

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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

www.retiredamericans.org • aracommunications@retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

April 29, 2016

Funding for the Older Americans Act Increased in Time for Older Americans Month

Since 1963 May has been Older Americans Month, a time to celebrate seniors and the anniversary of the Older Americans Act, which helps millions of people every year. This year's theme is "Blaze a Trail," which acknowledges the important contributions seniors have made to our community by daring to break the mold. To commemorate the occasion, the United States Department of Health and Human Services is [focusing](#) on wellness, securing your finances, reinvention, and civic engagement.

Last week President **Obama** signed into law the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, which funds Meals on Wheels, support for family caregivers, and transportation assistance.

"Signing the Older Americans Act reauthorization was a great way to remind us of all the contributions retirees have made to our country," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "Increasing funding levels for the OAA programs by 6% over the next three years was even better."

Valeant Pharmaceuticals CEO Called out for Outrageous Drug Pricing Behavior

Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc.'s outgoing chief executive, **Mike Pearson**, and billionaire investor **Bill Ackman** offered long-overdue [apologies and concessions](#) to lawmakers Wednesday at a Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing on the price of drugs. The company was harshly criticized in the media and at the hearing for its business practices.



Mike Pearson

Ackman, whose hedge fund is now a major shareholder in the drugmaker, and Pearson both said it was a mistake to jack up the prices of drugs after buying them – but only long after the strategy provided their firms with enormous profits.

Lawmakers in the House and Senate have chastized Valeant over the cost of two heart drugs, Isuprel and Nitropress, that Valeant acquired and soon after raised their prices by 525% and 212%, respectively. Sen. **Susan Collins** (R-ME) who heads the committee, also noted two other Valeant drugs, Syprine and Cuprimine, which are used to treat a rare genetic disorder called Wilson's Disease. Valeant raised Cuprimine's price for 100 capsules to \$26,189 from \$800, and Syprine's price was increased by more than 30-fold, Collins said.

A [New York Times](#) piece on Tuesday noted that despite the withering criticism of many members of Congress, drug prices continue to rise.

“Congress has paid a lot of lip service to the problem of overpriced prescription drugs,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “What's missing is action to make prices affordable.”

New Method of Rating Hospitals will have to wait

Obama administration officials [delayed](#) releasing a new hospital quality rating measure, just a day before its planned launch.

The new “overall hospital quality” star rating aimed to combine the government's wide ranging measurements of the quality of hospital care into one easily understood metric, a system of 1- to 5-star ratings.

However, 60 senators and 225 members of the House of Representatives recently signed letters urging the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to delay releasing the star ratings. “We have heard from hospitals in our districts that they do not have the necessary data to replicate or evaluate CMS's work to ensure that the methodology is accurate or fair,” the letter from the House members said.

Mortality, readmissions, patient experience and safety of care metrics each accounted for 22% of the star rating, while measures of effectiveness of care, timeliness of care and efficient use of medical imaging made up 12% of the total.

The industry's major trade groups said in a letter to CMS that some hospitals perform poorly because their patients tend to be lower income and don't have the support at home.

“Consumers should have access to information on the quality of their local hospitals,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, “The CMS needs to redouble its efforts to work with the hospitals to finalize and publicize these ratings as soon as possible”

Regional Conferences: Midwest Conference Just Five Days Away

The Alliance's quadrennial [Midwest](#) Regional Conference will be held this Wednesday and Thursday, May 4-5, at the MGM Grand Hotel in Detroit. Onsite registration is available for anyone who has not pre-registered and wishes to attend.

There is still time to register [online](#) for the Northeast Regional Conference in Washington, DC on May 19-20. During each conference members will elect four regional board members and prepare for the 2016 general election. Questions? Contact **Joni Jones** at jjones@retiredamericans.org or 202-637-5377.

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.3 million retirees and their families.