

**Anne Gargano Ahmed**  
**Lester T. Pritchard Citizen Leadership Award**  
**To AFSCME Retirees**

I now have the great pleasure of presenting the Lester T. Pritchard Citizen Leadership Award to six fabulous women from the Association of Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees Labor Union, or AFSCME, Retirees Subchapter 88. Barb Franklin, Bea Stratton, Jean Burns, Vicki Thomas, Eliza Catchings, and Neva Summers are being honored tonight for their commitment and hard work with our Medicare Task Force. These ladies have been an incredible force in our campaigns to Fix Medicare Part D and Protect Social Security over the years. They have volunteered and participated in events, not only as individuals, but also as members of AFSCME Retirees, which has added to our Campaign's strength and credibility. These women have a wealth of experience in fighting for social justice and their instincts and advice have helped the Task Force strategize and plan events. Their input has been vital for our Task Force and their feisty personalities make our monthly task force meetings much more fun! Ladies please step forward as I introduce you to accept your award.

**Barbara Franklin** is not only a member of AFSCME retirees but also the President of the IL Alliance for Retired Americans. Barb has helped our Task Force coordinate with other senior groups across the state, presented at press conferences and community meetings, and is always willing to step up when we need a volunteer. Barb and the AFSCME retirees fought hard against the privatization of Social Security back in 2005 and her insight was very useful when we had to fight attempts to cut Social Security once again this past December. Barb is a great asset to our Task Force and we are very lucky to have her.

**Bea Stratton** is perhaps the most outspoken of the AFSCME ladies. She has been an excellent spokesperson in fighting for Part D reform, especially for the elimination of the nasty Donut Hole coverage gap. She has spoken at press conferences and even had a special feature about her struggles with the Part D Donut Hole featured on the University of Illinois station, UI-7. She writes letters to the editor and letters to elected officials and has been an incredible advocate for protecting Social Security. She isn't afraid to fight for what is right and we are so glad to have her on our side.

**Jean Burns** is our resident expert on all things political. As an avid CSPAN viewer, and news watcher (except for FOX news of course!) she often has up to the minute updates on our issues. Plus, her opinions are always so dead on, it makes me wonder why Jean isn't running this country. Jean's input is always interesting, helpful, and often really funny. Her son is an organizer in Wisconsin, and it's no wonder, after being raised by such an inspiring, progressive mom.

**Vicki Thomas** has been a dedicated member of the Task Force since it began, and was the lone AFSCME representative for awhile. Vicki is a bit more reserved than her AFSCME sisters, but she has offered unwavering support for our Campaign over the years. She volunteers to help staff the CCHCC table at the Urbana Farmers Market every spring and fall which is great for all of the folks who visit our stand, but also a lot of fun for me because I get to hang out and chat with her for a few hours.

**Eliza Catchings** has been one of the most reliable members of our Task Force. As a phone tree leader, our members rely on her calls to remind them about our monthly Task Force meetings. She is often the smiling face at our registration table at various community events and at the Urbana Farmers Market. She is always willing to take action by adding her name to letters to the editor and letters to elected officials. Plus, she was able to use the cute baby that she takes care of to soften up Sen. Durbin when he came to meet with our Task Force at the CCHCC office.

Finally, I'd like honor **Neva Summers**, who passed away this past summer. Neva was such a sweet and caring woman with an unwavering dedication to social justice. Neva was also one of the more reserved women among her friends but when she spoke up it was always direct and right-on. One of the biggest things that Neva contributed to our Task Force was finding a location for our monthly meetings. A few years ago, when the IDF sold their building, the Medicare Task Force lost our meeting place. I searched for another location for us but every place that I found was either too small, charged a meeting fee, or would not let us reserve the same day every month. But just when I was losing hope, Neva came to our rescue when she convinced her church to allow us to meet there. Neva's faith reinforced her belief in social justice and she was able to show the First United Methodist Church that letting our Medicare Task Force meet in their church would fall into their mission statement. We were so sad to lose Neva but I think of her every time that we meet in her church. Her kindness lives on and allows us to keep fighting for the things that she deeply believed in. We were very proud to call her one of our own and we will keep fighting in her honor.

So to all of the amazing women standing up here with me tonight - For all of your hard work and dedication over the years, for your undying passion for social justice, for your commitment to speaking out for what you know is right, and for being exactly the kind of women that young women like me aspire to be, I am so happy to honor you with this year's Lester T. Pritchard Citizen Leadership Award. Let's keep up the good fight!