



# **AFT New Mexico**

## Retirees Chapter 8029

### **December 2023 Newsletter**

#### **NMERB's Matias Fontenla To Speak At Our December 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

Matias Fontenla, Ph.D., is the AFT-NM representative on the New Mexico Educational Retirement Board. An economics professor at UNM, Dr. Fontenla serves on the Investments Committee of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). He is also the treasurer of UNM's faculty union, United Academics of UNM.

As our own representative on the ERB, Dr. Fontenla will be giving us an update, but this is also a great time for you to bring your questions, concerns, etc.

And, in the spirit of the coming holiday season, we will have potluck snacks, and invite you to bring your favorite, easy snack to share.

We will meet in person at the AFT union hall at 530 Jefferson NE in Albuquerque starting at. Because the meeting is hybrid, you may also attend via Zoom. (The link will be sent out no later than Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.) Either way—in person or online—we'd love to have you join us.

#### **Dues Discussion**

The AFTNM Retires' Executive Council met November 15 to respond to members concerns about dues payments. There is much confusion on when to pay dues. As a result, it was decided that the best move forward is a "system reset". There will now be an annual renewal date of June 1<sup>st</sup> for everyone. No matter when you last paid due, the next renewal date will be June 1, 2024. (However, if you have just recently renewed in the last few months, your next dues payment will be June 1, 2025.) A reminder will be sent out at the end of the school year with the June 1 renewal date.

#### **Flu Shots – “For Penguins?”**

Hopefully, you have already gotten your flu shot. But there are no shots for birds! Countless millions of wild birds around the world have died from a virulent strain of bird flu. At the time of this writing, Australia is the only continent where avian influenza has not yet arrived. The British Antarctic Survey reported on October 26, 2023 that the particularly lethal form of bird flu has been detected in birds in Antarctica for the first time. Peru and Chile have already reported more than a half-million seabirds and 25,000 sea lions have been killed by the virus.

## **Thought for the Day**

"Don't act your age in retirement. Act like the inner young person you have always been."  
-J. A. West

## **COPE - Committee on Political Education**

After the 2021 Board of Education elections, there was a turnover in board members that left the Albuquerque Public School board have a majority of members who hold anti-union, anti-collective bargaining and anti-public education biases. It has been a horrific and tumultuous two years. Recently retired member and United COPE co-chair, **Sara Attleson**, reports the following: COPE organized a committee to change the process of endorsements to allow for a longer period for the campaign. It meant starting much earlier and was a success. We now have a majority of 4-3 pro-public education members and have hope for a more productive and positive relationship with the APS Board of Education. This could not have been accomplished without COPE donations and the hard work of volunteers (thank you, Retirees). During this election COPE was able to make large contributions to help the campaigns of our endorsed candidates.

Please consider making a COPE donation the next time you renew your dues or at any other time that is convenient for you. There is another huge election season coming up in 2024 and we can make a difference again.

## **Text Messages**

It seems like everyone is texting on their phones but when did it start? On December 3, 1992, the first telephone text message was sent by British engineer Neil Papworth, who transmitted the greeting "Merry Christmas" from his work computer to Vodafone executive Richard Jarvis' mobile phone. Jarvis was not able to reply because, while his Orvitel 901 mobile phone allowed him to read the message, mobile phones in 1992 did not yet have keyboards. (In 1993 Nokia released the first phones that used the 10-number dial pad to send texts.)



## **Medicare & Durable Medical Equipment (DME)**

Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) covers medically necessary DME if your Medicare-enrolled health care provider prescribes it for use in your home. DME includes things like: blood sugar test strips, canes, commode chairs, crutches, hospital beds, walkers, and much more.

After you meet the Part B deductible, you pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount (if your supplier accepts Medicare). Medicare pays for different kinds of DME in different ways – depending on the type of equipment. You may need to rent or buy.

Make sure your doctors and DME suppliers are enrolled in Medicare. It's also important to ask a supplier if they participate in Medicare before you get DME. If suppliers are participating in Medicare, they can charge you only the coinsurance and Part B deductible for the Medicare-approved amount. If suppliers aren't participating there is no limit on the amount they can charge you.

For more information or to find where to get covered DME items go to: [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov)

## **Clorox – Wherefor Art Thou?**

Last summer Clorox reported to the Securities and Exchange Commission that the company had detected unauthorized activity on several IT systems. In response to the attack, Clorox took the affected systems offline and began operating at a reduced production capacity, resulting in "an elevated level of consumer product availability". Clorox anticipates product shortages through March.

