



# DEMOCRATS ABROAD

## Global Senior Caucus



### Welcome to the Democrats Abroad Seniors Caucus!

This Caucus has been a long time coming, and resulted from the work of many DA members. We were delighted to be established as a bona fide Democrats Abroad Global Caucus on January 22, and we welcome you all as new members.

In 1997, the National Democratic Seniors Coordinating Council was created as an official body of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Its main purpose was “to give older Democrats a voice within the DNC, to make use of their experience and expertise on issues such as Social Security and Medicare, to acknowledge their life-long dedication to Democratic Party ideas, and to mobilize older Democratic voters in election campaigns.”

The DA GSC mirrors that purpose and provides a forum for all DA members to better understand the issues and concerns affecting Seniors and more specifically, Seniors living abroad. We are focused especially on empowering Seniors living abroad, inter alia to exercise their right to vote and participate in getting out the vote (GOTV) and to mobilize older Democratic voters in election campaigns. We welcome your participation in our new caucus. Please get involved, we need your help and support.

Warm wishes,

Betsy Ettorre  
Chair, Global Senior Caucus



## VOTING in the 2022 mid-term election is SO IMPORTANT

On November 8, 2022, 34 U.S. Senators, 435 U.S. Representatives, 46 State legislatures, and 36 governors will be elected. State primaries begin in May. To be sure you're ready to vote and to avoid confusion or even disappointment when it comes time to vote, check your voter registration status, and request your ballot at [VoteFromAbroad](#).

### [Vote from Abroad](#)

Have you ever used this website? If not, pop on over and check your registration status. It's made easy with user friendly tools. Just click the red [START](#) button, and you will be led through the registration process. When complete, you will also have requested your ballot(s) for all elections in 2022.

### [Voting in 2022 - what's coming up](#)

You can get all the information you need on your state's upcoming elections on the [Vote From Abroad](#) website. Here's how to find your state:

Go to <https://www.votefromabroad.org/states/>. Choose your state from the drop-down menu.

### Some Definitions:

**Trifectas:** A **trifecta** means having control of the state governor's office and both legislative chambers. Democrats hold 14 trifectas, Republicans hold 23 trifectas, and 13 states have a divided government.

**Redistricting:** These will be the first elections affected by the 2020 redistricting cycle, which reapportioned state legislatures based on data from the 2020 United States census. We will be watching this closely in the coming months.

## HEALTH & MEDICARE

**How are you Feeling Today?** As we enter YEAR THREE of the pandemic, we have to ask ourselves - am I moving enough? Am I making excuses to stay in, not walk, not stay mobile?

### Exercise and Aging - by Jim Dobson

To repurpose an old joke, most of us are not at all afraid of regular exercise. We can sit on the couch and watch someone else exercise with no discomfort at all!

However, when it comes to doing the exercise ourselves, it tends to get buried beneath higher priorities for most of us. Nonetheless, we are not doing ourselves any favors by skimping on our levels of exercise, especially as we age. And most of us are aware of that fact.

I think that if we were on the Family Feud game show and the question was, "What should a person do to reduce the risk or ameliorate the effects of such chronic diseases as arthritis, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease?", many of us would correctly guess that the top two answers are: (1) Engage in regular exercise; and (2) Maintain a healthy weight. However, knowing those answers and achieving those goals are two different things.

I am going to focus on the question of regular exercise. Let me start by acknowledging three things: (1) regular exercise will need to take different forms for different people; (2) changing one's routine and daily patterns to add sustained regular exercise is daunting to consider and difficult to do; and (3) there little if any positive reinforcement for weeks or even months. Nonetheless, over time it will reward you in ways that you might not have anticipated.

