

NRTA in the



I like us on Facebook 

Follow us on  twitter

Volume 3, Issue 1

Dear Retired Educators Association Leaders,

The New Year is well underway and we at NRTA are in high gear to deliver another productive year that is laser-focused on supporting your association's needs. In fact, our team convened last month to reflect on 2014 and to map out NRTA's strategic efforts for 2015.

We revisited the programs we delivered to you last year, and we hope you feel as good about the quality of those programs as we do. The Regional Workshops, Pension Education Toolkit, Image and Branding Fact Sheets, *New Breed* resources and other efforts added a new dimension to our collaboration with you. As we start 2015, we considered the input you provided throughout the year to help us craft another full calendar of programming that we hope will further strengthen your advocacy, service,

In This Issue

AARP CEO
NEW Fraud Watch
Info
Dixon Joins NRTA
NEW Toolkit
Resources Recap
It's Not Too Late!
Member Spotlight
Meet the Expert

membership and leadership initiatives.

We're also thrilled to be kicking off 2015 with a stellar addition to the NRTA team! Mary Beth Dixon is our new point person on leadership development and volunteer engagement, and we're fortunate to have her on our team. She brings so much relevant experience to NRTA, along with tons of enthusiasm and innovative thinking. We are confident she will be an important asset and resource for the REAs. Below you will find more information about Mary Beth, and we look forward to personal introductions in the coming weeks.

We're also energized about two new programs we are already rolling out for you - the NRTA Advocacy Toolkit and the NRTA Life Reimagined Book Club. Please read below about the first element of this best practices advocacy toolkit and information on a related conference call. In addition, the Life Reimagined Book Club is structured as an opportunity to engage your members who might be undergoing change or anxious about figuring out their "what's next." Hopefully, this opportunity will expose your members to the benefits of Life Reimagined while also increasing member involvement and loyalty to your REA. We look forward to your reaction to both of these new offerings.

In addition to our "regular" programming for 2015, you can also look forward to our national advocacy conference in Washington, D.C. this fall. We plan to structure this session so that attendees can network with counterparts from other states, participate in an agenda that is full of insightful speakers, and provide you with ample time to meet with your federal elected officials.

We hope you continue to find value in this newsletter and that you will take time to review the information below. In this edition of *NRTA In the KNOW*, our CEO Jo Ann Jenkins reacts to the State of the Union address, the Fraud Watch Network launches education efforts to thwart tax scams, and we provide you with a recap of the full range of NRTA resources available to REAs. We have also included an interview with one of the nation's top academic experts on pensions and retirement issues, Dr. Alicia Munnell, who has released a new book on the retirement crisis. In addition, you'll find a story on some of the innovations underway at the Florida Retired Educators Association. Finally, don't forget to send in responses to the trivia contest for a chance to win a professional development book from the NRTA library.

Once again this year, we at NRTA stand ready to continue our strong partnership with our REA colleagues from around the country. We will continue to look to you for leadership and guidance in our shared efforts for 2015.

If you have questions or comments, please reach out to me, Tom, Rebecca, Mary Beth or Gene.

Best wishes for the new year,

Dara

Dara Dann, Vice President
NRTA: AARP's Educator Community
202-434-3931 | ddann@aarp.org

Legislative Watch
Life Reimagined
Research to Note
Mark Your Calendar
Recycle Center
Additional Resources

Trivia



Test your knowledge!

Email Gene Ruiz at gruiz@aarp.org by Friday, February 6th at 5 PM if you can answer this question:

Debit cards remain Americans' preferred payment method, but their popularity is shrinking probably because of fraud risk concerns. According to AARP's Fraud Watch Network,

AARP CEO Responds to State of the Union

On January 20th, President Barack Obama delivered the [State of the Union](#), and he announced a number of wide-ranging proposals to improve economic prospects of the middle class. Following the speech, AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins released the following statement:

"The President's speech comes at the beginning of an historic year for older Americans. This summer Medicare turns 50, and Social Security turns 80. Some in the new Congress have already sought to limit these modest, crucial, earned promises that took shape when too many older Americans faced poverty. As Social Security and Medicare have protected the middle class and kept millions out of poverty for generations, and many families and Americans of all ages continue to struggle, we must seek to strengthen them.



AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins.

"As we anticipate new budget proposals from the President and Congress, we urge our elected representatives to fight for responsible solutions to strengthen Medicare and Social Security. If elected officials truly do want a strong middle class to have real possibilities in their lives, they must demonstrate as much with proposals that reflect the needs and views of the people they represent, instead of generating proposals that could cause irreparable harm.

"In November, voters sent the message that they want to see our elected officials work together. AARP will continue to raise our voice on behalf of older Americans and the benefits they have earned and need. We'll continue to work with the President and members of Congress from both parties to bolster health and retirement security for today's older Americans and for future generations.

"This year AARP will also be an active participant in the White House Conference on Aging and a series of forums to be held around the nation. We hope that elected officials with a diversity of viewpoints join this conversation to have an honest dialogue about aging in America."

Learn more about the proposals outlined in the State of the Union [here](#).

AARP Fraud Watch Network Launches Education Effort to Thwart Tax Identity Thieves

*what are four ways
to make debit cards
safer?*

**Sign up for Fraud
Watch Alerts [here!](#)**

The first three correct responses will be entered into a drawing to receive a copy of [*Thrive 9 to 5: Your Guide to Peak Performance at Work*](#).

