Alliance Launches “Protect Social Security Campaign” Urging Key Elected Officials to Come Clean

Alliance members held press conferences in several states this week to announce a campaign demanding that Senators and Senate candidates pledge to protect Social Security for the retirees who depend on the system for their retirement security.

“We will be working to educate elected officials about the importance of Social Security for retirees,” said Robert Roach, Jr., President of the Alliance. “Our members want public commitments to oppose cuts in benefits and privatization for current and future retirees. We will host multiple events and actions to educate and inform our members and the public about officials’ records on this most important issue.”

Sen. Pat Toomey (PA) claimed in the Philadelphia Inquirer this week that he “didn’t remember” his privatization stance on Social Security. The Pennsylvania Alliance responded during a news conference at the state Capitol in Harrisburg noting that Sen. Toomey has advocated for Social Security privatization since at least 2001 and even wrote a book outlining his views. He supported transforming guaranteed benefits into savings accounts modeled off 401(k)s. Sen. Toomey has insisted that these private accounts would not apply to retirees or Americans close to retirement, but it would impact millions of younger workers’ benefits.

Pennsylvania Alliance members gathered at the Capitol in Harrisburg Tuesday.
Events were also held in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Arizona, Florida and Nevada. In Columbus, Stanley Gates, a student at Ohio State University, sent a powerful message to Senator Rob Portman (OH) about Social Security and what it means to his family and his future.

We’ll be posting photos and videos from this effort to our Facebook page – check it out here.

**AFL-CIO Reminds Voters of the Real Donald Trump**

On Thursday, the AFL-CIO released a video that highlights positions and actions Donald Trump has taken on the campaign trail that make him unfit to be president.

The video underscores Trump’s belief that workers’ wages are “too high” despite years of wage stagnation. The AFL-CIO hopes to remind voters of Trump’s views and conduct over the past year.

“The video is an excellent explanation of why Donald Trump is the wrong person to lead our country,” said President Roach.

**2017’s Changes to Medicare**

On Tuesday, Huffington Post published an article that outlined the changes Medicare will undergo in 2017. Each year small scheduled adjustments are made to Medicare such as deductible costs and premiums.

Based on inflation rates, the Social Security Administration (SSA) determines the cost-of-living adjustment or COLA for Social Security beneficiaries each year. There was no COLA in 2016 and 2017 will likely only see about a 0.2 percent COLA increase.

Without legislative fixes, Medicare Part B will increase costs in 2017 through premium increases, especially for higher earners who aren’t covered by the “hold harmless” clause that protects workers from premium increases. Deductibles are scheduled to increase from $166 to $204 next year, increasing out-of-pocket costs for seniors. Similarly, Medicare Part D premiums will rise to $40 for Americans earning less than $85,000 or couples earning less than $170,000 per year.

“We cannot shift more health care costs onto retirees,” said Joseph Peters, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Increasing premiums and deductibles strains seniors’ retirement funds, and miniscule or non-existent COLA increases make it impossible to combat skyrocketing health care costs. Last year the Alliance was able to fight against a similar increase and we will be pressing Congress for a legislative fix once again.”

**Medicare Experiences an 1,100 Percent Price Increase for EpiPens**

While the Mylan’s EpiPen price-gouging has dominated news cycles and served as another example of pharmaceutical companies’ greed, the impact of the companies actions on seniors has received little attention.

*Kaiser Health News* reported on Thursday that Medicare experienced a 1,100 percent price increase between 2007 and 2014. In this seven-year period, the number of seniors using EpiPens also jumped from 80,000 to 211,000.
Steep price hikes like Mylan’s significantly impact Medicare spending and seniors’ out-of-pocket costs. Medicare patients’ out-of-pocket spending for EpiPens nearly doubled in this seven-year period. Similarly, Medicare spent approximately $6.4 million on devices for seniors and people with disabilities in 2007. However, by 2014, Medicare spent $75.3 million on these same services.

“An 1,100 percent price increase for patients with Medicare is clearly unacceptable,” said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Mylan’s price gouging places heavy burdens on both seniors’ and Medicare’s finances. This is yet another example why pharmaceutical companies must be reined in.”

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.