

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Annual Trustees Reports Show Social Security's Finances Remain Strong

The Social Security and Medicare trustees released their reports on the programs' trust funds on Tuesday, and they show that Social Security remains strong and will be able to continue making 100% of its payments to its beneficiaries through 2034. After that, it will still be able to make 79% of its payments to beneficiaries for 75 years without any changes. The estimates are mostly unchanged from 2017 projections.

The report led Alliance leaders and other seniors advocates to comment that expanding Social Security is a more logical solution than ever for the nation's looming retirement crisis. [Sixty-six percent](#) of voters are more likely to back candidates who support expanding and increasing Social Security benefits, compared to only 18% who are less likely.

"We certainly can afford to expand Social Security - the funds are there," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "It is a matter of making it a priority."



"Social Security becomes a more important part of millions of American families' retirement plans every year," added Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta** in a [statement](#). "We call on our elected leaders to safeguard and expand Social Security benefits, provide a more accurate formula for cost-of-living adjustments, and lift the cap on earnings for the wealthiest Americans."

"In addition, Congress should stop preventing the Social

Security Administration from spending just a few tenths of a percent more of its surplus on administration, so that it can restore the hours of field offices and open new locations," said Fiesta. "Since 10,000 Americans are turning age 65 every day and disability backlogs are shamefully high, this is a necessary change."

Trustees' Medicare Report Demonstrates a Need to Rein in Prescription Drug Costs

The reports contained [evidence](#) that the tax and other policies of the GOP have damaged the financial prospects of Medicare. The Medicare report projected that the trust fund specifically dealing with hospital insurance, or Medicare Part A, will face a shortfall in 2026, three years earlier than 2017 projections.

"The economic growth promised when the tax bill passed is not expected to manifest," said Fiesta. "The GOP policies are hurting the economy, leading to lower overall payroll tax revenue. That reduces the number of years that full Social Security and Medicare benefits can be paid."

The trustees also reported that the repeal of the individual mandate under Obamacare will lead to higher costs for hospitals covering uninsured patients, increasing the amount that Medicare will have to pay out.

"We need to make changes that will strengthen Medicare for the future while reducing costs to retirees," said President Roach. "Americans pay the highest prices in the world for their medications, and lowering prescription drug prices by allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug corporations would go a long way toward improving Medicare's financial future."

Trump Administration Won't Defend Key Parts of the Affordable Care Act

The Department of Justice (DOJ) announced Thursday that it won't defend the individual mandate in the Affordable Care Act, saying it is unconstitutional and key parts of the law should be invalidated. The announcement came in a court filing regarding Texas' lawsuit claiming that without enforcing a penalty, the individual mandate was unconstitutional and destabilized other aspects of law. Texas was joined in the suit by 19 other states. The U.S. Supreme Court declared the individual mandate constitutional under Congress' authority to tax in 2012, and Congress repealed the individual mandate penalty for not purchasing insurance last year.

If found unconstitutional, the aspects that the DOJ and Texas want thrown out would take two key [provisions](#) with it: the guaranteed issue and the community rating provision. Both extremely popular with the American public, these provisions outlaw insurance companies from denying someone coverage based on their previous health history, and stop insurers from setting premiums based on a patient's history - or age. Repealing these provisions could strip coverage from millions of patients with pre-existing conditions.

Attorney General **Jeff Sessions** had reportedly received permission from the president to go ahead without defending the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and wrote a [letter](#) to Congress defending the decision. Numerous states, including California, have filed a motion to intervene and defend the ACA.

"The Justice Department's position undermines the health system and sabotages coverage for millions of Americans, many of them older but not yet eligible for Medicare," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance

Florida Alliance Holds its Convention



The Florida Alliance for Retired Americans (FLARA) held its annual convention and quarterly executive board meeting in Orlando on Wednesday and Thursday. Speakers included former U.S. Rep. **Gwen Graham** and **Philip Levine**, Mayor of Miami Beach, who are gubernatorial candidates.

State Sen. **Victor Torres, Jr.**; navy veteran/congressional candidate **Andrew Learned** (D); **Mario Piscatella**, campaign manager for congressional candidate

Left to right: Bunny Baker, Gwen Graham, and Ernie Hartless

Dr. Stephen Seigny (D); and **Zack Meyers**, aide to **State Senator Denise Grimsley** (R), who is running for Agriculture Commissioner, also spoke.



Left to right: FLARA President Bill Sauers, Robert McNatt, Preston Dummer, Daneen Regna, Dave Bernstein, Donesa Jackson, J.B. Clark

Former **State Senator Jeremy Ring** (D), Candidate for Florida's Chief Financial Officer, spoke about his race and the State of Florida's Retirement System, and **State Representative Carlos Smith** (D) gave a legislative update. Attendees also heard from Alliance members **Sarah Jones**, Candidate for City Council of Port Orange, and **Felicia Bruce**, candidate for School Board of St. Lucie County. In cases where some of the candidates for a given elected office attended, all of the candidates were invited.

Eva Dominguez, Legislative Representative for the Alliance, gave the national legislative report, and other knowledgeable speakers also shared their insight. **David Bernstein** and **Daneen Regna** received the **Tony Fransetta** Outstanding Senior Advocate Award. **Robert McNatt** and **J.B. Clark** were honored with the **J.W. Strickland** Senior Award for Dedication to Others, and **Preston Drummer** and **Donesa Jackson** received Lifetime Achievement Awards.

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.