

CARA Alert – November 21, 2005

2nd ANNUAL CONVENTION WRAP UP

A publication of the California Alliance for Retired Americans

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE SPECIAL ELECTION!

November 8th was an incredible day for seniors and working people in California. We helped to defeat the 6 initiatives put on the ballot by the Governor and his special interest friends. Unfortunately, the two initiatives that we supported – Prop 79 & 80 also went down in defeat as a result, but we put up a very good fight on those as well. Prop 79 in particular, was the most expensive ballot initiative fight in history. Even with the pharmaceutical industry spending over \$80 million dollars – mainly to defeat Prop 79 – we were able to stay neck and neck with their phony Prop 78.

We cannot rest on our laurels after this victory. We must use it as a jumping off point for our work in 2006. And we will need all of the energy and impetus we can get. We will have our work cut out for us at the State and National level – on Medicare, Social Security, the state and national budgets, real prescription drug relief, and of course the 2006 elections.

Thank you so much for all of your hard work to make this special election a resounding success. CARA members put in so much time and energy at phone banks, precinct walks, rallies, press events and more. We thank you for everything you did. Now we all have something to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.

CARA 2ND ANNUAL CONVENTION A HUGE SUCCESS

CARA held our 2nd Annual Convention in Anaheim on November 9 & 10th. The dates were set last year (before the special election was scheduled), yet over 250 delegates (some a little weary eyed from the late night election celebrations) attended to listen to great speakers, attend informative workshops, hold a very theatrical Press Event on Part D, and join a picket line with the Boeing strikers. It was a day and a half filled with fun, information, and of course, ACTION. We would like to thank everyone who attended the event and to our sponsors who made it possible (for information on our sponsors go to the CARA website at www.californiaalliance.org).

Congratulations to Tom Rankin, who was elected to serve a full term as CARA's Treasurer. Also elected by the community caucus as community based vice presidents were Shirley Bierly from the CA Legislative Council for Older Americans, and Guy Cargulia from the North County Democratic Unity Coalition. Several vice presidents were reappointed by their unions to serve a 3 year term (the 9 unions with the largest CA retiree membership appoint a delegate to our board with staggered terms). They include: Helen Shea/AFSCME/ Bill Price, UFCW, Addie Brinkley/CWA, Vic Guzman/Bakery and Grainery and Jack Hill/IBEW and CA Labor Fed. Congratulations to all of our Board Members!!

Congratulations also to the Carino Award recipients. This year two awards were presented – one to Senator Joe Dunn for his tireless efforts on behalf of seniors and working people. A 2nd surprise award was given to Marjorie Murray, one of CARA's Legislative Advocates, for her tireless, and successful efforts on behalf of homeowners living in Homeowner Associations (CIDs)

CARA RESOLUTIONS APPROVED AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION

CARA supports HR 147 (McKeon-Berman) and S. 691 (Feinstein), The Social Security Fairness Act of 2005. these bills would restore the Social Security benefits of retirees who paid into both Social Security and a government pension plan. Social Security benefit reductions penalize careers in teaching and other public service fields including police officers, firefighters, and other local, state, and federal employees and discourage qualified individuals from seeking such critical positions (passed unanimously).

CARA vigorously opposes any effort to change the California Public Employee's Retirement System (CalPERS) and the California State Teacher's Retirement System (Cal STRS) from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. Such a change would endanger the financial stability of these retirement plans and jeopardize the retirement income of any member enrolled in a defined contribution plan. (passed unanimously)

CARA supports legislation to replace the appointed retired member of the State Teacher's Retirement System Board with a member elected by retirees. Such legislation would give STRS retirees the same privilege presently enjoyed by active members.

CARA requests the State legislature enact a law that requires at least 50% of Redevelopment Funds to be used for construction of Affordable Housing and that one half of that 50% be designated for extremely low income people, and that other revenue be developed and dedicated to Affordable Housing such as property tax transfer fees.

CARA supports re-regulation of energy services and telecommunications service in California and that CARA communicate this position to the California Public Utility Commission, the Governor and the State Legislature.

