

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Social Security Trust Fund is Stronger than Last Year

The Boards of Trustees for Social Security and Medicare [released](#) their annual report on the financial health of the programs on Monday. They found that Social Security is even stronger than last year and can cover all payouts and expenses until 2035, a full year later than projected in 2018.

“Despite unfounded ‘doom and gloom’ forecasts, Social Security is not in crisis. It will continue to be a robust cornerstone of a secure retirement for millions of current and future retirees,” [said Richard Fiesta](#), Executive Director of the Alliance. “If we remove the cap on earnings subject to Social Security contributions for the wealthiest Americans, we can expand Social Security benefits, provide a more accurate formula for cost-of-living adjustments, and increase the system’s long-term solvency.”

The program is not going bankrupt or running out of money, as many people continue to suggest. The 2019 Trustees Report projects Social Security’s cumulative surplus to be \$2.9 trillion. It shows that Social Security is fully funded until 2035, 93% funded for the next 25 years, 87% funded over the next 50 years, and 84% funded over the next 75 years.

The Trustees also found that the Medicare Trust Fund for hospital care has sufficient funds to cover its obligations until 2026, unchanged from 2018.

“To help strengthen Medicare, Congress and the Administration must rein in the cost of prescription drugs, which is a significant driver of health care costs,” added Fiesta. “There is no reason that American consumers and taxpayers should continue to pay the highest prices in the world for medicines.”

## Lack of Internet Makes Contacting SSA More Difficult

According to the Pew Research Center, 25% of Americans 65 and older do not use the [internet](#). Ten percent of all adults, including 12% of adults between ages 50 and 64 are also offline. While this number is significantly lower than it was two decades ago, it leaves a lasting impact on older and disabled Americans trying to get information from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

In 2010, SSA decided to switch from mailed, paper statements to online, electronic statements, which required people to set up an SSA online account.

Since then, the number of people accessing their statements at all [dropped](#) dramatically. While 155 million statements were mailed before the switch, only 42 million people have created online accounts -- despite the numbers of retirees growing exponentially. Further, the number of people accessing their online SSA accounts dropped from 96% to 43% in 2018. SSA could not offer an explanation for the decline.

The move to online statements was made in an attempt to save costs, but the result has been to make it harder for seniors to get information about their benefits.

“The Social Security Administration lost touch with millions of workers and retirees by switching to exclusively online statements,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We need to return to the yearly mailed statements, and more SSA workers are needed to take calls and meet in person to help retirees and people with disabilities understand their earned benefits.”

### **Workers Memorial Day and May Day Remind Us of Workplace Rights and Safety**

The labor movement will commemorate two important holidays during the next week. April 28 is Workers Memorial Day, and May 1 is International Workers' Day, or May Day. Together, the days remember and celebrate workers, retirees and those who fight for workers' rights. They are also reminders that we need to do more to protect workers on the job.

Workers Memorial Day [remembers](#) those who have been injured or have died on the job, and those who fight for a safe work environment. From fighting for coal miners to advocating for stronger anti-retaliation protections, unions and their allies improve working conditions, prevent injuries, and save lives.



The circumstances of workplace injury and death are evolving. Over the past decade, there was a 69% increase in serious workplace violence injuries for workers in health care and social assistance. One-in-six workplace deaths are from workplace violence, which is sometimes foreseeable and preventable. We remember the deceased on Workers' Memorial Day this Sunday.

International Workers' Day [celebrates](#) all workers and the past efforts of trade unions and the labor movement, but it is also a day of remembrance. Activists chose this day to remember workers who died during the Haymarket affair bombing in Chicago in 1886 while protesting for an eight-hour workday. May Day has since become an annual day of action for working people around the globe.

“These holidays remind us of past struggles for workers' rights and how far we still need to go,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Workers' rights and safety are under attack. We must work together to ensure that progress is not dismantled and continue our fight for more comprehensive protections.”

### **New York State Alliance Holds Annual Conference**

The annual conference of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans (NYSARA) drew more attendees than ever last week. Speakers included New York state Attorney General **Letitia “Tish” James**, state Comptroller **Thomas DiNapoli**, NYSARA President **Barry Kaufmann**, Executive Director **Steve Madarasz** and national Alliance Field Manager **Maureen Dunn**.

The conference addressed issues such as Medicare changes, Social Security expansion, aging populations, poverty, multiemployer pensions, and the NAFTA 2.0 agreement. Attorney General James, in particular, gave a powerful address to the conference participants about her priorities and the services her office offers to seniors.



Attorney General Letitia "Tish" James with the NYSARA Leadership and members, including NYSUT President Andy Palotta, NYSARA Executive Director Stephen Madarasz, NYSARA President Barry Kaufmann, NYSUT VP Philippe Abraham and NYSARA Board Member Delores Frazier

### **Alliance Activists Continue Meetings with Members of Congress in Home Districts**

Since February, Alliance members have held more than 100 meetings with members of Congress to discuss key retirees' issues. Just this past week, representatives from the Hawaii Alliance met with Senator Mazie Hirono; Arizona Alliance members met with Reps. **Greg Stanton** and **Ruben Gallego**, and with Rep. **Ann Kirkpatrick** at a roundtable with the Pima Council on Aging; and members of the Colorado Alliance met with Rep. **Jason Crow**.



Colorado Alliance members with Rep. Crow



Arizona Alliance members with Rep. Stanton