



2013 Rhode Island General Assembly Wrap-Up



The 2013 Rhode Island General Assembly Legislative Session adjourned earlier this month and as usual the Rhode Island AFL-CIO was deeply involved in a number of issues before the House and Senate. Below is a brief recap of some of the wins, losses, and disappointments from this year from a labor prospective.

Wins

- Over 600 home based child care workers are now able to form a union and engage in collective bargaining with the State of Rhode Island. These child care providers will now have a voice in their working conditions.

- The minimum wage will increase from \$7.75 an hour to \$8.00 an hour starting January 1, 2014. The federal minimum wage has been \$7.25 an hour since 2009.
- More than 40 firefighter jobs were saved in the Central Coventry Fire District with the passage of a bill that will allow Fire Districts to adopt a tax classification plan allowing fire districts to operate under a previous years' budget if the district fails to approve an annual appropriation.
- Legislation prohibiting employers from asking about arrest and conviction information on a job application was **PASSED**.
- A resolution was passed by the House and Senate requesting that the Rhode Island Board of Education review the validity of the NECAP test as a Rhode

Island High School Graduation requirement.

- Marcia Reback, former President of the RIFTHP, and Scott Duhamel, Business Rep. for the Painters and Allied Trades, District 11 and Secretary-Treasurer of the Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades, were appointed by Governor Chafee and received the advice and consent of the Senate to the State Labor Relations Board. These appointments give the State Labor Relations Board a full membership for the first time since early 2010.
- Legislation to allow workers to receive Temporary Disability Insurance while caring for a sick child or family member **PASSED**.
- A bill to deregulate phone services in Rhode Island that would have jeopardized the jobs of IBEW Local 2323

members **DID NOT PASS**.

- Legislation to allow employers to make Victory Day a floating holiday **DID NOT PASS**.
- Marriage Equality legislation that allows LGBTQ Rhode Islanders the same right to marry as all other Rhode Islanders and is a civil and workers rights issue allowing all Rhode Islanders to be treated equally **PASSED**. No action was taken on any legislation that would give cities and towns the ability to curtail or eliminate the right to collectively bargain pension and other issues. are some protections for workers in the bill— employers must .

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CONTEST BACKFIRES ON SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZER

Mike Hall, AFL-CIO Now



Oh, the sweet irony. Pete Peterson is the conservative billionaire who is a major financier in the effort to dismantle, cut and privatize Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Recently he and his foundation held a contest asking folks to submit videos on why it is important to “fix” the national debt of which, he and his foundation falsely claim, Social Security is a major contributor.

The “Just Scrap the Cap” winning video features rapping seniors rhyming their way to the conclusion that the way to shore up Social Security’s long-term finances isn’t through cuts or privatization but by scrapping the payroll tax cap on Social Security. That means billionaires like Peterson and rich CEOs would pay the same Social Security tax that low- to upper-middle-income workers do... [Read More](#) [See the Video](#)

SOCIAL SECURITY STARTS ACCEPTING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE CLAIMS

Erik Wasson, The Hill

The Social Security Administration announced Friday that it would begin accepting benefit claims related to same-sex marriage.

The Supreme Court in June found the heart of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) to be unconstitutional. It ruled that the federal government couldn't treat same-sex marriages approved by some states any differently than heterosexual marriages.

The ruling affects more than 1,000 federal regulations on everything from tax breaks to entitlement benefits....[Read More](#)



LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH-CARE LAW OPENS DOOR FOR SCAMS, GOVERNMENT SAYS

Washington Post/McClatchy Washington Bureau



Fraudsters are poised to take advantage of widespread confusion over the Affordable Care Act to steal Americans' credit cards, Social Security numbers and other personal information, consumer advocates and government officials say. The FTC already has issued a consumer alert about one telemarketing scheme, in which impostors claiming to be from Medicare told consumers they needed to hand over their personal or financial information in order to continue eligibility because "change is on the horizon."...[Read More](#)

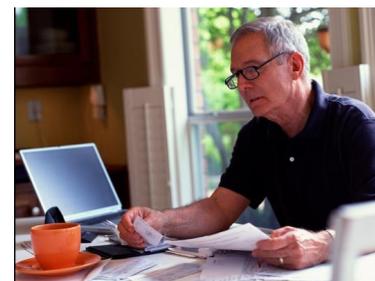
AT RISK OF OUTLIVING YOUR RETIREMENT SAVINGS?

