

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

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Richest 1% Live 10 to 15 Years Longer than the Poorest

Scientists from Boston University's School of Public Health [found](#) that the richest 1% of Americans live 10 to 15 years longer on average than the poorest 1%. Americans in the lowest income group have seen no increase in life expectancy since 2001, while middle and high-income groups have seen an increase of 2 years during that period. Poverty is associated not only with being unable to afford the best health care, but also a less healthy diet and smoking. Researchers say that diabetes and hypertension are two of the most common conditions that disproportionately affect poorer people.

A second [study](#) by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that the plan to increase the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67, favored by the House Speaker **Paul Ryan** and HHS Secretary **Tom Price**, would increase the health gap and the life expectancy gap between rich and poor.

Additionally, raising the normal retirement age for Social Security would disproportionately hurt low-income workers, who would receive fewer benefits in their shorter lifetime compared to high-income earners. Increasing the early eligibility age for Social Security from 62 to 64 would also hit low-income earners especially hard.

"Your income should not determine your life expectancy," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "We are fighting for increased access to health care, including the expansion of Medicare and Medicaid, because all of that would help to address this disturbing trend."

Congress Resumes Health Care Debate

Immediately following the failure of the GOP's American Health Care Act to gather enough support on the House floor, the **Trump** Administration signaled that it would abandon replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and move on to tax reform and other legislative priorities. However, House Republicans are again negotiating on the provisions of a bill to repeal the ACA with White House guidance.

House Freedom Caucus chairman **Mark Meadows** (R-N.C.) and more moderate "Tuesday Group" co-chairman **Tom MacArthur** (R-N.J.), are [reported](#) to have agreed to a deal to resuscitate the American Health Care Act. Under their plan, states could apply for a waiver from the community rating provision, which prohibits insurers from charging higher premiums to people with pre-existing conditions. Older Americans would be especially hard-hit by the changes.

While this provision would not explicitly deny people coverage, those with pre-existing conditions would face such high premiums that it would be virtually impossible for them to purchase health insurance. **Larry Levitt**, a senior vice president of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, said

that this would allow states to eliminate the ACA's guarantee of access to insurance at a reasonable price. Healthy people would see lower premiums while those with pre-existing conditions who desperately need coverage would be priced out of the market. Harmful provisions to seniors, such as raiding Medicare by reducing the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund by four years and cutting \$880 billion from Medicaid, remain in the bill.



Representatives Tom MacArthur (left) and Mark Meadows

“Rather than listening to their constituents, House Republicans have found a way to make a bad health care bill even worse,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Health care is a right for all. Allowing those who are sick or older to be discriminated against because they have a pre-existing condition is unacceptable.”

Big Pharma Officials Continue to Wine and Dine Washington Elites and Launch Campaign to Stop Drug Importation

Throughout his campaign, President Trump promised to bring down the cost of prescription drugs. Americans pay the highest prices in the world for medicines, and government protected “monopoly” rights for drug producers allow them to keep their prices and profits high. New revelations show some of the techniques manufacturers are using to keep the costs of their drugs high.

Pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer and Amgen [spent](#) a combined \$1.5 million to buy access to inauguration events for the incoming administration. Pfizer’s \$1 million donation allowed its executives to dine with “select cabinet appointees and House and Senate leadership.”

Fighting drug importation that would lower costs for consumers remains a priority for drug manufacturers. The nonprofit organization Partnership for Safe Medicines is heading a campaign to stop bills in Congress that would allow the importation of drugs from Canada. **Scott LaGanga**, a senior vice president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, [led](#) the Partnership for Safe Medicine for 10 years, until this past February.

“Rather than provide life-saving drugs at an affordable price to Americans, drug manufacturers have made it clear that their first and only concern is their profit margin,” said **Richard Fiesta**,

Executive Director of the Alliance. “We will fight just as hard as they do to ensure that the spiraling prices of prescription drugs are brought under control.”

Led by Senator **Al Franken** (D-Minn.), 16 senators have [introduced](#) S.771, the *Improving Access to Affordable Prescription Drug Act*, which would legalize the importation of affordable prescription drugs from Canada; allow Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices; increase competition by preserving access to affordable generics; and require drug manufacturers to provide drug rebates for drugs dispensed to low-income individuals.

Ohio Alliance Spring Convention 2017

More than 160 delegates attended the Ohio Alliance Convention last week in Columbus. The convention remembered **Rod Farnsworth** and **Wally Kaufmann** for their leadership in serving on the Ohio Alliance board and bringing retirement security to their communities.

The convention focused on Medicare and Medicaid in the context of ACA “Repeal and Replace,” statewide budget and tax issues, “Buy Union --- Keep It Made in America,” and “Elections have Consequences” themes.

Wynn Antonio spoke about the Senior Voice! brochure “Facts Not Myths.” **Deidra Reese**, AFSCME 1184 Retiree Director, encouraged attendees to tell their own retirement security health care stories.

The delegates adopted several resolutions, including the protection and preservation of Medicare and Medicaid; opposition to anti-worker state legislation; and support for federal infrastructure legislation co-sponsored by their Senator, **Sherrod Brown**.