

Mimi Hull, AUSWR 2010 Agenda Plans

Many have asked, "What is the future of our AUSWR organization?" Leadership changes and major shifts in direction confront us as we start 2010.

I would like to tell you what I see as the state of our retiree organization and share our commitments to our role in protecting and preserving our pensions and benefits.

First, the retirement of Nelson Phelps is a mix of emotions for all of us. While we wish him well in his days of enjoyment free of our retiree claims on his time every day, we know that his leadership will be missed.

Sadly, we also share the loss of our AUSWR Ombudsman Howard Rickman who for so many years became the ear of our complaints and questions about benefits and patiently answered everyone who came to him for help. Howard led our Retiree Advocate program where each retiree –member or not –can go for help when the "red tape" is too confusing.

Challenges face us immediately with the loss of the Pensioner Death Benefit which Qwest has announced will be eliminated March 1. Qwest has estimated a savings of \$220 million, so again they are strengthening their finances by sacrificing retirees' security. Of course, we believe retirees earned this benefit. We are looking at all of our legal options and will decide soon on what action –if any --we can take.

The financial viability of Qwest is a continuing concern as it continues to lose its land-lines, incur losses of product and services revenues, and downsize employees. Cost-cutting



Mimi Hull
AUSWR President

measures include halting contributions to the pension fund for current management. We closely watch the Qwest financials to help us assess the security of our future pensions and benefits.

Oversight of the Pension Plan funds has been an ongoing effort for us. As Qwest works its way through its financial woes, we are keeping a close eye on the pension plan management. In the last newsletter, we told you about the scrutiny our litigation attorney Curtis Kennedy has performed in his review of the 2009 Qwest filing

with the SEC. We sent a request for additional information about the annual filings to the pension plan administrators and continue our communications with them to gain answers to all of our questions. For example, a major question involves how Qwest appears to have underperformed in its role to protect the pension plan funds resulting in the loss of more than \$90 million invested with a now bankrupt company, Westridge. We will continue our oversight role to monitor the activities in the Qwest Pension Plan.

Support of the National Retiree Legislative Network, the NRLN, is a major affiliation for us to send a retiree voice to the members of Congress and develop federal legislation to protect pensions and benefits.

To sum up, the AUSWR 2010 focus is: 1) Litigation when necessary, 2) oversight and monitoring of the pension plan funds, 3) continued Retiree Advocate program, and 4) support for retiree federal legislation through our affiliation with the NRLN.