FRIDAY ALERT

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Hillary Clinton Shines in Final Presidential Debate

On Wednesday night Secretary **Hillary Clinton** and **Donald Trump** sparred in their final debate of the 2016 election. Secretary Clinton repeated her commitment to strengthen and expand Social Security, protect health care for seniors, and tackle out-of-control prescription drug pricing. She also promised to defend Social Security from benefit cuts and ensure the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, repeated his threat to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This repeal would eliminate free wellness checks, preventive care and cancer screenings for retirees through Medicare.

"Hillary did a great job," said **Robert Roach, Jr.,** President of the Alliance. "I was proud to be in Las Vegas representing not only the Alliance but all retirees."

President Roach and Nevada Alliance members protested with the Culinary Workers Union outside the Trump Tower hotel in Las Vegas before the debate. Trump refuses to bargain with hotel employees who voted last year to unionize.

President Roach added, "I had the honor of spending a brief moment with Secretary Clinton on Wednesday. She is absolutely committed to the right to **retire with dignity** after a lifetime of hard work. She made that clear when I first met her years ago, again in the video she made for the Alliance earlier this month, and also at the debate on Wednesday."

In case you missed it, last week Secretary Clinton shared a special video message for Alliance members detailing how she will work closely with us to protect and expand Social Security, defend pensions from attack, and reduce sky-rocketing prescription drug costs. To watch her message, click here.

Alliance Addresses the Tiny 0.3% COLA Increase for Social Security Beneficiaries

On Tuesday **Richard Fiesta,** Executive Director of the Alliance, issued a statement regarding the government's announcement that there will be just a 0.3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for millions of Social Security beneficiaries, disabled veterans and federal retirees next year.

"The Alliance for Retired Americans is deeply disappointed by the announcement today that there will be a minuscule 0.3% benefit increase for millions of Social Security beneficiaries in 2017," said Mr. Fiesta, "For the average retiree that means just a $5.00 per month increase, not enough to keep up with the cost of their prescription medications." To read Mr. Fiesta's entire statement, click here.

The small COLA increase also triggers massive Medicare Part B premium hikes for the 30 percent of Medicare beneficiaries not currently covered by the "hold harmless" provision, which prevents premiums from increasing by more than the dollar increase in an individual's Social Security benefit. Low-income beneficiaries, whose deductibles are paid by Medicaid, public sector retirees not receiving Social Security, new Medicare beneficiaries and high-income beneficiaries who already pay higher premiums are the affected groups.

Without a solution, these people will be forced to shoulder the entire burden of all beneficiaries' Medicare Part B's increases, and their monthly premiums will rise 23%, from $121 to $149 each month.

Congress last year voted to extend the hold harmless provision to cover all Medicare Part B beneficiaries whenever there is no cost-of-living adjustment. However, this provision does not apply when there is a small COLA, as there will be in 2017.

"The Alliance will absolutely be working to make Congress pass a legislative fix for this large premium increase," said Mr. Fiesta.

Tim Kaine: "Poverty is Hiding in Plain Sight"

At an event in Detroit on Tuesday, Democratic Vice Presidential nominee **Tim Kaine** discussed his campaign's plan to fight poverty. He said "poverty is hiding in plain sight" in many communities and if elected, he and Secretary Clinton intend to tackle it head-on for all Americans.

Sen. Kaine stressed the importance of maintaining and expanding our social safety net. He also cited Social Security's critical role in keeping millions of Americans out of poverty, noting that despite its success, Social Security has been the target of attacks by politicians who want to cut benefits, raise the retirement age, and shift to risky, private accounts. He promised to defend Social Security against these efforts.

"Hillary and I know we've got to fix it," he said. "We're not only just going to defend Social Security. Forget about anybody's efforts to privatize or tinker around with it. No. We're not only just going to defend it. We've got to go on offense. We want to expand it, especially for those who need it most."

Prescription Drug Prices Singled Out as Major Health Care Industry Cost Driver

Eric Schultz, president and CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care [testified](#) on Monday in front of the Health Policy Commission (HPC) in Boston about rising health care costs. He said prescription drug prices have been played a large role in the recent acceleration of health care spending.

In Massachusetts, total health care spending increased by 4.1 percent in 2015. Mr. Schultz linked this increase to prescription drug costs and notably mentioned popular drugs Humira and Enbrel, both of which have both undergone "remarkable increases" in the past several years.

"Prescription drug pricing and government spending will continue to increase if we do not rein in pharmaceutical companies," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.,** Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "For starters, we must reduce the cost of prescription drugs for seniors by allowing Medicare to use its leverage with more than 40 million enrollees to negotiate drug and biologic prices."