

**EIU Annuitants Association Chapter Meeting
Neal Welcome Center
Thursday, Oct. 6, 2022**

Present: President Nancy Dole, Past President Richard Wandling, Secretary John Ryan, Peter Andrews, Billie Rawlings, Kathy Reed, Margaret Messer, Virginia Gochanour, Julie Sterling, Donald Schitl, Tim Mills, Melanie Mills, Pamela Newby, F. Eugene Hacket, Rob Bates, Toni Chamburn (SP), John Willems, Ali Moshtagh, Bill Slough, Mary Ann Hanner, Jan Fischer, Rosalee Noble, Sue Songer, Helen Gregg, Jayne Ozier, Jeanne McFarland, Christine Merllie-Young, Gloria Leitschuh, Jill Nilsen, Nor Pat Small, Anita Shelton, Bill Witsman, Jone Zieren, Linda & Eldon Toothman, Doug Klarup, Steve Lane, Charles Titus, Terry Weidner, Gordon Warfel, Amy Lynch, Charlotte Castle, Doug Sloat, Dale Wolf, Brenda Wilson, Nancy Grant, Bonnie Buckley, Bailey Young.

Call to Order

President Dole called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

Meeting minutes

Minutes of the July 14, 2022, chapter meeting were approved with one correction. Jone Zieren's name was misspelled. Wilson moved and Zieren seconded a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. Unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report

Wandling said EIUAA has \$3,374.09 in the bank. He explained how the fund works. He also pointed out that EIUAA has contributed \$1,000 to SUAA Legal Fund and \$2,000 to the scholarship fund this year. Small moved and Hanner seconded a motion to accept the report. Unanimously approved.

Membership:

Ryan reported EIUAA has 567 members, down from all time high of 630 members six years ago. Reasons for that include the downsizing of the EIU staff and being unable to be on campus to recruit.

Scholarship

Dole reported that the scholarship corpus stands at \$42,666.98, meaning the amount of our annual award will increase. Our goal is to increase the annual scholarship is to award \$2,000 a year. Hanner said the board used to have a plate for donations. She pledged \$20.

Communications

Dole gave a brief report for Wendy Long, who is planning a wedding in Arizona. Long will be putting out a newsletter when she returns. She asks members to send news items to her to be included in the newsletter.

Events

Small said Brenden Moore, capital reporter for Lee Enterprises, will be the speaker for the EIUAA speaker series from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Oct. 26 at the Charleston-Mattoon Room of the union.

Nominations:

Wandling said two board members will be stepping down after serving two terms, the maximum allowed by the bylaws. Dole and Ryan are leaving the board. Gary Aylesworth also has moved to Chicago and will end his term at the end of the year. Gloria Leitschuh and Steve Lane will replace Dole and Ryan. Another member is considering replacing Aylesworth. Lisa Dallas and Marita Metzke have agreed to stand for re-election to three-year terms. Lynch moved and Andrews seconded the motion to approve the four appointments. Unanimously approved.

Letter to Governor

Wandling discussed a letter he has written on behalf of EIUAA to the governor, pointing out that the awarding of an exclusive contract to Aetna PPO for supplemental Medicare leaves no contract with Carle Foundation Hospital. This leaves state retirees who get their health care at Carle uncovered.

Chapter Program:

Senator Chapin Rose, R-Mahomet, spoke on the recent health care decision made by Central Management Services to award Aetna PPO the exclusive Medicare supplement contract.

Rose told members they should be angry about the move. He said this is the second year this has happened. Last year, they dropped Carle out of plans, also.

“CMS administration is woefully mismanaged. I think there is a good chance Carle and Aetna will work something out. Is that a guarantee? No, it’s not.”

Every 10 years there’s new health care contracts. There were two bidders – Aetna and United. “Both bids were identical. I’m told retirees will be saving on front end with Aetna. That’s great but not if you’re from East Central Illinois.”

This is a pretty glaring oversight that on the front end. It has happened before and fixed at 11th hour. There are several options that could correct this, he said:

1. The governor could amend or extend the contract to include Carle.
2. We could try an end run to the federal CMS, which oversees all TRAILS. It says everyone should be guaranteed adequate health care.
3. Could sue that state for what you were promised. The state Supreme Court has upheld the pension clause that says pensions cannot be diminished. “That would scare the living bejesus out of Pritzker.” That would be expensive but and is not a guarantee.

4. Could just sign up for another Trail and pay for it out of pocket. He said Health Alliance would be available and would cover Carle.

In recent years, the fundamental health care marketplace has changed. Carle has been expanding into other communities, such as Bloomington. They are not as dependent on state any more. Carle can get by. People can get Health Alliance and other plans and pay for it.

Last thing, Rose is considering introducing a bill that would pass along the amount on supplemental to the retirees and they could purchase their own Trail. Could give portable to purchase TRAIL in another state. Don't think it will pass. Need Democrats. But it would get the discussion going.

