



## ROBS NEWSLETTER

APRIL/MAY 2008

RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ISSUE 73

WEB ADDRESS FOR  
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General meetings  
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**FRIDAY, MAY 2**

**History Video**

**Election of ROBS Officers-  
Book/CD, Video, DVD swap**

**JUNE 6**

**SPRING LUNCHEON**

**MOLLY MALONE'S  
IN BAY SHORE**

**12 - 3:30 PM**

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### AFL-CIO Survey Shows Healthcare System in Crisis

A new survey released March 25 by the AFL-CIO finds that an astounding 95% of those who responded say that the nation's healthcare system needs to be completely rebuilt or fundamentally changed. Nearly 27,000 people—including 1,600 AFT members—completed the online survey, and more than 7,000 submitted personal and often painful stories about their own healthcare woes.

Among them was Melissa, a member from Oregon, who wrote: "I'm currently over \$5,000 in debt due to an overnight hospital stay in November of 2007. My doctor sent me to the emergency room due to tachycardia, and the resulting tests and observation put me in a deep financial hole. Ironically, my employer of 17 years finally started offering its employees insurance, 6 weeks after my hospital stay." In her view, health coverage shouldn't "have anything to do with employment status, as that is unfair to employers and those unable to work. We need a national, single payer system which will eliminate the health insurance companies who are blood-sucking vampires doing nothing for our nation's health and everything for their own profit."

The survey—which was completed by union members as well as nonmembers—shows Melissa is far from

alone in dealing with the hardships of being uninsured. Among the findings:

In the past year, 76% of people who lack insurance themselves, and 71% of people with uninsured children, say someone in their family did not visit a doctor when sick because of cost.

Sixty seven % of the uninsured and 66 % of those whose children are uninsured report skipping medical treatment or follow-up care recommended by a doctor.

Fifty seven % of the uninsured and 61% of people with uninsured children had to choose between paying for medical care or prescriptions and other essential needs (such as the rent or mortgage and utilities).

Even those with health insurance (about 3/4 of those who responded) are deeply concerned about rising costs and declining quality. Some 96% of insured respondents say they worry about being able to afford coverage during the next few years. Currently, 94% say they are dissatisfied with the cost of their current coverage, and 62% say they are dissatisfied with their healthcare quality. In addition, more than half of those with coverage say it does not provide vital health services, such as prescription drugs, preventative care

and check-ups, or it makes those services unaffordable.

Gary, an AFT member in Florida, wrote: "The medical insurance deduction keeps going up, but the deals that my employer draws up with the insurance company provide inadequate coverage in an affordable price range. The insurance plan that I currently have is the worst that I've ever had. I pay a lot out-of-pocket."

Judith in Missouri worries about retiree coverage: "While I currently have health insurance through my employer, it seems that if I retire in a timely fashion, I will either be dependent upon Medicare or have to pay out a large sum of money to have full health coverage.... I can't retire until I just can't make it any more. The cost for my insurance would be about half of what my retirement income would be. That won't work."

Almost 80% of those surveyed say healthcare will be a major issue in the 2008 presidential and congressional campaigns, and 97 % say they plan to vote this fall.

"We have to help candidates who support real reform become active champions for healthcare," says AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. "

# PHYLLIS'S FORUM

Phyllis Goodwin, President – (631-673-2971)



Dear Colleagues,

The Medicare Rights Center is offering a free guide for Part D drug coverage. Medicare Drug Coverage 101: Everything You Need to Know About the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit (Part D). Logon to [www.dearmarci@medicarerightscenter.org](http://www.dearmarci@medicarerightscenter.org) to order your copy. You can read it online and copy the information that you might need.

Yesterday, I received the printout for Vote Cope membership. There are 787 names listed on the Vote Cope Contribution list. Currently, there are only 64 people who contribute via TRS pension. That means that 565 people are sending checks. Since you are not able to use this as a tax deduction, it makes good sense to use pension deduction. Please call NYSUT Member Benefits and ask for a deduction card. You will have several options and the amount is miniscule.

Marge does a wonderful job as Treasurer but it would make her bookkeeping so much easier if you would take the time and enroll in the pension deduction plan. Vote Cope will get your money sooner and we won't have to pay a second postage by sending it to Albany. Your help would be greatly appreciated in this matter.

Dates for Mailing Stimulus Rebate Checks Announced The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has listed the dates for mailing

out stimulus payment checks, which will be issued according to the last two digits of the main tax filer's Social Security number.

Recipients who use direct deposit will be among the first to receive the payments, starting on May 2. Paper checks will be put in the mail starting on May 16. The IRS is scheduled to mail checks by July 11 to all eligible taxpayers who have filed a return by the April 15 deadline. Those who file a tax return after April 15 will receive their economic stimulus payment later. A return must be filed by October 15 in order to receive a stimulus payment this year. See the IRS online calculator for an estimate of the amount you will receive. For the complete schedule of payments by Social Security number, visit <http://www.irs.gov/irs/article/>

And finally, Congratulations are in order to Chris Veech for our newsletter. Once again, we have won an award for our feature story in the Class II division for those retiree groups with a membership over 299. She will receive her award at the NYSUT journalism luncheon at the New York Hilton on April 10.

In Harmony,  
Phyllis Goodwin

## Trustee's Report Shows Medicare and Social Security Sustainability

The Medicare and Social Security Trustees' reports issued March 25 confirmed that the programs do not face an immediate crisis, while highlighting America's growing health care problems. The Social Security surplus is expected to continue for more than three decades, with the trust fund not set to expire until 2041. Medicare's trust fund will be insolvent by 2019, due largely to continually rising health care costs. Both dates are unchanged from last year's account "Reports of Medicare's death have been greatly exaggerated," said Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee. "Though the trigger has been pulled by Republican ideologues, this year's trustees report shows that Medicare remains solvent and sustainable." The Bush Administration has used the report to renew efforts to privatize both programs. Under Medicare's 45% trigger law, the President must reduce Medicare spending when the program is expected to be more than 45% funded by general government revenue for more than two years - March 25's was the third such consecutive warning. "The President is using this artificial measure to ignore America's real health care crisis and protect big insurance company programs that have already stolen years from Medicare's solvency," said Edward Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

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Life is not measured by the number  
of breaths we take, but by the  
moments that take our breath away.

Anonymous



#### ROBS Newsletter Editorial Board:

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### THE M-T CORNER

"To announce that there must be  
no criticism of the president,  
or that we are to stand by the  
president, right or wrong,  
is not only unpatriotic and servile,  
but is *morally treasonable* to the  
American public."  
Theodore Roosevelt

