

# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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## Republicans Moving Forward with ACA Repeal

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said that [he plans to hold a vote](#) on the Graham-Cassidy bill next week. Introduced by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC), the legislation is the GOP's latest attempt at repealing the Affordable Care Act.

This particular stab at the Affordable Care Act is even worse than the previous attempts. It includes an age tax on older Americans, allowing insurers to charge older people five times more for the same coverage; it eliminates protections for people with pre-existing conditions, repeals the health care law's tax credits for middle-income Americans. It would also end Medicaid as we know it, changing the program to a block grant to states and eliminating coverage for vulnerable and poor citizens.

“Senators Graham and Cassidy saved the worst for last. Their bill is beyond cruel and will take affordable health care away from millions of older Americans.” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Congress should listen to the voice of the American people and reject this back-room deal.”

## Call Your Senator Today to Stop Graham-Cassidy Health Care Repeal Bill!

We need everyone to speak out against the Graham-Cassidy bill.

It hurts seniors and people with disabilities particularly hard. It will allow insurance companies to charge older Americans five times more for insurance coverage; eliminates protections for pre-existing conditions and ends Medicaid's guaranteed health benefits.

Here's what you can do to take action:

- Learn more by looking at our [fact sheet](#) and sharing
- Call your Elected Officials - Dial (866) 828-4162 to be connected to their office and tell them you oppose the bill
- Find a [#KilltheBill event](#) near you and speak out

## Tom Price Opts for Private Jets While Cutting HHS Budget

Crafting legislation to end Medicaid's guaranteed benefits and take health care away from millions of Americans is apparently time consuming. That's [the reason](#) a spokesperson gave when asked why Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price took 24 private charter

flights on government business over the last several months at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$300,000.

Dan Diamond, a health reporter with Politico, [broke the story](#) about these taxpayer funded jaunts, one of which went from Washington, DC, to Philadelphia and included Kellyanne Conway as a passenger. That trip would have been more timely and less costly if Price had just taken Amtrak instead.

“It’s hard to imagine a more flagrantly wasteful use of taxpayer money,” **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance said. “It is clear that Secretary Price isn’t really working for the American people, since he saw fit to use their funds so extravagantly.”



HHS Secretary Tom Price and White House Senior Advisor Kellyanne Conway chartered this plane to travel from Washington, DC to Philadelphia (Source: *Politico*)

## Many People with Diabetes Struggle to Afford Life-saving Insulin

The rise in high-deductible insurance plans, combined with a steadily increasing price for insulin, has left many [scrambling to pay for their diabetes medication](#). Of the 6 million people in the United States who depend on insulin, about 1.25 million have Type I diabetes, a condition in which the pancreas does not produce the hormone insulin. The rest have Type II diabetes, and they take insulin because their bodies do not produce a sufficient amount of insulin.

One of the newer types of insulin saw 24 price increases from 2001 to 2014, going from \$44 to about \$300. Research suggests that 57% of people who use insulin in the United States face paying list price for their supply at some time during the year.

“These price increases are unacceptable. No one should ever have to be concerned that they will not be able to afford to keep themselves alive,” said **Joseph Peters**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Protesters are calling upon Eli Lilly and other manufacturers to be transparent about how much it costs to make insulin, to show how much they earn from the sales, and to lower their price. One factor behind the rising costs has been the arrival of the next generation of analog or synthetic insulin that could one day replace its less expensive predecessors, human or animal insulin. While previous-generation insulins remain on the market, the newer drugs have been shown to be superior at keeping blood sugar constant.

People with diabetes have taken several steps to ensure they have sufficient insulin. Some rely on samples from their doctor's offices, and Facebook groups have come along to connect those who have extra insulin with those in need. People living near Canada often still go over the border to buy their supplies.

High-deductible plans enable employers to spend less on insurance, but they can mean that the patient no longer has access to manufacturer rebates and has to pay the full list price.

### **Obituary: Former Alliance Executive Vice President Judy Cato**

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Judith "Judy" Cato last week. A tremendously energetic and passionate activist, Ms. Cato joined the Board of the Alliance for Retired Americans when it was founded in 2001, and later served as Executive Vice President until 2015.

Judy managed the Council House senior facility in Suitland, Maryland, a union-built and operated high-rise. She served for 15 years on the Prince George's County Advisory Committee on Aging and was a delegate to the 1995 and 2005 White House Conferences on Aging. She also served for eight years at the request of Maryland Governor Parris Glendening on Maryland's State Commission on Aging.



Cato was active in a number of community-based groups, and as a 30-year volunteer with the Leukemia Society, helped raise millions of dollars through the annual Bobby Mitchell charity golf tournament. In 1999 Cato was named Distinguished Black Woman by Black Women in Sisterhood for Action.

"She was a joyful colleague and tireless advocate, and she will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to know her," said Executive Director Fiesta.

Judy is survived by her husband, Elias Cato, Sr. and her two children, as well as 5 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Her family suggests that contributions in her memory be directed to the Alzheimer's Association and the American Cancer Society.