

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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King v. Burwell Supreme Court Case: Affordable Care Act Hangs in the Balance

Continued access to affordable health insurance for many early retirees is at stake as the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on Wednesday in the case of *King v. Burwell*, a lawsuit challenging provisions in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The suit claims that it is illegal for the government to issue tax credits for insurance policies purchased on federal health insurance exchanges.

Millions of people in 34 states could lose the federal subsidies that help deray the cost of private insurance through if the U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs. Governors in those 34 states have chosen not to set up their own state exchanges, joining the national exchange instead. Those subsidies reduce monthly premiums by as much as 89%. To learn more, go to <http://tinyurl.com/prznnzg>.

“Before the ACA, Americans who retired without employer-sponsored insurance and before they were eligible for Medicare were entirely at the mercy of insurance companies,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Early retirees could be denied coverage altogether, or saw their life savings dwindle because of exorbitant premiums available in the individual market.”

Seniors watching the *King v. Burwell* case closely include **Bonnie Mathias**, 57, of Dallas, Texas, a member of the Texas Alliance. Prior to the ACA, Ms. Mathias went without health insurance when the monthly premium for her retiree plan skyrocketed from \$86 to \$1,300 per month for Bonnie and her husband. Once she became part of the national health care exchange, however, the couple was able to obtain subsidized coverage for \$211 per month.

“Older Americans are at an extreme disadvantage when they are forced to fend for themselves in finding health care coverage,” said Mr. Fiesta. “The federal health care exchange addresses that problem in a way that no alternative plan even comes close to matching.”

Oxfam Report: World’s Top 1% Will Have More Wealth than the other 99% by 2016

On Monday, Oxfam International, an anti-poverty confederation, released a report stating that the combined wealth of the top 1% worldwide will surpass that of the other 99% by 2016, unless we take serious steps to address this inequality. Oxfam is urging a seven point plan that will help reduce wealth inequality, including a living wage for all workers; a crackdown on corporate tax-dodging; equal-pay legislation; and adequate safety-nets for the poorest citizens. Read the full research paper at <http://tinyurl.com/pl7tsdb>.

“The extreme imbalance of wealth in the world is a moral concern for many, but it also impedes economic growth,” said **Ruben Burks**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

“The growing inequality of wealth is not just in the U.S.,” stated **Barbara J. Easterling**, President of the Alliance. “It is absolutely destroying the middle class worldwide. The U.S. can lead the way in addressing this with a fair tax approach and the expansion of Social Security benefits.”

AFSCME: Poll Shows “Tsunami of a Retirement Crisis” due to 401(k) Schemes

AFSCME President **Lee Saunders** spoke out Wednesday regarding a new poll by the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS). The poll found that 86 percent of respondents believe there is a retirement crisis in America, 85 percent believe all Americans should have access to a pension and 67 percent would be willing to accept smaller pay increases in exchange for guaranteed retirement income.

“Our nation is facing a tsunami of a retirement crisis and the American people can see it coming,” said Mr. Saunders. “It’s no accident that as Wall Street-backed politicians double down on their attacks on pensions, Americans’ fears about retirement security are higher than ever. For workers and families, the best path to economic peace of mind and a secure retirement has always been through a union.”

Mr. Saunders also said that recent decades have seen Wall Street brokers line their pockets with the crumbling 401(k)s workers thought they could count on in their golden years, while middle-class Americans retire into poverty in skyrocketing numbers. More at <http://tinyurl.com/qaevna4>.

Daily Beast Piece Highlights Importance of Social Security Disability Insurance

A daughter who lost her father wrote a column in *The Daily Beast* on Saturday about Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), illustrating the need for Congress to stop exaggerating claims of fraud. Writer **Monica Potts** asked why we would “push aging people, in many cases, at the end of their lives, into new jobs that require new skills and probably pay poorly in the name of saving a few federal dollars?” Read the full piece at <http://tinyurl.com/lm85u4s>.

“Instead, we should re-allocate funds from the Old Age and Survivors Insurance fund to the SSDI fund before it runs dry in 2016. Congress has reallocated the funds routinely in the past,” said Ms. Easterling.

Wisconsin Convention Elects Officers, Draws Distinguished Speakers

The Wisconsin Alliance held its sixth biennial convention on Monday, drawing more than 150 members. Speakers included Wisconsin State Supreme Court Justice **Ann Walsh Bradley**; state AFL-CIO President **Phil Neuenfeldt**; **John Nichols**, columnist for *The Progressive*; and Mr. Fiesta. **Mike Pyne** was re-elected as state president. Also elected were: **Vivien De Back** – Executive Vice President; **Joanne Bruch** - Secretary; **Bernie Faust** - Treasurer; and **Leon Burzynski** - President Emeritus. **Billy Feitlinger** was honored for his years of service as the retiring Executive Director of the Wisconsin Alliance.

Medicare Turns 50... Despite Repeated Attempts to Dismantle It

Medicare has been around for 50 years despite numerous attempts to tear it down. For instance, in 2012, **Rick Santorum** said, “You want the private sector out there competing, driving down costs, improving efficiency... get rid of this—of CMS [the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services], where government basically micromanages all healthcare through Medicare and Medicaid.”