

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Senate Republican Health Care Repeal Bill is Horrendous for Older Americans

The Senate bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act was finally released Thursday. It includes an Age Tax which allows insurance companies to charge older customers five times more for the same policies as younger adults and makes even deeper cuts to Medicaid than the House-passed repeal bill. The Senate version also robs the Medicare Trust Fund to pay for tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires.

If the Senate bill becomes law, starting in 2020, Medicaid funding would be changed from an open-ended entitlement to a per-capita system. This would end Medicaid's guaranteed coverage, and would force states to either reduce care for each enrollee or pay for fewer people's care. Medicaid is the largest funder of nursing home care, and also provides health coverage for millions of people with disabilities and for children.

Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (KY) is pushing for a vote before the 4th of July. In addition to the public having little knowledge of the health care bill, most Senators also have a very limited understanding of the proposed plan. Multiple GOP Senators were [unable or refused](#) to answer questions on the basic aspects of the bill or what its impact would be.

"They hid the bill and are rushing to vote on it, because they know it will harm millions of Americans," said **Robert Roach Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "Even the President said the House version was mean, and the Senate version would inflict even more severe long-term cuts to Medicaid."

"President **Trump** promised on the campaign trail that he would not cut Medicaid. If he meant it, he would veto this bill since it does not keep that promise," [said Richard Fiesta](#), Executive Director of the Alliance.

Alliance Members Take Action on Health Care in D.C., across the Country

On Tuesday Senators **Bob Casey, Jr.** (PA), **Kirsten Gillibrand** (NY), **Maggie Hassan** (NH), and **Chris Van Hollen** (MD), were joined by **Susan Flashman**, a Maryland/DC Alliance member and national board member, at the U.S. Capitol to draw attention to the effects of the Republican health care bill on seniors. Sen. Casey, the ranking member on the Senate's Special Committee on Aging, and the other Senators outlined the expensive premiums older Americans would have to pay due to the "Age Tax." The senators also focused on the effects that Medicaid cuts would have on the millions of seniors who rely on the program for long-term care and for help with Medicare co-pays. They stressed the importance of action by groups like the Alliance in showing opposition to the Republican health care plan.

Ms. Flashman, a retired International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) electrician, illustrated the problems with the Senate bill by sharing her own story, which includes being diagnosed with a brain tumor at age 57 that left her disabled and required expensive medical treatment.



Susan Flashman at Capitol Hill event with (left to right) Sens. Chris Van Hollen, Bob Casey, Jr., and Maggie Hassan.



Alliance members with President Roach and staff at Tuesday event at the Capitol.

“In a way I am lucky. I had private health insurance through my union,” said Ms. Flashman. “If I had been left trying to get a new policy in the insurance marketplace with this new legislation, I would have been financially ruined.”

Outside the nation’s capital, Alliance members took part in events across the country to urge their senators to reject the American Health Care Act (AHCA). Alliance members contacted their Senators in droves during the Alliance’s national call-in day Thursday, placing thousands of calls.

In Nevada, Alliance members in Las Vegas and Reno gathered at Senator **Dean Heller’s** regional offices to urge him to meet with his constituents to review the contents of the proposed [bill](#). At the Las Vegas office, members delivered petitions in opposition to the AHCA and its Medicaid cuts. Nevada President **Thomas Bird** also wrote an [op-ed](#) on the dangers of Medicaid cuts to seniors that was published in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. Arizona Alliance members visited the Phoenix offices of Senators **Jeff Flake** and **John McCain** in 109 degree heat to demand they reject the cuts to Medicaid and also met with Sen. Flake’s staff in Tucson.

Ohio Alliance President **Norm Wernet** took part in a telephone press conference to speak about the AHCA’s impact on the stability of Medicare and Medicaid. In Connecticut, state President **Bette Marafino** spoke at a public hearing organized and attended by Senator **Richard Blumenthal** in Hartford on the AHCA’s harmful impacts. In San Francisco, members of the California Alliance (CARA) laid down in the streets to show their disapproval for the upcoming Senate vote on health care.

President Trump’s Prescription Drug Ideas Designed to Help Pharmaceutical Companies

President Trump convened a working group of administration officials to examine policies he can implement with a new executive order. The Drug Pricing and Innovation Working Group met last Friday, and documents from the meeting [shine a light](#) into the policies they are considering.

The ideas include creating monopoly protections on drug sales overseas; deregulating the industry in the United States; and allowing tax credits for companies which engage in generic drug research. Most concerning is the fact that the text of the White House documents was taken directly from policy papers written by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PhRMA), the industry’s powerful lobbying group.

The group is led by **Joe Grogan**, associate director of health programs for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Until March, Grogan served as a lobbyist for Gilead Sciences, the pharmaceutical company that priced its hepatitis C drugs at \$1,000 per pill. According to a number of health policy experts, the ideas outlined by the working groups would do little to lower prescription drug prices, and they represent the interests of the pharmaceutical industry.

“President Trump is right that the cost of prescription drugs has grown out of control, especially for seniors,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “But the policies that his administration is considering will not help seniors. Rather than holding pharmaceutical corporations and executives accountable, he is letting the fox guard the hen house. The result is even higher corporate profits.”

It is unclear if and when President Trump will make his final decision on an executive order regarding prescription drugs, as there has been no official timeline given. However, if the policies in the order match those that his working group have discussed, experts say, the problem won’t be solved any time soon.

Iowa Alliance Holds Statewide Convention

The Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans held their annual statewide convention on Wednesday. The theme of the conference was “Safety for Savvy Seniors,” with presentations focused on staying safe in your home and community and on recognizing elder abuse. Speakers at the conference included **Mark Smith**, Iowa House Minority Leader; **Ken Sagar**, President and of the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; **Charlie Wishman**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Iowa Federation of Labor; United Way Advocacy Officer **Dave Stone**; and Alliance Field Manager **Maureen Dunn**. The Alliance congratulates **Midge Slater** and **Bob Connett** for their re-election as President and Treasurer, and welcomes **Greg Lewis** and **Christie Sherrard** in their new positions as Vice President and Secretary.

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.