If your exercise program is built around regular walking and jogging, it will have the well-known benefits of reducing the risk and severity of many chronic diseases and reducing excess pounds. But it will also have a positive effect on a person's daily life. Specifically, a person who regularly jogs or walks continuously for 30-40 minutes is likely to maintain a good level of mobility. This is particularly important for older people, because a loss of mobility is directly related to the loss of one's independence and the abandonment of desired activities and interactions with friends. In short, a loss of mobility shrinks a person's world. The effect of suitable regular exercise in terms of continued mobility is a hugely valuable benefit.

The second collateral benefit to regular sustained exercise is the person's own perceptions of him- or herself. For example, suppose you are visiting Iceland and someone recommends that you see its largest waterfall, Dettifoss. It is located nearby, but it is a one kilometer walk away from the nearest road. Do you decide whether to visit Dettifoss by answering the question "How interested am I in seeing another waterfall?" or by answering the question "Will walking one kilometer each way be too hard?"? You can see that the person who asks the first question has a very different and more positive sense of self than the person who asks the second question. Having confidence in one's physical capability instead of having concerns about one's physical restrictions produces a very different sense of self.

Let us suppose that I have convinced you to start or increase your exercise program. How can you do that? I will lay out the steps for creating and carrying out a program tailored to your situation—in the next newsletter. Stay well until then!

"We can relate! I didn't know how much I love staying home — no appointments to keep, no opening/closing hours to adhere to, no doctors appointments, lunches, shopping or travel — I enjoy it!"

-- Lauren Hakulinen, Newsletter Editor



A lovely rendition of [La Bamba](#) to get you moving from Playing For Change | Song Around the World. (Courtesy of Irene Chriss)

## F-word to which all senior citizens should pay attention: FRAUD - by Eric Jackson

The material misrepresentation of relevant facts, often enough “just” by omission, to make ourselves and our assets part of, is [a lifestyle hazard for us](#).

At our age, we have seen so much of it. Cigarette ads to get us to smoke. Pitches for convenient innovations that turned out to be toxic, [terribly polluting](#) or way overpriced. Balloon payments and mortgage traps. All manner of [financial schemes](#). Phishing lurks in our email. Myriad other [frauds are aimed directly at our age group](#).



Getting whiteboarded by Katie Porter? A charlatan's nightmare that we like to see, but not nearly all the protection older folks need.

Then there are frauds aimed at stealing our votes, and [our voting rights](#).

At the moment the USA still hasn't recovered from a nightmare encounter with a serial con man, and [court cases about aspects of that](#) will likely affect this year's midterm elections.

This newsletter is going to look at the world of fraud as it is most likely to affect us. It's about mutual self-protection, and wisdom to pass down to younger generations.

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## TAX NEWS

### DA's Taxation Task Force

A lot of work was done to restructure the Taxation Task Force (TTF) since Rebecca Lammers took over as Chair on January 1st, including:

- recruiting over 35 new members to the TTF, and growing!
- forming a team to help CC and chapter social media managers with battling the trolls
- recruiting local members to help CCs host tax webinars to help with fundraise

It is Rebecca's aim to make the TTF a resource for global teams, Country Committees, and Chapters. The more we talk about the issues Americans abroad care about most, fixing the tax problems we all personally experience, the more it will help us mobilize the overseas vote as we get closer to November.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to Rebecca Lammers if you have any questions, need help on anything tax advocacy related, or if you are interested in joining the TTF.

### TTF News

Earlier this month, the TTF submitted [Legislative Recommendations to the Ways & Means Committee](#).

### Tax Filing — Having problems filing? Is this your first year abroad?

Not to worry - the AARP provides in-person and virtual tax assistance to anyone, free of charge, with a focus on taxpayers who are over 50. That's us!

The [AARP Foundation Tax-Aide](#) assists with online queries.

Even the **IRS** has a helpline and [these pages](#) are designed specifically for international taxpayers.

Form [1040SR](#) can be used for those 65 and over (born before 1 January 1957).

