

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Miners, Alliance Members Storm Capitol Hill to Push for the Miners Pension Protection Act

Retired coal miners, their families, and Alliance members gathered on Capitol Hill this week to urge members of Congress to pass H.R. 935, the Miners Pension Protection Act, and preserve their hard-earned pensions. On Wednesday the activists held a press conference with a group of bipartisan House and Senate members, including Sens. **Joe Manchin** (WV), **Shelley Moore Capito** (WV) and **Rob Portman** (OH), as well as Reps. **Rodney Davis** (IL), **David McKinley** (WV), **Terri Sewell** (AL) and **Peter Welch** (VT) who are all sponsors or co-sponsors of the legislation.

United Mine Workers (UMWA) International President **Cecil Roberts** and Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President **Sara Nelson** also spoke. Pennsylvania Alliance state president **Dwayne Thomas**, a retired mine worker himself, led an Alliance delegation who traveled from Pennsylvania. Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** joined them at the Capitol.



Alliance Members, leaders and staff on Capitol Hill Wednesday

The UMWA 1974 Pension Plan has been decimated by a series of coal company bankruptcies and is projected to go insolvent in 2022. The miners, who risked their lives for years to provide a key source of energy to the nation, and their widows will lose the pension benefits they earned unless Congress passes the legislation.

“This is one of the labor movement’s most important issues,” said

President Roach. “The mine workers were promised these benefits, and find themselves in this situation through no fault of their own. Legislative action is needed to preserve the pensions of about 87,000 retirees and another 20,000 working miners.”

President Roach sent a [letter](#) Monday to Rep. **Richard Neal** (MA), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, expressing the Alliance’s strong endorsement of the legislation. The letter urged the committee to pass the Miners Pension Protection Act quickly and send it to the full House for a vote.

The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) has said that if the UMWA 1974 Pension Plan were to become insolvent and end up the responsibility of the PBGC, it could only pay benefits at reduced levels for a short time before the PBGC multi-employer program itself became insolvent, putting the pensions of millions of retirees at risk.

Sánchez and Pocan Social Security Expansion Bill Would Scrap the Cap, Expand Benefits

The Strengthening Social Security Act of 2019, H.R. 2654, was introduced on Wednesday by Representatives **Linda Sánchez** (CA), a member of the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee, and Congressional Progressive Caucus Co-Chair **Mark Pocan** (WI).

The legislation increases Social Security benefits, ensures that Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) reflect how seniors spend their money and strengthens the Trust Fund.

It also phases out the taxable cap on wages, currently \$132,900, ensuring that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share into the system. The proposal would not increase payroll taxes.

"This bill will increase the monthly benefits of those who need it most: seniors, surviving spouses, Americans with disabilities, and children whose parents have died or become disabled," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "It goes a long way toward ensuring a dignified, secure retirement for Americans after a lifetime of hard work."

The legislation replaces the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which is currently used to calculate COLAs, with the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers (CPI-E). The CPI-E more accurately reflects the rising cost of goods and services used by older Americans, such as health care and housing.



Reps. Sánchez and Pocan

Alliance Supports Bill to Make Uber and Lyft Fully Fund Drivers' Social Security

The Alliance backs Rep. **Deb Haaland's** (NM) [plan](#) to introduce a bill calling for Uber, Lyft and other ride-share companies to pay their drivers' payroll taxes. Currently, these so-called gig-economy drivers are treated as independent contractors by these corporations and must pay 15.3% payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare all on their own.

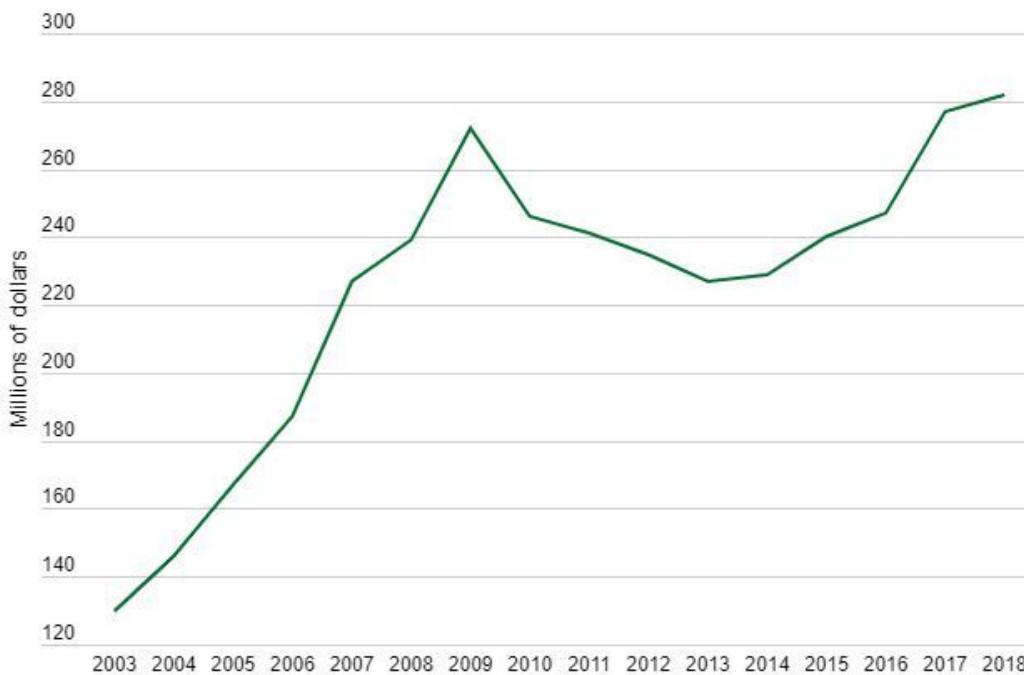
Haaland's announcement coincides with ride-share drivers' strike in several cities on Wednesday. The strike was called on the eve of Uber's initial public offering, or first stock sale. The company is expected to issue stock worth as much as \$91 billion.

"A huge portion of these companies' revenue is going to a few executives and investors at the very top," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Meanwhile, drivers frequently work 70 and 80 hours per week to fulfill their most basic economic needs."

Did You Know? Pharmaceutical Corporations Spend \$281 Million Lobbying Congress

Since the passage of the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit, pharmaceutical companies have invested heavily in lobbying. The total now stands at [\\$281 million](#) annually.

Pharmaceutical/Health Products Lobbying, 2003-2018



Source: [Center for Responsive Politics](#)