

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

House, Senate Budgets Both Include Trillion-Dollar Cuts to Medicare and Medicaid; House Version Raises Medicare Eligibility Age

The House passed its 2018 budget resolution on Thursday by a vote of [219-206](#), completing a step toward House Speaker **Paul Ryan's** goal of sending tax-reform legislation to President **Trump** that would cut \$1.5 trillion from Medicare and Medicaid. Eighteen Republicans voted against the resolution, along with all the Democrats who were present.

The vote allows the GOP to pass its tax bill with only a simple Senate majority, instead of the Senate's typical 60-vote threshold. The Senate released its budget proposal last Friday and plans to mark up its proposal in committee this week, then put it to a floor vote next week. The GOP's House and Senate proposals are different, but both cut Medicare and Medicaid severely. The Senate budget requires cuts of \$473 billion from Medicare and about \$1 trillion from Medicaid over the next 10 years, according to [The Hill](#).

"That is a cut to Medicare and Medicaid combined of \$1.5 trillion with a 'T,'" said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "These cuts are completely unnecessary - \$500 billion from Medicare to go with a trillion dollars just from Medicaid. And all to give tax cuts to corporations and billionaires."

The House budget raises the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67 and turns guaranteed benefits into a system of inadequate vouchers. Cuts of more than \$1 trillion to Medicaid will force states to make deep cuts in the number of people who receive benefits, or the amount of health care provided.

"Today the House of Representatives said to retirees, 'You are not our priority,'" [added Richard Fiesta](#), Executive Director of the Alliance, on Thursday. "The wealthiest 1% are the big winners here, at the expense of seniors and working Americans losing their earned health benefits. The Republican plan is clear: offer enormous tax giveaways to corporations and the wealthy, cause the deficit to skyrocket, and then claim we need to cut Medicare and Medicaid."

Future federal government retirees also take a big hit under the House budget. It would mean higher employee contributions to the federal defined benefit pension plan and an elimination of supplemental payments to employees who retire before age 62, even though federal law enforcement officers are forced to retire at 57. It would also mean a switch to a defined contribution pension plan for new federal employees.

"A budget is a statement of values and priorities. And with the 2018 budget resolution released on September 29, Senate Republicans are showing deep contempt for America's retirees," [added Executive Director Fiesta](#). "President Trump pledged that he would not cut Medicare, Medicaid

and Social Security. Alliance members intend to remind him that we expect the GOP to keep that promise.”

Puerto Rico Gets Some Direct Aid from Labor

As the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico continues, working people from across the country are helping with recovery and rebuilding. On Wednesday morning, more than 300 truckers, machinists, electricians and nurses [flew down to Puerto Rico](#) for a two-week mission led by the AFL-CIO in hopes of filling that void. AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and Alliance Vice President **Liz Shuler** was one of those helping the cause.

More than 20 unions had members on the flight. The nurses, doctors, electricians, engineers, carpenters and truck drivers will help in many ways, including clearing road blockages, caring for hospital patients, delivering emergency supplies, and restoring power and communications.



Alliance Vice President Shuler (l) preparing to launch the Unions United relief flight to Puerto Rico with National Nurses United volunteers.

Tom Price Resigns as Secretary of HHS

Health and Human Services Secretary **Tom Price** resigned Friday after widespread criticism over his repeatedly taking expensive private jets instead of commercial flights or the train. He spent more than \$1 million on the travel, and HHS even paid \$25,000 for a jet from Washington, D.C. to Philadelphia. Confronted with the evidence, Price suggested he could re-pay around \$52,000, which represents roughly 5 percent of the cost taxpayers incurred, for his travel.

“The spending was particularly outrageous given that former Secretary Price spent months fighting to take health care benefits from millions of Americans, saying the country could not afford it,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “He was even trying to lay off parts of the HHS workforce while he was spending all that money.”

As Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Price was supposed to be a key part of President Trump’s effort to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act, but there were [reports](#) that Trump was not satisfied with his efforts.

Administration officials announced last Friday that **Don Wright**, MD, MPH would become Price’s short-term successor as Acting Secretary. Dr. Wright has been Acting Assistant Secretary for Health at HHS since February. He also served as the HHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health and Director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

The New York Times [suggests](#) that current commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) **Scott Gottlieb**, MD, and current Director of the Centers for Medicare and

Medicaid Services (CMS) **Seema Verma**, MPH, are two of President Trump's top choices to become the next Secretary of HHS.

In April, when Gottlieb was the nominee to become Commissioner at FDA, Secretary-Treasurer Peters said that the confirmation hearing was essential to make sure that the nominee "will be an advocate within the agency for changes that help consumers, not pharmaceutical companies. Dr. Gottlieb is not that person."

In Indiana, Verma helped design the "Healthy Indiana Plan," which included a strict system of changes to health care availability in the state. Under Verma's program, Medicaid recipients can't get complete benefits unless they pay new monthly premiums that were instituted. People who are poor enough to qualify for Medicaid in Indiana can be locked out of their coverage for six months if they fail to make a payment.

Annual Medicare Open Enrollment Begins October 15

With open enrollment starting in less than ten days, it's the perfect time to do a "Medicare Check-up" and make sure that you are in the right Medicare insurance plan for your situation. Union Plus is pleased to offer the Union Plus Retiree Health Insurance Program to help Alliance members with their Medicare needs. This is a free service and there is no obligation to change your plan or enroll.

Learn about the coverage options available to you, including ways to potentially save money on your future out-of-pocket health care expenses. To speak to a licensed insurance agent at eHealth, an insurance broker specializing in the Medicare insurance plan needs of Alliance members, call 1-888-898-5304 (TTY users: 771) Monday - Friday between 8am - 8pm EST or visit UnionPlusMedicare.com.

APWU Retirees Convene in Las Vegas Just Days after Mass Shooting

Mr. Fiesta spoke about recent legislative developments concerning Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid at the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Retirees Department Educational Conference Wednesday in Las Vegas. The conference came just three days after the horrific mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival of country music in the city left 58 dead and more than 400 injured.

"The members of the Alliance for Retired Americans stand with all of the community members who were hurt and killed by the terrible violence in Las Vegas this weekend," [said](#) President Roach. "During this difficult time for our nation, we thank the seasoned first responders and medical professionals who kept this tragedy from being even more destructive."

Arizona Alliance Conventioneers Thank Sen. McCain, Shame Sen. Flake

Approximately fifty retirees attended the annual Arizona Alliance convention last Thursday. The keynote speaker was President Roach. Other speakers included Phoenix Vice-Mayor **Laura Pastor**, state House Minority Leader **Rebecca Rios**, Maricopa County Recorder **Adrian Fontes** and Congressman **Ruben Gallego's** District Director **Luis Heredia**.

The new and re-elected officers are President, **Doug Hart**; 1st Vice President, **Sandra Cole**; 2nd Vice President, **Vic Peterson**; Treasurer, **Dr. Janie Hydrick**; and Secretary, **Russ Crossan**.



Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans members and President Roach thanked Senator John McCain for protecting retirees from the GOP's attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

The day was capped off with members loading onto a bus and heading to Sen. **John McCain's** (R) office to thank him for voting against the GOP's health care bill. Then they marched across the street to Sen. **Jeff Flake's** (R) office to express their extreme disappointment that he voted yes on the bill.

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.