

J. Dale Oliver, President  
AARP Chapter #2613  
303 Marlinton Street  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

**AARP Chapter Meeting**  
Tuesday, January 20, 1998  
Blacksburg Community Center  
11:30 AM

Blacksburg

A.A.R.P.

# NEWSLETTER

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## **President's Comments**

I trust that each of you had a very Merry Christmas and I wish you a happy and prosperous new year. I would like to thank each of you for your part in making 1997 a successful year for our chapter. Special thanks go to Ken Martin for his outstanding leadership in serving as our president.

As we begin 1998, I encourage each of you to attend our monthly meetings and to participate in the activities of our chapter. Helen Wells, program chair, and her committee are planning an excellent series of informative and entertaining programs.

I look forward to serving as your president. If you have suggestions for programs and activities for our chapter, please share them with the committee chairs, elected officers, or others who serve on the Board of Directors.

## **Inclement Weather Policy**

The Board of Directors, at its January, 1998 meeting, adopted the following policy relative to Board and/or chapter meetings during inclement weather.

“AARP Board and/or chapter meetings will be canceled if Montgomery County, Virginia schools are closed due to inclement weather on the day AARP Board and/or chapter meetings are scheduled”

## **Memorial Service**

Our annual Memorial Service will be held at the January meeting, honoring members who have died and have not previously been recognized. Will the family of any deceased member please notify Wilda Siburt at 951-1358 to be sure that we do not miss anyone.

## **1998 Blacksburg AARP Chapter #2613 Dues**

Please remember to pay your local chapter dues. National dues are paid separately from local chapter dues.

Your check for \$5.00 should be made payable to Blacksburg AARP. Indicate on your check “dues for 1998.” Include your current address and telephone number, if this information is not on your check, and mail to:

Bill Keeney  
1470 Jefferson Forest Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

The January meeting will be held at the Blacksburg Community Center at 11:30 AM. The program will include a presentation by Dan Fleming on “Electric Utility Deregulation: Good News or Bad?” and completing a survey on the interest of members relative to serving on committees for 1998 and programs for 1998.

## **Committee Chairs**

<b>Committee on Caring</b> Wilda Siburt	951-1358
<b>Chaplain's Committee</b> Lula Roberts	552-7655
<b>Community Service Committee</b> Lincoln Taylor	552-3255
<b>Financial Planning Committee</b> James M. Moore	552-4688
<b>Health Care Committee</b> Charles & Violet Drake	552-2807
<b>Hospitality Committee</b> Clara Jane Billig Cerrie Coil	552-3095 552-4530
<b>Legislative Committee</b> Dan Fleming	951-1525
<b>Membership Committee</b> William (Bill) Keeney	953-3408
<b>Newsletter Committee</b> Peggy Cain	552-5621
<b>Program Committee</b> Helen Wells	951-9720
<b>Telephone Committee</b> Charlotte Beamer	552-2205
<b>Ways and Means Committee</b> James M. Moore	552-4688

## Electric Utility Deregulation: Good News or Bad?

So you thought comparing long-distance phone plans was confusing? Well, just wait until you get the chance to pick your power company. In New Hampshire where electric utility regulation is already underway, customers have reported that they were swamped with mailings and phone calls trying to sell different utility plans. Some companies offered gifts to sign up with them ranging from bird feeders to blue spruce seedlings.

Nearly every state in the nation is currently in some state of development to deregulate electric utilities with plans now being implemented in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and California. At the federal level, bills are pending before Congress to force states to deregulate the monopoly now held by electric utilities following what has been done in the monopolies held by the airlines, cable television and long-distance telephone industry.

What is the reason for such deregulation? Supporters, led by large corporations such as General Motors and states with high electric rates such as California and New York want to have options in buying electricity from another part of the country where power is produced more cheaply than in their state. Backers predict that the individual consumer will have much lower rates as a result of deregulation. Opponents, particularly from areas where electric rates are low, such as in Virginia, fear that their rates will go up and service will go down, particularly in rural areas. There are also concerns over cheaper power being provided because of lower environmental standards in other areas.

There are three main steps in the delivery of power to your home: the generation of electricity at the plant; the transmission through a *grid*, the network of high-voltage lines and giant towers that crisscross the country; and the distribution through the smaller lines that run directly to your home. Today the local utility controls all three steps. Under deregulation, the generation process is being opened up to any player. The transmission and distribution would likely still remain regulated, but the actual cost of producing the electricity is the part that would be deregulated. This could result in a resident in New York buying low-cost hydroelectric power generated in Idaho where the average price of electricity is one-fourth of that paid by residents of Long Island.

In Virginia, a recent report released by the State Corporation Commission (SCC), calls for further study before Virginia decides what to do in this controversial area. However, Virginia Electric and Power and AEP may be sending bills to the 1998 session of the General Assembly to move faster than the SCC recommends arguing that Virginia will be left behind in selling electricity outside Virginia if other states act more swiftly. Because seniors and low-income Americans pay a much higher part of their income to utilities, AARP is monitoring all deregulation proposals very closely. AARP has a number of clear positions as to what protections are needed for the consumer including that *all consumers should have access to basic service offered at competitive and affordable rates.*

By: Dan Fleming, Chair, Legislative Committee  
and member, Virginia State Legislative Committee