Authored by Kristi Daniels, the book offers a proven program for every stressed out, under-valued and exhausted professional who wants to boost his or her brain power, health and happiness at work. The method gives you the principles to thrive in any demanding work environment.

CONGRATULATIONS

to last month's winners! **Bob Bussmann** and **Janice Charlesworth** knew that **Elizabeth Blackwell** was the very first woman to ever receive a medical degree from a school in the United States.

Blackwell moved from England to the U.S. in 1821 because her father wanted to help abolish slavery, and she carried on his social justice work by fighting slavery

To coincide with [Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week](#), the AARP [Fraud Watch Network](#) this week is launching an education effort to help protect people from tax scams. Many taxpayers are not taking precautions necessary to reduce their risk of tax identity theft according to a recent national [study](#) released by the AARP Fraud Watch Network.

This week, AARP released a new tax fraud [video](#) and [tip sheet](#). NRTA encourages REAs to share this important information across your state and with your members.

Tax identity theft schemes involve scammers electronically filing tax returns under someone else's name to collect a tax refund. All the fraudsters need is a birth date and Social Security number. Many taxpayers make their personal information easy pickings by:

- **Failing to lock their mailbox.** Almost six in ten (59%) Americans do not regularly lock their mailbox, which could lead to a criminal stealing bills, tax forms and other documents that contain personal information.
- **Leaving valuables exposed.** Over half (54%) of Americans 18-49 have left at least one valuable personal item in their car in the last week (e.g., a purse/wallet, paystub or laptop) that could be used for identity theft.
- **Failing to destroy personal information.** More than one in five (21%) Americans say they never shred any of the personal documents that could be used for identity theft.

Tips for protecting against tax identity theft include:

- Mail tax returns as early in the tax season as possible before the cons beat you to it.
- Don't give out personal information unless you know who is asking for it and why they need it.
- Shred personal and financial documents.
- Know your tax preparer.

Information about AARP Foundation Tax Aide, the nation's largest free, volunteer-run tax preparation program is available at aarp.org/taxaide and 1-888-227-7669. Each tax season, Tax Aide helps millions of low- to moderate-income taxpayers - especially those 60 and older - get the credits and deductions they deserve. For fraud prevention tips, visit aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork. For additional help, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490 and visit irs.gov/identitytheft.



New tax scammers Fraud Watch Network video.

and prejudice against women. After deciding that she wanted to become a doctor, Blackwell applied to every medical school in the Northeast.

One school, the Geneva Medical College, put her admission to a vote by the student body, sure that they would deny her. The young male students thought that the proposition was a joke and voted in favor of her admittance.

Thus, Blackwell gained admission. She went on to open the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, which functioned as the first teaching hospital for women.

Bob and Janice have won a copy of [*The Personal Efficiency Program: How to Stop Feeling Overwhelmed and Win Back Control of Your Work*](#) by Kerry Gleeson.

This book helps busy professionals get their work lives organized to become more effective and efficient. Readers will learn how to stop procrastinating, stop feeling overwhelmed, and start feeling good about their work lives.

Mary Beth Dixon Joins NRTA Team

"The NRTA staff is thrilled to welcome Mary Beth Dixon to the team," said Dara Dann, NRTA vice president. "She comes to us highly regarded within AARP at both the national and state levels. Mary Beth brings energy, innovation and experience, and she's hitting the ground running in support of the REAs."



NRTA will tap Mary Beth's expertise to support REAs on leadership development and volunteer engagement. Her past work lends itself well to these areas. She has nearly 20 years of nonprofit experience and 10 years of experience working with volunteers to help create meaningful volunteer experiences as well as designing volunteer led programs. Another strength Mary Beth brings is her work in the area of educating the public on complex policy issues that create programs to improve quality of life. Her work in this area is directly relevant to REAs' efforts to engage new members.

"I get excited about empowering people to get involved with policy initiatives that help people's day-to-day lives," said Mary Beth, NRTA advisor. "Public education, growing membership and engagement and volunteerism can be greatly improved by how we design our approach with the public. We have to start by meeting them in their space. We have to do the pre-work to break down complex policy issues into bite-sized, more palatable chunks of information that people seek. Approaching the public from their perspective really jumpstarts individuals to take action, and it helps us better work as a collective," she says.

Prior to joining NRTA, Mary Beth served as AARP's Associate State Director in New Jersey, and then was "on loan" working on AARP's Enterprise Community Pilot program in New Hampshire and California. She is known for her outside-the-box thinking and passion to make a difference. For example, Mary Beth leveraged Day of Service into a two-month statewide food security campaign that engaged over 100 people and nearly all of New Jersey's Congressional offices. This resulted in over 1,000 pounds of food collected for needy populations. She also led AARP Teletown Halls and built diverse coalitions that reached African American and Latino communities.

"I'm eager to start contributing to the work of the REAs," Mary Beth said. "I've always felt a connection to Ethel Percy Andrus, the founder of NRTA and AARP. At the end of every day I ask myself if Ethel would be pleased with my accomplishments. I know I can make a real contribution to NRTA and the REAs, and I am excited to have the opportunity to work in a closer way with the spirit of our founder. Also, my mother was a teacher. That gives NRTA a special place in my heart," Mary Beth explained.

NRTA looks forward to introducing you to Mary Beth in the coming weeks!



OUR MISSION

We create real possibilities to strengthen America's working and retired education community by protecting their financial security and fostering collaboration and volunteerism.

