

DFL Senior Caucus Political Affairs Committee (PAC)
2021-2023 Report
June 1, 2023

The role of the DFL Senior Caucus PAC is to develop, promote, and manage programs through which seniors can participate in political events, projects, and campaigns including DFL candidate endorsement and advocating for legislation and policy benefiting seniors throughout the state.

The PAC has focused on the following activities and accomplishments.

1. Candidate Screening and Endorsement Process

- The PAC provided oversight of candidate screenings for local chapter candidate endorsement recommendations. Where there was no chapter available, the PAC filled in to conduct the process.
- A screening questionnaire addressed issues important to seniors based on input from members including:
 - Expanding senior access to broadband
 - More affordable insulin prices
 - End of Life Options
 - Specialized transportation and ride share programs
 - Subsidized community based in-home services
 - Subsidized alternative housing communities
 - Universal access to health care
 - Expanded chiropractic services coverage
 - Balancing public safety and police reform
 - Protecting employee pension funds from cuts
 - Support for endorsed DFL candidates
- 61 candidates received endorsement recommendations from the PAC which were submitted for approval to the Executive Committee and/or Board and were signed by the DFL Senior Caucus Chair and sent out by chapter chairs. 41 of those candidates eventually won their races.
- Endorsements were shared with members and publicized through Face Book, the DFL Senior Caucus Website, and personal distribution.

2. Postcard Project

- The PAC and individual chapters recruited volunteers to send approximately 10,000 postcards to voting seniors age 55 and older in key races around the state.
- Since it was not a Presidential election year, the focus was on GOTV efforts directed at DFL seniors likely to vote.
- This involved developing a preprinted post card which volunteers filled out, addressed, added personal messages, and stamped. Many volunteers donated their own stamps.
- The majority of those candidates were successful in winning their elections
- After preliminary analysis of results, the PAC intends to expand this project for the 2024 election year.

3. Legislative and Policy Action Plan

- As part of the candidate screening process described in #1. above, the PAC also developed a standardized process for chapter identification of resolutions and legislative positions for submission to and approval by the Executive Committee and/or Board. This Legislative and Policy Action Plan was presented to the Board in March 2023.
- This written plan provided a protocol for consensus on resolutions on key policy issues of interest to seniors for further legislative and advocacy efforts.
- In addition, the PAC identified current policy issues which were most likely to be addressed in the 2023 legislative process and prioritized them for further advocacy efforts.
- Based on available PAC resources and evidence of legislative activity, the PAC chose to focus on three important legislative priorities likely to have significant positive impacts on seniors if passed. These were:
 - Caregiver Workforce Shortage: Addressing the current health care workforce shortages in nursing homes, assisted living and in-home settings through higher wages and other recruitment strategies to restore staffing levels and prevent closure of senior facilities. The PAC consulted with experts such as the LTC Imperative to track the status of this complex proposal and communicate its progress to members. **Significant** investment in home and community-based services and nursing home staffing was eventually included although some funding is short term.
 - The Task Force on Aging: This task force, appointed by the Governor and the legislature, is created to identify and prioritize necessary support for an aging population to remain in their communities. It must seek input from a wide array of stakeholders and provide recommendations by January 15, 2025. The PAC collaborated with Elder Voice Family Advocates and labor retirees to encourage this proposal, which also passed.
 - Funds for Senior Nutrition: After years of static funding, creating food assistance waiting lists for seniors, especially in rural areas, this proposal was designed to increased funding for senior nutrition such as meals preparation and distribution (meals on wheels, congregate dining and food shelves) provided through Area Agencies on Aging. The PAC collaborated with a coalition of Area Agencies on Aging which solicited DFL Senior Caucus assistance and support. Significant additional funding was approved, although it is short term.
- The PAC followed these issues during the legislative process, providing letters of support, in person testimony and on-going monitoring of hearings on-line or in person while notifying members of status reports, hearings, opportunities and instructions for individual comments through periodic emails and newsletters at both the chapter and state levels.
- Thanks to the DFL trifecta and committee leadership, all three priority issues were approved by the legislature.
- In addition, the PAC monitored other key legislation identified as important by members including sending status updates and monitoring and collaborating with AARP on increased tax exemptions for Social Security and with labor retiree organizations on the Family Leave Act.
- The PAC is now in the planning phase for the 2023-2024 agenda in which the 2024 election will be paramount. The PAC will continue to solicit member input for legislative priorities for the 2024 session, to update and revise screening questionnaires as needed for candidate screening for 2024. The PAC also expects to further expand support to endorsed candidates, follow up with elected legislators, and improve GOTV efforts.