

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Changes to Tax Code Would Have Low-Income Seniors Subsidizing the Wealthiest 1%

The House Committee on Ways and Means rolled out the Republican tax bill on Thursday, finally revealing their plans to overhaul the nation's tax code.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA), H.R. 1, would permanently reduce the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20% while eliminating many tax breaks that benefit retirees. It will also add \$1.5 trillion to the federal deficit over a decade. Lawmakers must keep the deficit at that level to be able to pass the bill with just 50 Senate votes.

Especially discouraging to seniors, the bill paves the way for nearly \$500 billion in cuts from Medicare and more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid over the next 10 years. The tax breaks are heavily weighted toward business, which would receive about \$1 trillion in net cuts, or [two-thirds of the total](#), according to calculations by the Joint Committee on Taxation.



Left: The Arizona Alliance hosted a "Tax Cuts Are Scary" protest on Halloween;

Right: Alliance Executive Board member Susan Flashman with Leader Pelosi at the Capitol

"Make no mistake, the House tax bill has seniors subsidizing corporations and the wealthiest 1% of earners," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "Deductions that benefit seniors, like those on medical expenses, are being taken away."

"The bill unleashed by the House moves us one step closer to massive, unnecessary tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Seniors, low-income and middle-class taxpayers will be footing the bill for these changes through health care cuts, by losing the ability to deduct all their state and local income and sales taxes, and by limiting their ability to deduct their property taxes."

Republicans are hoping to move the bill quickly through the House, with committee action expected next week. Lawmakers aim to forward it on to the Senate later this month.

If the bill becomes law no one – retirees or active workers at all income levels - would be allowed to deduct their medical expenses, including nursing home costs and out-of-pocket medical and dental expenses, any longer.

Alliance Executive Board member **Susan Flashman** of Maryland [spoke at the U.S. Capitol](#) about her experience in needing the medical tax deduction following brain surgery at an event with House Democratic Leader **Nancy Pelosi** and Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member **Richard Neal** (D-MA) on Friday.



The Texas Alliance also hosted a Halloween-themed protest of the GOP tax plan.

Events by the Arizona Alliance in [Phoenix](#) and the Texas Alliance in [Dallas](#) protested the tax rollout with Halloween costumes this week. North Carolina Alliance members demonstrated at the district offices of Reps. **Walter Jones** (R) in Havelock and **Ted Budd** (R) in High Point. Nebraska Alliance members demonstrated in Omaha. Maryland/DC Alliance members rallied with Democratic members of the U.S. House and Senate at another event at the Capitol.

Alliance members are already calling the Capitol Hill switchboard to urge their House members to vote NO. To make your voice heard on this important issue, call your Representative at 866-828-4162 today.

## **Obamacare Enrollment Suffers from Attempts to Repeal it, Starve it**

[Confusion was evident](#) as the open enrollment period began on Wednesday for the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Many people believe that the ACA has been repealed, when in fact, the program has survived attack after attack since President **Trump** took office in January.

Trump and the administration have taken several steps to undermine the markets, including gutting outreach and marketing activities to remind people to enroll. His decision to cut off cost-sharing subsidy payments, which insurers rely on to reduce costs for low-income Obamacare customers, further rattled the marketplaces. As a result, there is mass confusion and anxiety among the nearly 10 million Americans covered, or who seek to be covered, by the program.

Cuts to the advertising budget for the program's enrollment period have clearly limited public awareness and the success of the law. On top of this, the open enrollment period has been cut in half, allowing only 45 days, or until December 15, for people to enroll.

If you or anyone you know doesn't receive health care through their jobs, encourage them to go to <https://www.healthcare.gov/> to sign up now.

## **House and Senate Democrats Call for Action against State "Right to Work" Laws**

On Wednesday, Senate Democratic Leader **Chuck Schumer** and House Democratic Leader Pelosi unveiled [a new plank](#) of "A Better Deal," the democratic agenda under the Trump administration. The newest addition addresses "Right to Work" states which have enacted legislation aimed at diminishing the rights of workers.

The proposal lays out eight specific goals of the plan, ranging from protecting the integrity of union elections to empowering workers to protest unfair work environments. The most integral part of the plan cracks down on states that undermine workers' freedom to ban together and negotiate. The new language addresses labor issues in states where workers have the ability to opt out of joining a union while still reaping the benefits of the negotiations.

"Ultimately, we want to ban state laws that undermine worker freedoms to join together and negotiate," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "We need significant changes in our elected leaders and laws to make that a reality, and this is a step in that direction."

## **Vermont Alliance Holds its Annual Conference**

The Vermont Alliance held its Annual Conference and Business meeting on Saturday, October 28. Attendees focused on establishing Universal Primary Care statewide; the "Universal Publicly Financed Primary Care for All Vermonters" bill is currently in the Vermont State Legislature. The chapter plans to work closely with sponsors to get the bill passed during the 2018 legislative session, which begins in January.

**Sheila Reed**, an outreach staffer for Senator **Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) reported on Sen. Sanders' recently introduced "Medicare for All" bill in the U.S. Senate. Other speakers included **Elizabeth Morris** from Rep. **Peter Welch's** (D) office, State Senator **Debbie Ingram**, and State Representative **Mary Hooper**.

The Vermont Alliance's incumbent officers were re-elected for 2-year terms:

- President - **Jane Osgatharp**
- Vice-President - **Terry Macaig**
- Recording Secretary - **Brenda Lindemann**
- Corresponding Secretary - **Dennis Labounty**
- Treasurer - **Scott Hess**

Incumbent At-Large Board members were also re-elected. The attendees elected one new Affiliate Board Member, **Jill Charbonneau**, President of the Vermont AFL-CIO.

President Osgatharp reported on the group's activities during the past year, including Senior Town Meetings in six locations, several progressive rallies and protests, and presentations to local Senior Centers.