

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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May 11, 2018

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## Administration's Prescription Drug Price Remedy Falls Far Short of What Trump Promised

**President Trump** [outlined](#) his administration's "American Patients First: Blueprint to Lower Drug Prices" plan to address high prescription drug costs today. He broke his campaign promise of allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical corporations directly. Despite its public popularity, the idea was harshly opposed by drug corporations, and is no longer included in the administration's plan.

The inadequate proposal mentions encouraging increased use of generic prescriptions; increasing competition; creating nonspecific incentives for lower list prices; calling on other countries to raise their prices; and reducing patients' out-of-pocket costs.

Medicare Part D's 20 most prescribed drugs have seen a [12% price increase](#), while another six saw hikes over 100%. The Alliance and health care advocates have expressed their concerns with the administration's conflicting stance on drug corporations. The recently enacted tax cuts also allow large drug corporations to keep extra money in their pockets instead of lowering costs.

"The administration's proposal doesn't go nearly as far as it should to address rising prescription drug prices," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "It won't make a difference for most seniors. We need better policies that address price gouging and allow Medicare to negotiate prices. What matters is making sure seniors have access to affordable medications, not allowing big corporations to keep more money." The full Alliance statement is [here](#).

Congressional Democrats released an alternative [plan](#) this week that includes allowing Medicare Part D to negotiate drug prices; creating a new agency dedicated to stopping price gouging; and increasing transparency in excessive price increases. Companies with a large price increase would be required to submit a justification for the increase to the Department of Health and Human Services.

## Trump Threatens to Veto the Farm Bill Without SNAP Work Requirements

**President Trump** has told Congress that he will [veto](#) any farm bill that crosses his desk unless it includes stricter work requirements for those receiving help from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The administration's hardline stance on the issue has threatened the typically bipartisan approach to the farm bill.

The farm bill promises renewed funding every 5 years for nutritional and food based subsidies, including SNAP. Currently, House Republicans are proposing a \$20 billion cut from the program over 10 years, eliminating approximately 2 million people from eligibility.



There are currently 42 million Americans living in poverty, and SNAP allows them to purchase food for their families while also increasing overall public health with very little associated fraud. Poverty experts see increased work requirements as simply a way to cut costs without recognizing that people need help.

Retired Americans are eligible for SNAP with no work requirements once they reach age 60, but income and resource restrictions are still in place.

The Alliance strongly opposes changes to the SNAP program, and is urging all members to take action next week.

Please sign up [here](#) to pledge to call Congress this Wednesday, May 16.

“There is very little fraud associated with the SNAP program,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “These changes would not cut down on people getting undeserved benefits. Rather, it would just keep our most vulnerable citizens from knowing where their next meal is coming from.”

### Sen. Bernie Sanders Introduces Legislation to Strengthen Unions Dramatically

**Sen. Bernie Sanders** (I-VT) [introduced](#) the Workplace Democracy Act on Wednesday, legislation that would remove several of the major barriers to organized labor’s growth. The bill would ban



“right to work” laws, which cause the “free-riding” that lets employees opt out of paying union dues even though the union must still bargain on their behalf. Right to Work laws have been enacted in 28 states.

“Sen. Sanders understands the importance and strength of unions to ensure a secure retirement,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, who spoke at an [event Wednesday on Capitol Hill introducing](#)

Executive Director Fiesta speaking at the event introducing the bill

[the legislation](#). “The Workplace Democracy Act is a major step in securing the rights of workers and unions to provide for their members.”

Inspired by the grassroots efforts of the teacher walkouts in recent weeks, Sen. Sanders said the walkouts show that more workers would like to band together in unions if only the law made it easier. He emphasized that workers who are union members earn significantly higher wages compared to those who are not. Only 6.5% of private sector workers belong to a union.

The legislation aims to lessen the burden placed on unions and workers looking to unionize at a time when collective bargaining rights are constantly under attack, despite high public approval ratings. In doing so, it allows “card checks,” which guarantee workers the right to form a union after a majority in their workplace have signed cards saying that is their desire. In addition, the bill permits mediation during the first round of labor negotiations.

### **Midterm Election Update: Ex-Coal CEO Blankenship Loses West Virginia Senate Primary**

**Don Blankenship**, the former West Virginia coal baron who served a year in prison for his role in the deaths of 29 miners in the [Upper Big Branch Mine disaster](#), finished third Tuesday in West Virginia’s Republican primary race for U.S. Senate. Current state Attorney General **Patrick Morrisey** won the Republican nomination, and **Rep. Evan Jenkins** finished second. Morrisey will face Democratic incumbent Sen. **Joe Manchin III** in November.

Leadership in both parties nationally are focusing their efforts on voter outreach in the lead-up to the midterm elections. Republicans will try to hold onto those union members who supported Trump in 2016, but some are having buyer’s remorse. Union members’ approval of the President fell [15 points](#) since March 2017.

Union members are showing that in 2018, they want to support the candidates who have plans to protect Medicare and Social Security, support unions, and boost jobs and wages. “The union vote will be crucial to the outcome of the midterms,” said President Roach. “And the retiree part of that vote will be critical, since older Americans overall are expected to be such a high percentage of the electorate.”