

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

October 26, 2018

Georgia's Secretary of State Caught Red-handed Suppressing the Right to Vote

Georgia Secretary of State **Brian Kemp**, the Republican candidate for Governor, expressed “concern” over Georgians exercising their right to vote in the November elections. The comments, first reported by [Rolling Stone](http://www.rollingstone.com), were recorded at a private fundraiser.



Brian Kemp and Stacey Abrams

Kemp's comments referred to his Democratic opponent **Stacey Abrams'** campaign efforts to increase voter turnout. Kemp said that the efforts and focus on absentee ballots “continue to concern us, especially if everybody uses and exercises their right to vote.”

Since he is Secretary of State, Kemp is responsible for overseeing elections and voter applications.

“As Secretary of State, protecting the right to vote is Brian Kemp's legal responsibility,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “Instead, he is trying to win an election through voter suppression.”

Kemp is well known for his restrictive voter laws and for purging voter rolls in the state. He recently suspended over 53,000 voter applications, the vast majority of them filed by African-Americans, for not meeting the state's “exact match” policy, which detects a problem if, for instance, state records do not include a hyphen in someone's name.

Another [107,000 voters](#) were purged from voter rolls in 2017 under Kemp's direction simply for not voting in the last election. He is also [being sued](#) for tossing out a disproportionate number of absentee ballots in Georgia's most racially diverse county, and another [lawsuit](#) accuses him of failing to secure the state's voting system, which left records of over 6 million voters open to hacking.

Georgia Alliance President **Kenny Bradford** added, “Voter suppression takes many forms, but it always disproportionately affects seniors, minorities and the disabled. The 65,000 members of the Georgia Alliance call on Secretary Kemp to resign as the Georgia Secretary of State immediately. We simply do not have confidence that he will impartially and fairly administer this election.”

President Roach Working to Help those with Little Savings



President Roach and **Eva Dominguez**, Legislative Representative for the Alliance, are participating in the Retirement Security Policy and Outreach Working Group. The group is made up of policy experts and advocates in the pension field and is chaired by **Kathleen Kennedy Townsend**, Director of Retirement Security at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

The task force is focused on educating the public and developing legislative proposals to provide retirement security for the 50 percent of Americans who have little or no retirement savings, including 35% who have no employer-sponsored plan.

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend

GOP Continues Rolling Back Protections for People with Pre-existing Conditions Despite Claiming to Champion Them

The administration [took steps](#) to broaden access to health plans that do not cover pre-existing conditions this week, weakening standards and loosening regulations on the health insurance industry. Protections for patients with pre-existing conditions were established by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Currently, states can apply for permission to redesign their insurance markets and still keep federal aid, as long as the changes do not decrease the number of people with comprehensive health coverage. With the changes, states could still receive federal funding even if their plans shift people out of comprehensive coverage and into plans that flatly deny coverage for a pre-existing condition, as long as residents still have access to a more expensive, inclusive plan.

The rule changes come amid last minute [GOP promises](#) to save protections for pre-existing conditions ahead of the midterm elections. While the President stated in a tweet last week that “All Republicans support people with preexisting conditions,” his administration has made numerous rule changes that allow for cheaper plans offering skimpy coverage and lacking protections. The Department of Justice also refused to defend the ACA in a GOP-led lawsuit seeking to declare the law unconstitutional, stripping away pre-existing protections established under the ACA. Republicans in Congress have repeatedly sought to repeal and [sabotage](#) the law’s key provisions, and a repeal bill passed the House last year before being narrowly defeated in the Senate.

“Many Republicans say they will protect patients with pre-existing conditions, but years of actions show otherwise,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The fact is that

these protections are at risk of being eliminated. We must vote for elected officials who will support seniors and defend access to affordable health care, regardless of medical history.”

New Prescription Drug Proposal Uncertain to Bring Down Prices at Pharmacy

In a press conference with Health and Human Services Secretary **Alex Azar** Thursday, the President blamed international “free loading” for high prescription prices and announced a [new plan](#) to change the way Medicare pays for certain drugs. The proposal still needs to be refined and put through a federal rulemaking process.

The proposal has severe limitations, as it would only apply to drugs administered directly at doctors’ offices and outpatient hospital departments. The vast majority of prescriptions that patients purchase at pharmacies would be excluded from the pricing plans, and most patients won’t see reductions in their prescription costs.

The plan aims to keep costs similar to those in sixteen other countries, where prices are on average 44% lower, by slowly decreasing them to international levels over five years. It also calls for private sector vendors to negotiate with drug makers. Finally, the administration would change the practice that gives doctors a percentage of the drug fee, which can incentivize them to prescribe more expensive medications.

Experts expect that the new proposal will face intense opposition from the hospital and drug industries, both of which have powerful lobbying influence.

“As we’ve seen in the past, the administration’s plans to bring down skyrocketing prescription drug prices fall short,” said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. “This plan is too slow and too limited to make a real impact for seniors who are unable to pay for life-saving prescriptions now. We need bold action, such as allowing Medicare to negotiate prices without the restrictions that this plan includes, to address profiteering.”

Obituary: John E. Jensen of Nebraska, National CAN Board Member



The Alliance is sad to share the passing of [John Jensen](#) on October 18 in Omaha, Nebraska. John was a beloved high school science teacher and proud union member who spent decades as a champion for improved salaries and benefits for school employees. John also served on the Alliance’s Community Advocacy Network Board and remained a champion for public education and a dedicated advocate for student success up until his passing.

“Known as ‘Mr. Wizard,’ John will be dearly missed by the entire Alliance family and all who knew him,” said Executive Director Fiesta.