

# FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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## Donald Trump Inaugurated Amidst Brewing Fight over Medicare

At noon today, **Donald Trump** will be inaugurated as President. Those celebrating the new president's election will not be alone in Washington, as hundreds of thousands of citizens, including representatives from many labor unions, will be rallying against his policies.

Looking past the pomp and circumstance of the event, Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** said, "The president-elect is now expected to govern. He can no longer simply attack but must offer specific plans to address concerns."

The nominee to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, Rep. **Tom Price** (R-GA), on Wednesday did not endorse allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices, despite a campaign promise by Trump. Price also refused to offer firm commitments on preventing cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, another Trump promise, instead saying he had a desire to ensure that people "do not fall through the cracks." Rep. Price was unable to clarify personal health care investments that benefited himself; at one point he attributed his purchase of Innate Immunotherapeutics to a broker but later described a process that involved him personally.

On Thursday, Alliance member and Washington, D.C. resident **Diane Fleming** participated in a shadow hearing on Price's nomination and spoke about the importance of Medicare.



Ms. Fleming speaks to Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) at the hearing on Thursday

She joined 12 Democratic Senators: **Tammy Baldwin** (WI), **Richard Blumenthal** (CT), **Bob Casey** (PA), **Maggie Hassan** (NH); **Mazie Hirono** (HI); **Tim Kaine** (VA); **Jeff Merkley** (OR); **Patty Murray** (WA), **Gary Peters** (MI); **Debbie Stabenow** (MI), **Elizabeth Warren** (MA), and **Sheldon Whitehouse** (RI) at the event. Ms. Fleming told the Senators that she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer but because of Medicare, she was able to afford necessary care and her treatment has been successful. Her story is just one of millions that illustrate the vital role of Medicare's guaranteed benefits.

### **Tell Trump to Stand Up to Paul Ryan; Veto Any Cuts to Our Earned Benefits**

With Republicans taking control of the White House, House Speaker **Paul Ryan** is preparing bills to dismantle or cut Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security for current and future retirees. The president-elect promised repeatedly not to cut these earned benefits while on the campaign trail.

Thousands of activists will call the White House on January 23 at 202-456-1414 and tell him to keep his promise and veto any cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. You can help. RSVP for the call-in day [here](#). When you RSVP, we will send you a reminder on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a script to use for your call.

### **Alliance Members Go to Bat for Health Care for All**

As Republicans race to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) without a replacement, a [report](#) this week from the **Congressional Budget Office** underscored the dramatic effect that repealing it would have. The CBO projected that 32 million people would lose health insurance, including 18 million in the first year after repeal. Those who would retain coverage would face premiums that could double within just 10 years. Furthermore, despite Republican talk about competition, their actions would leave about 75% of Americans in areas with "no insurer participating in the nongroup market."



At the January 15 rally in Hartford, Connecticut to save the ACA and protect Medicare and Medicaid (left to right): Connecticut Alliance President Bette Marafino, State Rep. Mett Lesser, and his constituents Matt and Amy O'Connor

Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Joseph Peters, Jr.** noted that already “people are getting involved and getting loud. This issue matters too much to too many people for Republicans to ignore their stories.”

As the CBO makes clear, repealing Obamacare without a replacement would cause tremendous disruption in the health care of millions and Alliance members are working hard to prevent this reckless action. [The Alliance for Healthcare Security](#), a coalition of groups including the Alliance, has been formed to coordinate efforts. On January 15 dozens of rallies were held across the country in support of the ACA with overflow crowds at many.



Ohio Alliance members also rallied to save the ACA and protect Medicare and Medicaid on Sunday.

### **Sen. Sherrod Brown Introduces Bill to Lower Medicare Drug Costs**

One of the biggest expenses for Medicare is prescription drugs, and a major reason is that Medicare is prohibited from leveraging the purchasing power of 41 million Americans to obtain lower prices on medication. Sen. **Sherrod Brown** (D-OH) recently reintroduced legislation to allow Medicare to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for cheaper prescription drugs to address the problem.

The bill, [S.41, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2017](#), already has the support of several Senators, including **Amy Klobuchar** (D-MN). The president-elect has expressed interest in addressing the rising costs of prescription medications.

“The Alliance is hopeful that there will be progress on this important issue. The current loophole is in place solely for the benefit of drug companies, to the detriment of taxpayers,” said President Roach.

Past CBO reports predict a savings of \$121 billion over the next decade, given the tremendous potential of negotiations.

## **Report Highlights Impact of Physically Demanding Work on Seniors**

A recent Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs [report](#) included new insights on the state of the labor market for seniors. On a surface level the labor market is strong, with the unemployment rate at only 3.6%. However, many are working at risk to their long term health and well-being. Millions of seniors are employed in physically demanding positions, and those numbers are worse for those who earn less.

Of those who make less than \$22 an hour, 52% are involved in labor that, according to the [Schwartz Center for Economic Policy](#), “debilitates and breaks down human bodies.” For those seniors who make the most, only 27% are in physically demanding positions. The ramifications of the work are drawing increased scrutiny.

“America’s seniors are almost working themselves to death,” said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. “Raising the retirement age, as some GOP leaders have suggested, would be especially harmful for those who earn less and create further long term health problems. That’s morally troublesome but also bad public policy.”

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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.