

Stop GE's War on Retiree Healthcare



Because losing your healthcare is going to leave a bad taste in your mouth.

On January 1, 2015, GE eliminated post-65 Medicare health insurance supplements and life insurance for future salaried exempt retirees. Also on that date, the company took away Medicare supplements from current post-65 salaried exempt retirees. Instead, GE forced these retirees into a private health insurance “exchange” where they have to buy their own Medicare supplements, with GE only providing a \$1,000 per-person stipend. But even with the stipend, the loss of the supplements means GE is paying on average 30% less for health coverage per person.

Last year GE was sued over these cuts by two retired former high-ranking managers: Dennis Rocheleau, GE's former chief labor negotiator, and Evelyn Kauffman, former senior corporate benefits executive. Rocheleau said the cuts are unjustified. “This isn't what employees expected of General Electric.” As a benefits manager, Kauffman advised employees that they'd qualify for GE health coverage after they retired. “I was always so happy to share that with people. Now I've ended up lying to all these people,” she said.

For years GE has promised these benefits to workers after they retire, and countless people have retired believing those promises. In a benefits handbook published as recently as July 2012, GE said it “expects and intends” to continue the Medicare supplement benefits indefinitely. By breaking these promises, GE has broken faith with retirees and will cause hardships for many.

UE fully expects GE to propose these or similar cuts in health insurance for hourly retirees when we negotiate in June. UE intends to lead the fight to protect these benefits. GE workers, past and present, have made GE hugely successful and profitable, and we all deserve a decent retirement, including health security.



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