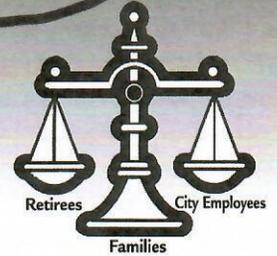


RECSL News

Volume XXV, Issue 2
JUNE 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Mike Sullivan*



Greetings members and friends!

As in the recent past, I am pleased to report that our meetings have been very well attended. On a side note I am sorry that I have been unable to join all of you recently as I have been somewhat "under-the-weather". I am currently in recovery mode and look forward to returning as soon as possible.

We had no meeting in January, as usual, and unfortunately February's meeting was also cancelled due to bad weather.

Our March meeting went well. Our main speaker was Jim Garavaglia. Jim enlighten us on many interesting occurrences in the month of March. Sir Issac Newton was born in 1727; Einstein developed his famous theory of relativity; Fred (Mr.)Rogers, Bobby Orr and Spike Lee were all born in March.

Jim also reminded us of several major corporations which got their start or dramatically expanded here in St. Louis.

Monsanto was founded in the early 1900's by John Queeny. Monsanto developed saccharin and many other food additives. Later, herbicides and insecticides were also invented including: DDT, Lasso, Agent Orange, and Roundup. These helped make the United States a world leader in agriculture. A few were later found to be somewhat hazardous and are no longer used.

Our April meeting was rather abbreviated, the speaker was unable to attend and Jim Garavaglia also had a prior commitment. Please let Jim know how much we missed him!

Our May meeting also reportedly went well. Once again Jim Garavaglia enlightened us on many things we didn't know we needed to know.

Jim informed us that the City of Los Vegas was founded May 15, 1905. In May 1928 the first Mickey Mouse Movie debuted. In May 1940 the first McDonald's Restaurant was erected. In 1958 the USSR launched the first satellite. In 1972 Okinawa was returned to Japan. Jane Seymore, Emmit Smith, Madelyne Albright were all born in May. National hotdog day and national chocolate chip day are also in May. The birth stone is Emerald and the flower is Lilly of the Valley.

Our St. Patrick's luncheon was well attended and a good time was reportedly had by all! And don't forget our annual RECSL picnic will be held August 21st after our regular meeting. Please see the backside of this newsletter for details.

	Special Aldermanic July 1st, 2025 8th Ward (only)
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Tariffs on products, including cars and steel, are now in effect. The administration has threatened duties on other goods, as well. The U.S. excels at exporting services (eg: banking and consulting) but a high level of goods imports has fueled a large trade deficit. The U.S. had a goods deficit across many key trade partners. A sizable trade deficit in goods exists with China, Canada and Mexico.

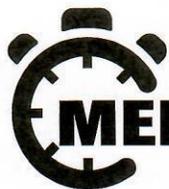
The U.S. economy contracted in the first quarter of 2025. The 0.3% decline in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) fell short of the 0.4% growth expected by economists. The first quarter marked the first contraction for the U.S in two years. U.S. firms ramped up imports to get ahead of tariffs. Net exports subtracted nearly 5% from GDP in the first quarter, the biggest drag since 1947. Core PCE (Personal Consumption Expenditures) increased 2.3% year over year in March but could go higher due to tariffs.

The U.S. labor market held steady in April despite tariffs with 177,000 job additions. The unemployment rate remained constant at 4.2%. Shipments from China plummeted in April. Containers from China to the U.S. dropped sharply due to high levies on Chinese imported goods. The Federal Reserve

held rates constant at its May meeting. Investors now anticipate three or four rate cuts in 2025.

Mixed predictions of economic gloom and doom have failed to materialize. The economy remains strong, the jobs market continues to

grow, incomes are increasing and the prices of many consumer items, like gasoline and groceries, are coming down. Many countries are looking to make trade deals with United States and the House and Senate are working to pass significant budget and national security legislation. Still there is enough uncertainty to keep the market in a state of flux. The Dow, while going up and down on a daily basis is currently at 42,270.07 and remains healthy. The ERS fund remains strong. The bottom line is the one year return on investment is 8.8% with the market value of the fund, as of May, 6, 2025 standing at \$858,796,418.



Submitted by Theresa White, Secretary,
Mike Sullivan, President

MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 17, 2025

The meeting was opened on Thursday, April 17, 2025 at 10:05 am. The pledge was recited and the

minutes were not read due to the misplacement of the folder. If any finds the folder, please let the secretary know... The Treasurer's Report was given, approved and seconded pending audit with no corrections. A copy of the report is attached to the minutes.

Tom Stoff gave the pension report indicating that in the light of a rollercoaster stock market, the pension fund remains just below nine hundred million and the board continues to monitor the money managers. He also chaired the meeting for as our president was unavailable.

We did not have a speaker for the month of April.

Jim Garaveglia was also unavailable for the month of April due to a previous commitment.

Peggy gave a report of upcoming events at the Czech Center such as the April 26th Spring Festival, the May 31st BBQ, and a chili dinner just to name a few. Fliers were available for detailed information.

