‘Cheers and Jeers’ Over Health Care Transition

Reimbursements’ Rough Road

‘Cheers and Jeers’ follow major changes in the divestiture from “Ma Bell-type” company group health care coverage to an individual plan — the “best Medicare plan for you” — in the open market as imposed on 4,500 CenturyLink/Qwest retirees* at the end of 2011.

Cheers go to those Medicare retirees who received their first health care reimbursements (HRA) with electronic deposits to their checking accounts.

Cheers go to the CenturyLink managers in the Compensation & Benefits department who literally worked night and day to ensure that each eligible retiree and spouse receives full benefits.

Cheers go to the AUSWR leaders, especially the Retiree Advocates, who fielded the questions and complaints and communicated retirees’ distress to the CenturyLink leaders — and followed-up to problem-solve hundreds of calls for help.

Jeers go to AON Hewitt for the myriad of continuing delays in the setup of Medicare plan accounts, keeping retirees waiting for their reimbursements.

Jeers go to AON Hewitt for the many, many broken promises and failed commitments to meet scheduled calls.

Jeers go to AON Hewitt for the grossly erroneous and poor quality information about Medicare coverage given hundreds of retirees.

Cheers again to CenturyLink for assessing the overwhelming volume of retiree complaints and adding Extend Health, another national benefits administration company, who met the challenge to assist retirees with expert and timely Medicare options.

If you are affected by the change in your Medicare plan and having problems —First call (800-729-7526) — the CenturyLink Service Center and ask for a commitment for the ‘fix.’ Don’t give up! If you need additional help, call your state Retiree Advocate — see page 5.

*For more information about who is affected, go to ‘BACKGROUND’ on Page 3.
AUSWR President’s Message

As we kick-off another year I am confronted with questions about what is happening? What’s happening with health care, pensions, telephone concession services—all of those earned benefits that are now controlled by CenturyLink, a company unknown to us a short time ago.

I don’t have all the answers, just a few. Telephone concession services are known as ‘discounts’ to CenturyLink, and I am assured by company executives that these discounts will continue with no plans to eliminate them.

Pensions are protected by federal laws and the merger of Qwest into CenturyLink seems to be viewed favorably by the financial markets. So long-term viability of the company appears strong—and that strength protects retiree pensions.

Health care costs and coverage continue to be confusing and at times threatening to all of us. The dialog started last year with executives of CenturyLink continues as we work together to assist retirees on the changes. CenturyLink is committed to continue support of our Retiree Advocate program. Changes cannot be stopped, but we can surely keep one another knowing what to expect without shock and surprise.

AUSWR support for the NRLN will remain strong this year including teams of our members going to Washington, DC, and scheduling appointments with Congressional members to ensure that our messages to protect earned pensions and benefits are heard. AUSWR is affiliated with the NRLN which comprises 30 other national retiree organizations—all advocating together for retiree protections with Congress.

[See story on page 5—Washington, DC]

Mimi Hull, AUSWR President speaks to retirees in Phoenix

Mimi Hull, AUSWR President

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On January 1, 2012, about 9,000 CenturyLink Medicare retirees and spouses lost company group health care coverage—including 4,500 former post-1990 Qwest management retirees and spouses. An individual Medicare plan selected by the retiree/spouse in the open-market became the option for health care for thousands. To assist with the complex task of finding a Medicare plan while keeping familiar doctors and necessary medications, CenturyLink offered two types of assistance.

First, AON Hewitt, a national benefits’ administration company, was contracted to make individual appointments with each affected retiree. A licensed insurance ‘expert’ scheduled times to talk and give advice on potential matches for services to Medicare retirees during phone calls which started in October.

Second, CenturyLink voluntarily contributes to a HRA—Healthcare Reimbursement Account—for each eligible retiree and eligible spouse to receive reimbursement towards the costs of a selected Medicare plan with a $1,740 annual maximum for each participant.

AON Hewitt administers the HRA program.

NOTE: Pre-1991 and 1992 ERO retirees are NOT affected by any of these health care changes because of the Phelps case settlement negotiated by Nelson Phelps and Curtis Kennedy with US WEST leadership. Pre-1991 and 1992 ERO retirees’ protected health care coverage is binding on all corporate successors—including CenturyLink.
Time For A Beneficiary Check-Up

CenturyLink changed to Met Life for Group Life Insurance coverage

Computers control and confuse some of us, but they also manage our valuable benefits including the $10,000 Group Life Insurance benefit.

CenturyLink changed the group life insurance carrier effective January 1, 2012 to Met Life from Prudential. With this change comes the need to be sure that your beneficiary is set-up correctly.

Two options are available for you to check or change your Group Life Insurance beneficiary:

PHONE CALL OPTION: Check with the CenturyLink Service Center —Call 800-729-7526 —to make sure your designated beneficiary for Group Life Insurance is properly documented and updated. You must have your Social Security number, your date of birth, and your retirement date to make this request. If necessary, ask to have a current Beneficiary Confirmation form mailed to you.

To make changes, ask to have a Beneficiary Designation form mailed to you, complete it, make a copy, and mail the original back to CenturyLink.

ON-LINE OPTION: You can access your benefits on the CenturyLink benefits website, set-up and account and manage your beneficiaries at: www.centurylinkhealthandlife.com (that’s CenturyLink health and life without the spaces).com.

Some retirees report that they check and learn surprisingly that there is no record of their beneficiary designation. Or the CenturyLink beneficiary records do not agree with the retirees’ wishes.