None of the hearings on the Aetna contract have been scheduled for Charleston or Coles County. They are scheduled in Champaign, Danville and Effingham, he said.

Rose doesn't officially represent Coles County until the next term in the legislature when the redistricting of General Assembly districts takes effect. He suggested the audience contact their local representatives and push for CMS to hold a hearing in the Charleston area.

Q& A

Q. Does the state pay anything for this?

A. There are no zero premium plans so the state is paying Aetna or the retirees are paying Aetna, he said. He also noted that Pritzker made the contract with Aetna PPO, which is more expensive than an HMO plan.

Q. What percentage of premium is ours and which is state?

A. "I don't know. CMS won't tell us."

Q. What should individuals do now?

A. Rose told audience members not to do anything right now. "I believe there is a good chance that Carle and Aetna will work this out."

Q. An audience member said he has a very expensive treatment scheduled for Jan. 5 at Carle and asked Rose what he should do.

A. Rose said Aetna did work well with patients last year to get people authorized to continue with current health care. He believes they will do the same this time.

He suggested the man and others call their state senator and representative and work with them to get the coverage extended.

Aetna has been good in work things out, he said. "Don't do anything for a month and see if Carle and Aetna work this thing out. "

Q. An audience member asked if she opted out of the current plan for another TRAIL plan could she opt back in later?

A. "CMS has told us you are allowed to come back during open enrollment. It mirrors Medicare enrollment as well."

Q. Within in the 10-year period.

A Yes. "I don't know what the length of this contract is." His aide said the proposed contract is for four or five years with an option to renew.

Rose said Aetna is not necessarily a bad option for retirees. Aetna can be used throughout the country and may be convenient for retirees who travel or who go to Florida and other states during the winter. "It's just not good in East Central Illinois" if you want to use Carle.

Rose said people ask him to fix the problem. "I'm not the governor. I'm a legislator. I can't fix it, only the governor can." He said entering into this state contracts is the charge of the governor via the state constitution.

Rose said this has all been caused by mismanagement in the Pritzker administration. "Why didn't they make this decision last March and give everyone notice and not wait until 15 days before open enrollment period begins?"

Q. An audience member asked when retirees should address this issue?

A. Rose said after month start raising questions.

Rose added: "You can demand a local hearing. Don't think they'll do anything until hearings. I don't think CMS is going to do anything until they get their ass chewed into by real people."

He encouraged audience members to sign up for his newsletter on his web site. "As we get info, we send it our via web site."

Q. An audience member asked given the physician shortage, especially for specialist, retirees may not be able to get the care they need, if they switch plans.

A. Rose said the problem is theoretically "you don't run out of specialists until you go for surgery."

CMS can say there are specialists available under other health plans. “The problem with this whole thing is when you come to adequate health care is you don’t have to go to Carle you can go to Sarah Bush or to Christie (Clinic),” too.

Q. An audience member said she has Aetna and did go to Christie Clinic but Aetna dropped contract with Christie.

A. Rose said he believes Aetna and Christie have worked out coverage issues and Aetna now covers specialist at Christie. The problem is Christie doctors have privileges at Carle to operate and not at other hospitals.

Q. An audience member asked if it would be considered diminished health care if specialists aren’t taking new patients.

He said maybe but it would be hard to prove since the insurance companies must list so many doctors per patient in the region. They can say another hospital is taking new patients.

He told audience members not to believe the doctor listings the insurance companies list. He said a WCIA Channel-3 report showed that these doctors could be pharmacists and no longer have offices in the area. He said it would be better to get specialist referrals from your personal doctor.

Q. An audience members asked isn’t this Deju Vu all over again? She said 10 years ago when she was on the board, U of I board went to Carle and it helped.

A. Rose said it may come down to that again, a group may have to meet with Aetna and Carle.

Rose said SUAA’s Linda Burkhart does good job and she’s working on setting up a meeting with the parties.

On a side note, he said the CEO of Carle has not been as congenial this time around. Carle wants a contact for prompt payment and a way to settle disputes. That might be part of the problem with Aetna, he said.

Q. Another audience member pointed out that without Carle, patients with severe life threatening medical problems will be airlifted to Peoria or Springfield.

A. Rose agreed and asked: “How do you launch a product without having a program in place?”

Rose said what’s been published so far are the plans but the details have not been made public and won’t be until mid-October

Q. An audience members said: "I can't afford to change doctors. When will they be published?"

A Rose said he didn't know.

In summary, Rose told audience members to: "Get on our email list. When we get information we send it out. This is a localized problem to East Central Illinois. I don't think it's fair to throw the situation back on Carle and tell them it's on them."

He said people can sign up for the newsletter by going to SenChapinRose.com to get on list.

Reed moved Zieren seconded a motion to adjourn.

Adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Respectively submitted,

John M. Ryan
Secretary