

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

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Join Us on February 24 for Working People's Day of Action

On February 26th, the Supreme Court will hear arguments on Janus v. AFSCME, a case funded by wealthy interests to further rig the system against working people. These are the same extremist voices that actively work to limit voting rights, roll back economic protections, and gut civil and labor rights laws.

Please join the Alliance, along with our AFSCME and AFL-CIO allies, at the Working People's Day of Action before the arguments, on Saturday, February 24.

[Click to find an event near you and to RSVP.](#)

Fifty years ago, **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** joined striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, as they fought for the freedom to join together in a strong union and be treated with dignity and respect at work. They carried signs that boldly proclaimed: "I AM A MAN."

On the Working People's Day of Action, retirees will join our working brothers and sisters and stand up for the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions and fight for decent and equitable pay for our work, affordable health care, quality schools, vibrant communities and secure future for us all.

"I want to thank Alliance members in advance for their support, before an important day at the Supreme Court," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "The justices could reverse a long-held ruling from 1977 that gave public employee unions the right to collect dues from non-members who derive benefits from negotiations on their behalf. We need to speak with a unified voice."

President's Budget Cuts Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, Breaking Core Campaign Promise

The 2019 budget released on Monday by the White House includes [cutting](#) Medicare by \$266 billion, Medicaid by \$1.1 trillion, and Social Security by \$72 billion.

"The 2019 budget reflects the Administration's priorities and shows once again that the President did not intend to keep his promises to older Americans," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "One could conclude that the health and well-being of seniors and

retirees is of little concern to him, since they so blatantly fly in the face of his campaign pledges that he would not cut Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid.”



In addition to Medicare cuts, the president proposed a \$1.1 trillion cut to the Medicaid system. The cuts are presented as a plan to “reform” the system but actually reverse the Medicaid expansion that was permitted under the Affordable Care Act.

It also eliminates LIHEAP home heating assistance; the Community Services Block Grant

that helps local communities fund wrap around service for older adults to maintain self-sufficiency; and cuts seniors nutrition program, including Meals-on-Wheels.

The proposal comes just weeks after the GOP passed a windfall \$1.5 trillion tax cut for big corporations, real estate developers, hedge fund managers and the very wealthiest Americans. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center reports that 83% of the cuts go to the top 1%.

If all of the health care measures in this budget were enacted – repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and enacting ‘something like Graham-Cassidy’, reversing Medicaid expansion, and block granting traditional Medicaid – 32 million Americans would lose health care coverage.

In addition, under the guise of “reforming disability entitlements”, the plan makes explicit cuts to Social Security by cutting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Administration’s Budget Fails to Protect Seniors from Skyrocketing Drug Prices

Despite promises to lower prescription drug prices, President Trump’s FY19 budget does not come close to actually protecting seniors and all consumers from skyrocketing prices.

“Unfortunately, the President’s plan does nothing to rein in the cost of drugs and leaves out the most important tool at its disposal -- Medicare’s ability to negotiate lower prices,” [said Richard Fiesta](#), Executive Director of the Alliance.

According to [Kaiser Health News](#), some of the proposals are reshapes of plans the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have already said are under consideration. Overall details remain sketchy.

One promising provision would allow seniors covered by Medicare's Part D prescription benefit to share in the rebates for individual drugs that are purchased at the pharmacy. Also included is a proposal to ensure that low-income seniors in Medicare don't pay for generic medicines.

Other changes would hurt Medicare beneficiaries. The Administration would shift drugs administered in a doctor's office and today paid for under Medicare Part B into Medicare Part D. This includes some chemotherapy and rheumatoid arthritis infusions. The Part D program allows insurers and pharmacy benefit managers to negotiate formularies. Under this change, the Medicare system would save money but beneficiaries would be subject to a higher co-pay than they are today.

The proposal creates a pilot project in five states to allow state Medicaid programs to negotiate prices with manufacturers and create their own drug formularies. It is doubtful this provision would help reduce costs, as Medicaid already requires drug companies to pay rebates.

The Administration's plan would cap out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries who pass through the Part D "doughnut hole" gap in prescription drug coverage and hit the catastrophic stage. Beneficiaries typically pay a 5 percent coinsurance in the catastrophic phase, but under the new budget plan it would be decreased to zero.

ADA Education and Reform Act is an Affront to Americans with Disabilities



On Thursday the House passed HR 620, "The ADA Education and Reform Act," which [allows businesses to remain non-compliant for years](#) with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

before becoming more accessible. It also require individuals to educate businesses about ADA compliance rules. The [vote](#) was 225-192.

The bill rolls back the protections that individuals with disabilities have received through the ADA for more than a quarter of a century.

The 1990 law ensures that people with disabilities have equal access to public accommodations. It covers businesses and service establishments like grocery stores, doctors' offices, and homeless shelters. This bill removes the incentives for businesses to comply with the law and imposes significant burdens on Americans with disabilities.

By providing businesses a 120-day waiting period before the person reporting a violation can take the case to court, this bill weakens the ADA. During this time, businesses would not be penalized as long as they are making 'substantial progress' towards becoming ADA-compliant. However, "substantial progress" is not defined and would be left to the courts.

"This legislation is misguided and an affront to disabled Americans, many of whom are Alliance members. It is a travesty that this legislation was even up for a vote," said Executive Director Fiesta.

President Roach: Retirees Stand with Targets of School Shooting in Parkland, Florida

Following the dreadful assault at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on Wednesday, President Roach offered his condolences to all of those affected.

"The members of the Alliance stand with all of the people who were hurt and killed by the terrible violence in Parkland," said President Roach. "Our thoughts are with the deceased, the injured, and all of their friends and families."

"The violence at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School was once again an attack on all of us and on the American way of life," he added. "Seniors and retirees send their deepest condolences and wishes for healing to our neighbors who were targeted in this senseless act."