

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org) • [aracommunications@retiredamericans.org](mailto:aracommunications@retiredamericans.org)

Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

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## Senators Sanders, Warren Warn of Social Security Battle Ahead

On Tuesday, Sen. **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) said that House Republicans have already fired a warning shot that they'll try to scale back future payouts under Social Security. Sen. Sanders mentioned the Alliance and made the statement in a report at <http://tinyurl.com/lbquhxd>. “Republicans are manufacturing a phony crisis in Social Security in order to cut the earned benefits of millions of the most vulnerable people in this country,” Sanders said.

Sen. **Elizabeth Warren** (D-MA) sent a similar message to supporters on Wednesday. “We’ve known for years that Social Security Disability Insurance is set to run low in 2016, and most people assumed that another bipartisan reallocation was coming,” Sen. Warren wrote. “But now, thanks to the Republican ideological war on our most important national safety net, disabled Americans could suddenly face a 20% cut in their Social Security checks next year.”

The messages came in conjunction with a hearing on Wednesday, as top Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee challenged the White House plan to shift \$330 billion between the program’s trust funds to avert deep cuts in disability payments, beginning at the end of 2016. **Carolyn Colvin**, acting commissioner for the Social Security Administration, urged senators to act first to avert the crisis at hand and then begin serious negotiations on finding a longer-term solution. She said the threatened cut in disability payments would be a “death sentence” for many of the poorest recipients.

“Rather than targeting the disabled community’s lifeline, we need to expand Social Security,” said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. You can read more from *Politico* at <http://tinyurl.com/l77mmep>. More from *Bloomberg News* is at <http://tinyurl.com/lzv2htx>, and MSNBC’s **Rachel Maddow**’s comments are at <http://tinyurl.com/lamolun>.

## New Report: Address Income Inequality to Strengthen Social Security Trust Fund

A new report from the Center for American Progress (CAP) has shown that the increasing inequality in income can have long-term, damaging effects on Social Security’s fiscal health (<http://tinyurl.com/nexkysx>). The CAP analysis shows that benefit cuts, privatization of accounts, or individual accounts – all “fixes” Republicans have proposed – are unnecessary if we raise lower-income wages and collect more money from the wealthiest citizens.

“Fixing the income gap could not just rebalance the funds within Social Security,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance, “but it would also fix the growing inequality of income distribution within our nation. Social Security has a projected shortfall of \$11.1 trillion over the next 75 years, but working to equalize incomes in our nation would allow us to prevent this shortfall of funds and pay full benefits.”

CAP's report also focused on stagnant wages for the middle- and lower-income classes. The wage growth in our nation has not been equal to the rapid increase of productivity, resulting in less money being put into Social Security. CAP estimated an additional \$759 billion that could have been added into Social Security funds if wages had increased parallel to our workers' productivity. Raising lower-income wages in the future can help alleviate this loss of funds over the past several years.

### **Pledge Your Support for "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service"**

Yesterday, the Alliance joined with over 60 other national organizations to launch "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service." This coalition has been created to save the Postal Service and postal jobs that are being threatened by interests aimed at dismantling this great public institution. To pledge your support and learn more, go to <http://agrandalliance.org>. To view the Alliance page in support of the effort, go to <http://tinyurl.com/k985g6m>.

"Post offices are a lifeline – particularly for older Americans. We must continue 6-day delivery so that seniors, the disabled, and all who need prescription drugs can have them delivered in a timely manner. And we need for that delivery to be door-to-door, so that those who may have a little trouble getting around are able to open what is being delivered," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, who spoke at the Thursday kickoff (photo at <http://tinyurl.com/n2lpjvt>).

### **Washington State Alliance Holds its Convention, Elects New State President**

Mr. Fiesta spoke at the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans' 2015 Convention – the group's largest convention ever, with 64 delegates - in Seattle this week. Elected to office were: **Jackie Boschok**, Machinists - President; **Nancy Heley**, Retired Public Employees (AFSCME) and **Al Link**, SOAR - Vice Presidents; and **James Brandley**, Retired Public Employees (AFSCME) - Treasurer. Outgoing President **Ron McGaha** led the effort in arranging the conference. A Facebook photo from the event is at <http://tinyurl.com/k6qluxf>.

### **Pennsylvania Alliance Continues the Fight for Statewide Minimum Wage Hike**

On Monday, Alliance members in Pennsylvania participated in the kickoff of the "Raise the Wage PA" 2015 campaign. Last year, Alliance members spoke at rallies all over the state in support of a minimum wage increase from the current \$7.25, but despite the efforts, Pennsylvania remains the only state in the region at the federal minimum. This year, newly-elected Governor **Tom Wolf** (D) has expressed support for giving workers a raise and proposals have already been filed by both Republicans and Democrats in the Legislature. Lieutenant Governor **Mike Stack** (D) and a bipartisan group of legislators addressed the Monday rally before all 300 attendees marched to the Capitol and conducted visits to legislators' offices.

"Hopes are high to get an increase this year!" said **Wayne Burton**, President of the Pennsylvania Alliance. "Without it, too many low-wage workers will earn a Social Security benefit that is too small to keep them out of poverty in retirement. That's why Alliance members are standing with the next generation of retirees in fighting for their retirement security."

### **Medicare Turns 50 Years Old in 2015: A Blast from the Past from President Carter**

"Every advance in this half-century--Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education, one after another--came with the support and leadership of American Labor." (**Jimmy Carter**, 1978)