

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Alliance Members Visit Over 120 Congressional Offices during Lobby Week

Members of the Alliance visited over 120 Members of Congress and staff in their home states this week during the Presidents Day recess.

“Under the new 114th Congress, retirees issues are once again under attack from many directions including proposed trade agreements, Social Security and Medicare,” said **Richard Fiesta**, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans. “I applaud all of the Alliance members who are taking their concerns directly to their Representatives.”

Retirees are deeply concerned about the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement and the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) proposal, also known as “fast track.” TPP has provisions that would impact prescription drug pricing, including patent extensions for biologics and medical devices. In addition, TPP could interfere with the government’s ability to list and price prescription drugs and would allow pharmaceutical companies to challenge drug prices in public programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and the Veterans Administration.

Also concerning Alliance members are new rules for governing passed by the House Republicans, which included a provision prohibiting members from offering proposals to reallocate funds to the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) fund. In addition, many in Congress have called for turning Medicare into a voucher program, raising the age of eligibility, means testing benefits, requiring home health co-pays, limiting Medigap coverage and restructuring or redesigning Medicare. Photos from the visits are at <http://tinyurl.com/ktbjhuo>. See the Alliance’s updated fact sheets and Lobby Day materials at http://retiredamericans.org/issues/Lobby_Week_2015.

White House Conference on Aging Kicks Off with Forum in Tampa

Yesterday, the White House kicked off the 2015 White House Conference on Aging in Tampa, Florida with a panel on retirement security. Three Alliance members attended the conference sessions and others gathered offsite in Tampa and South Carolina to discuss the importance of strengthening Social Security, Medicare and Pensions – the three essential components to a secure retirement. “The White House Conference on Aging is a tremendous opportunity to make clear and address seniors’ biggest concerns,” said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Ruben Burks**.

The Alliance plans to present a petition in support of preserving, strengthening and expanding Social Security, strengthening Medicare and Medicaid, and protecting defined benefit pensions at the final White House Conference on Aging event in July. Please show your support and join us by signing our petition at <http://tinyurl.com/mppm5tm>. To read Mr. Fiesta’s *Huffington Post* column entitled *Don’t Let America’s Seniors Go Bankrupt*, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nydfmjp>.

National Journal: Seniors, Minority Voters Pivotal in Battleground States in 2016

National Journal reported on the trends showing that America is growing older and more diverse, particularly in many important swing states. While these demographic shifts will surely have an impact on the 2016 election, the extent of that impact is still unclear. The growing number of older voters could help Republicans, especially in the North and Midwest - though those are states where **Hillary Clinton's** message is the strongest, should she become the Democratic nominee. An accompanying chart shows the growing number of voters over 50 in eleven crucial battleground states. More at: <http://tinyurl.com/lpfsh2a>.

Alliance President **Barbara J. Easterling** said, "Based on where the Alliance's presence is the strongest - several of the likely battleground states - our members can play a crucial role in deciding who our next President is."

Other Nations Continue to Outpace the United States in Retirement Security

The United States ranked 19th in a recent international assessment of retirement security worldwide. This places the U.S. just behind France and just ahead of Slovenia in the rankings, while Switzerland, Norway, and Australia took the top three positions. Nations were ranked by Natixis Global Asset Management in four categories: finances in retirement, health, quality of life, and well-being. The United States' comparatively low level of retirement benefits, in addition to a lack of workplace retirement plans for many employees, likely contributed to its comparatively poor ranking among developed nations. More from *The Washington Post* at <http://tinyurl.com/nak3hol>.

Illinois Gov. Rauner Pushes Anti-Union Crusade

Last week, Illinois Governor **Bruce Rauner** (R) disallowed mandatory fees from workers to be collected by public employee unions. To make his case, Rauner falsely charged that unions are using these mandatory fees from union workers to fund political candidates and are violating the First Amendment. Reporter **Sam Levin** from the *Huffington Post* wrote, "**Anders Lindall**, a spokesman for AFSCME, the largest Illinois public employee union, told the [*Chicago*]*Sun-Times* the organization doesn't use fair share fees for political contributions. AFSCME Council 31 executive director **Roberta Lynch** called Rauner's move 'a blatantly illegal abuse of power' in a statement to the [*Sun-Times*] newspaper." Read the full article at <http://tinyurl.com/okxt7oe>.

A "Medicare Turns 50" Look-Back from *The New Yorker*

"How Medicare was Made" is the title of an article in the current *New Yorker* magazine. Passing Medicare required a broad coalition of organized labor, seniors, and members of both parties. More from the most recent issue of *The New Yorker* is at <http://tinyurl.com/lur4dj4>.