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AARP-Led Group Targets Health Care, Retirement

Being as bipartisanship is all the rage these days, it wasn't a shock to see Senate Minority Leader Mark **SCHAUER** (D-Battle Creek) and Rep. Rick **SHAFFER** (R-Three Rivers) join forces today in AARP's coalition prioritizing health care and Social Security this election year.

But Charlie **OWENS** said the endorsement of his group, the National Federation of Independent Business/Michigan (NFIB), was like the children's game of "Which one of these is not like the other?"

"Some would say it would be a cold day for the NFIB to get together with these groups," Owens grinned at the press conference. "But as you know from being outside, that day is here."

The Divided We Fail coalition, which includes more than 30 unions, social service groups, businesses and religious organizations, was formed under the belief that all Americans should have access to affordable health care. The group also is promoting wellness and prevention programs as national priorities along with the expansion of long-term care choices.

AARP Michigan President Eric **SCHNEIDEWIND** said 47 million Americans don't have health insurance and 80 percent don't have a defined-benefit plan. Social Security is not secure.

He laid out the campaign's objectives for each presidential candidate:

- Lay out his/her plan to ensure quality, affordable health care for every American or "we won't vote for you"
- Lay out a plan for the financial security for all Americans
- Make a commitment to working across the aisle to get the job

done

"The political system is even more broken than our safety net," Schneidewind said.

The campaign has already aired commercials in Michigan and around the country, featuring appeals from children and its symbol, a purple hybrid of a donkey and elephant, the ubiquitous symbols of both political parties.

"My only partisan comment, Eric, is the color of your T-shirts," Schauer said, referring to the cherry-red AARP shirts dotting the audience. "I would have gone maybe with blue."

Schauer expressed optimism for a bipartisan plan to "get a handle on skyrocketing health care costs."

Shaffer reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring every citizen has access to affordable health care. He also said rising costs are a drain on the state and businesses.

"The state's fiscal status is directly related to high health care costs," Shaffer said.

Owens said health insurance was the No. 1 concern of business 20 years ago and it remains the No. 1 concern today. He said high costs are "holding us back and it has to stop."

General Motors, which has been crippled by legacy costs, also is a coalition member.