NEW Advocacy Toolkit

For 2015, NRTA is providing another important tool for REAs. We know that legislative and advocacy issues remain a top priority for your associations, and the **NRTA Advocacy Toolkit** is designed to strengthen your efforts in these areas by providing best practices guidance and tips. Watch for us to roll out one element of the toolkit each month, and shortly thereafter we will hold a conference call to discuss the tool and engage with you.



In early February, we will provide you with the first element of the toolkit, *Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor on Public Pensions*. As you know, the news media can play a pivotal role in the policy process by influencing legislators and public opinion. This tip sheet is designed to enhance your media efforts by helping to get your views and messages published. Letters to the editor can be submitted in response to published articles or opinion pieces, and often are intended to set the record straight or express support for policy positions. Keep an eye out for the first element of the Advocacy Toolkit to hit your inbox soon.

We also invite you to join us for a conference call on **Tuesday, February 17, 2015, at 3 PM ET**. During the conference call, **Tom Nicholls**, NRTA senior legislative representative, will provide an overview of this new tool. He will be joined by **Bob Wagoner**, Kentucky Retired Teachers Association executive director, and **Kelly Kennneally**, NRTA communications consultant.

Bob and Kelly also will discuss a recent [letter to the editor](#) published by *The Courier-Journal*, a widely read statewide paper. KRTA submitted this letter as part of its communications plan in support of a pension funding legislative strategy. During the conference call, we also will take your questions and comments.

What: Advocacy Toolkit Conference Call
Date: Tuesday, February 17, 2015
Time: 3 PM ET; 2 PM CT; 1 PM MT; 12 PM PT
Dial In: 1-866-215-3402, Conference Code 4342380#

We hope this first element of the toolkit is helpful, and we look forward to engaging with you on the conference call. In the meantime, please contact Tom Nicholls, NRTA senior legislative representative, at 202-434-3765 or tnicholls@aarpp.org with questions or comments.

Recap | NRTA Resources for REAs

NRTA is pleased to provide a variety of ongoing, valuable resources to REAs. For your convenience, below is an inventory of those resources we hope you will continue to utilize throughout 2015.



NRTA Staff

- **Dara Dann**, Vice President: ddann@aarp.org and 202-434-3931. Located in the AARP national office, Dara continues to lead NRTA efforts and to be your voice at the national level. She directs NRTA's strategic efforts to support your needs and to promote key AARP initiatives. Dara remains committed to listening to you and finding resources to strengthen your organizations. Please feel free to contact her with any questions or suggestions.
- **Mary Beth Dixon**, Advisor: mdixon@aarp.org and 202-434-2388. As the newest member of the NRTA team, Mary Beth focuses on REA leadership development. A seasoned AARP veteran with some 20 years of relevant experience, she will be an asset to REAs seeking to strengthen their efforts on leadership and volunteer development.
- **Tom Nicholls**, Senior Legislative Representative: tnicholls@aarp.org and 202-434-3765. Located in Pennsylvania, Tom offers deep knowledge of retirement security issues to help navigate key retirement policy matters. Tom provides strategic leadership, direction and support of advocacy and legislative efforts in the states on key public policy issues with a central focus on public pensions.
- **Gene Ruiz**, Senior Administrative Technician: gruiz@aarp.org and 202-434-2380. Gene works in the AARP national office and is passionate about serving your administrative needs. Reach out to Gene if you need assistance with travel, resources such as a oversized community service facsimile check, or NRTA's free teleconference line (more on that resource below).
- **Rebecca Villarreal**, Senior Advisor: rvillarreal@aarp.org and 312-458-3620. Rebecca is located in the AARP Illinois office in Chicago. Her central focus is volunteer engagement and community service. She also coordinates the NRTA *With Our Youth!* program and NRTA's involvement in Life Reimagined.

Toll-Free Conference Call Line

Please contact [Gene](#) to determine if the NRTA toll-free conference call line is available for your use. Please provide Gene with the requested date, as well as the start and end time for your call (in eastern time). If the line is available, he will provide you with a confirmation number, the toll-free phone number and passcode.

Pension Education Toolkit and E-Briefings

NRTA released this updated resource last year to help educate your members and other stakeholders - particularly legislators - on a full range of pension issues. Prepared with the National Institute on Retirement Security, the toolkit is available [here](#).

We unveiled the Pension Education Toolkit via a live webinar, and a replay is available [here](#). To supplement the toolkit, we also recorded a series of e-briefings, a web-based service that allows viewers to watch and listen to a PowerPoint presentation anywhere, anytime and at no cost. The toolkit e-briefings are listed and linked below.

- The Economy and Your Pension:
http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Economy_and_Your_Pension
- Pension Funding
Gaps: http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Funding_Gaps
- Pension Contribution
Requirements: http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Funding_Requirements
- The Importance of Your Pension for Non-Social Security
States: http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Funding_Requirements
- Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs):
http://www.brainshark.co/aarp/Cost_of_Living_Adjustments
- Public Pension
Trends: http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Pension_Trends
- Public Pension
Reforms: http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Pension_Reforms
- Costs of Switching from Pensions to Individual
Accounts: http://www.brainshark.com/aarp/Costs_of_Switching

Image and Branding Toolkit

This package of fact sheets was developed to support your image and branding efforts, which aid in membership recruitment and retention. Download the package of fact sheets [here](#).