Form [2555](#) is used to reporting Foreign Earned Income.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

So many events are coming up in March! From Get Out The Vote (GOTV) to book clubs and cocktail hour trivia nights to heavyweight speakers answering our questions about Washington DC, the DNC, and what's coming up in the primaries in 2022.

You can find it all on DA's website under [Events](#).

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## Chair's Corner



Let us remember that February is Black History Month, and for nearly fifty years we have marked Black History Month by recognizing and honoring the contributions and achievements of Black Americans. Black History Month is a time to celebrate and highlight the wide-ranging roles so many Black Americans have played in our country's history. We reflect on the contributions of African Americans and how important it is for all of us to make our communities more equitable and just.

Also, let us remember that there are currently more than 4 million African Americans over the age of 65..., with a projected growth of about 12 million by 2060. Like the general population of Seniors, African American Seniors are living longer. However, unlike their White counterparts, "African American Seniors experience significant health disparities, including lower life expectancies and an increased risk of chronic health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, dementia, stroke, and cancer. In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the impact of racism on the quality of life of African Americans, sparked in part by the Black Lives Matter movement. Research indicates that African Americans—young and old—experience subtle and overt forms of racism. African American Seniors, however, have also experienced cumulative race related stressors that negatively impact their physical and mental health." <sup>1</sup>

For African American Seniors, exposure to cumulative experiences of racism has resulted in limited access to resources such as education, employment, health care, housing, and political participation, contributing to health disparities and increased rates of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and dementia." <sup>2</sup>

We need to be sensitive to our African American Senior brothers and sisters and offer them understanding and empathy. For African Americans, the effects of racism are felt daily. Racism also intersects with other forms of discrimination, including ageism, classism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism. All Seniors should aim to understand the lens through which individuals view their experiences.

Recently, in pondering Black History Month, Bernice King, the daughter of Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, said: "*The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Jim Crow aren't "Black History" but European, American and World History. Our history is about a people with roots and hope, who suffered and challenged these evils as multi-faceted, dynamic, diverse beings. + Black History includes Black Joy.*" Let's remember this Black Joy as we celebrate Black History Month for people of all ages and races.

1. See: The Cochran Firm, [Race, Sex & Age Discrimination](#)
2. Adomakoy, Frances (2018) [African-American Older Adults and Race-Related Stress: How Aging and Health Care Providers Can Help](#), American Psychological Association, Office of Ageing

See also — [For Black workers, age discrimination strikes twice](#)

### Who am I?

I have been a member of Democrats Abroad for 22 years first in DAUK and then in DA Finland. I have been active in the Finland Executive Committee as Member-at-Large since 2019; a member of the LGBTQ+ Global Caucus Steering Committee and co-leader of Pro DA's Monthly Meetings for Progressive Minds. I was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut and in 1972, I moved to England where I completed my sociological graduate studies in 1977. After that time, I was a researcher and taught at the Universities of London, Åbo Academy, Helsinki, Plymouth, and Liverpool. In 2011, I retired and came to live with my female partner in Helsinki, Finland. I love skiing, reading history and walking our two Finnish Lapland dogs, Ruusa and Sampo.

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## News and Stories from Home and Abroad

We've collected some funny, some serious and some informative articles for you in this corner. Click the headlines to be taken to outside sites like the New York Times, Bloomberg, and MSN.

[Call It 'Codger Power.' We're Older and Fighting for a Better America](#)

**Neil Young and Joni Mitchell** did more than go after Spotify for spreading Covid disinformation last week. They also, inadvertently, signaled what could turn out to be an extraordinarily important revival: of an older generation fully rejoining the fight for a working future.

