees visited members of Congress and their staffs on the Hill to advocate for legislation on the four issues below. As usual, I chose to meet with Senators from states with a concentration of DuPont retirees and met with staff members from the offices of Senator Chuck Grassley (Iowa), Senator Joni Ernst (Iowa), and Senator Tom Carper (Delaware). I have attached a picture of me meeting with Lynn Sha, a staff member, for Senator Carper.

Click on the video above for my comments about our lobbying issues.

We advocated for improved legislation to protect retirees on the following four issues. For more information I have provided below links to the “talking point” documents that we used in our meetings. Also, additional information can be found under the legislative agenda tab at [nrln.org](http://nrln.org).

**Medicare Advantage (MA) Plans** move Medicare toward privatization, NRLN opposes the use of government subsidies to insurance companies for Medicare Advantage plans to move Medicare toward privatization. These plans are subsidized by Medicare and if the subsidies should go away beneficiaries could be faced with higher premiums and cuts in benefits.

**Some facts:** Medicare costs are increasing at much higher rate than the increase in the number of enrollees, in 2018 CMS paid out more per MA enrollee (3% more) than for traditional Medicare enrollee even though MA plans are usually held by younger more healthy retirees, Congress funded 19 new benefits in 2020 for MA plan enrollees that are not available to traditional Medicare enrollees, and MA costs/enrollee are projected to increase faster vs traditional Medicare over the next 10 years.

**NRLN advocates:** Investigate financials of MA and traditional Medicare with and without subsidies, focus on reducing the cost of services, encourage private insurance

companies to compete with Medicare without subsidies, make all extra MA services available to traditional Medicare enrollees, and work to reduce improper payments

[Here is a link to a recent New York Times article](#) that discusses both the popularity of MA and some of the criticisms.

**Reduce the Cost of Prescription Drugs:** We advocated for passing legislation to direct Medicare to do competitive bidding for prescription drugs, allowing importation of safe and less expensive drugs from approved pharmacies in Canada and ending pay-for-delay and other drug makers' tactics that obstruct generic drugs from coming to market. Even though there has been plenty of talk about this and several pending bills in Congress nothing has been done to reduce the price of drugs and in fact the cost has steadily increased much more than the rate of inflation.

**Pension Plan De-risking:** Advocated the NRLN's position on companies transferring pension assets to third party insurance companies to replace promised pension benefits, causing the loss of PBGC insurance protection. The NRLN advocates that plan sponsors purchase reinsurance or back-up insurance from a second, highly rated insurer.

**Mergers, Acquisitions and Spin-offs:** Protect retirees' benefits when corporations engage in these actions. Certain corporate transactions in case of these events can increase the risk of a distress termination of a pension plan resulting in loss of benefits for retirees. The NRLN advocates legislation to make this less likely.

If you want to read the Talking Points that were used in the Capitol Hill appointments. Click on these headlines:

- [Medicare Privatization – A Bait and Switch Failure and Government Scandal](#)
- [Congress Must Act to Reduce Price of Prescription Drugs - Talk Is Cheap – Drugs Are Not!](#)
- [Pension Plan De-risking: Fiduciary Protection of Retirees](#)
- [Pension Plan Risks in Mergers, Acquisitions and Spin-offs](#)

[Click here to see more photos taken during appointments.](#)

**A comment in closing** – We haven't communicated a lot lately because little has changed since our August 1 email about the proposed class action lawsuit (now waiting for the court to decide to move forward). We are still monitoring this and any other developments that may occur. We will let you know as soon as we have any new information.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or requests for more information. [odlejk@gmail.com](mailto:odlejk@gmail.com)

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