

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

Senate Passes Budget that Slashes Medicare and Medicaid, Offers More Tax Breaks to the Wealthy

The U.S. Senate voted [51-49](#) on Thursday to pass a budget that requires cuts of \$473 billion from Medicare and about \$1 trillion from Medicaid over the next 10 years. The measure is estimated to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years.

The Senate also adopted a last minute amendment eliminating the need for a conference committee. That will speed up the timeline so that Congress can move on to “tax reform.”

“This is a cruel budget that blatantly disrespects older Americans,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “It drastically cuts Medicare and Medicaid to give billionaires and profitable corporations money they don’t need.”

Several notable amendments were offered by Democrats and Independent **Bernie Sanders** (VT). Senators Sanders, **Debbie Stabenow** (MI) and **Bob Casey** (PA) offered an amendment to prevent the \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid, paid for by reducing the Republican tax breaks for the wealthy. The amendment failed [47-51](#).

Senators **Bill Nelson** (FL) Stabenow and Sanders offered an amendment to provide additional resources to restore the \$473 billion in cuts to Medicare, paid for by reducing the Republican tax breaks for the wealthy. It failed [47-51](#).

In addition, Sanders and Sen. **Ron Wyden** (D-OR) offered a third amendment to ensure that there are not tax cuts for the top 1% of Americans. It failed [46-52](#).

Alliance to Host Pension Seminar; GAO Calls for a National Commission on Retirement

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) [released](#) a 173-page report on the state of retirement security. It discusses pensions, Social Security, Medicare and the status of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and recommends that Congress create a national commission on retirement.

The report notes that fundamental changes to the nation’s current retirement system have occurred over the past 40 years and increased the risks and responsibilities for individuals in planning and managing their retirement.

The current retirement has three main pillars: Social Security, employer-sponsored pensions or retirement savings plans, and individual savings. The changes have made it increasingly difficult for individuals to plan for and effectively manage retirement. In particular, there has been a

marked shift away from employers offering traditional defined benefit (DB) pension plans to defined contribution (DC) plans, such as 401(k)s, as the primary type of retirement plan. Economic and societal trends — such as increases in debt and health care costs — can also impede individuals' ability to save for retirement.

The report states that individuals face three major challenges: accessing retirement plans through their employers; accumulating sufficient retirement savings; and ensuring that their accrued savings and benefits last through retirement.

On November 30 and December 1, the Alliance will host a seminar for union leaders and senior staff, ***Responses to the Pension Crisis***. The event will include two days of interactive discussions based on the experiences of union leaders in dealing with endangered pension plans and pension terminations. In addition, presenters will consider best practices in dealing with pension plans through the corporate bankruptcy process.

Presentations from unions, government agencies, legislative representatives, and bankruptcy attorneys will be featured. Officials from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) will talk about their role in overseeing single and multi-employer pension plans, with an overview of the current pension situation nationally.

"The event is intended to provide information and resources so that decision makers and their advisers can meet their pension objectives," said President Roach.

"We look forward to hearing from labor unions and international pension advocates and experts about how they have navigated this challenging climate," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Bipartisan Murray-Alexander Bill Would Stabilize Health Insurance Markets; But President Trump Remains a Wild Card

Senators **Patty Murray** (D-WA) and **Lamar Alexander** (R-TN) reached a [bipartisan deal](#) for stabilizing Affordable Care Act (ACA) markets on Tuesday. The deal included two years of funding for cost-sharing subsidies that President **Trump** decided to end last week. The subsidies reimburse insurance companies for lowering deductibles, co-payments and other out-of-pocket costs for low-income customers.

Under the deal states would have greater freedom to shape their own health care systems. States could more easily get waivers to end benefits that are currently guaranteed by law, and approvals for those waivers would be streamlined. The bill would also expand eligibility for catastrophic coverage under the ACA, a goal for Republicans who want to increase the options consumers have in the marketplace.

President Trump swung wildly on whether to support the Alexander-Murray deal. During a press conference with the Greek Prime Minister, he was initially skeptical but eleven minutes later, Trump pivoted and said he supported the agreement. After staking out the conflicting positions, Trump attacked Democrats. The next day White House officials said the Administration opposed the bill.

"There is widespread agreement from both political parties that we need to stabilize the health care markets with a solid plan for what will happen not only down the line, but also in the

immediate future,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We urge President Trump to join the more sensible members of his party on this.”

Massachusetts Alliance Holds Lobby Day, Convention

The Massachusetts Alliance chapter, which was founded in 2014, participated in an all-union state Lobby Day on Wednesday and then held their state convention later that day. Highlights of the convention included remarks by **Steven Tolman**, President of the Mass. AFL-CIO, and **Maureen Dunn**, Field Manager with the national Alliance.

Elected to the board were:

- **John Ratliff**, President, UAW Retiree
- **Bill Dooling**, Executive Vice President, Mass. Teachers Assn., Retired
- **Joseph Boffa**, Treasurer, Community Advocacy Network
- **Marianne "Mickey" Dumont**, Rec. Sec., United Teachers of Lowell Retired
- **Marilyn Marion**, Corresponding Sec., Boston Teachers Union, Retired



Left to right: John Ratliff, Marianne "Mickey" Dumont, Marilyn Marion, Joseph Boffa, and Bill Dooling

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.