

## Rand

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bill just introduced on Capitol Hill last week, health care reform now dominates the conversation on Capitol Hill. This makes it a capacious time for the senior lobbying group; older Americans are facing runaway health care and living costs, compounded by evaporated retirement savings. With many unable to retire or get work, 50+ America is being hit especially hard by the recession.

AARP has a powerful advocacy engine at the state level. It has over nine million volunteers and activists across the country and regional offices in all 50 states.

"We have some opportunity to push forward," Rand says. "As an example, most of the states control most of the long-term health care legislation, as opposed to the federal [government]. We can give more support to the states in their efforts to bring about change. The volunteer work that we have is best at the ground level, in the communities."

While spurring social change on the outside, Rand and his executive team must also address the lack of diversity that exists within its member ranks. AARP's membership is 88.5 percent White while its Black membership is less than 5 percent, according to Edna Kane-Williams, AARP's vice president of African-American member outreach.

Months before hiring Rand, AARP resolved that it must strengthen its recruiting efforts in order to attract more members of color.

"[Rand] almost becomes a billboard for our efforts," Kane-Williams said. "He's not the CEO of the African-American community, but certainly him being African-American helps us make the point that AARP is an organization that cares about the African-American community and that we are ready to work hand-in-hand to improve the quality of lives of older African-Americans."

## Voting

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disinterest, down from 37 percent in 2004.

Among other findings:

- The decline in percentage turnout was the first in a presidential election since 1996. At that time, voter participation fell to 58.4 percent – the lowest in decades – as Democrat Bill Clinton won an easy reelection over Republican Bob Dole amid a strong economy.

- The voting rate in 2008 was highest in the Midwest (66 percent). The other regions were about 63 percent each.

- Minnesota and the District of Columbia had the highest turnout,

each with 75 percent. Utah and Hawaii – Obama's birth state – were among the lowest, each with 52 percent.



Frey

The figures are the latest to highlight a generational rift between younger, increasingly minority voters and an older white population.

A recent Pew Research Center poll found almost 8 in 10 people believe there is a major difference in the point of view of younger and older people today, mostly over social values. It was the largest generation gap since divisions 40 years ago over Vietnam, civil rights and women's liberation.

Last November, voters under 30 cast ballots for Obama by a 2-to-1 ratio. Still, because of their smaller numbers – in population and turnout – young voters weren't critical to the overall outcome and only made a difference in North Carolina and Indiana, according to Scott Keeter, Pew's director of survey research.

The census figures are based on the Current Population Survey, which asked respondents after Election Day about their turnout. The figures for "white" refer to the whites who are not of Hispanic ethnicity.