CARA goes on record as opposing the war and continued occupation of IRAQ and urges immediate withdrawal. Further, CARA will publicize this resolution to other state affiliates of the Alliance for Retired Americans, to the California Labor Federation, to the labor groups that have opposed the war and occupation, to state legislators, and to the general public. CARA consider participation and co-sponsorship of various anti-war or anti-occupation rallies, marches, or other activities as they arise. Criteria for deciding whether to join should include their agreement with principles of this resolution, their support of senior issues, and their broad-based support particularly by labor.

CARA delegates are outraged by the action of the US House of Representatives in proposing budget cuts of \$54 billion in programs for poor people and children to pay for huge tax cuts, most of which will go to the wealthy. The budget cuts for the poor are in Medicaid, food stamps, children's programs, the list goes on ad nauseum. We call on the House of Representatives and the California delegation specifically to oppose this perverse and inhumane action. Our country deserves better.

Issue Priorities for 2006

(in order of priority by vote of the delegates at the 2nd Annual Convention, November 10, 2005)

- Preserve and Strengthen Social Security.
- Protect pensions and retirement benefits (both statewide and nationally).
- Reconsider and Rescind the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit and fix some of the worst problems with it.
- Continue efforts to win real prescription drug benefits and regulate the pharmaceutical industry (at state and national levels – OURx Bill of Rights).
- Support efforts to win universal health care at state and national level.
- Work to end the war in Iraq and bring the troops home.
- Continue efforts to protect homeowners living in Homeowner Associations.
- Fight state and national proposals to reduce safety net funding (MediCAL, IHSS, housing, annual COLAs, etc.)
- Advocate for increased funding for affordable housing construction and preservation.
- Expand protections for renters in California.

CARA RAFFLE RAISES OVER \$5000!

The lucky winners were of CARA's 2nd Annual Raffle were drawn at the end of our Convention on November 10th. We want to thank all of the CARA affiliates and members who sold raffle tickets. We are still counting the money – but so far we have raised over \$5000!!

A special award was given to the high ticket seller. This year, there was really no competition. Bill Powers, one of CARA's vice presidents and member of CARA's incredible legislative committee, sold over \$2000 worth of tickets himself!!! YOU ROCK, Bill.

The 2nd Annual CARA Raffle Winners are:

1st Prize - \$2005

2nd Prize – 2 Tickets on Southwest Airlines

3rd Prize – 3 night Stay at Sheraton Anaheim

3 night Stay at Sheraton Anaheim

2 night Stay at Sheraton Long Beach

Stan Keasling

Bill & Dorothy Duclus

Dolores Carlisi

Don & Joanne Sherrill

Noah Rush

2 Pairs of AMTRAK Tickets

2 50th Anniversary Mickey Mouse Ears

Audrey Garner & Larry Schaleger

Ralph Copperman & Dave Bullard

WARNING!!!! BETTER FOOT SOLUTIONS COULD BE A SHAM

One of our Convention Exhibitors, Better Foot Solutions, came to us after exhibiting at the Nevada Alliance for Retired Americans Convention in October of this year. They were a very popular exhibitor, providing computer imaging of your feet and offering custom made orthotics and shoe inserts. Several people signed up for their products on site.

It turns out that Better Foot Solutions has not paid the NARA organization for their exhibit space nor have they honored the orders that delegates made at the NARA convention in October. If you entered into a contract with them at the CARA Convention, please check on the status of your order immediately. If you get no response, please cancel your check or call your credit card company to cancel. Better Foot Solutions has not paid CARA for their booth at our convention either, and we are worried that there might be a scam involved. We are contacting the Foot Solutions Headquarters in Atlanta (these are franchise operations) and we will also contact the Attorney General's Office to pursue legal action if necessary.

We apologize for any inconvenience this might cause you. And please do not do business with Better Foot Solutions until we can verify their legitimacy.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Petitions to Reconsider and Replace the Medicare Part D plan are due by December 10th.
- CARA CATs are taking a well-deserved holiday vacation. They will resume their meetings in January of 2006. Reminders will be sent with the date and location of your next CAT meeting.
- Membership renewal notices will be sent to all affiliates and individuals in December for 2006.
- The CARA office will be closed from December 23 to January 1 – reopening January 2, 2006.

CARA wishes you a Wonderful Holiday Season and Peace in the New Year!

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