

Unmarried America



Newsletter of the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR SINGLE PEOPLE

National USA Week: September 15-21, '02

National Unmarried and Single Americans Week, formerly commemorated by AASP as "National Singles Week," begins this year on September 15.

National USA Week is a time to celebrate the lives and contributions of unmarried Americans as valuable employees, dutiful taxpayers, good neighbors, community volunteers, and loving family members.

There are commemorative days, weeks, and even months, for parents, secretaries, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and others. It is only fitting that 82 million unmarried and single Americans be recognized in such a manner too.

AASP is planning a variety of activities for National USA Week, including a Speakers Bureau, appearances on radio talk shows, interviews with newspaper feature and lifestyle writers, stopping by the offices of each member of Congress, and conferring awards to single people who are great role models, as well as to elected officials for positive leadership and to members of the media for excellence in reporting.

You can help us secure a proclamation from the mayor of your city acknowledging USA Week in your area.

For more details on what you can do to participate in these events, visit our website at:

www.nationalUSAweek.org

Unmarried Workers Question Pension Plans



younger workers. Being able to own up to one-third of their contributions would mean they could designate a beneficiary to receive those assets if they were to die before retiring. A surviving domestic partner, parent, or adult child might desperately need such a financial boost for economic survival.

"Unmarried workers sue state, say retirement law discriminates" was the headline of a story in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on August 3, 1999.

The article explained that Secretary of State Douglas LaFollette and other state employees were suing Wisconsin over a state law that discriminated against workers who are not married.

The law being challenged only allowed spouses or dependents of state workers to receive full retirement benefits if an employee died before retiring. But if the employee's designated beneficiary is not a spouse or dependent, the employer's contributions to the retirement fund are forfeited.

LaFollette has since become a member of AASP.

A similar complaint was recently raised by an AASP member who works for American Airlines (see story, page 12).

A preliminary investigation by AASP has found that forfeiture of employer contributions to traditional pension plans is a problem faced by many employees working for both public and private employers.

The problem is compounded by the fact that unmarried employees who die before retirement also forfeit all contributions made by them and by their employers to Social Security. That is why proposals to partially privatize social security look attractive to many

The issue of pension equity for government workers was taken up by the Regents of the University of California at their meeting on May 16, 2002. University administrators presented the Regents with proposals to eliminate marital status discrimination in the university's pension system.

AASP Executive Director, Thomas F. Coleman, appeared at the hearing. He advised the Regents that it was time to reassess U.C. health benefits as well as pension benefits.

AASP member Vic Pelton, a retiree of the university, is still waiting for the Regents to open up the same-sex-only domestic partner health benefits plan to heterosexual domestic partners.

"Equal pay for equal work should be the bedrock principle on which all benefits plans operate," Coleman said. "An employee's overall compensation, including benefits pay, should hinge on merit, productivity, and loyalty."

"Unmarried employees who live alone, who live with unmarried relatives, or who have domestic partners, should not be second-class workers," Coleman stressed. "They are currently shortchanged by the pension plan."

AASP will keep pension benefits discrimination on its long-term agenda and make periodic reports to our members on further developments. This is an issue which sorely needs attention. $\Delta\Delta$