

Retired Boeing engineers and technical employees are paying close attention to contract negotiations with Boeing's engineering union, SPEEA.

Boeing employees can retire before the normal retirement age of 65, with reduced pension benefits. SPEEA contracts provide a continuation of medical insurance for employees who retire before age 65. The coverage ends when the retiree or spouse reaches age 65 or is eligible for Medicare by disability.

In its latest offer, Boeing claims the option of terminating medical coverage at any time for employees who retired years ago. Boeing insists they have no plans to take such action.

In 1992, Boeing started shifting monthly premiums costs to retirees. In 1999, Boeing made newly hired non-represented employees ineligible for early retiree medical. In 2005, Boeing eliminated early retiree medical for newly hired SPEEA-represented employees. Coming into this year's contract negotiations, Boeing constructed their proposal by making numerous edits to a Word document containing the existing language. The first edit to the Word document was to remove protections for medical coverage for employees who had already retired.

If Boeing really has no plans to terminate this coverage, then they can leave the language unchanged. Given the history of this negotiated benefit, we have every reason to be concerned, and every reason to doubt Boeing's reassurance.

We are proud of our careers making great Boeing products over the decades. We chose careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), at a time when business leaders, elected officials and educators told us that was a valued choice. We prepared ourselves through education, worked hard, contributed to Boeing's success and planned for our retirement. As retirees, we believe we have taken responsibility for our education, our careers and our retirement. **We did our part.**

The products we designed and built were very popular in the global marketplace, we put in extra effort to make our programs succeed. We created great wealth for shareholders and executives. **We did our part.**

We bought US savings bonds, wrote our elected officials in support of Boeing's government contracts, and supported billions of dollars in state and federal incentives to keep good jobs in our communities. **We did our part.**

Boeing, as a premium employer in the region, has benefited as much as any company from an educated workforce, good roads, ports and other infrastructure, and a favorable business environment.

It's too late for us to un-retire and resume our careers. **We expect Boeing to do its part**, by honoring its commitment, as reaffirmed repeatedly in contracts with employees over the years, to retirees and our communities by delivering the early retiree medical coverage,

Retirees who lose early retiree medical will face huge costs, finding replacement coverage. If Boeing tosses retirees out of their medical plans, those costs will become a public burden, either through Medicaid, or the new health care Exchange, or by

consuming our own limited retirement resources, or by watching uninsured retirees face crushing medical costs on their own.

Ultimately, all these costs will weaken the economic health of communities in our region.

Employer-provided coverage is at the heart of the American care health system. We could only grit our teeth as WalMart – the largest employer in the country and the beneficiary of countless tax breaks and incentives - counseled its employees to enroll in state-funded Medicaid programs. It would be a bitter pill to see Boeing follow Wal-Mart's example.