

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

House GOP Wants to Drastically Cut Our Social Security

U.S. Rep. **Sam Johnson** (R-TX), chair of the Social Security subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, has filed a bill that would cut Social Security [drastically](#). Analysts say it would mean a 35% cut from current levels for some retirees.

The Social Security Reform Act of 2016, H.R. 6489, gradually raises the retirement age from 67 to 69 for Americans who are 49 or younger. It changes the formula that determines the size of a retiree's initial payments and it mandates a less generous formula for calculating cost of living increases.

"Now is when we find out if the president-elect will keep his promise not to cut Social Security," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "We know the voters certainly didn't elect him hoping that cuts would happen."

"This plan's approach is a non-starter," he continued. "It does not raise any revenues for the Social Security Trust Fund – it only cuts benefits."

The Johnson plan would gradually turn Social Security into a program that produces essentially one flat benefit, regardless of how much a worker contributed. The so-called House Freedom caucus, a group of extreme conservatives, have said they want Social Security and Medicare cuts to come in the first 30 days of 2017, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Johnson's bill doesn't just affect future retirees. It reduces Social Security's cost of living increases (COLAs) for everyone and eliminate them entirely for some retirees. The extreme plan will reduce benefits for spouses and children of seriously disabled workers.

Johnson's initial cuts come in the form of the two-year retirement age increase, which according to **Paul Van de Water**, a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, amounts to a seven percent cut each year.

National Medicare Call-In Days Set for January 4th, 23rd

House Speaker **Paul Ryan** told Fox News that he would push legislation in early 2017 that would end Medicare's guaranteed health care benefits. A national call-in day has been set up in response to the threat.

Call your Member of Congress on Wednesday, January 4th and say, "Hands Off My Medicare! I Earned It!" The number is (866) 828-4162.

We will also be calling the White House on Monday, January 23rd, once the new president is inaugurated, with a similar message.

More information is forthcoming via e-mail.

“Medicare Under Attack” Webinar Link Available

On Monday the Alliance conducted a webinar that explains how the GOP plans to attack our earned Medicare benefits and what we are doing to fight back. For those who missed the live version or want to see it again, [watch here](#).

“It’s important that we all get informed about the specifics of the Republican plans to gut your guaranteed benefits and see how you can get involved,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Polls show that very few Americans know about this plan, but once they learn the details 67% disapprove. We need to first raise awareness and then mobilize our members and their friends and families to speak out against this plan.

You can also download new fact sheets on the plans to cut Medicare and the effects of cutting Medicaid and repealing the Affordable Care Act on seniors [here](#).



International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Global Youth committee protested Medicare cuts while in Washington, DC this week.



Texas Alliance members at Rep. Lloyd Doggett's (D) office. Rep. Doggett said he would work with Alliance members to stop cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

Americans Divided on President-Elect, Future of the ACA and Unaware of Medicare Changes

The Pew Research Center recently published a [national survey](#) addressing post-election attitudes.

The survey found that the president-elect has the lowest approval ratings of an incoming president and his transition process since the poll began with **President George H.W. Bush** in 1989. The incoming president only received 41 percent approval on his policy plans and 40 percent on his cabinet choices and other high level appointments.

Americans are also divided on the future of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Over half of respondents believe the ACA will be eliminated by the new administration and only 39 percent think it will be maintained.

Furthermore, Pew found that half of Americans are unaware Medicare is under attack. 49 percent of respondents have heard nothing of proposed Medicare changes, whereas 39 percent have heard a little, and only 12 percent of respondents have heard a lot and about changes. Amongst Americans who have heard a lot about the changes, two-thirds oppose the plan. Only 32 percent support it, and opinion is split amongst those who have heard little or nothing.

"The more people know about Republican plans to dismantle Medicare, the less they like it," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "That is a hopeful sign, but it's up to us to make sure people know what Paul Ryan is up to."

Ways to Slow down a Premature Hospital Discharge

Too many Americans feel powerless when faced with surprise [hospital discharges](#) and fast-tracked facility transfers. Medicare beneficiaries and their families need to know they can fight back when they feel they are unprepared to leave the hospital.

Families need to know their rights and stay informed. For example, hospitals are required to provide a written notice of patients' rights within two days of admittance. They also must issue a second notice before a patient is discharged.

The notice "[Important Message from Medicare](#)" includes the contact information for Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO), which handles fast appeals and care complaints. Appeals can be initiated with QIOs, and if no one is available to speak to you, you can leave a message and explain your situation. Lodging an appeal prevents hospitals from discharging you or your family member until a verdict has been reached. This process usually takes two days.

QIOs also exist for hospice, home health care, skilled nursing and rehabilitation services; however, time frames and rules differ.

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.