

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Alliance Congratulates Conor Lamb; Thanks Pennsylvania Members for their Role in his Victory

Retiree issues, combined with [a strong Get Out the Vote effort by Alliance for Retired Americans members and staff](#), helped propel first-time candidate **Conor Lamb** to victory in the special election for Pennsylvania's 18th congressional district seat.

The Alliance has more than 22,000 members in the 18th Congressional district, and used a variety of methods to educate and mobilize both members and the general public on the stark differences between Lamb and **Rick Saccone** on retiree issues.

Lamb campaigned on a commitment to strengthen and expand Social Security and Medicare for current and future generations and to tackle the rising cost of prescription drugs. He also promised to protect and defend earned pension benefits through the Miner's Pension Act.

"I want to thank our Pennsylvania Alliance members for their key role in bringing Conor Lamb over the finish line," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "Congressman-elect Lamb not only promised to resist House Speaker Paul Ryan's plans for cuts to Social Security and Medicare, but also to go a step further by working to expand the programs."

"We showed candidates across the country that putting retirement security issues like Social Security and Medicare on the front burner is a winning formula for November's midterm elections," added **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

Thousands of Alliance members received mailings outlining the differences between Lamb and Saccone on retiree issues. A week before election day, the Alliance gave its members an opportunity to hear directly from the candidate on senior issues during a tele-town hall. Thousands of Pennsylvania Alliance members who lived in the district joined the call and asked Lamb questions about Medicare, prescription drugs prices, Social Security cost of living increases and protecting miners' pensions.



Alliance staff and members helped with the Get Out the Vote effort. Executive Director Fiesta visited the district several times to help campaign and **Maureen Dunn**, Field Manager for the Alliance, directed the Westmoreland County Central Labor Council's effort. She led an operation that knocked on thousands of doors and made thousands of phone calls as a cornerstone of their work. Pennsylvania Alliance President **Dwayne Thomas** (left), who lives in western Pennsylvania, and board member **Harriet Ellenberger**, who lives in the district, volunteered dozens of

hours of their time and recruited others to join in. [Click here to view more photos.](#)

Independent expenditure digital ads in support of Lamb by the Alliance ran on the three main local newspaper websites as well as on [Facebook](#). One of the ads featured Ms. Ellenberger.

New White House Economic Adviser Kudlow: Medicare and Social Security are "bad ideas"

President **Trump** plans to name **Larry Kudlow**, a conservative media analyst who served as his informal economic adviser during the 2016 campaign, as the next head of the White House National Economic Council, according to multiple sources.

In November, 2004, on MSNBC's "[Scarborough Country](#)," Kudlow was part of a panel with host **Joe Scarborough**, political consultant **Joe Trippi** and others. Speaking about Democrats, Trippi said, "We have been defending Social Security, defending Medicare. These are all great ideas from eons ago."

"No, they're bad ideas," Kudlow responded. In the segment he went on to support a "reform agenda, that is, Social Security reform, tax reform, health care reform, all good ideas, in my opinion, using the consumer and the investor, not the government."

"It is deeply disturbing to hear those words from the top economic adviser to a President who promised not to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, since those programs have been so successful," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "It is a reminder of the need for us to remain vigilant against attempts to cut these crucial programs."

Paying Cash for Prescription Drugs Can Sometimes Save You Money, Analysis Shows

Researchers at the University of Southern California found that customers unknowingly overpaid for their prescriptions 23% of the time, with an average overpayment of \$7.69 on those transactions. The study showed that the overpayments totaled \$135 million during a six-month period.



The lesson: paying cash at the pharmacy counter, rather than than using your insurance card and paying just a copay, can sometimes save you money.

The practice of charging a copay that is higher than the full cost of a drug is called a “[clawback](#),” because the middlemen who handle drug claims for insurance companies essentially “claw back” the extra dollars from the pharmacy. (The middlemen, known as pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), include Express Scripts, CVS Caremark

and OptumRx. Express Scripts and CVS Caremark say they don’t use clawbacks. OptumRx declined immediately to comment when contacted by *Kaiser Health News*.)

Kaiser explained how it works: After taking your insurance card, your pharmacist says you owe a \$10 copay, which you pay, assuming that the drug costs more than \$10 and your insurance is covering the rest. However, if the drug actually cost only \$7, the PBM claws back the extra \$3. Had you paid cash, you would have saved money.

"Apparently there is now another prescription drug racket to watch out for," said President Roach. "Trying to charge the people who have insurance more."

Better Business Bureau Warns of Scams Involving New Medicare Card

Beginning next month, Medicare will begin mailing new cards to beneficiaries. To help protect your identity, Medicare is removing Social Security numbers from the cards to make them more secure. Instead, the new cards will have a unique Medicare beneficiary number. In advance of the launch, however, [scammers are taking advantage of confusion](#).

One scam involves a phone call from a person claiming to work with Medicare calling about the new Medicare cards -- which have yet to be mailed. The scammer says that there's a problem with your card and may claim your new card was lost or someone tried to use your ID number. To resolve the situation, the scammer says he needs your Social Security number for verification, hoping the beneficiary will share personal information even though the call was unsolicited.

In another version, the scammer claims you must pay money to receive your new Medicare card. They may ask you for payment information, so they can “complete the process.” They may even ask you to mail them your old card, but beneficiaries should not do that.

Remember: never give your Social Security card to anyone who calls you on the phone. If you are concerned, call the official Medicare hotline at 1-800-**MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227), TTY 1-877-486-2048.

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.