

# FRIDAY ALERT



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## Bipartisan Effort in Senate Aims to Stabilize Health Insurance Markets

After the GOP's attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) failed last week, President **Trump** said that he was willing to let the health care law "implode" before trying again to pass legislation. He later stated that the administration may withhold cost-sharing subsidies from insurers, which allows insurance companies to cover lower-income Americans without premiums skyrocketing for millions.



California Alliance (CARA) activists spent [Tuesday on the bus](#) traveling to the offices of Reps. Jim Costa, Devin Nunes and David Valadao in the central valley. Activists urged the Members of Congress to listen to their constituents and oppose any efforts to dismantle Obamacare or cut or privatize Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman **Lamar Alexander** (R-TN) [announced](#) that his committee would begin work to stabilize and strengthen the individual insurance market for 2018. While Alexander and Ranking Member **Patty Murray** (D-WA) have previously brokered bipartisan deals on education and other health care legislation, strengthening

the insurance marketplaces for the ACA has [many challenges](#). Uniting the committee behind the ACA changes will be especially difficult given the short amount of time to pass legislation before insurers make final decisions for 2018. Staff is expected to work on the plans while Senators are in their home states during the month of August.

“We support legislation that stabilizes the markets while truly helping older Americans gain affordable, quality health coverage,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance.

Alliance members used the July 30 birthday of Medicare and Medicaid to tell their elected officials to oppose efforts to replace the ACA. The Florida Alliance held [16 events](#) on Monday alone. The *Dallas Morning News* wrote about the Texas Alliance’s [event](#) with Rep. **Eddie Bernice Johnson** (D) in Dallas on Wednesday. The *Fresno Bee* covered California Alliance members holding signs, singing “Happy Birthday Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security” and offering cupcakes to passersby while urging that Reps. **Jim Costa** (D), **David Valadao** (R) and **Devin Nunes** (R) protect the programs from cuts or privatization.

### **CBO Finds Americans Would Save Nearly \$7 Billion from Prescription Drug Importation**

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that American taxpayers would save nearly \$7 billion over the next 10 years by allowing the importation of prescription drugs from Canada and other countries. The Affordable and Safe Prescription Drug Importation Act, [S. 469](#), expands the Food and Drug Administration’s regulatory authority and allows pharmacies, wholesalers, and individuals to import prescription drugs into the United States from selected countries for personal use.

With prescription drug prices in the United States among the most [expensive](#) in the world, an overwhelming majority of Americans support lowering them. In 2014, Americans spent over \$1,100 per person on prescription drugs, while Canadians only spent about \$770 on average. In some developed countries, drug costs are even lower; in Denmark, the average person spent \$325.

The bill faces steep obstacles to passage. Despite promising to lower prescription drug prices on the campaign trail, President Trump has repeatedly sided with wealthy drug corporations and stated that he favors tax cuts and deregulation for these manufacturers. In the first quarter of 2017, the pharmaceutical and health industry spent \$78 million to lobby lawmakers in Washington, D.C. Pharmaceutical industry lobbyists are likely to fight any legislation that loosens their monopoly power.

“Affordable prescription drugs go hand-in-hand with affordable health care,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “This legislation would go a long way toward making prescription drugs more affordable and accessible for all Americans.”

### **Nabisco Parent Company Mondelez Names new CEO after Declining Sales**

After an extended period of declining sales, **Irene Rosenfeld** [was replaced](#) as the CEO of snack conglomerate Mondelez International. Mondelez’s revenue decreased 5% from the same point last year, and its share price has decreased 2.3% so far this year. The Alliance and allies in the labor movement have criticized Mondelez, maker of Oreo cookies and Ritz crackers, for off-shoring U.S. jobs to Mexico.

In June, a group of 17 Democratic senators wrote a [letter](#) to Rosenfeld, pointing to bakeries in Chicago and Philadelphia that were shut down by the company and moved to Mexico and calling on Mondelez to bring jobs back to factories in the United States.

The Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM), which represents workers at Mondelez plants, thanked the senators for their concern. The Alliance, the AFL-CIO, BCTGM and labor allies have called for a boycott of Nabisco goods made in Mexico by drawing attention to a [video](#) that shows consumers how to see where their snacks were made.

“Large corporations need to understand that there will be consequences when they offshore good jobs,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Whenever any middle class jobs are shipped overseas for the profit of these corporations, the retirement security of their workers is threatened.”

### **Scam Targets Seniors’ Earned Social Security Benefits**

Scammers posing as representatives of the Social Security Administration (SSA) have been requesting private information, including Social Security numbers, birth dates, and parents’ names, in order to steal seniors’ identities and their earned benefits. There are [widespread reports](#) across the country from seniors who have been targeted.

There has been a sizable increase in cons targeting seniors and Social Security in recent months. In March, SSA’s Office of Inspector General put out fraud alerts concerning a sham, pre-recorded call that told seniors they had been overpaid in benefits. The con went on to say that a warrant would be put out for the seniors’ arrest if they did not buy hundreds of dollars of prepaid debit cards to resolve the warrant. SSA never requires beneficiaries to compensate for overpayments via untraceable sources such as gift cards or prepaid debit cards.

"If an unknown person pressures you on the phone into providing payments or making purchases for odd reasons, don't think twice about hanging up," said **Gale Stallworth Stone**, Social Security's Acting Inspector General.

If you receive a suspicious call from someone purporting to be with Social Security or the agency's Office of Inspector General, report the issue to the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271 or online at <https://oig.ssa.gov/report>.

### **Alliance Leaders Speak at IMAW, APRI Events in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Florida**

President Roach addressed International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IMAW) retirees at their Education Strategy Program Session in Hollywood, Maryland on Monday. Mr. Fiesta spoke at the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) National Education Conference in Hollywood, Florida on Friday.

Robert and Rich both joined the Machinists Union Local Lodge 1976 Retirees Club at their annual picnic in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania on Thursday. Robert is a member of the club.