You could call it (with a wink!) Codger Power! [Read on...](#)

Cindy Meyers of Petaluma, California wrote in this NYT article last month: *The Pandemic Has Made Many Seniors Less Active*

“Like many employees, Dr. Myers has now been working remotely for two years, curtailing social and cultural events and forgoing travel. That shift, perhaps exacerbated by a bout of depression in 2020, has taken a physical toll, she said. Her limbs feel weak, her balance rocky; she has fallen several times.” [Read](#)

[more....](#)

[Scientists Create Spinal Cord Implants That Could Allow People to Walk](#)

Bloomberg 7 Feb 2022

[U.S. Reps Urge CMS to Maintain Medicare Advantage Benefits in 2023](#)

In a bipartisan effort, the policymakers commended CMS for supporting the program and urged them to protect and ensure Medicare Advantage benefits for next year’s plan... 1 February 2022

## VOTER PROTECTION IN THE NEWS

[Meanwhile in Florida....](#) A Florida prosecutor said she is investigating reports that elderly voters in Miami unknowingly had their registrations changed from Democratic to Republican. [Read more...](#)

[Update on Texas voter suppression:](#) “Kenneth Thompson, 95, told the outlet that he fears the new Republican voting law, SB 1, could prevent him from voting for the first time in his life. Thompson said his application was denied twice because of the new requirement but Harris County election officials did not notify him of the rejection until he called to inquire both times.”

“The [new Texas law](#), which includes numerous restrictions on ballot access, requires voters to submit their driver’s license number or a partial Social Security number, which election clerks then have to match to their voter registration. But [more than 100,000 voters](#) in the state do not have either number on file, and more than 700,000 do not have at least one of the numbers on file, according to the Texas secretary of state’s office.”

We need to Cancel voter suppression! [Read more....](#)

## RETIRING - BUT WHERE?

When you think about who is moving to Mexico from the United States, you probably think of retirees seeking a warmer and more affordable place to live out their golden years.

“Living in Mexico has restored my faith in humanity. People walk down the streets and say good morning to complete strangers. People are willing to go out of their way to help. When you see someone’s car broken down on the side of the road, people come out and help. I’ve never seen that back at home,” she said.”

Read more... [Who is Moving to Mexico from the US?](#)

[10 Best Places to Retire Around the World in 2022](#) from *Travel & Leisure* magazine, February 2022

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## This month in US history

**March 1, 1961** - President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, an organization sending young American volunteers to developing countries to assist with health care, education and other basic human needs.

**March 22, 1972** - The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed by the U.S. Senate and then sent to the states for ratification. The ERA, as it became known, prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender, stating, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," and that "the Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." Although 22 of the required 38 states quickly ratified

the Amendment, opposition arose over concerns that women would be subject to the draft and combat duty, along with other legal concerns. The ERA eventually failed (by 3 states) to achieve ratification despite an extension of the deadline to June 1982.

If this wasn't quite enough for you, [many more events are listed here.](#)

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## In Search of Volunteers...

We are looking for Volunteers for the Global Senior Caucus Steering Committee!

What does a member of the Steering Committee involve?

- Good communication skills in meetings and enjoying the company of others.
- Steering Committee Meetings are via WebEx once a month (the 1st Wednesday of the month) for 60-90 minutes at 8 am EST | 2pm CET.
- Taking on a specific role on the Steering Committee (See the open roles below) and helping the Caucus to organize around your role.

### Roles open on the Steering Committee

#### *Role and Responsibilities*

*Events* Keeping a record of all planned events (i.e., check list) and making sure the wiki form has been filled in for these events in coordination with event's organizers

*Community Building* Sharing experiences on Zoom/WebEx by establishing a monthly "Meet and Greet" event open to all members of the GSC

*Education and Awareness* Working with other members of the Steering Committee, especially our members interested in Legislation, and ensuring that all members of the GSC are aware of any legislative changes, innovations, social changes that are affecting their lives as Seniors.

