

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

Alliance Reacts to President Obama's State of the Union Address

President **Obama** gave his State of the Union Address on Tuesday night, and in a statement, the Alliance voiced its approval of his remarks and ideas. In particular, the statement from Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta** noted that the President's initiative to allow more family leave would benefit many seniors, whose adult children are often their caretakers. Calling for higher wages - including an increased minimum wage - in addition to the President's idea of expanded IRA's, Fiesta said, "You can't save what you don't earn."

Fiesta also cautioned that proposed Fast Track trade legislation includes provisions that empower foreign drug makers to challenge drug pricing and preferences in programs like Medicare and Medicaid, saying, "That would raise drug costs for all Americans, especially hurting seniors. It could also delay the introduction of generics into the market, in turn raising drug prices." Read the full Alliance release at <http://tinyurl.com/mappzao>.

Postal Workers, Alliance and Allies Partner to Institute Postal-Service Banking

On Monday, the American Postal Workers Union announced that it is partnering with the Alliance and other financial-reform organizations for a national campaign to create low-cost financial services through the United States Post Service (USPS). This partnership, named the Coalition for Postal Banking, aims to use over 31,000 USPS retail branches throughout the United States to provide low cost banking services to people who do not have access to traditional banks. Today, 28% of U.S. households, representing 93 million people, do not have access to affordable financial products such as the ability to cash a check, transfer money or pay a bill at a reasonable fee. These "unbanked" Americans are often subject to predatory check cashing companies, payday lenders, and loan sharks, which usually incur massive profits for their services. USPS is not a latecomer to banking services. From 1911 to 1967, it offered savings deposit accounts, and it currently sells more money orders than any other institution.

"The campaign is a coordinated effort to cut costs for working Americans and alleviate 'bank deserts' in many communities," said **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance.

The Fight to Preserve Medicare turns 50

The Alliance is commemorating Medicare's 50th birthday throughout 2015, and as part of that celebration will be drawing attention to memorable quotes about the program from both its supporters and those who would like to see it slashed. In the first of this series is President **Lyndon Baines Johnson**, who led the way for the creation of Medicare and Medicaid. Said President Johnson on July 9, 1965, "Older citizens will no longer have to fear that illness will wipe out their savings, eat up their income, and destroy lifelong hope of dignity and independence. For every family with older members it will mean relief from the often-crushing responsibilities of care. For

the Nation it will bring the necessary satisfaction of having fulfilled the obligations of justice to those who have given a lifetime of service and labor to their country.”

SaveOurRetirement.com Launches to Prevent Conflicted Investment Advice

On Tuesday, the AFL-CIO and coalition partners including AFSCME, Better Markets, the Consumer Federation of America, and the Pension Rights Center launched a new web initiative, www.SaveOurRetirement.org. This website aims to educate retirees about loopholes in Department of Labor rules that allow financial advisors to give advice that furthers their own financial interests. These organizations want to change rules these so that retirees can be better protected from Wall Street financiers and others who put their savings at risk.

“This website has the potential to mobilize thousands of retired Americans in support of changing these rules,” said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Ruben Burks**.

Texas Alliance Holds Convention

The Texas Alliance for Retired Americans (TARA) held their annual convention in Austin on Tuesday. State President **Gene Lantz**, Secretary **Tony Padilla** and Treasurer **Elaine Jones** were all re-elected for a two year term. Attendees heard speeches from a range of national labor advocates and discussed how they can continue to fight for retirees. The Texas Alliance also hosted a number of speakers rallying against the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision the following day.

Mr. Lantz asked convention attendees to remember that “TARA is a growing force in Texas, and it is the main hope for saving and improving the right to retire. You are the leadership we need. You are the main hope.” See pictures from the convention on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/TexasRetirees?ref=hl>.

Social Security Administration Announces Extended Field Office Hours

The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced on Thursday that starting on March 16th, all Social Security Field Offices will be open an additional hour on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Hours generally vary between offices, but this change will mean that most offices will now stay open to the public until 4pm on these days. Most offices will continue to close at noon on Wednesdays. These extended hours are a result of Congressional approval on the FY 2015 budget, which allocated money to keep these offices open for extended hours. SSA resources are also available at www.socialsecurity.gov or by calling their assistance number, 1-800-772-1213.

Thank You, Peter Witzler

Peter Witzler, deputy field mobilization director for the Alliance, has accepted a position at the National Education Association, and his last day with the Alliance will be today. He will be part of a team that will focus on organizing in charter schools, and will also organize and activate college students before they enter the teaching profession.

“We will miss his great enthusiasm and ideas that he brought to our organizing and advocacy work,” said Fiesta.