

NRLN Review - August 2019

The *NRLN Review* provides a monthly report on National Retiree Legislative Network actions, events in Congress and important retirement news. Although Congress was in recess the entire month of August, the NRLN continued to work on important retirement issues.

Meetings on Capitol Hill

On August 6 and 7, NRLN President Bill Kadereit and NRLN Executive Director Alyson Parker had meetings on Capitol Hill to advocate:

- NRLN's proposal to limit retirees' liability in pension recoupment. This is when a pension plan sponsor finds an error in the pension payment calculation and forces a retiree to pay back thousands of dollars and suffer a large cut in his/her pension benefit. NRLN is advocating that there be a limit on the number of years that retirees can be exposed to paying back overpayments and the percent that can be taken from their monthly pension checks to repay the pension plan.
- NRLN's proposal to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 420 Rule to allow employers with generously overfunded pension plans to use a portion of the plan's surplus assets to fund healthcare and life insurance benefits by changing the surplus transfer limits from 120% and 125% to a lower level of 110%. This would be subject to the requirement that annual plan surplus transfers may not exceed the combined annual cost of retiree benefits or 1.75% of plan assets whichever is lower.
- NRLN's proposal that traditional Medicare participants have access to the special benefits offered by a number of private insurance Medicare Advantage plans.

The meetings on pension recoupment were with the Chief Tax Counsel for Representative Richard Neal (MA-01) Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee and Professional Staff for Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley, Chairman and Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance. Jay Kuhnle, President, National Chrysler Retirement Organization (NCRO), also participated in these meetings.

The meeting on the Section 420 Rule was with staff members for Ohio Senator Rob Portman and Maryland Senator Ben Cardin. Joe Dombrowski, President, Lucent Retirees Organization (LRO), also participated in this meeting.

The meeting to discuss Medicare and Medicare Advantage issues was with staff members for Senator Grassley, Chairman, and Senator Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance. A meeting on Medicare and Medicare Advantage issues was also held with the Staff Director on the House Ways and Means' Subcommittee on Health.

NRLN Legislative Committees' Work

The NRLN's Legislative Affairs Committee (LAC) composed of Judy Stenberg, Chairwoman, Deb Morrisett, Joe Mazzei, Al Duscher and Bob Martina submitted the following bills for the Legislative Action Planning Committee (LAPC) to consider for action during its August 12 conference call.

- H.R.2573/S.433 -- Home Health Payment Innovation Act of 2019
- H.R.2367/S.1574 -- Lifetime Income Disclosure Act
- S.2254 -- Rehabilitation of Multiemployer Pension Act

The LAPC composed of Bill Kadereit, Chairman, Alyson Parker, Judy Stenberg, Bob Martina and Ed Beltram made the following decisions on its August 12 conference call.

- On August 13, emailed letters to the Legislative Directors of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley and Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, requesting a Committee vote on S. 2254, Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pension Act.
- On August.19, 2019 emailed letters to the Legislative Directors of House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal and Kevin Brady, Ranking Member; House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone and Greg Walden, Ranking Member, requesting a Committee vote on H.R. 2573, Home Health Payment Innovation Act of 2019.
- On August.19, 2019, emailed letters to the Legislative Directors of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley and Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, requesting a Committee vote on S. 433, Home Health Payment Innovation Act of 2019.
- Decision was made to “table and monitor” H.R.2367 / S.1574, Lifetime Income Disclosure Act.

Congress of California Seniors

NRLN President Bill Kadereit met on August 13 in Sacramento with Greg Passmore, President, Congress of California Seniors to discuss affiliation with the NRLN. The Congress of California Seniors directs its attention to legislative and consumer issues that impact older adults.

The organization is part of a grassroots coalition including trade union retirees, retired federal/state public employee organizations, senior centers, tenant and homeowner associations, other senior advocacy groups, church groups, and a variety of other agencies and associations

Healthcare Presentations at NRLN Villages Chapter Meeting

The NRLN Villages Chapter meeting on Thursday, August 22, featured two very informative presentations. Bob Bienvenue, a resident of The Villages and a member of the NRLN Villages Chapter Leadership Team, spoke on *Military Retiree Healthcare*. NRLN President Bill Kadereit discussed *Why Traditional Medicare Is Better Than Medicare Advantage*. The meeting also marked the launch of the NRLN Villages Chapter Speakers Bureau which will offer presentations to clubs in The Villages on retirement issues.