New Breed Videos

NRTA provided REA leaders with a groundbreaking book, *[The New Breed - Understanding and Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer](#)*, which provides powerful guidance for attracting new members. REAs also have access to a series of videos featuring one of the authors discussing key elements of the book. These videos include:

- Session I: Seismic Shifts Impacting Volunteers available at <http://bit.ly/NewBreedSession1>
- Session II: Five Recruiting Best Practices available at <http://bit.ly/NewBreed-Session2>
- Session III: Volunteer Coaching available at <http://bit.ly/NewBreed-Session3>
- Session IV: Volunteer Empowerment available at <http://bit.ly/NewBreed-Session4>

Direct Action Organizing Trainings

NRTA continue to host Direct Action Organizing (DAO) training sessions that are designed to help REAs reach their advocacy goals. Working

collaboratively with AARP staff and state offices, NRTA has helped REAs facing legislative battles by providing group and state-specific DAO trainings. Please contact [Tom](#) for more information.

NRTA *With Our Youth!* Program

This program provides opportunities for retired educators and America's youth to work together to address the needs of the young and the broader community. Each year, NRTA provides national *With Our Youth!* volunteer awards to recognize top projects. Information about the award application process is [here](#), and we invite you to read about last year's winners [here](#). Please contact [Rebecca](#) for more information.

NRTA in the *KNOW* and *Even More in the KNOW*

These are NRTA electronic newsletters distributed regularly to REA leaders. *NRTA in the KNOW* is published 10 times per year, and includes a range of stories, member spotlights, expert interviews and other resources. *Even More in the KNOW* provides short updates on timely information on an as-needed basis.

Online Survey Tool

NRTA has a subscription to Survey Monkey, an online survey tool for REAs interested in creating a member or meeting survey. We also can provide sample surveys that other states have utilized. Please contact [Gene](#) for more information on this service.

Caregiving Resource Center

Visit this AARP [website](#) for a wealth of information on the myriad issues facing caregivers - from finding healthcare providers to calculating costs to connecting with experts.

Create the Good

This AARP [website](#) offers valuable resources for your community service programs. Here you will find tools for finding service opportunities, starting a project, getting volunteers and getting inspired.

Fraud Watch Network

AARP's [Fraud Watch Network](#) offers information about protecting you and your family from fraud. Watchdog Alerts provide timely information on con artists' latest tricks, along with information on what to do if you have been victimized.

Leadership

Strong leaders and succession planning are essential ingredients for any association. NRTA has developed a series of leadership workshops based on approaches by top management thinkers. Please contact [Mary Beth](#) for more information.

Motivating Volunteers

NRTA has a wide range of resources related to motivating volunteers, tracking hours, designing programs and more. Please contact [Rebecca](#) for more information.

We hope you will save this list of NRTA resources available to your REA and refer to it throughout 2015. If you have suggestions or need additional resources to strengthen your association, please email your ideas to ddann@aarp.org.

It's Not Too Late | January 31st Deadline for Service Awards

January 31, 2015, is the deadline to submit nominations for the **2015 AARP/NRTA Annual Community and REA Unit Community Service Award**. This is a terrific and easy way to honor an individual or couple in your REA or chapters for outstanding community service.



Each year, REAs and AARP chapters are invited to nominate individuals or couples that deserve special recognition for dedicated service to the local community. You have many deserving members, and we would like to help honor their work through an award that will be meaningful to passionate, hardworking members.

We hope you will take a few minutes to download the instructions and brief application form [here](#). Next, complete the form to nominate the person or couple your chapter or REA leadership believes has made the greatest contribution in your community through a chapter- or unit-sponsored service project in 2014.

Finally, please return your completed form (make a copy for your records) by January 31, 2015, via email to volunteer@aarp.org or by mail to AARP, Office of Volunteerism and Service, Attn: Chapters B10-202, 601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049.

The award - a commemorative certificate and pin - will be mailed in time for presentation during National Volunteer Week scheduled for April 12-18, 2015. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity, and we encourage you to share it with your unit/chapter leaders.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact NRTA staff or Sharon Binns-Stewart at sbinns@aarp.org or 202-434-3385.

Member Spotlight | Florida Retired Educators Association Promoting Literacy, Building Brand Awareness

The Florida Retired Educators Association ([FREA](#)) is making a real difference for students and classroom teachers. At the same time, they use simple and smart approaches for growing their brand awareness.

The Margaret Poppell Literacy for Life project is a flagship FREA community service program that supplies new books to schools and organizations across the state. On the state level, Literacy for Life holds an annual book drive. FREA makes it easy for members to identify books needed by posting the Literacy for Life [book list](#) on its website. Then at the FREA annual convention, the books are collected and donated to the designated recipients. In addition, FREA's 48 active units create their own literacy programs to collect and distribute



books to organizations serving needy children in their area.

"Sadly, we lost Margaret last year," said Barbara Williams, FREA executive secretary. "But, she continues to make a meaningful impact on the lives of teachers and children in Florida. At our 2014 convention, her namesake program provided more than 600 books to Otis A. Mason Elementary School. The principal was overwhelmed and overjoyed by boxes and boxes of books for her school," she said.

