

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

July 12, 2019

Butch Lewis Act Can Save Multiemployer Pension Plans

Economists predict that more than 100 pension plans will become insolvent within the next few years if Congress does not take dramatic action.

On Wednesday, the House Ways and Means Committee held a markup hearing of the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act, also known as the Butch Lewis Act, which would allow the Treasury Department to issue loans to save these multiemployer pension plans from insolvency. The committee passed the bill, H.R. 397, by a [25 to 17](#) party-line vote.

The legislation must next be taken up by the House Appropriations Committee before a vote by the full House of Representatives. The bill is estimated to protect 1.3 million pension plan participants for at least 30 years and save the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation \$65 billion in potential liabilities..

“The Butch Lewis Act will protect the pensions that retirees have earned through a lifetime of hard work,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “If nothing is done, these pension plan participants could see their benefits decrease by 50 to 75 percent. Congress has a duty to future and current retired Americans to pass the Butch Lewis Act and preserve their retirement security before we have a national disaster.”

The pension funds are important to both the workers and retirees in the plans. The pensions are a critical revenue source for communities across the country. The multiemployer pension system generated \$14.7 billion in federal, state and local taxes, and added \$50 billion in value to the GDP in 2016, according to a new [study by the National Institute on Retirement Security](#).

Opponents are attempting to downplay the benefits of the Butch Lewis Act with claims that are either misleading or don't tell the whole story. A recent column in [The Hill](#) explains the many flaws in their arguments.

Affordable Care Act Lawsuit Would Rob Americans of their Health Insurance

On Tuesday, the Fifth District Court of Appeals heard [a case that would determine the fate of the Affordable Care Act](#) (ACA). Two judges on the three-judge panel frequently interrupted attorneys to ask whether the ACA's individual mandate is constitutional, and if not, whether the entire law could stand without it. An opinion is expected in about 10 months.

The case, *Texas v. United States*, was originally introduced by opponents of the ACA and has been in the federal court system for some time. In December, a Texas federal judge struck down

the trademark health care law, claiming that the 2017 Republican tax bill effectively makes the law unconstitutional.

The ACA's future appeared murky after two hours of oral arguments, but it is unclear whether the judges are ready to uphold a federal judge's earlier decision invalidating the law. The case could move to the U.S. Supreme Court next year in the midst of the 2020 election season.

"The health and well-being of nearly every American is at risk," said California's Attorney General **Xavier Becerra**. "Health care can mean the difference between life and death, financial stability and bankruptcy. Our families' well-being should not be treated as a political football."

"Attorney General Becerra is right - overturning the ACA would have severe consequences for millions of Americans," added **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "If the lawsuit is successful, [52 million people with pre-existing conditions](#) could lose the health coverage that they are guaranteed under the ACA. This is an especially serious problem for older Americans, given that [84 percent](#) of those aged 55-64 have a pre-existing condition."



[Twenty million people](#) across the United States are at-risk of losing their health insurance altogether. The Center for American Progress (CAP) [has projected the number of people affected](#) by Congressional district. The one that's hit the hardest is California's 40th District, which covers parts of East and South Los Angeles and is currently represented by **Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard**. CAP projects that 129,000 people would lose their health insurance in that district alone.

Many legal scholars believe that the suit makes no sense. "This case is ... an exercise of raw judicial activism," wrote **Nicholas Bagley**, a law professor at the University of Michigan. "Don't for a moment mistake it for the rule of law."

New Business Plan Cuts Postal Workers' Pensions, Lowers Benefits



After pressure from Congress to dramatically decrease their budget, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is [floating a new business plan](#) that would severely cut pensions and reduce benefits for employees. Congress has asked the agency to provide a 10-year plan to cut operating costs by the end of July.

Included in the plan is a proposal to discontinue pensions for new hires, instead offering less secure defined-contribution plans, and increase employee contributions to existing pensions. The plan could

also require all retired postal workers to enroll in Medicare instead of providing an agency-sponsored plan.

In addition, the agency has suggested closing mail processing plants as a way to cut jobs. USPS already [began hiring 60%](#) more non-career staff between 2010 and 2017 by hiring temporary workers who are not eligible for the same pay and benefits as permanent employees.

According to **Mark Dimondstein**, President of the American Postal Workers Union, USPS officials are “trying to balance these false books, which resulted from a crisis created by Congress, on the backs of the workers and the backs of the postal customers as well.”

“This new plan being floated jeopardizes the pensions of [dedicated career employees](#) who have worked tirelessly for a secure retirement,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Congress needs to end their assault on our postal service so that employees can receive the benefits they have been promised and provide the services all Americans rely on.”

Acosta Out as Labor Secretary

Embattled Labor Secretary **Alexander Acosta** resigned Friday amid a scandal over a plea deal related to billionaire financier **Jeffrey Epstein** and sex acts with minors while Acosta was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida in 2007.

President **Trump** was under increasing pressure from Democratic lawmakers and women’s rights advocates to remove Acosta, who agreed to what is widely viewed as a light deal with Epstein over a case involving girls as young as 14.

Hearing Aids are for More than Just Hearing



Hearing aids are most often thought of as a simple solution to a common and harmful problem. Yet hearing aid technology has evolved substantially over the years and continues to advance. Seniors suffering from hearing loss can now benefit from improvements that offer added benefits that no one ever imagined. Fall Detection and Alert capability within a hearing aid -- as well as Heart Rate Measurement -- is now available in certain models.

Falling is a major health issue for retirees. According to the National Alliance for Caregivers, more than 65 million people (29 percent of the U.S. population) currently provide care for a disabled, chronically ill or an aged friend or family member. And according to the National Council on Aging, every 11 seconds an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury. One in every three older Americans – about 12 million – fall every year. Hearing aids are now considered necessary medical treatment rather than the luxury they once were.

The Alliance is working to make this treatment more easily available and less expensive for you and your extended family through our partnership with HEAR In America hearing plans. Please consider if you or anyone in your extended family should have their hearing checked. Then contact Hear In America today to find out if hearing aids would benefit you. For more information or to register for a FREE screening and evaluation, call 1-800-286-6149 or click here: www.hearinamerica.com/ara.