

# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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## Day of Action Brings Union Members Together in More than 25 Cities

Working people and retirees gathered in more than 25 cities across the country last Saturday to stand up against attacks on unions. [Rallies and marches](#) took place from coast to coast as tens of thousands came together to revive **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s** call for freedom and dignity at work.

The events came two days before the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case of Janus v. AFSCME. 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.

Members of the AFL-CIO and the Alliance stood with allies to defend the freedom of working people to join together in strong unions. Their message: American workers deserve decent and



Alliance and union members rallied in Allentown, PA on Saturday (Photo credit: Jody Weinreich)

equitable pay for their work, affordable health care, quality schools, vibrant communities and a secure retirement.

Gathering in the nation's capital, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia and dozens of other cities as part of the national day of action, they vowed to make this the first day in a struggle against corporations and the wealthiest 1 percent. They carried signs with messages such as "Unrig the rigged economy."

"Thank you to everyone who participated in the Working People's Day of Action," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "Thank you to those of you who attended the events, who committed to showing solidarity from afar, who spread the word, and who made the events so powerful. Together, we'll continue to stand up for the freedom of working people to come together and fight for their communities and their futures."



President Roach (second from left) is joined by APWU activists including Nancy Olumekor, Director of APWU's Retirees Department (second from right), and Executive Director Fiesta in Washington, DC on Saturday

Other speakers emphasized that regardless of what the justices decide, the movement will continue as a combination of politics and organizing. “We’ll tell the truth about this case,” AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer **Liz Shuler** declared.

Senators **Sheldon Whitehouse** (D-RI) and **Richard Blumenthal** (D-CT) warned the Supreme Court in a brief that if it were to overturn a case “simply because a differently composed court emerges,” it would upend the American tradition of respecting precedent.

### **Allowing DACA Immigrants to Stay Would Strengthen Social Security**

The Supreme Court on Monday decided to stay out of the legal fight surrounding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, all but nullifying a March 5 deadline for congressional action set by President **Trump**.

The court’s decision means an injunction preventing the administration from unwinding the program will remain in place as the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals continues its review. Immigrants covered by the DACA program whose work permits are set to expire after March 5 are now able to apply for renewals.

While many consider the administration’s policies surrounding “Dreamers” to be cruel and callous, the linkage between Social Security and immigration are less well known. Lower immigration rates weaken our Social Security system. Immigration helps Social Security’s finances because immigrants are generally younger and pay into the system now and do not draw benefits until far into the future.

If President Trump is successful in reaching his goal of cutting immigration in half, Social Security will lose \$2.4 trillion over the next 75 years. In contrast, if immigration were doubled, Social Security would gain around \$5 trillion over the next 75 years.

Undocumented workers (who are in another category from the DACA recipients) are prohibited from receiving Social Security even if they can prove that they have contributed to the program. The Social Security Administration (SSA) estimates that undocumented workers pay billions of dollars to Social Security each year, yet they earn no benefits as a result of those contributions.

“Legislation protecting eligible immigrant youth who came to the United States when they were children from deportation also benefits everyone who ever plans to collect Social Security,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

### **Expansion of Short-Term Health Care Plans Leaves the Sickest Individuals Paying More**

The most recent administration policy aimed at [dismantling restrictions on short term health care plans](#), would make it easier for healthy individuals not to join the insurance pool. Short term health insurance is a cheaper alternative to regular coverage, but it is exempt from the minimum coverage requirements under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). These plans are allowed to provide basically no coverage for hospital visits and they have the ability to deny anyone coverage for pre-existing conditions.

Under the ACA, the maximum amount of time an individual was allowed to have a short term insurance plan was three months. However, the administration is increasing that timeframe to 364 days.

“The Administration tries to argue that individuals deserve more choice when it comes to health care,” said **Richard Fiest**a, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Realistically, it drives healthy people, who are enticed by the low premiums, out of the insurance pool, leaving the sickest individuals to pay the most.”

### **President Roach: Seniors should be Inspired by the Next Generation of Activists**

Reflecting on the dreadful assault at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on Valentine’s Day which killed 17 people, President Roach [said](#), “Out of this tragedy a new group of young people has risen up. They have created a climate for change in this country that we have not seen on a very divisive issue. Personally, I could not be more proud of how these new activists are conducting themselves.”

Motivated, articulate, and dedicated to their cause, the young activists have visited state and federal lawmakers, given hundreds of interviews, met with the President of the United States, marched, rallied and begun to secure commitments for incremental change in just one week.

“These young people are a testament to the power of collective action, and as retirees, we should never forget to use our collective voices as forcefully as they have used theirs,” added President Roach.

“Like the students of Parkland,” President Roach concluded, “we must tell our elected officials that they are either with us or against us, and that we will vote in November. All of us should be reminded to use our voices and push for the change we wish to see in our country.”