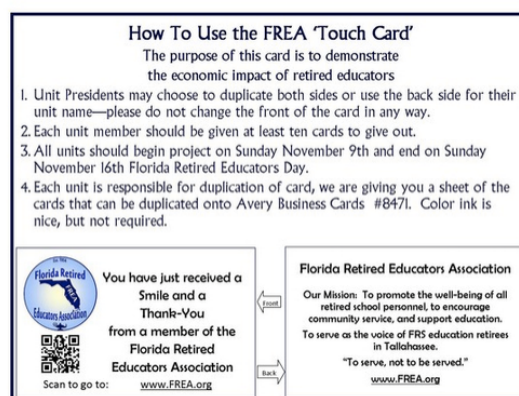
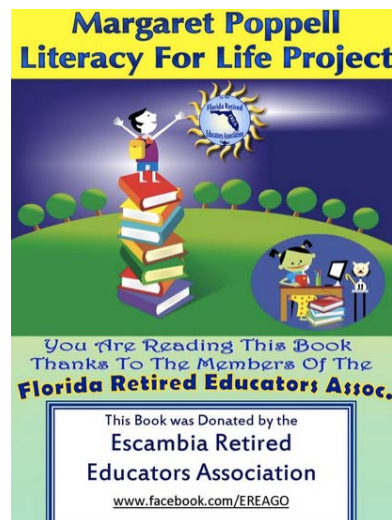
In 2011, the program donated 350 books to [A Gift for Teaching](#), an organization that provides free school supplies to teachers for students in need. In 2012, Literacy for Life donated 360 books to [Free Teacher Market](#). Run by Polk County Schools, this organization helps teachers receive needed classroom supplies and materials to aid students and increase lesson quality. Support from FREA helps to lessen the burden on teacher budgets.

"We also include a customized bookplate inside each donated book," said Anne Fagan, who manages technology and designs the artwork and graphics for FREA. "This is a simple but lasting way to build awareness of FREA and the units. Every teacher, student and parent who opens one of our donated books will read our name and hopefully appreciate our community services efforts," Fagan explained. This visibility can help increase visibility with prospective members.

In addition to the bookplates, FREA is taking a traditional approach to building brand awareness with a modern flare through its Touch Cards. These cards are a simple, inexpensive tools that every member can use as "leave behind" calling cards wherever they go during Florida Retired Educators Day and throughout the year.

The Touch Cards are designed by FREA and are provided as [electronic files](#) to unit presidents for local printing and distribution. Sized as business cards, the Touch Cards deliver a "smile and thank you from FREA member" on the front of the card and the mission on the reverse side.

Also, these cards include the updated FREA logo and "QR" code on the front side. A QR code, or Quick Response Code, is the trademark barcode for a product, event or organization. Anyone with a QR code reader application - free and easy downloads from the AppStore to smart phones and tablets - can scan the code and access information behind the code. It's similar to the barcode one might see on a product in the grocery store. Anyone who scans the FREA Touch Card QR code goes directly to the FREA website.



Use of QR codes on business cards and other marketing materials is growing. While not everyone who receives a FREA Touch Card will scan the code, they likely will appreciate that the organization is modern and tech-savvy - and it could even spur interest to learn more about FREA. Those who scan the QR code will be exposed to more FREA information beyond what is printed on the Touch Card. More information on the use of QR codes is available [here](#).

Indeed, FREA is distinguishing its traditional programs and materials by adopting modern innovations and creative thinking!

Meet the Expert | Dr. Alicia Munnell, Co-Author of *Falling Short: The Coming Retirement Crisis and What to Do About It*

Dr. Alicia Munnell is widely known as one of the nation's top academic experts on pensions and retirement issues. Her new book, *Falling Short: The Coming Retirement Crisis and What to Do About It*, provides a vivid picture of the coming retirement crisis along with simple and feasible solutions.



Dr. Alicia Munnell leads the Boston College Center for Retirement Research.

As the Peter F. Drucker Professor of Management Sciences at Boston College's Carroll School of Management and director of the [Center for Retirement Research](#) at Boston College, she has authored numerous publications regarding private and public sector pensions. Before joining Boston College in 1997, Dr. Munnell was a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisers and assistant secretary of the Treasury for economic policy. From 1973-1993, she was at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston where she became senior vice president and director of research in 1984.

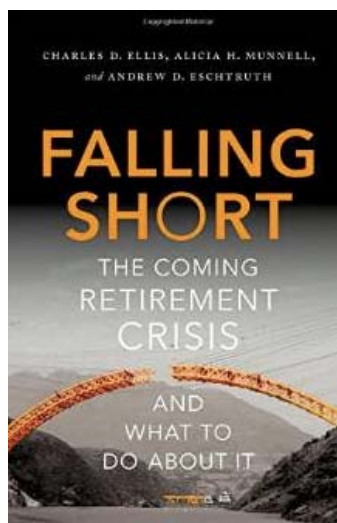
We spoke with Dr. Munnell to learn about her new book and to gain her insights on retirement security and public pension issues.

Just how severe is the retirement crisis?

As outlined in our new book, the retirement crisis is quite severe. The gravity of the crisis will become obvious once we are at the point when most retired Americans lack pension coverage and are relying on their 401(k) plans to last through retirement.

To give you a sense of the severity of the retirement shortfall, our National Retirement Risk Index finds that more than half of U.S. households are at risk of not having enough to maintain their living standards in retirement.

As discussed in the book, failure to recognize that we are far off course will mean millions of retirees will find they are too old to return to work, have too little savings, and have no one to turn to for help. We hope our book -



like Paul Revere's ride in 1776 - will sound the alarm and spur government leaders, corporate executives and individual workers to pay attention to solving the retirement crisis.