## **Health Security for New Mexicans**

Rising health care costs are impacting the state budget, public employees and retirees -

and also affecting employers, health professionals, and the pocketbooks of all New Mexicans. Cost drivers refer to the systemic reasons why health care prices are rising. All countries that have universal coverage also address these critical cost drivers (like bulk purchasing of drugs). Three separate studies concluded that the Health Security Plan would save hundreds of millions of dollars within five year -- precisely because it includes provisions addressing the key cost drivers. If New Mexico can control these cost drivers, savings can be used for much-needed initiatives like behavioral health, primary care, attracting providers, and insuring more New Mexicans.

At our November meeting, representatives of the Health Security for New Mexicans Campaign <https://www.nmhealthsecurity.org/> updated us about current state-level research on Health Care Cost Drivers to identify potential solutions and strategies. The contracted research firms are reporting to the interim Legislative Health and Human Services Committee on a limited number of cost drivers on a very compressed timeline. It is critical that this work continue and that the areas of study are expanded. The Health Security campaign urges us to contact our legislators between now and the session and ask them to dedicate some of their junior funds, assuming they will be available, to the Health Cost Drivers project. On Saturday December 9th the group will host a Zoom workshop on Cost Drivers from 10AM to 12. Register here: [us02web.zoom.us/j/84451234567](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84451234567) We are also invited to attend or host a screening of American Hospitals: Healing a Broken System <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCphsqY6MEU>. To learn more and get involved with the Health Security campaign sign up here: <https://www.nmhealthsecurity.org/email-form> ]:

## **ERB – Educational Retirement Board**

It was recently announced that the ERB has approved a contract to build a new Santa Fe office. The new, Energy Efficient facility will be located at 5211 Las Soleras Dr. on the south end of Santa Fe. It is expected to take 12 months and \$12.4 million to build. Administrative services, member services, investments and other services will be at the new Santa Fe location starting January 2025. The current Santa Fe office is located at 701 Camino de Los Marquez. After the 2025 move, that building will be sold to the State of New Mexico for use by the Public Regulation Commission and the proceeds will be used to offset the building costs.

The ERB finished its fiscal year on a positive note, although slightly short of their 7% annual target. When looking at the long-term investment portfolio the NMERB “ranks as one of the top performers among public pension plans with assets over \$1 billion dollars.

## **Something To Think About**

“Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time.”  
–Jim Rohn

# Alliance for Retired Americans Supports Biden Administration's Moves to Tighten Medicare Advantage Regulations

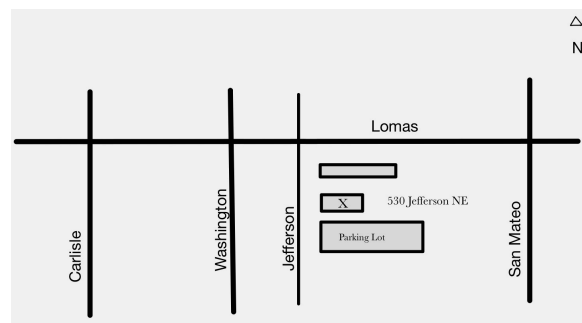
The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has issued a draft rule that would require Medicare Advantage plans to encourage beneficiaries to actually use all of the supplemental benefits available to them. Beneficiaries would also have to be informed mid-year about any unused benefits available to them.

This draft rule would also more strictly limit the amount that insurance agents and brokers who advise customers can be paid. It would set a fixed amount for guidance, no matter which plan a customer selects.

Says Robert Roach, national Alliance for Retired Americans President, "CMS must continue to hold Medicare Advantage corporations accountable. There should be no tolerance for corporations compensating insurance agents or brokers more than is allowed."

## Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be **December 13, 2024 at 1:30 pm.** We will have an in-person meeting at the AFT Union Office (530 Jefferson St. NE) *and* a simultaneous virtual meeting (Zoom).



We don't *publish* the link/number for our Zoom meeting. ***We send the link out a few days before the meeting through email.*** The link will be emailed to you by December 12, 2023.

We will also send out an email with the Minutes from last month's meeting as well as a current Treasurer's Report. As part of our regular business-meeting we ask members of review these documents and ask any questions about them before we vote to accept them into our permanent record. Please take the time to look these over and note any corrections or questions you may have.

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**AFT New Mexico**  
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*A Union of Professionals*

**AFT New Mexico Retirees Chapter  
Local 8029-R**

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION /RENEWAL

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE AND ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

|

I What local did you retire from?

### ANNUAL DUES

check indicate:

**\$25 Per Person – Licensed** ☐

**\$20 Per Person – Classified** ☐

Please make checks payable to AFT NM Retirees Chapter  
and mail to: **530 Jefferson St NE, Albuquerque NM 87108**

### VOLUNTARY AFT RETIREES CHAPTER

#### **COPE DONATION**

**(write a separate check for this made out to AFT NM COPE)**

NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR

AMOUNT

DATE

CHECK#

OR CHECK HERE FOR CASH

**KEEP THIS AS A RECEIPT FOR COPE DONATION**

NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR

AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED

DATE