

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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AFL-CIO Executive Council Weighs in on Prescription Drug Prices

The AFL-CIO Executive Council this week [called for government action](#) to address the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs, a position shared by the Alliance since its earliest days when it conducted the “Rx Express” bus trips to Canada to allow seniors to purchase lower cost prescriptions and draw attention to the issue.

The Council noted that prescription drug prices increased by 12.2% in 2014, far outpacing the rate of inflation and wage increases. The decision is especially timely; [Politico reported](#) yesterday that Phrma, the Big Pharma lobbying organization that spends millions of dollars in Washington each year, is gearing up for a post-election campaign pushing back on efforts to bring down prices.

Among other policy changes, the Council called on lawmakers to permit the government to negotiate drug prices, for fair prices and policy reform to stop pharmaceutical companies from blocking low-cost generics from the market. It also reiterated opposition to the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement (TPP) which would allow Big Pharma to create monopolies and increase already out-of-control drug prices.

“The Alliance stands with the AFL-CIO Executive Council in the fight against out of control prescription drug prices. This is another important reason why the Alliance for Retired Americans support Hillary Clinton for president. She has committed to deal with this and other problems concerning health insurance and prescription drugs.” said **Robert Roach Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Retirees and working Americans should not have to choose between paying for their prescriptions or for food or housing. Clearly Big Pharma is feeling the pressure and we need to keep fighting until consumers get some relief.”

Victories for Voters: ID Laws Struck Down Across the Country

In a series of court decisions throughout the country over the past two weeks, voter ID and “proof-of-citizenship laws” have been [struck down in five states](#). Courts have ruled that laws in Texas, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Kansas, and North Dakota placed unnecessary requirements on voters and violate their rights.

States began to institute voter ID laws in 2010. But it wasn’t until the 2013 Supreme Court decision, *Shelby v. Holder* which struck down a key requirement in the 1965 Voting Rights Act that states began to pass ID laws in earnest.

The [series](#) of recent court decisions found that the strict voting requirements did not reflect the reality of voter fraud in America. As U.S. District Judge **James Peterson** wrote, “To put it bluntly, Wisconsin’s strict version of voter ID law is a cure worse than the disease.” There have only been

31 reported cases of impersonation fraud in the U.S. since 2000 – approximately 0.000003 percent of total ballots.

“Voter ID laws disproportionately impact seniors,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “These court decisions protect Americans’ right to vote and will help millions make their voices heard in November.”

Alliance Members Marking Medicare and Social Security Anniversaries

Medicare turned 51 last week and Social Security will mark 81 years of providing retirement security for millions of Americans, on August 14.

In Phoenix, the Arizona Alliance hosted an event highlighting the importance of Medicare to retirees. Attendees included **Doug Hart**, President of the Arizona Alliance, **Bill Engler** and **Vic Peterson**, Vice Presidents of the Arizona Alliance, and Representative **Ann Kirkpatrick** (D-AZ). The Arizona Alliance thanked Representative Kirkpatrick for her work in Congress, “She has proven vote after vote that she will protect and preserve Medicare. Thank you, Congresswoman!”

Show your care about Medicare and Social Security by attending an event in your community.

[Click here to find one.](#)



Some Seniors Surprised to be Automatically Enrolled in Medicare Advantage

Message from Richard Fiesta, executive director of the Alliance, “We urge you to read the below article from Kaiser Health News. We are very concerned about this issue and are working with allies on Capitol Hill to see how it can be stopped.”

(Kaiser Health News, August 4) -- Only days after Judy Hanttula came home from the hospital after surgery last November, her doctor’s office called with bad news: Records showed that instead of traditional Medicare, she had a private Medicare Advantage plan, and her doctor and hospital were not in its network.

Neither the plan nor Medicare now would cover her medical costs. She owed \$16,622.

“I was panicking,” said Hanttula, who lived in Carlsbad, N.M., at the time. After more than five hours making phone calls, she learned that because she’d had individual coverage through Blue Cross Blue Shield when she became eligible for Medicare, the company automatically signed her

up for its own Medicare Advantage plan after notifying her in a letter. Hanttula said she ignored all mail from insurers because she had chosen traditional Medicare. [Click here to read more...](#)

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.