How did we end up here when we once had a strong retirement infrastructure?

Falling Short details how just 30 years ago, most American workers could stop working in their early 60s and enjoy a comfortable retirement. This "golden age" of retirement reflected a culmination of efforts that started more than a century ago to provide workers with pensions, Social Security and healthcare benefits.

We describe how that golden age is over thanks to economic and demographic developments. Just at the precise time when we need more for retirement savings because we are living longer, retirement income is shrinking. Social Security is replacing less and less of our pre-retirement income. Traditional pensions in the private sector are being replaced with 401(k) plans that typically have inadequate balances. Employers are dropping retiree health benefits while health costs are climbing. And don't forget that nearly half the workforce doesn't have any employer provided retirement plan.

The result of all of these changes is that millions of Americans will not have enough money for the comfortable retirement our parents and grandparents once enjoyed.

What can be done to do solve the retirement income problem?

In the book, we outline three options. First, Americans can just accept that we are going to be poor in retirement. Second, we can start saving more during our working years, which means less spending today. Third, we can work longer, which means fewer retirement years. As I see it, these are the only realistic options.

Every policy idea for solving the retirement income problem seems to fall under one of these options. For example, further cuts to Social Security means living on less retirement income. Expanding participation in 401(k)s or other retirement plans means saving more. And raising the Social Security age means encouraging people to work longer. Our book focuses on solving the retirement problem through a combination of working longer and saving more.

Many states have taken action to close public pension funding gaps following the financial crisis, with many states cutting benefits and raising retirement ages. Yet, there still seems to be pockets of resistance to pensions for public workers. What is going on?

It seems that the root of the opposition to public pensions can be tied to "pension envy." That is, fewer and fewer private sector workers have pension benefits and are not on track to be financially secure in retirement. Yet, private sector workers must contribute their tax dollars to pay for what they see as better retirement benefits for the public workforce. And let's not forget that nearly half of the workforce doesn't have any type of employer retirement plan.

Given that the lack of pensions is a major contributing factor to the retirement crisis, it just doesn't make sense to move everyone to the lowest common denominator by taking away public pensions. Instead, what's needed are policy solutions to re-fortify retirement security for private sector

workers and raise their level of retirement readiness. Once private sector workers feel less vulnerable about their retirement prospects, perhaps the level of pension envy will subside.

Recent research from the Boston College Center for Retirement Research focused on the role of public pensions in recruiting and retaining a high quality public workforce. What were the findings?

Since the financial crisis, we've seen many state and local governments cut retirement benefits to help close funding shortfalls. These benefit cuts come in the form of increases in age and tenure requirements, as well as reductions in cost-of-living adjustments. Ultimately, this translates into lower levels of total compensation.

We know from research that pension benefits are helpful in terms of recruiting and retaining high-quality workers, and we wanted to examine whether public pension cutbacks could hurt worker quality. Research indicates that one indicator of public workforce quality is the wage that a worker can earn in the private sector. Using this measure, states and localities consistently have a "quality gap" - the workers they lose have a higher private sector wage than those they gain. Our analysis shows that jurisdictions with relatively generous pensions have smaller quality gaps, which means they can better maintain a high-quality workforce.

Our research suggests that states and localities with relatively generous pensions should be cautious because reductions in benefits may result in a reduction in their ability to maintain a high-quality workforce. To the extent the quality gap already exists for many of these employers, reducing pension generosity may further widen the workforce quality gap. *Do Public Pensions Help Recruit and Retain High-Quality Workers?* is available [here](#).

Last year, you issued research on the links between teacher compensation and workforce quality. What were the findings in terms of impacts when teacher compensation and pension benefits are cut?

Our research, *Compensation Matters: The Case Of Teachers*, examined whether compensation really matters when it comes to attracting high quality teachers. The analysis found that more generous state and local teacher pension plans do indeed play a factor in hiring higher quality teachers as measured by SAT scores. These findings are particularly important now when financial pressures are leading public employers to cut teacher pension benefits.

What this means is that cutting teacher pensions and compensation is not costless. It will almost certainly result in a lower quality of applicants for one of the nation's most important jobs.

It's important to note, however, that the point of our research was not to argue against restructuring pensions. Some plans were unsustainable. But, the research does argue that pensions are a part of a total compensation package; and total compensation for teachers - even before cuts - is either the same or lower than that of private sector workers. Thus, even if the pension reforms are good policy, they will diminish the total compensation that new teachers will receive unless wages are increased. And lower compensation makes teaching in public schools less attractive, thereby reducing the quality of teaching applicants.

Can you give us a glimpse of the research we might see in 2015 from the Center for Retirement Research?

This year, we have a number of important research projects in the works. One effort will focus on mortality assumptions and another will look at public pension governance. We also will release research on Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statements 67 and 68, which relate to accounting and financial reporting by state and local governmental pension plans.

Legislative and Government Watch

Across the States: AARP Fighting for You in 2015

This month, state legislatures across the nation are convening to mark the inauguration of new governors, state legislators and other state leaders. Also, governors are detailing their views of challenges, opportunities and priorities for the year ahead in their State of the State messages.

In a blog post, Elaine Ryan, AARP vice president of state advocacy and strategy integration, outlines AARP's 2015 state advocacy agenda highlighting how AARP will continue to fight for you.



"We'll be watching closely as governors and legislators lay out their agendas to make sure our priorities - your priorities - are addressed," Ryan says.