Membership: no new members

Recommendation was made for members to visit the Facebook page for updates. We were also reminded to check with Jim or Joanna to make sure your information is correct if you are not receiving information regularly.

Attendance prizes:

\$25 went to Dave Brandt

\$15 Roman

\$10 Roger Allison

50/50 (\$65) went to Unknown

Rollover (\$30) went to Kathryn Rodner; however you must be present to win Next month's amount will be \$40

A motion was made to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned at 10:30am.

The next meeting will be May 15, 2025.

In Memorial

During 2025, we were notified that the following members have passed away:

Barbara A. Beck	Lawrence J. Schmidt
Vincent DiRaimondo	Victor W. Sternberg
Arthur J. Lyons	Fred J. Weissmann
Freda F. Newport	

Our deepest condolences to the families of deceased members and may they rest in peace.

New Members



During 2025, the following retirees have become members of our organization.

Freddie L. Dunlap
 Raymond J. Gude
 Steven C. Roberts
 Thomas A. Roulston
 Cathy Smentkowski
 Barbara J. Speropoulos
 Fred K. Zeller

We welcome them and hope to see them at our monthly meetings.

Treasurer's Report

by Norm Sutterer

As of April 30, 2025 our balances are:

Checking Account	\$4,285.31	(Mkt. Value
Edward Jones Franklin Fund	\$33,000.00	\$32,979.18
	\$37,285.31	

Note: RECSL Membership Meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of the month EXCEPT no meetings in January, and December (Christmas Party). The meetings are at the American Czech Center, 4690 Landsdowne, St. Louis, MO. Meetings start at 10:00 am.

RECSL Officers

President	Mike Sullivan	314-631-9158
Vice President	Tom Stoff	
Treasurer	Norm Sutterer	314-752-7997
Secretary	Theresa White	
Trustees	Gary Gooden	
	John Stoverink	
	Joanna Stoverink	
	Jim Gadell	314-781-6220
	Peggy Triska	
ERS Pension Rep	Tom Stoff	
Newsletter	Jim Gadell	

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The services and information available in and through this newsletter including but not limited to website links are provided "as is without warranties of any kind."

Address Changes

A separate address change notification to RECSL is required in addition to the address change notification made to the Employees Retirement System. Please notify RECSL as soon as possible when you have an address change. We do not want you to miss a Newsletter or notice of an upcoming event. It is costly and time consuming to have mail returned to us, often the Post Office will not forward mis-addressed mail.

Address changes should go to:

RECSL
Joanne Stoverink
P.O. Box 190724
St. Louis, MO 63119-6724

HAPPY
 Father's Day



5 Ways AARP Is Fighting to Protect Social Security

We're mobilizing our members, calling for answers and demanding better customer service

By Emily Paulin, Updated April 30, 2025 AARP

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is making big changes to how it operates, including cuts to its workforce and the closure of many of its regional offices. A proposal to scrap over-the-phone application services was recently abandoned, thanks in part to fierce opposition from AARP. But uncertainty about future changes at the agency remains.

AARP is sending a clear message that Social Security must be protected. We're tracking new SSA initiatives and taking action when needed to ensure that all older Americans can safely access the benefits they've earned and get questions answered in ways that are best for them. Here's how AARP is fighting to protect Social Security.

1. Defending against cuts to customer service

Thanks in part to powerful opposition from AARP, the SSA recently abandoned its plan to implement burdensome new in-person identity verification requirements that could have forced millions of older Americans into field offices to secure their benefits. The walk-back is "great news for older Americans," LeaMond said in an April 9 statement, released the day after the SSA announced it was scrapping the plan.

"We were pleased to see the SSA respond to the concerns raised by older Americans and reverse course," LeaMond wrote in her most recent letter to SSA's Dudek. "Your decision will make a meaningful difference for millions of individuals who count on SSA to be accessible and responsive to their needs."

The SSA administers roughly \$1.6 trillion in payments to more than 73 million Americans each year. Many beneficiaries rely on the SSA's phone lines to claim their benefits.

In March, the SSA said its plan to require beneficiaries to confirm their identities in person at a local office or online was an anti-fraud measure. The proposal triggered an outpouring of concerns from older Americans and AARP quickly demanded that the SSA not cut phone services. The agency was already trying to address reports of poor customer service.

AARP's LeaMond called the agency's cuts "deeply unacceptable" in a letter to the SSA acting commissioner. "With Americans already waiting hours to get connected with Social Security on the phone, it is outrageous that under this new policy, older Americans, especially those in rural areas, will have to call, wait on hold for possibly hours, make an appointment, or even take a day off work to claim the benefits they have worked for and earned," she wrote.

2. Ensuring Social Security can meet the needs of older Americans

Customer service failures at the SSA persist — in fact, problems have worsened over the past few months creating a "chaotic environment" that is "fueling fear and concern among many older Americans," AARP's LeaMond wrote in an April letter to SSA's Dudek.

In February, the SSA announced plans to slash its workforce by 12 percent, from about 57,000 employees to 50,000, and to reduce its number of regional field offices from 10 to four. Staffing levels at the agency were already at historic lows, and since the reductions were announced, there have been reports of website crashes, long waits at overwhelmed field offices and increasing phone hold times when trying to contact services representatives.