Rodney Brooks, USA Today

In the good old days, retirement was pretty simple. You worked 30 years. Got a pension. And put your money in bonds to make it last.

But this isn't your father's retirement. Back then, life expectancy was such that people only spent less than a decade in retirement.

Today is different. Boy, is it different! People getting ready for retirement are worried that they won't be able to save enough to last. And people already in retirement worry they will outlive their nest eggs....[Read More](#)



A CRISIS FOR THE VERY OLD: THEY'RE OUTLIVING THEIR ASSETS

Michael Hiltzik, LA Times



Nearly half of all Americans will die with practically no money at all. It's a problem that policymakers and financial services firms must address. (The article includes a photo from the July 2nd Human Chain Events.)

As if you haven't been scared enough by the projections that most Americans haven't saved enough to maintain their lifestyles as they enter retirement, here's something even more terrifying:....[Read More](#)

SENIORS & THE ACA

Ryan Witt, CBS Local

In 1965, health care coverage for seniors in America changed dramatically with the passage of Medicare, and largely remained unchanged until 2010, when the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law. The ACA attempts to strengthen Medicare by increasing coverage while also controlling costs. This article will focus on how the ACA will impact seniors, including those who may not yet qualify for Medicare....[Read More](#)



OBAMACARE PILOT PROJECT LOWERS MEDICARE COSTS

Brett Norman, Politico



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announced Tuesday that all 32 health care organizations had hit performance benchmarks for improving care in the Pioneer Accountable Care Organization program, and 13 had done so while substantially lowering Medicare costs. In part, that was by reducing hospitalization and rehospitalizations, CMS reported.

An ambitious program under the health law to change how care is paid for lost nearly a third of its participants after the first year, but not before all were able to boost the quality of care provided to patients in an experiment that some experts say holds promise to bring down health care costs in the long run...[Read More](#)

MOST HEALTH CARE RECORDS NOW ARE ELECTRONIC

David Jackson, USA Today

An ever-expanding amount of the nation's medical records — millions of prescriptions, medical reports and appointment reminders — are now computerized and part of an ambitious electronic medical records program, the Obama administration reports. Since the start of a 2011 program in which the government helps finance new health records systems, doctors or their assistants have filled more than 190 million prescriptions electronically, according to data provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services...[Read More](#)



DEMENTIA RATE IS FOUND TO DROP SHARPLY, AS FORECAST

Gina Kolata, New York Times



A new study has found that dementia rates among people 65 and older in England and Wales have plummeted by 25 percent over the past two decades, to 6.2 percent from 8.3 percent, a trend that researchers say is probably occurring across developed countries and that could have major social and economic implications for families and societies.

Another recent study, conducted in Denmark, found that people in their 90s who were given a standard test of mental ability in 2010 scored substantially better than people who had reached their 90s a decade earlier. Nearly one-quarter of those assessed in 2010 scored at the highest level, a rate twice that of those tested in 1998.

The percentage of subjects severely impaired fell to 17 percent from 22 percent...[Read More](#)

Summertime Heat Poses Special Risks to Seniors

Jim T. Miller, Huffington Post

Most people don't realize that extreme summer heat causes thousands of heat-related illnesses in the U.S. each year, and kills more people than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined. Seniors are among the most vulnerable.

The reasons behind this are because of the body's ability to regulate temperature through blood circulation and sweat glands tends to decline with age. Bodies of older adults also contain far less water than a younger person's, and older brains don't recognize thirst as easily, making them more likely to get dehydrated.

In addition, many seniors have certain health problems that can increase their risk of hyperthermia (when the body overheats)...[Read More](#)