She says that with respect to pension issues, "We're working to protect retirees from cuts to their pensions - because pensions are promises and states need to keep up their end of the deal. Underfunded pension plans need to be shored up, and any changes must be fiscally responsible and protect the financial future of workers and retirees."

The top 2015 AARP legislative priorities across the states include:

- Supporting Family Caregivers
- Helping People Live Independently in Their Own Homes and Communities
- Enhancing Retirement Security
- Standing Up for Consumers
- Accessing Affordable Health Coverage
- Designing Livable Communities for All Ages

For more detailed information on these state priorities, read Elaine's full blog [here](#).

For more advocacy news from across the country, sign up for the [AARP Advocates e-newsletter](#) or visit your state [web page](#).

Senate Finance Committee Launches Working Groups, Outlines Retirement Agenda

The U.S. Senate Finance Committee has launched five bipartisan working groups to explore tax reform options. Among them, the Working Group on

Savings & Investment and the Working Group on Community Development & Infrastructure, are expected to examine proposals that could affect public retirement systems.

Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) stated that the Committee also will take up his SAFE Retirement Act proposal, legislation that would allow public defined benefit plans to purchase private annuities. According to [*Pensions & Investments*](#), Senator Hatch is "convinced that my plan represents the best solution to the growing pension crisis in America."

Read the Committee's announcement of the working groups [here](#).

New Hampshire Supreme Court Affirms State's Right to Change Benefits

The New Hampshire Supreme Court has ruled that the state can increase public employees' pension contributions. The ruling reverses a Superior Court decision that could have forced refunding \$75 million dollars in pension contributions to public employees. New Hampshire Public Radio reports that a coalition called the decision "disappointing," and that "the ruling sends a strong negative message to younger workers who are required to join the retirement system, but do so without any protections against ever increasing costs that are deducted from their pay." Read the New Hampshire Retirement System statement regarding the ruling [here](#). Read New Hampshire Public Radio reporting [here](#).

AARP Testifies on Responsible Medicare Solutions, Permanent "Doc Fix" in House Committee Hearing

In testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health on January 22nd, AARP advocated for a permanent solution to the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula - also known as the "doc fix" - used to reimburse doctors and other providers in the Medicare program.

"Permanently repealing the sustainable growth rate formula will bring stability and predictability to health care providers and the Medicare beneficiaries they serve," AARP president-elect Eric Schneidewind said in testimony before the committee. "We applaud the move away from fee-for-service and toward more coordinated care; the streamlined quality reporting system; the greater use of quality measurement; and greater data transparency, among other improvements."

Under current law, Medicare updates physician fees using a method called the SGR, which was designed to keep spending in line with an overall target. Since 2002, spending on physician services has exceeded the flawed SGR target, triggering reductions in physician updates, which have been repeatedly addressed. However, regular threats to reimbursement rates have caused providers to consider not accepting Medicare patients, and caused Medicare beneficiaries to fear losing access to their provider. In addition, plans to offset the cost of SGR reform have often included significant cost-shifts onto beneficiaries. Read the testimony [here](#).

Please contact Tom Nicholls, NRTA senior legislative representative, at 202-434-3765 or tnicholls@aarp.org with questions or comments.

Life Reimagined | New Book Club, Programs and Events

We look forward to hosting a new virtual **NRTA Life Reimagined Book Club** in 2015!

This is an excellent opportunity to engage your members who might be undergoing change or feeling anxious about figuring out their "what's next."



If you know of any members or volunteers who might be interested in participating in this virtual NRTA Life Reimagined Book Club, please [email](#) Gene Ruiz by **February 9th** and provide their mailing address. Gene will send a copy of *Life Reimagined*. Please note that the books are available on a first-come, first-served basis. An overview of the book is available [here](#).

The book club is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 11, 2015**, at 2:00 PM ET, 1:00 PM CT, 12:00 PM MT, 11:00 AM PT. To participate in the conference calls, please dial 1-866-215-3402. When prompted, enter the conference code 4342380 followed by "#."

Rebecca Villarreal, NRTA senior advisor, will moderate the book club that will be hosted by Dr. Joanna Jones, community service chair for the [South Dakota Retired Teachers Association](#). Dr. Jones has guided book club discussions for 25 years. At the state and national levels, she has participated in book discussions for literature award selections and in the area of applied school health. In South Dakota, Dr. Jones is a discussion leader for the annual [South Dakota Humanities Council's One Book South Dakota Project](#).

For your convenience, the NRTA Life Reimagined Book Club questions are as follows:

1. What do the authors mean by Life Reimagined?
2. What statements from the book have you heard individuals say?
3. When have you seen Choice, Curiosity and Courage overcome the obstacle of inertia?
4. In what ways could the six practices suggested by the authors help develop a reimagined life?
5. Why might the concept of "reimagined" just be an issue of self-permission?
6. Why would the alignment of the G+P+V (Gifts, Passions, and Values) formula allow life to be lived to its fullest?

Life Reimagined continues to innovate by launching more tools to help people breakthrough and determine what matters to them and what's next. While you've probably already read the Life Reimagined [book](#) and explored the [website](#), we recommend taking a few minutes this month to revisit the site to experience some new elements:

- Short online, engaging programs that guide users through a variety of issues to help you become a better you - from caregiving to relationships. Sign up [here](#) for these no-cost programs that provide quizzes, journaling and guidance. We invite you to provide NRTA staff with your feedback on these programs

- Life Reimagined Checkup events guide participants through personal reflection, insightful activities and thoughtful conversations at free workshops. Find upcoming events near you [here](#).

