

# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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## Alliance Pledges to be Part of the Hurricane Harvey Solution

People around the world have been watching the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey in Gulf States, especially in Houston and surrounding areas in Texas and Louisiana. The Alliance sends its thoughts and prayers to the victims who are suffering through one of the worst hurricanes in our nation's history.

We applaud the work of the first responders and the local, state and federal workers who have been working round the clock to save and protect the people in affected areas. We cannot say enough about the volunteers who have come from around country to provide support. The national Alliance has been in contact with our Texas Alliance Chapter, which is coordinating with the Texas AFL-CIO to render any and all assistance in the most affected areas.

Harvey has especially endangered seniors who are immobile, some of whom were temporarily trapped in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Fortunately, neighbors helping neighbors, and Americans helping Americans, rescued many of them from this horror and showed what makes our country great.



Seniors in the La Vita Bella nursing home in Dickinson, Texas were forced to wait in waist-deep flood water before help arrived.

There is a lot of work to be done and the Alliance will do everything possible to be part of the solution. We request that anyone who is able provide assistance to our brothers and sisters in Texas by clicking [here](#) and giving to the Texas Workers Relief Fund.

In addition, please contact your Senators and Representatives and tell them to pass a bill expeditiously that provides all the financial assistance necessary to continue relocating people and rebuilding devastated areas.

**Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance, said, "**Martin Luther King, Jr.** stated, 'We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.' Never has that been more true."

### **AFL-CIO Celebrates Labor Day, Emphasizes that Workers Rights Issues Persist**

Labor Day, first celebrated as an official federal holiday in 1894, is an occasion to honor the achievements and victories that working Americans have won. Working conditions are undoubtedly better since the first Labor Day thanks to unions who made the two-day weekend, a 40-hour work week, and child labor laws a reality. However, on this long last weekend of the summer, there is still much work to be done.

The AFL-CIO released its "[Laboring on Labor Day](#)" report which finds a large number of workers increasingly work more and harder for less pay and benefits. For many workers who live paycheck-to-paycheck, work-life balance has collapsed. Nearly a quarter of private-sector workers have no paid holidays. Without paid leave, workers cannot afford to miss work when an emergency or illness comes. Americans are working more and taking fewer vacation days, and many are uncomfortable asking their employers for time off to care for a sick child or family member. More than half of all workers, 54%, report working more holidays and weekends than ever before and more than 25% of workers will be working in some capacity on Labor Day.

Unions have tirelessly fought to give workers the wages and time off they deserve. In recent months labor unions have helped secure victories for workers around the country, including guaranteed paid family and medical leave laws in New Jersey, New York, and Washington, D.C. Public support for unions is growing: a recent poll by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research found that 72% of Americans believe unions help people enter the middle class.

"Labor Day is a time to remember all that unions have done to provide a better life for workers and also retirees," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "This report shows that one of our goals must be a better work-life balance. It is an issue that affects seniors, since paid time off is often used by workers to care for an elderly relative."

### **Medicare and Medicaid Beat Private Health Plans on Cost**

A key factor in Congressional Republicans' failed attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act was the Congressional Budget Office finding that the GOP's so-called replacement plans would raise premiums and the cost of health insurance for most Americans. *The New York Times* this week highlighted the ways that Medicare and Medicaid deliver health care at lower cost.

Medicare and Medicaid pay lower prices to doctors and other health care providers, resulting in lower costs. Critics of expanding access to Medicare and Medicaid argue that because they pay doctors a lower amount than private insurance plans, only providers that offer cheap, low-quality

care will accept the lower payments from Medicare and Medicaid. However, [multiple studies](#) have found that doctors will provide the same services and will treat all patients the same and provide the same level of care, no matter which insurance plan is paying for the costs.

Many advocates are pushing for expanded access to Medicare and Medicaid in order to expand care, and Senator **Debbie Stabenow** (D-MI) has introduced a bill that would allow Americans to buy-in to Medicare at age 55. At the same time, Congressional Republicans are considering a federal budget that would weaken Medicare and voucherize Medicaid.

“Health care costs have been in an out-of-control spiral for years,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Medicare and Medicaid offer an efficient solution that is guaranteed to keep Americans covered and able to access quality care.”

### **Four Ways to Lower Your Prescription Drug Prices**

Americans pay some of the highest rates in the world for their prescriptions. While Congress could and should pass legislation to lower costs, knowing more about your prescriptions can save you money.

There are [numerous ways](#) to find out if your prescription drug prices are as low as possible. Talk to your doctor any time you start a new prescription to see if there are any alternatives available. Be sure to bring a formulary, list of drugs your insurance covers, with you. Drug prices can also be compared online before any pharmacy visit. At the pharmacy, ask the pharmacist if a generic not covered by insurance would be cheaper than a name-brand drug with your coverage. If you pay out-of-pocket for drugs or visit multiple pharmacies to receive the best price, your insurer or regular pharmacists will not be monitoring all your medications. Remember to keep track of all your prescriptions and their side effects to ensure they do not cause a negative reaction.