"This rapid decline in performance is deeply alarming," AARP's LeaMond wrote.

The SSA then reported that 2,500 workers left their jobs on April 19 with "voluntary separation incentive payments." Of that group, at least 1,962 — nearly 80 percent — worked in field offices directly serving the public. Forty of the SSA's local field offices have lost a quarter or more of their employees.

The SSA said in an April statement that it has "refocused its workforce on customer service" by directing teleworking employees to report in-person on a full-time basis, surging employees in support positions to front-

line service positions and eliminating layers of outdated and inefficient bureaucracy in its headquarters and regional offices.

AARP continues to call for more clarity on how the SSA is fixing its customer service shortfalls. "SSA needs to be transparent about its service changes and seek input from the older Americans who will be affected," LeaMond said in a March statement.

3. Calling on Congress to act

AARP is also asking Congress, which sets the SSA's budget, to make sure the agency has the resources it needs to prioritize and improve customer service, and that the money is being used effectively.

"The customer service crisis at Social Security has been building for years. As the population ages, demand is going up — but funding from Congress hasn't kept pace, and now we're seeing even more staffing cuts without a clear plan to improve service," said Bill Sweeney, AARP's senior vice president for government affairs, in April.

"Americans have paid into Social Security their whole working lives, and they've paid for the support that comes with it," he added. "Anything less is unacceptable."

4. Raising your concerns with decision-makers

Since the SSA and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) announced its moves to cut costs and curb fraud in February, thousands of AARP members have voiced concerns about the safety of personal data, the possibility of delayed payments and long wait times for customer service.

AARP has raised — and will continue to raise — these concerns and seek answers from leadership during this period of change. Since February, we've regularly contacted the SSA with questions on everything from how DOGE is accessing and using beneficiaries' personal data to why certain field offices have recently closed for in-person services.

In our most recent letter to the SSA, we urged the agency to consider the needs of older Americans as they implement new tools and technologies.

"As SSA utilizes AI-powered tools to handle certain customer service tasks, older Americans will expect timely and consistent access to those services and for their personal information to be protected," AARP's LeaMond wrote. "It will be important for SSA to account for differing levels of comfort with technology, ensure strong safeguards, and communicate clearly about how these changes will be implemented."

5. Mobilizing our members

Since the beginning of the year, more than 1.35 million AARP activists have sent more than 2 million messages to their Congressional representatives, urging them to keep Social Security strong.

AARP activists played a pivotal role in defeating the SSA's proposed phone cuts, said AARP's Hishita, and will continue to be influential voices as changes at the agency unfold.

For more than 65 years, AARP has sought to protect Social Security and ensure its future viability. We have fought hard against arbitrary cuts to the cost-of-living adjustment, against congressional proposals to create fiscal commissions that could target Social Security to deal with budget deficits, to prevent turning Social Security's guaranteed benefits into risky private accounts, and to ensure that those on Social Security could get economic stimulus payments without having to file separately.

We have spearheaded efforts to combat SSA's customer service challenges and advocated for Congress to approve adequate funding for the SSA to deliver benefits and services properly and promptly to its growing number of customers.

We're continuing that advocacy now.

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**Good Luck
to Members
of RECSL**

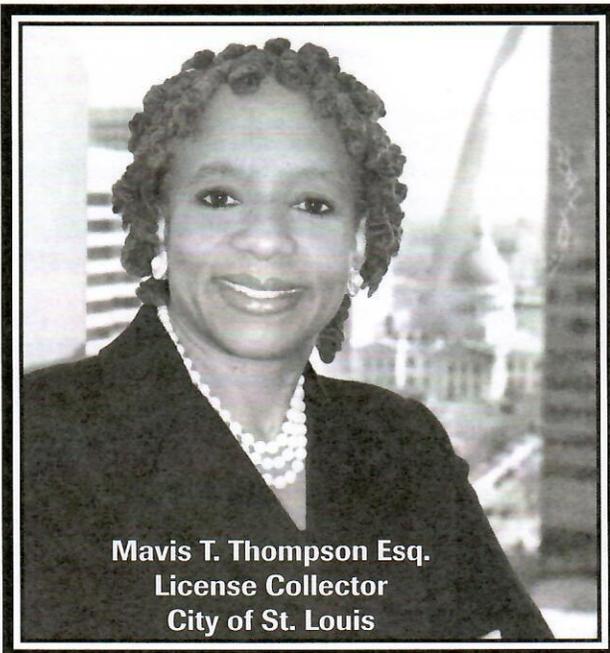
From

Gregory F.X. Daly

**Collector of Revenue
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RECSL Picnic Notice

Thursday,
August 21, 2025

11:00 am • Cost is \$7.00 per person

American Czech Center

4690 Landsdowne

HAMBURGERS AND HOT DOGS

Beverages available at the hall

Attendance Prizes of \$100, \$50 and \$25 for members only

Make checks payable to RECSL, must be paid by Aug 14, 2025.

Cost \$7.00 per person

Send payment to: Jim Garavaglia

5405 Elizabeth Ave. • St. Louis, MO 63110 • 314-805-0050