## Clinic

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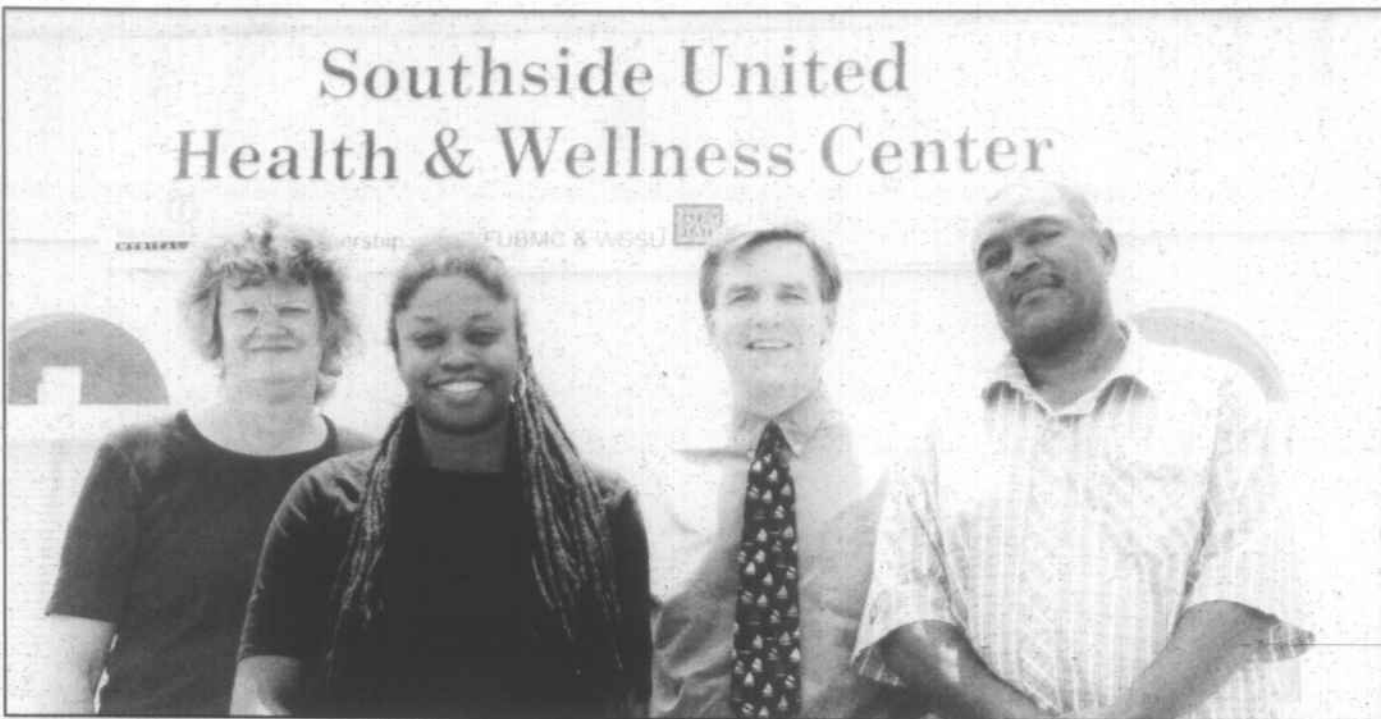
The Southside center was conceptualized by area residents, who, during neighborhood association meetings, identified a need for a medical facility in the community, says Lavastian Glenn, a member of the center's nine-member board and a former employee of Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods.

"It really was the neighbors doing a scan and realizing that there weren't any medical providers on this side of town," Glenn related.

The area has been classified by the federal government as a "medically underserved area," underlining the need for the center, Lord said. Keeping a center like Southside operational is a challenge, he said, because so many of its patients are unable to pay the high premiums most medical outlets enjoy.

"It's really hard to provide care for so many people who are uninsured," he commented. "You're getting paid less for (providing) the same services. You can get paid 70 percent more, in some cases, for doing the same thing (for insured patients)."

Board members are planning to apply this summer to become a Federally



Board members Suzanne Newsome, Lavastian Glenn, Physician Richard Lord and Board President Julius Davis.

Qualified Health Center, which would allow them to receive funding subsidization and other assistance to offset the cost of providing care to the uninsured population.

"It takes special people to be involved with this," Board President Julius Davis said of the project. "There's no pay, there's no glory, and it's quite a bit of work. You have to have the right people in place to be able to pull something like this off."

The center's leaders have

a goal of employing three full time physicians at the center – which is currently open abbreviated hours and staffed by four part-time physicians, including Lord – by the fall.

Bringing the project to fruition has been no small task. Since 2002, when the idea was conceived, board members and supporters have worked to establish the partnerships and procure the funding necessary to make it viable.

"There have been some huge obstacles that have been overcome," remarked Board Member Suzanne Newsome, a dentist. "It's challenging, but I think it's a very important project, and I think it could (positively) affect a lot of people."

The center will continue to grow and change as its leaders learn more about how to provide the best care to the community, Lord said.

"This is a work in progress," he commented.

"But the board members have a deep vision for seeing that this project continues to exist. We're very interested in hearing feedback from the community."

*The Southside United Health and Wellness Center, located at 3009 Waughtown St., is open Mondays and Wednesdays, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, call (336) 293-8730.*

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