

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

## Activists Deliver a Million “Hands Off Our Medicare” Petitions to Capitol Hill

Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta** spoke at a Capitol Hill press conference and petition delivery event with allies on Wednesday that renewed the fight to protect Medicare and Medicaid.



Virginia Alliance President Ron Thompson joined Rep. Jan Schakowsky and allies at the Wednesday event

At the [event](#), Medicare champions including incoming Senate Democratic Leader **Chuck Schumer** (NY) promised to fight tooth and nail to block any GOP effort to weaken, cut, or privatize Medicare. Other speakers included House Democratic Leader **Nancy Pelosi** (CA), Sen. **Bernie Sanders** (VT), and Representatives **Tony Cárdenas** (CA), **Ted Deutch** (FL) and **Jan Schakowsky** (IL). Several representatives from other advocacy groups also expressed their horror that Republicans have threatened to slash and privatize the program. A video of the event is available [here](#).

Alliance members signed 279,000 of the 1,000,000 petitions that were delivered, telling House Speaker **Paul Ryan** and Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** to keep their hands off Medicare.

“This was just the beginning of our fight to save our guaranteed Medicare benefits,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We are outraged that many politicians want to do this in order to give millionaires and billionaires more tax cuts.”

“Our members are irate,” [said](#) Fiesta. “They paid into the Medicare system for decades, and heard President-elect Trump repeatedly promise to protect their earned health care benefits. Medicare must be protected, preserved and expanded for future generations, not dismantled.”

### **Join us on Monday to Learn How You Can Help**

The event marked the launch of a new Alliance campaign to protect seniors from Republican efforts to dismantle Medicare and make deep cuts to Medicaid. Call-in days to Capitol Hill and the new administration’s White House are scheduled for January.

As part of the campaign, you are invited to join an online Webinar on Monday, December 12th at 3 pm ET. During this online meeting Alliance leaders will share the latest information about the threats to Medicare, provide ways for you to get involved and answer questions. All you need to participate is a computer with an internet connection.

“Now more than ever we need to stand up and defend the benefits we have earned after a lifetime of hard work,” said Fiesta.

Click [here](#) to RSVP.

### **Does Medicare Matter to You? Share your story.**



Wendy Boszak

We need your help reminding people why it’s important to protect Medicare’s guaranteed earned health care benefits.

If you are willing to be interviewed for a story on our website, please contact **David Blank** by e-mail at [dblank@retiredamericans.org](mailto:dblank@retiredamericans.org) or by phone at (202) 637-5275. You can also click [here](#) to tell us online what saving the program means to you personally.

One person who shared her story is **Wendy Boszak**, 68, of Reno, Nevada. She is president of Women of Washoe – WOW, the first all-woman chapter of the Alliance and the Nevada Alliance.

She believes that if Medicare were cut or privatized, her financial well-being and health would suffer. Her modest pension and Social Security continue to be threatened and medical costs drain savings that fluctuate on Wall Street.

“My Medicare costs are already almost \$4,000 per year just with premiums. People don’t realize how much seniors are paying as it is,” she said. “In addition, during my working years I was pre-paying into Medicare.”

Asked what she would like to say to Speaker Ryan if she had the opportunity, Wendy said it’s not recordable. But after re-thinking it, she said, “People did not vote for Trump to have Medicare cut. Keep your hands off it!”

Get inspired by reading more stories [here](#).

### **President-Elect Saves Some Carrier Jobs, but Attacks their Union Representative**

**Chuck Jones**, president of United Steelworkers 1999, [told](#) NBC News that he had been harassed and threatened in the wake of **Donald Trump's** latest attack — a Twitter diatribe against Jones’ leadership of union workers at a Carrier manufacturing plant in Indiana that took center stage last week. While thanking the incoming president for saving some jobs, Jones noted – correctly – that the president-elect had overstated the number of jobs that were being kept in Indiana and not moving to Mexico.

"Chuck Jones spoke out on behalf of those who will not be able to keep their jobs. He was doing his job as a union leader," said President Roach. "The Alliance stands with the United Steelworkers, their president **Leo Gerard**, and all of Carrier’s employees. Not only are many of them losing their jobs, but also the potential to retire with dignity."

"We hope the president-elect will now turn his attention to pensions and retirement savings and away from attacking unions and their members," he added. "This is symptomatic. It is not just an attack on Brother Jones – this is a signal to all of labor."

### **Intended Nominee to lead Department of Labor is Harsh Critic of Raising the Minimum Wage**

On Thursday the incoming president chose **Andrew F. Puzder**, chief executive of the company that franchises the fast-food outlets Hardee’s and Carl’s Jr., as his nominee for secretary of labor. Puzder has been a tireless campaigner against raising the minimum wage - another anti-union position by the new administration.

"If Mr. Puzder is confirmed by the Senate, the Alliance will absolutely be engaging him on issues of retirement security," said President Roach.

### **Social Security Service Declines as Waits at Offices Grow Longer**

A new [report](#) from the Social Security Administration (SSA) inspector general confirms that funding levels have not kept up with the needs of those who visit SSA offices. For all regions, the

number of field office visitors who waited longer than one hour for service increased from 2.3 million in FY 2010 to 4.5 million in FY 2015 – a 95 percent increase.

“Our service budget has been underfunded since FY 2010,” an agency statement said. “The number of Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income recipients has already risen by 12 percent since 2010, resulting in service deterioration since we simultaneously have had less funding to serve them. ... Additionally, Social Security’s enacted budgets for service have not kept pace with inflation.”

"Without a doubt, budget cuts at SSA have adversely affected the services that offices are able to deliver," said Mr. Fiesta. "This report proves what people have been saying for years now."

## **U.S. Life Expectancy Declines**

*The Washington Post* reported on Thursday that the [life expectancy](#) for Americans declined in 2015, a phenomenon that hasn't happened since 1993. According to the new report, males could expect to live 76.3 years at birth last year, down from 76.5 in 2014. Females could expect to live to 81.2 years, down from 81.3 the previous year.

Death rates rose across all ages and most demographic groups. Among the ten leading causes of death in the United States, eight rose last year including heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer's disease.

“This is especially troubling because other developed nations are not seeing similar statistics,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We must make sure that everyone has access to quality, affordable health care.”

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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.