

NYSUT NOTES

Dorothy Zuckerman, NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant
631-273-8822; e-mail: dzuckerm@nysutmail.org

BUILDING FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE

The first week of September over 600 members of the Alliance for Retired Americans met in Washington, DC to plan the agenda for the activist program in the important election year of 2008. Meeting with our elected Congresspeople and Senators, we emphasized the need to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. We also re-emphasized the importance of allowing the safe reimportation of drugs from Canada and other countries. We heard from many inspiring and supportive speakers, including Sen. Hillary Clinton, Rep. Dennis Kucinich and Elizabeth Edwards.

The Alliance sponsored an impressive "Strategic Survey" to get a sense of how retirees feel today about their country and their future. The results were very informative and often disturbing, mainly because **older voters are not optimistic about the state of the country.**

- ⇒ **Seniors are concerned over security issues**
 - By almost 3-1 older voters believe the country is on the wrong track
 - Iraq, terrorism and national security top the list of concerns
 - 48% believe the war in Iraq has made us less safe
 - Although they support a change in the direction of the war, there is no agreement on what course to take
 - More than any other economic issue they are most worried about rising health care costs
 - 64% worry that Social Security won't be there for retirement, while 61% think taxes will go up too much to afford retirement
 - There is strong opposition to privatizing Social Security
- ⇒ **Retirees are unhappy with anyone in government**
 - They strongly blame corporations and greedy CEO's for rising health care costs. But when asked to decide who was most to blame, more held the government responsible than the insurance companies and HMOs
 - They feel that both parties in Congress are doing a fair/poor job
 - Health care costs is the first issue they want Congress to address, followed by guaranteeing affordable health care for everybody
- ⇒ **This age group strongly believes in the American Dream**
 - 70% are paying a lot or some attention to the presidential campaign and 40% are enthusiastic about voting in 2008
 - Many don't feel the candidates are paying attention to their concerns
 - They are worried that their children and grandchildren won't be able to afford to retire

These are issues the Alliance will be addressing on the local, state and national levels. It is urgent that more of us must become involved as activists to accomplish our goals. **Start by becoming a member of the Long Island Alliance for Retired Americans.** Call me at 631-273-8822 for more information and material.