



## Life In Brief

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**Current Title:** CEO of AARP

**Born:** February 8, 1958

**Hometown:** Mon Louis Island, AL

### Education:

- BS, Political Science and Government, Spring Hill College, 1980

### Work History:

- CEO, AARP, 2014-Present
- President, AARP Foundation, 2010-2013
- COO, Library of Congress, 2007-2010
- Director of Office of Advocacy and Enterprise, US Department of Agriculture, 1990-1993
- Partner, Quality Management Services, 1987-1990
- Special Assistant to the Secretary, US Department of Transportation, 1985-1987
- Executive Assistant, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1981-1985
- Voter Outreach, Ronald Reagan campaign, 1980

## Quick Summary

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**As CEO of AARP, Jenkins leads one of the world's largest non-profit, nonpartisan membership organizations; Under her leadership, AARP has become a leader in social change, dedicated to empowering people to choose how they live as they age. She is recognized as a visionary and global thought leader and a catalyst for breakthrough results**

- Interned for the RNC while in college and eventually moved to DC after graduating to work on Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign

- Worked with Elizabeth Dole, then-Department of Transportation Secretary, as a special assistant for minority affairs to create a program to promote women in the department
- During her time at the Library of Congress, she helped launch the National Book Festival with then-first lady Laura Bush and pushed to digitize important works like the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights
- As president of AARP Foundation, she increased the number of donors from 800,000 to two million and centered the foundation's efforts on fighting hunger, income, housing and isolation
- As CEO of AARP, she has pushed to strengthen communities and advocate for issues pertaining to health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. Key areas of focus include: combating ageism, maintaining brain health, supporting family caregivers, creating work opportunities, educating seniors about fraud, developing livable communities and reducing the number of older adults going hungry
- Works to protect programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, but ultimately seeks to maintain nonpartisan ideals; believes that it "is not for [AARP] to say, this is the right solution for you, but for us to lay out the options"
- As CEO, she has led AARP to be recognized one of the *Washington Post's* "Top Workplaces" for the last three years and named one of the "World's Most Ethical Companies" by Ethisphere in 2019 and 2020.
- She is a leader in Global Aging, speaking on aging issues before the World Economic Forum at Davos, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics World Congress and the Milken Institute Global Conference.
- Recognized as a "Top Influencer" by the *Non-Profit Times* (2013-2019), and in 2019, she was





named by *Fortune Magazine* as one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders.

## Approach and Motivations

**With decades of experience in government affairs, Jenkins is known for embracing innovation and leading organizations through change**

- Developed strong working relationships with members of both parties in the executive and legislative branches of government during Republican and Democratic Administrations
- Embraces change and innovation; pushed the Library of Congress into the digital age, helping lead the creation of the "Library of Congress Experience," an interactive pathway that offers digital access to the Library's collections
- Helped AARP move to rethink the future of work, retirement and aging and refocus the organization's efforts on low-income and vulnerable populations
- Champions innovation and leverages the creativity of AARP staff through internal innovation events where employees submit their ideas for new products; holds annual pitch events.
- Created AARP Innovation Labs to partner with startups to develop new ways to address issues such as medication management, menopause, and brain health
- Created the AARP Innovation Fund to provide capital to innovative companies focused on improving the lives of people 50-plus and their families.
- AARP named one of *Fast Company's* Best Workplaces of Innovators in 2020, placing 14 out of the top 100 companies.

## Policy Position and Areas of Focus

**Policy Positions and Areas of Focus: Works to change the perception of aging and fights for policies that support AARP's mission as an organization for social change**

**Social Programs: *Focuses AARP's efforts toward Health, Wealth and Self***

- Reoriented the organization's goals to help people grow older knowing they have access to the care, information and services they need to lead healthier lives with independence and dignity (Health); where they have the financial resources and opportunities to match their longer life expectancy (Wealth); and where they are seen as an integral and inspirational asset to society (Self).
- Seeks to protect Medicare and Social Security and lower prescription drug prices and created the campaign, "Protect Voters 50+," a comprehensive voter engagement campaign to support and protect Americans age 50 and over as they vote in the 2020 elections. It also provides information on where candidates stand on issues that matter to Americans 50-plus and helps them vote safely from home or in-person.
- Created Drive to End Hunger, a multi-year, nationwide campaign that has donated more than 36 million meals to local organizations serving seniors and provides additional support to more than 100 anti-hunger organizations
- In response to COVID-19, created and launched AARP Community Connections, an online platform that helps people organize and find mutual aid groups and access support from trained volunteers. In the first five months it has helped more than 470,000 users and helped create nearly 800 mutual aid groups in communities nationwide.





**Health Care: Believes one of the biggest things the country can do to help with retirement security is bring down the cost of health care and prescription drugs**

- Launched a campaign called “Stop Rx Greed,” to help lower prescription drug prices by advocating for policy solutions at the state and local level such as allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices and putting an end to pay-for-delay and other loopholes that keep lower cost generic drugs off the market
- Advocated for and secured more than 100 state laws in the past two state legislative seasons to start bringing needed reforms to that industry
- Champions legislation that supports family caregivers like the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, which directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a national strategy to support family caregivers and establish an advisory body that will bring together stakeholders to make recommendations to help caregivers
- Created model caregiving legislation for states called the CARE Act and successfully advocated for its enactment in over 40 states.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, she called on Congress to ensure nursing homes had access to PPE and testing, called for an increase to SNAP benefits, and fought to ensure that Social Security recipients received stimulus payments.

**Post-Retirement: Seeks to change the way people view retirement years and combat age discrimination**

- Believes people may not want to stay home or travel after retiring; instead, the organization should consider this period of life as a time “to find real meaning and purpose”
- Works to combat age discrimination and urged the passage of the “Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act,” which which would

permit plaintiffs to sue for age discrimination even if age was not the sole cause of the challenged employment decision and passed in the House in 2020

- Seeks to improve older people’s digital skills through hands-on education sessions and established Mentor Up, a program in which high school and college students train people over the age of 50 to use technology
- In collaboration with Getty Images, AARP launched The Disrupt Aging Collection, a library of 1,400-plus images designed to more accurately portray how people age in today’s world

## **Publications, Media and Speaking**

**Publications, Media, and Speaking: Regularly tapped to speak about aging and issues that affect AARP members and people 50-plus**

### **Publications**

- Outlets: CNN, TIME, and The Saturday Evening Post; interviewed on Dr. Phil and CSPAN
- Subjects: Healthcare, dementia and brain health, Social Security, caregiving, work, livable communities and aging
- Wrote an award-winning, national best-selling book, *Disrupt Aging: A Bold New Path to Living Your Best Life at Every Age*, to challenge outdated stereotypes and attitudes about aging and spark new solutions so more people can choose how to live as they age. The book was also translated into Chinese and Korean.
- Writes a monthly column in the *AARP Bulletin* and blog posts on AARP.com

### **Speaking**

- Audiences: Commencement addresses and health conferences such as mHealth Summit, Connected Health Symposium, the American





**Jo Ann Jenkins**  
CEO of AARP

Telemedicine Association and EMERGE Financial Health Forum

- Topics: Health and health care, the future of work, financial security, diversity and inclusion
- Several of her speeches have been published in *Vital Speeches of the Day*

## **Family and Personal Background**

### **Developed an interest in politics and leadership at a young age**

- Grew up on an island in Alabama, the youngest of four children; went on to be student council president of her historically white public high school
- Father was a Merchant Marine and her mother was a homemaker
- While in college, she interned for the Republican National Committee, working on voter outreach, and was one of the organization's first African-American interns
- Active member of The Links, Inc., one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of African-American women committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans.

