

# MiARA Newsletter

March 2018

## MiARA Gears Up for Biennial Convention to be Held April 18, 2018

The Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans (MiARA) invites all union and community-based retirees, members, affiliates and guests to attend its **Biennial Convention** in the Metro Detroit Area on Wednesday, April 18, 2018 at UAW Region 1, located at 27800 George Merrelli Dr. Warren MI, 48092.

The MiARA is an organization that is active and ready for the legislative and political challenges that lie ahead. The mission of the MiARA is to create a powerful statewide network of union retirees and community-based organizations to educate and inform the membership, the public, and elected officials about issues that affect the well-being of retirees.

By coming to the Biennial Convention, delegates and participants have the opportunity to share ideas on solving serious issues affecting the lives of retirees.

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The Convention will chart the course that MiARA will pursue in the critical years ahead. Because of a full agenda, which includes voting for officers, the Convention will start at 11:00 am. Registration at the door will open at 10:00 am.

The program will include a briefing on many important legislative issues that impact the retirement security and standard of living for Michigan seniors.

Speakers include retiree advocate and attorney Mark Brewer and Michigan Education Association Government Affairs Director Doug Pratt, who will bring attendees up to date on current Michigan politics. Prof. David Dulio, Chair of the Oakland University political science department, will present information regarding Oakland University's Center for Civic Engagement.

An election will be held for MiARA's top five officers: President, Executive Vice-President, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice- President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

The MiARA Nomination Committee will present a slate, and nominations will also be taken from the floor. Each registered delegate will have one vote for the acceptance of by-laws and for officers.

Convention registration forms and additional information are attached to this newsletter, including a description of MiARA officer duties, instruction for officer nominations, and an official nomination form.



**Look for additional information and official convention registration forms included with this newsletter.**

## ***Nevertheless, She Persisted* MiARA Celebrates March Women's History Month**

March has been designated as National Women's History Month, dating back to a 1987 declaration of Congress. Following in this tradition, Present Donald Trump has also proclaimed March as such. The month is set aside to honor the extraordinary achievements of American women.

This year's theme for Woman's History Month is ***Nevertheless, She Persisted: Honoring Women Who Fight All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.***

The National Woman's History Project explains that the theme originated from an incident in February of 2017, when Sen. Elizabeth Warren, (D-MA) was silenced on the floor of the U.S. Senate at the confirmation hearing for Attorney General Jeff Sessions. At the time, Warren was reading an opposition letter penned by Coretta Scott King in 1986.

Referring to the incident, Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) later tried to rationalize his actions, saying "Senator Warren was giving a lengthy speech. She had appeared to have violated the rules. She was warned. She was given an explanation, *nevertheless she persisted.*"

Feminists immediately adopted the phrase in hashtags and memes to refer to any strong woman who refuse to be silenced."



## **MiARA Activist Spotlight Mary Etta O'Brien-Kreklau**

Our March MiARA Activist Spotlight shines on AFSCME retiree Mary Etta O'Brien-Kreklau. Mary Etta grew up primarily in what is now Westland, MI, but spent most summers on the family farm near Pickford in Chippewa County. Mary Etta learned to drive a tractor at the ripe old age of ten, and she was prepared to drive a car long before it was legal.

After graduating from Wayne Memorial High School, Mary Etta attended Eastern Michigan University before marrying her childhood sweetheart, Charles Kreklau.

Mary Etta went to work at Wayne Memorial General Hospital in August of 1969 in the personnel office. She continued working in personnel even after the hospital was sold to a private entity, transferring first to the county's personnel and human resources administration, and then working at the Wayne County Youth Home as a personnel officer until 1987.

Later, while working at Detroit Diesel, Mary Etta returned to college full time and graduated from Madonna College with a Bachelor of Science Degree. Mary Etta, remained in the private sector several years working in various administrative positions before taking a "temporary" position with the city of Westland, where she worked in the Housing and Community Development department for a number of years, before moving to finance, and finally retiring in 2006.

While at Wayne County General Hospital, Mary Etta was on the opposite side of the table as part of the management team in labor relations; however, by the time she retired, she was an active member of the Government Administrators' Association. At the City of Westland, Mary Etta

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## MiARA Activist Spotlight Mary Etta O'Brien-Kreklau *Continued*

was an active member of AFSCME Local 1602 where she served on the Executive Board for a period of time. Mary Etta was able to retire at an age where she could do some traveling with her husband, Charles and become a “pro-active Grandma,” with her five grandchildren.

Mary Etta also had time to devote to activism. “As a retiree, now I have time to work on campaigns, such as being a Team Caption for Voters’ Not Politicians,” she said.

Mary Etta serves on the executive board of the County of Wayne Retiree Union, Subchapter 38, and serves as a member of the Executive Committee of the Monroe County Democratic Party. Mary Etta is also an active member of the Monroe County Progressive Democrats and Monroe County Positive Action Network (MCPAN), which, according to Mary Etta, “was formed as a result of the 2016 election.”

Mary Etta also sings with the River Raisin Sweet Adelines Chorus, which she says, “I need to keep my sanity.”



*Behind the wheel of a tractor at age ten, Mary Etta was destined to become a driving force for change.*

## Students Lead Nationwide Protests to End School Gun Violence

Valentine’s Day will never be the same for students at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MDSHS) in Parkland, Florida, after 17 students and teachers were killed by a mentally-ill 19-year-old who had previously attended the school.

Led by survivors of the Parkland shooting, students throughout the nation have organized to say, “Enough is Enough,” and are leading the way to enact sane gun regulations. Students are standing up to the National Rifle Association (NRA) and to gun manufacturers, who they say place profits before children’s lives. And, they are calling out politicians who have taken millions of dollars in contributions from the NRA and promising to “vote them out” if they continue to refuse to pass commonsense gun regulations that are supported by a vast majority of Americans.

The Parkland students and the movement they started have already proven to be a force to be reckoned with.

On March 14, 2018 students across America left their school buildings for seventeen minutes to honor those killed at MSDHS, and, on March 24<sup>th</sup>, upwards of two million Americans took to the streets in Washington D.C. and across the country to echo their calls to end school shootings in the “March for Our Lives.” They are following the march with an effort to have parents promise their kids to vote for politician who put safety over guns.

According to The Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit that tracks school shootings, since 2012, when a gunman killed 20 first graders and six adults with an assault rifle at Sandy Hook Elementary, there have been at least 239 school shootings nationwide. In those episodes, 438 people were shot, 138 of whom were killed.

## Obamas Pen Moving Letter to MSDHS Student Leaders

In response to the brave and fruitful efforts of the young people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School who are leading a movement to stop school gun violence and enact sane gun regulation, President Barack Obama and former First Lady Michelle Obama wrote the following letter addressed to the students of Parkland.

*“We wanted to let you know how inspired we have been by the resilience, resolve and solidarity that you have all shown in the wake of unspeakable tragedy.*

*Not Only have you supported and comforted each other, but you’ve helped awaken the conscience of the nation, and challenged decision-makers to make the safety of our children the country’s top priority.*

*Throughout our history, young people like you have led the way in making America better. There may be setbacks; you may sometimes feel like progress is too slow in coming. But we have no doubt you are going to make an enormous difference in the days and years to come, and we will be there for you.”*

*Barack and Michelle Obama*



*In the wake of the Parkland school shooting, activists of all generations are calling on politicians to put the safety of students over guns.*

# Plan to Attend MiARA Biennial Convention April 18th, 2018

*Registration Form & Info Attached*

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### MiARA Executive Board

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