Announcement of NRLN Lucent / Nokia Chapter

On August 26 a letter was mailed to members of the Lucent Retirees Organization (LRO) to announce that the NRLN Lucent / Nokia Retirees Chapter would be formed later this year. The letter noted the NRLN will continue to collaborate with the LRO board and support its previously announced plan to dissolve in 2020.

As is the case with the NRLN's other 10 Chapters, the Lucent / Nokia Retirees Chapter has a website at www.nrln.org/LUCENT with relevant Lucent / Nokia Retirees Chapter news, company news, contact information and email capability. The NRLN FOCUS newsletter will be posted online; contributors without online access will get a FOCUS by mail. The Chapter will receive NRLN Action Alerts on important matters to address with their U.S. Representative and Senators, and at times with the President. They will also receive other emails to keep you informed on retirement issues.

Planning Underway for NRLN Fly-In to Washington, DC

Planning began in August for the NRLN's fall Fly-In to Washington, DC, September 23-25 Legislative Action Planning Committee (LAPC) members had a discussion during their August 12 conference call on the possible issues to be lobbied on Capitol Hill by Fly-In attendees. The LAPC's suggestions were presented to NRLN Board of Directors members on an August 19 conference call. The Board members decided the following issues would be lobbied during the Fly-In:

- Traditional Medicare participants should have access to the benefits available to Medicare Advantage participants.
- Key prescription drug bills supported by NRLN that should be passed.
- NRLN supports H.R. 860 / S. 269 Social Security 2100 Act, the only bill in Congress that would adequately fund Social Security for the next 75 years.

Selected Fly-In attendees who will be meeting with certain members of Congress will also lobby for:

- Protecting retirees during "De-Risking" when a pension plan sponsor converts a pension plan to a private insurance company annuity.
- Protecting retirees in corporate Mergers, Acquisitions and Spin-offs.
- Limiting retirees' liability in pension Recoupment when a pension plan sponsor finds an error in the pension payment calculation and forces a retiree to pay back thousands of dollars and suffer a cut in his/her pension benefit.

Links to News Articles Posted in August

During August, 76 links to news articles related to retirement issues were researched and posted daily IN THE NEWS on the NRLN website home page at www.nrln.org. All the articles remain available by scrolling down IN THE NEWS. Here are examples of the headlines:

- The Social Security 2100 Act is critical for millennials and small business owners – Aug. 1**
- These pension plans are at risk of going broke. Now lawmakers need to agree on a fix - Aug. 2**
- Cutting Interest Rates Hurts Retirees the Most – Aug. 3**
- The biggest bull market ever — yet disaster looms for millions of retirees – Aug. 3**
- Beware: Fake IRS Letters Are Making The Rounds This Summer – Aug. 6**
- PBGC projects improving single-employer program, insolvency for multiemployer one – Aug. 6**
- Companies are racing to dump their pension plans – Aug. 7**
- Medicare to cover expensive cancer cell therapies – Aug. 7**
- Senate bill aims to protect taxpayers from costly drugs – Aug. 8**
- 7 Reasons Social Security Is in Big Trouble – Aug. 9**
- Opinion: Drug importation won't keep Big Pharma in check – Aug. 9**
- Congress is considering big changes to the way you retire. Here's what could make the cut – Aug. 10**
- Here's What "Cutting" Social Security Benefits Actually Means – Aug. 11**
- America is facing a pension crisis. Retirees will pay the price if we don't act now – Aug. 14**
- 'Apparent Coordinated Obstruction:' Lawmakers Renew Investigation Of Generic Drugmakers' Pricing – Aug. 15**
- The price of a cup of coffee may be the answer to fixing Social Security – Aug. 17**
- Medicare must protect access to innovative treatments for seniors – Aug. 17**
- How To Find Low-Cost Care For What Medicare Doesn't Cover – Aug. 20**
- Seniors deserve access to Health Savings Accounts – Aug. 22**
- 'Skyrocketing' Drug Prices Push Many Off Medication – Aug. 23**
- An Early Look at Social Security's 2020 COLA – Aug. 25**
- Opinion: The Caregiver Crisis Is Here! – Aug. 30**