Finally, we recommend several Life Reimagined articles that can help anyone at a crossroads or searching for "what's next" in their lives. Some of these stories are:

- *Be a Multi-Generational Leader* is available [here](#).
- *Hack Your Fitness Resolutions* is available [here](#).
- *Hit Pause to Power Up Your Day* is available [here](#).
- *When You Should Sacrifice for Your Spouse* is available [here](#).

All of these resources are at no cost to you, your members and family. Life Reimagined resources also are effective bridges to reach new members, Boomers and Gen Xers.

Research to Note

AARP's Public Policy Institute has released *Monitoring the Impact of Health Reform on Americans 50-64: Medicaid Expansion and Marketplace Implementation*.

The study is in collaboration with the Urban Institute's Health Reform Monitoring Survey to learn about the experience of Americans ages 50-64

in the initial phase of implementation of health coverage reforms. The research presents findings from surveys during the first open enrollment period. Download the research [here](#).

The research presents findings from surveys during the first open enrollment period. Download the research [here](#).



The Boston College Center for Retirement Research has released *How Does Aging Affect Financial Decision Making?* The research finds that older Americans that suffer cognitive decline experience a reduction in their financial literacy but no change in their confidence in managing their money. Download the research [here](#).

The Boston College Center for Retirement Research also has released *How Did State/Local Plans Become Underfunded?* This issue brief presents a new tool that describes the evolution of the unfunded liability for 150 plans from 2001 to 2013 when virtually every plan reported significant underfunding. The report concludes that the impact of the two financial crises and inadequate contributions tell a story that "often gets obscured in the political debate." Download the research [here](#).

The National Institute on Retirement Security has released *Teacher Retirement Plans: Case Studies in Washington and Ohio Indicate Value of Pensions*. This issue brief examines the retirement benefit elections of teachers in two states when new teachers have a choice between a defined (DB) pension plan or a plan that combines a defined contribution (DC) individual account with a DB pension. The analysis finds that since 2008, teachers in both states show a preference for the stand-alone DB pension. Download the research [here](#).

Teacher Pensions.org/Bellweather Education Partners has released *Uncovered: Social Security, Retirement Uncertainty, and 1 Million Teachers*. Teacherpensions.org is funded by The Joyce Foundation and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. Meredith Williams, executive director of the National Council Teacher retirement said about the study, "I am very concerned with what seems to me to be a pretty transparent effort by Bellwether to confuse young teachers and lead them to believe that the current public pension model for retirement security is unfair and insecure and needs to be 'reformed' along the lines espoused by the Arnold Foundation and others," Williams said. Download the research [here](#).

Mark Your Calendar

January 31, 2015: Deadline to submit nominations for the 2015 AARP/NRTA Annual Community and REA Unit Community Service Award. Download the instructions and application [here](#).



February 17, 2015: NRTA hosts a conference call on the NRTA Advocacy Toolkit at 3 PM ET. To participate, dial 1-866-215-3402. When prompted, enter the conference code 4342380 followed by "#."

February 6, 2015: Deadline to submit REA State Profile surveys. Contact [Gene Ruiz](#) if you have questions or need assistance.

March 4, 2015: Life Reimagined Checkup event in Tampa, Florida. Learn more [here](#).

March 11, 2015: Life Reimagined Checkup event in Brandon, Florida. Learn more [here](#).

March 11, 2015 at 2:00 PM ET:

NRTA hosts a new, virtual Life Reimagined Book Club. To participate, dial 1-866-215-3402. When prompted, enter the conference code 4342380 followed by "#."

April 12-18, 2015: National Volunteer Week. Learn more [here](#).

May 14-16, 2015: AARP hosts Life@50+ Convention in Miami, FL. More information [here](#).

Recycle Center

You told us that articles that can be repurposed and provided to your members via newsletters, websites and social media would be of tremendous support to REAs. Each month, we provide several articles to meet that need. Please use the articles as is or make modifications to make them more appropriate and relevant for your members.



A Path to Retirement provides a five-step path to help envision what retirement will look like. Download [here](#).

Health Insurance Marketplace is Open Until February 15th outlines important information for those seeking health insurance coverage. Download [here](#).

Top Vehicle Technologies for Safer Driving provides a useful list of the latest technologies to consider if you're upgrading your vehicle. Download [here](#).

Additional Resources

Each month, we highlight a few resources that may be helpful to you and your members. We encourage you to review and bookmark this information, and make your members aware of these resources.



Create the Good provides a wealth of information on volunteer opportunities and tips on a wide range of service areas - military, education, environment, hunger and much more. Read more [here](#).

Entrepreneur lists six tips for turning hard work into elite results. Read more [here](#).

Fast Company provides tips for maximum productivity. Read [more here](#).

Inc. offers insight on how to become the leader others want to follow. Read more [here](#).

The Fraud Watch Network provides timely information and tips for fraud and scam prevention. Sign up for Watchdog Alerts [here](#).

Mashable provides advice for writing effective emails. Read more [here](#).

Social Media Today reports that Instagram is projected to have 60.3 million U.S. users in 2015, and provides an [infographic](#) with user projections for all major social channels. Read about the five keys to using Instagram for your organization [here](#).

Contact & Connect



601 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20049
202-434-2380

<http://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/nrt/>