The change from one insurance company to another is the time for a beneficiary check-up.

AUSWR Retiree Advocates —Here To Help YOU!

If you have questions about your benefits, FIRST contact the: Service Center at 800-729-7526 —Select Option 2, then select the appropriate options. If you are unable to resolve your problem or get an answer to your question, THEN call your state AUSWR Retiree Advocate:

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Six AUSWR Members Attend NRLN-sponsored Visits to Congress

AUSWR Travels to Washington, DC

The NRLN conducts two meetings each year, January and September, to bring retirees together in Washington, DC, for the purpose of taking our retiree messages of pensions and benefits protections to members of Congress. In January, about 50 retirees from among the 30 NRLN retiree organizations went to the first 2012 meeting and made over 90 scheduled visits to members of Congress, their staffs, and Committees who determine federal legislation affecting retirees. AUSWR sponsored six members who attended.

Below is a report by Rick Giffin, Arizona Legislative Leader, on his impressions of the 3-day January 2012 meeting.

by Rick Giffin, AUSWR Arizona Legislative Leader

Great conference in Washington, DC! On Monday, the first day, we had a very informative talk with Phyllis Borzoi, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment Benefits. She was presenting a positive attitude towards Administration support for some of our issues.

Bob Martina [VP NRLN Grassroots], Ed Beltram [VP NRLN Communications], and Joe Dombrowski [VP NRLN Membership & President Lucent Retirees] did a great job on getting our Grassroots efforts really moving and increasing participation.

On Tuesday we had a report from Elizabeth Jurinka, Legislative Assistant to Sen. Ron Wyden (D-WA) on the Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) ‘Obamacare’ replacement. Left a lot of questions.

We had a very good session on preparations for our scheduled visits to the Hill.

New NRLN member organizations that are facing corporate sanctions and possible bankruptcy, such as Kodak and American Airlines, had representatives from their retiree groups meeting with NRLN, preparing for many of the things we have been through. Hopefully they won't lose any benefits if they know what to watch for.

Ken and Jen Gornall ‘hit the ground running’ --they did a great job and represented all of our issues very well in each of the meetings with members of Congress and their staffs.

Del Polad’s (AUSWR Utah) contacts with Sens. Orrin Hatch and Max Baucus scheduled a successful 90-minute session with the Senate Finance Committee that included NRLN leaders and our AUSWR team. They met with Sen. Max Baucus, his staff, representatives from Social Security and some pension folks. I feel a lot of information was exchanged. (more on page 6)

--Rick

During each scheduled visit with a member of Congress or staff, the NRLN leaves a package of top priority position papers: ‘Executive Summaries’ to reinforce the meeting. The four top priorities for the January meetings were: Pension Asset Protections, Bankruptcy Reform, PBGC Reform and Social Security protection. To read the position papers, please go to the NRLN website: [www.NRLN.org](http://www.nrln.org).

...and think about joining the next meeting in Washington, DC in September.
Del Polad from St. George, Utah recently attended the NRLN (National Retiree Legislative Network) meeting, in Washington DC representing Utah, Idaho, and Montana AUSWR Association. The purpose of the meeting was to address pension asset protection, as well as the protection of Social Security and Medicare benefits. Social Security is not an entitlement, but a benefit that was paid for by our employees and employers.

Del, along with other members of the AUSWR delegation, also met with Katherine Condrey, a staff member of Congressman Jim Matheson, the staffs of Senator Max Baucus and Senator Orrin Hatch of the Senate Finance committee.

Del spoke of his personal situation with CML Leukemia and the problems he is having with the high costs of medicines. He also discussed the disparity of costs between the United States and Canada and the rest of the world. Del also attended meetings with the Arizona AUSWR to visit with Arizona Congressmen and Senators.

Del recommends that we fully support the NRLN, for we need their voice in Washington DC to help save our benefits.

milestones
Send obituary information for all Utah/Idaho/Montana deaths to: Sue Blair Foster. Email: geosbfoster@yahoo.com
or mail to: Sue Blair Foster. P.O. Box 12878. Ogden, UT 84412-2878

UTAH
Kenneth “Gary” McDonald – Salt Lake City, Utah – died Feb. 5, 2012. Survived by his wife, Sue. Published in Salt Lake Tribune.
Dean Everett Salmon – Salt Lake City, Utah – Feb. 16, 1932 – Dec. 29, 2011. (Continued on page 8)
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(03-12)

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2012 AUSWR Events

Mark your calendar!

There will be a Town Meeting in St. George again this year. It will be held on **Saturday, April 28, 2012 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Santa Clara library.**

All retirees are welcome to attend this event but we especially want to invite all retirees in the Southern Utah and Southern Nevada area.

Donnetta Mitchell and other board members will be there to meet with retirees.

*A reminder will be sent in early April.*

Also, we are planning our 2012 Annual Meeting in Murray, Utah on Saturday, September 22, 2012. It will be held again at Hillcrest Junior High School in Murray, Utah at 9:30 a.m.

We are in the process of lining up speakers for this event and will inform you when this had been decided. Further information is forthcoming.
The date of your last contribution is shown above. If you show a different date, contact Susan Johnson, Utah/Idaho/Montana Retiree Guardian Editor at the phone or email shown on page 7.

(Continued from page 6)

Survived by his wife, Sharon. Published in Salt Lake Tribune.


IDAHO


MONTANA


Clyde Aldrich Buell – Helena, Montana – Aug. 10, 1932 – Nov. 27, 2011. Survived by his wife, Pat. Published in Helena Independent Record.