If you are interested in being a member of our newly established Steering Committee, email us with the subject "Steering Committee" and tell us briefly about yourself, your experience, why you'd like to join our team and in what role. We look forward to hearing from you. *We are especially interested in Volunteers from the Asia Pacific Region.*

### Join our Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) Committee

We want to ask you, "Are you 60+ and tired of being "WEPed" — namely having your Social Security benefits shrunk because of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)? We invite you to join the Seniors WEP Committee where we will analyze the issues and developments, strategize, and under the DA umbrella, reach out to allies in Congress, with the goal of achieving the elimination of WEP or at the very least, reduce the severity of its sting on our finances. Are you interested? If so, please email the Seniors Caucus with the subject "WEP" in the subject heading and we'll get back to you.

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## Tech Tips

Having a hard time reading your computer screen? We've been there ourselves. You can enlarge the size of the display of you're seeing by holding down these keys:

**MAC:** Command, Shift and the + sign

**PC:** Use Magnifier.

### [Tools on Your Smartphone Can Make Life Easier](#)

These are great! I've been using an iPhone for many years, but in reading this I learned a thing or two. Tell us what bothers you, and we'll try to find a solution!

## A great reminder

- At age 23, Tina Fey was working at a YMCA.

- At age 23, Oprah was fired from her first reporting job.
- At age 24, Stephen King was working as a janitor and living in a trailer.
- At age 27, Vincent Van Gogh failed as a missionary and decided to go to art school.
- At age 28, J.K. Rowling was a suicidal single parent living on welfare.
- At age 28, Wayne Coyne (from The Flaming Lips) was a fry cook.
- At age 30, Harrison Ford was a carpenter.
- At age 30, Martha Stewart was a stockbroker.
- At age 37, Ang Lee was a stay-at-home-dad working odd jobs.
- Julia Child released her first cookbook at age 39, and got her own cooking show at age 51.
- Vera Wang failed to make the Olympic figure skating team, didn't get the Editor-in-Chief position at Vogue, and designed her first dress at age 40.
- Stan Lee didn't release his first big comic book until he was 40.
- Alan Rickman gave up his graphic design career to pursue acting at age 42.
- Samuel L. Jackson didn't get his first movie role until he was 46.
- Morgan Freeman landed his first MAJOR movie role at age 52.
- Kathryn Bigelow only reached international success when she made The Hurt Locker at age 57.
- Grandma Moses didn't begin her painting career until age 76.
- Louise Bourgeois didn't become a famous artist until she was 78.
- Whatever your dream is, it is not too late to achieve it.
- Hell, it's okay if you don't even know what your dream is yet.
- Never tell yourself you're too old to make it.
- Never tell yourself you missed your chance.
- Never tell yourself that you aren't good enough.
- You can do it. Whatever it is that sets your soul on fire.

### Members of the Steering Committee

Chair	Betsy Ettorre (Finland)
Vice Chair	Jim Dobson (Finland)
Secretary	Lois Floyd (Panama)
IT	Will Prescott (Mexico)
GOTV (Get Out The Vote)	Jim Mercereau (Spain)
Legislation and WEP	Antonio Nichols (Austria)
Medicare Portability	Marnie Delaney (France)
Communications, Social Media, Newsletter	Lauren Hakulinen (France) Eric Jackson (Panama)
Member/Volunteers Recruitment	Tilly Gaillard (France) Dan Smith (Israel)
Member-at-Large	Karen Lee (Greece) Melanie Gardner (Canada) Robert Scott (Germany)
Member ( <i>ex-officio</i> )	Candice Kerestan Chair, Democrats Abroad (Germany) Katie Solon, DNC, DA Member (Germany)

Our next Steering Committee meeting will be on ...

**2 March @ 8 am EST | 2pm Paris**

**ALL Seniors Caucus members are welcome.**

**Click here to RSVP to get the Zoom link!**

## Suggestion Box

Do you have questions for us? What do you want to hear about?  
What should Congress be doing to help Seniors?  
Drop us a line by email to: [seniors@democratsabroad.org](mailto:seniors@democratsabroad.org)  
We would love to hear from you!



**Senior Caucus Newsletter**







