



AFT New Mexico

Retirees Chapter 8029

January 2024 Newsletter

*And now let us welcome the new year, full of things
that have never been.*

- Rainer Maria Rilke

Next Meeting

Our January membership meeting is set for Wednesday, January 10, 2024, starting at 1:30 p.m., at the AFT-NM offices at 530 Jefferson NE in Albuquerque. AFT-NM's John Dyrco will join us to discuss our union's legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

As usual, our meeting will be hybrid...So you may attend either in person or via Zoom, whichever works best for you. Either way, we look forward to seeing you!

Thought for the Day

"It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone."

- Andy Rooney

Hearing Aids May Boost Longevity But Must Be Used Regularly

A new study has found that restoring hearing loss with hearing aids may lengthen people's lives. Dr. Janet Choi, an otolaryngologist and her colleagues tracked the status of nearly 1,900 adults who had a hearing loss.

They found that patients using hearing aids regularly had a 24 per cent lower risk of mortality compared to the group who never used hearing aids. Previous studies had shown the negative impacts of untreated hearing loss but Dr. Choi did not expect such a big difference in mortality risk.

It could be that people who regularly use hearing aids are also more likely to stave off isolation, remain more active, or have reduced risk of falls, which could explain their increased longevity. The effect held up even when the researchers took into account differences such as age, ethnicity, education, and medical history.

Approximately 40 million adults in the U.S. have hearing loss, but most don't use hearing aids. Given the benefits, Dr. Choi says it's stunning how few people with hearing loss wear hearing aids regularly—just 12 per cent, according to her study. Another striking finding was that the people in the study who had hearing aids but didn't use them regularly were as likely to die prematurely as those who never used them.

Turning the Heat Up On Planet Earth

The United Nation's weather agency and Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service indicate that 2023 has been the warmest year on record globally. On average, Earth in 2023 was approximately 2.61 degrees warmer than in preindustrial years. And a new study finds that the ocean surface is now warmer than any other time since satellite records began. Rising ocean surface temperatures could bring super-charged storms around the world.



January 6, 1912 “Happy Birthday New Mexico”

The Story of Our Flag

The first flag of New Mexico statehood was authorized in 1915. It featured a blue field with a miniature U.S. flag in the upper left corner, the state's great seal in the lower right corner and “New Mexico” diagonally across the field from lower left to upper right corner. Our beautiful yellow and red flag did not become the official state flag until March of 1925.

The NM chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) wanted a flag that represented New Mexico's unique character. They held a design competition which was won by Santa Fe physician and archeologist, Dr. Harry Mera. It is a modern interpretation of an ancient sun design found on a late 19th water jar from Zia Pueblo. The red rays represent the four: seasons (spring, summer, fall, winter), directions (north, south, east, west), times of day (dawn, day, dusk, dark), and times of life (infancy, youth, adult, old age).

The Zia proportions are fixed by legislative act, with the four groups of rays set at right angles, the two inner rays one-fifth longer than the outer rays. The diameter of the circle in the center is one-third the width of the symbol

“Retirement is like a long vacation in Las Vegas. The goal is to enjoy it to the fullest, but not so fully that you run out of money.”

-Jonathan Clements.

ERB - Educational Retirement Board

The ERB's communication team has been promoting and conducting a "virtual" Road series, in addition to their onsite presentations. Each month they will present a webinar. Mainly aimed at currently employees who need to know more about the defined benefit plan and how to prepare for retirement, they will also conduct webinars that cover return-to-work programs and guidelines for participation. You can find out more on the ERB website on the Webinars and Presentations page. Go to erb.nm.gov

NMRHCA – New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority

Last year, in an effort to control health care costs and with the support of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, the legislature passed SB 16. This bill created a new state agency named the Health Care Authority (not to be confused with the *Retiree Health Care Authority*). Gov. Lujan Grisham said, "The HCA's creation marks a monumental step toward enhancing health outcomes, cost-effectiveness, health care accessibility, and the overall welfare of our state's residents." It was unclear what this meant to the *Retiree Health Care Authority*. Would this limit the number of choices of health care providers for NMRHCA members? Who would make those decisions? What about the trust fund that the NMRHCA has set up to maintain its sustainability?

The new agency, HCA, is set to launch on July 1, 2024. This will be a merging of the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD), the State Employee Benefits Bureau from the General Services Department, and the Division of Health Improvement and Developmental Disabilities Support Division from the NM Department of Health.

On January 2, it was announced that the final report will no longer include a proposal to "administratively attach the New Mexico Retiree Health Care Authority to the HCA." The NMRHCA will continue as it has in the past to offer various health care options to retirees at an affordable price and to maintain a trust fund to ensure that this is available long into the future.

The NMRHCA is planning on two legislative proposals: (1) a one-time request for \$150 million to help lower liabilities and mitigate rising costs to members and (2) a joint (House & Senate) resolution for NMRHCA to be recognized and protected under the New Mexico Constitution, similar to the Educational Retirement Board (ERB) and Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA).

At this time no sponsors for these measures have been identified.

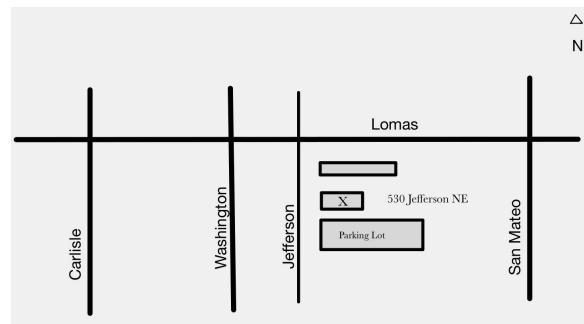
Something To Think About

"People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day."

— A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be **January 10, 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 January 8, 2024

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.

Contact information:

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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