

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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After a Combative Senate Hearing, Judiciary Committee Advances Kavanaugh Nomination

Amid a contentious nomination process, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted today in favor of confirming Judge **Brett Kavanaugh** to the U.S. Supreme Court. Sen. **Jeff Flake** (AZ) voted to advance Kavanaugh's nomination with the understanding that the sexual assault accusation against him will be investigated by the FBI. However, Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (KY) is not obligated to honor such a deal and the investigation would have to be requested by President **Trump**.

Maine Alliance member **Donald Bilodeau** last Sunday laid out the reasons in an [op-ed](#) why a key swing vote, Sen. **Susan Collins** of Maine, should not vote to confirm Judge Kavanaugh. Bilodeau cited the harmful effects the confirmation would likely have on older Americans.

Kavanaugh has an extremely worrisome [record on issues](#) relating to retirement security, health care and disabilities. Most notable are his writings disagreeing with rulings upholding the Affordable Care Act (ACA). If Kavanaugh is confirmed by the full Senate, he could be the deciding vote in an upcoming case that would make the ACA unconstitutional. The case would strip away protections for the [84%](#) of older Americans living with pre-existing conditions.

Kavanaugh has also ruled on cases that reduce the civil rights of people with disabilities, rolling back their rights of self-determination and making it easier for employers to discriminate against disabled workers. In another case he ruled that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) should be found unconstitutional. The CFPB provides an important, unbiased resource for seniors seeking information on financial planning and fraud protections.

"If confirmed, Judge Kavanaugh's confirmation would put the protections and civil rights of seniors and the disabled in severe jeopardy for decades to come," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "His rulings could take away protections for older Americans with pre-existing conditions and could re-institute the age tax, which allows health insurers to charge older Americans five times what younger people pay."

Reps. Linda Sanchez and Mark Pocan Introduce New Social Security Expansion Bill

Reps. **Linda Sanchez** (CA) and **Mark Pocan** (WI) introduced legislation on Thursday that would not only bring increased monthly Social Security benefits for beneficiaries but also strengthen Social Security by guaranteeing its solvency for future generations.

Aptly called the "Strengthening Social Security Act," H.R. 6929 would guarantee that cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) keep pace with rising health care costs and would increase benefits for all current and future retirees. The bill also phases out the taxable cap of \$128,400, ensuring that millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share. Additional co-sponsors are listed [here](#).

“With these improvements, tens of millions of seniors and Americans with disabilities will see a noticeable increase in their monthly earned benefits,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Not only would the bill include a more accurate cost-of-living increase, but it will increase benefits.”

The bill replaces the CPI-W (Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers) with the CPI-E (Consumer Price Index for the Elderly) for the purpose of calculating COLA's.



Rep. Sanchez



Rep. Pocan

House Passes Tax Reform 2.0

The House voted 220-191 on Friday to pass "Tax Reform 2.0" (H.R. 6760), a continuation of the tax scam passed late last year. The bill aims to make all of the individual tax cuts included in the first round of cuts permanent, and establishes a permanent cap on the state and local income tax deductions. Most of the individual cuts reduced taxes for the top 1% of earners, and the bill is projected to increase the national deficit by over \$1.9 trillion.

The bill [passed the House](#) even without the support of several GOP representatives in high-tax states who are against the state and local tax deduction (SALT) caps. SALT deduction caps can hurt middle income Americans, including seniors, who often have their assets tied to their homestead. This aspect of the bill will also harm many communities that use these taxes to provide services to their residents, often older Americans.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has [pushed back](#) on the GOP's claim that these cuts will help grow the economy and create more jobs. Instead, the CBPP found that revenue loss from Tax Cuts 2.0 will increase the already growing national deficit at a time when baby boomers are reaching retirement age, significantly increasing the need for Social Security and Medicare funds.

"Time and again, studies have proven that the tax scam has lined the pockets of CEO's, instead of helping the hard working American families who would benefit," said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. "The Tax Scam 2.0 will exacerbate the harmful effects of placing the interests of the nation's wealthiest individuals above working people and retirees."

Drug Prices Continue to Rise Despite President's Promises

The President promised to hold drug manufacturers accountable for skyrocketing prices, and ensured that companies were going to voluntarily reduce their prices when he unveiled his prescription drug blueprint this spring. On the contrary, a [new report](#) from the Associated Press shows that while the number of increases has dropped slightly compared to previous years, far more drug makers continue to raise their prices than cut them.

The report looked at thousands of list price changes between January and July of this year, and found price increases for over 4,000 brand name drugs, while only 46 drugs had a price cut. That equates to approximately 96 increases for every cut. In addition, no company stated any future intent to reduce prices. Pfizer, one of the largest companies, raised prices on over 100 products in both January and July of this year, with some increases as high as 9.5%.

Prescription drug prices are an important issue for patients, politicians, and drug makers themselves. Some experts noted that the increased scrutiny surrounding prescription costs could explain the slower rate of increases, but that the administration's plan itself had no effect on companies' pricing decisions.

"This report proves that the administration's blueprint barely does anything to protect seniors from the exorbitant and growing costs of prescription drugs," said Executive Director Fiesta. "We must push to hold drug makers accountable by giving Medicare the ability to negotiate prices."

President Roach Emceeds Event with New York Attorney General Candidate Letitia James



President Roach emceed an event in New York City Monday with New York state Attorney General candidate **Letitia (Tish) James**, who gave remarks. Ms. James is a longtime friend and supporter of the New York State Alliance.

The event opened artist **Bruce Bundock's** "The Faces of Labor, Words and Images" [exhibit](#) at the the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, SUNY Empire State College. In addition, **Doris Welch** (IBT), President of the New York City Alliance,

Christopher Saldana's (IBEW Local 3) likeness was part of the exhibit.



President Roach with Letitia James (left) and Doris Welch

and **Armando Mandes** (UFT), Vice President of the NYC Alliance, promoted their work to form an intergenerational group that brings together young people and retirees. The group's aim is to share ideas across the generations and educate young workers about the battles the generations before them had to fight for the labor protections they have today.

Also at the State University of New York event were **Jim Pearlstein** (AFT), **Delorise Frazier** (TWU), and several other labor leaders.