

# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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

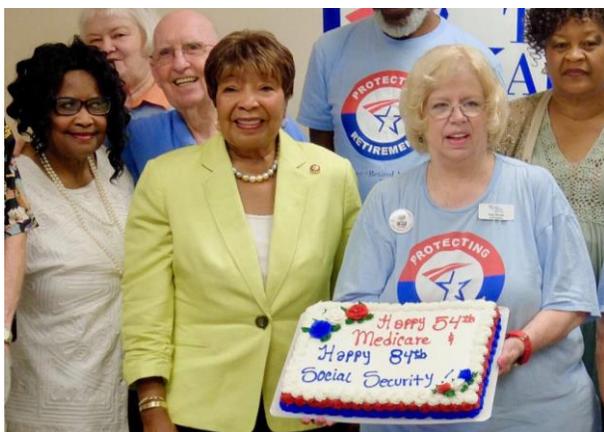
[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)

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**August 9, 2019**

## Alliance Chapters Celebrate Anniversaries, Salute Retiree Heroes

This week Alliance members across the country continued celebrating the 54th Anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid which was on July 30 and the upcoming 84th anniversary of Social Security on August 14.



Rep. Johnson joins Texas Alliance members to celebrate anniversary of Medicare and Social Security



Rep. Titus accepts Hero Award from members of the Nevada Alliance

Several local Alliances also presented five members of Congress with 2018 Retiree Hero awards, in recognition of their 100% pro-retiree score in the Alliance's Annual Congressional Voting Record. Those honored this week were Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse** (RI), Sen. **Jack Reed** (RI), Rep. **G.K. Butterfield** (NC), Rep. **David Cicilline** (RI), Rep. **James Clyburn** (SC), Rep. **Eddie Bernice Johnson** (TX), Rep. **Jim Langevin** (RI), Rep. **Ed Perlmutter** (CO) and Rep. **Dina Titus** (NV).

“It is time to strengthen and expand Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to ensure all retirees can have a healthy and more secure retirement,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “On the occasion of these anniversaries, we thank those elected officials who have -- and will continue to -- fight to protect these earned health care and retirement benefits for current and future retirees.”



Colorado Alliance members present Hero Award to Rep. Perlmutter

## Eliminating Pensions for State Employees Costs Taxpayers More

The National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS) [released a new report](#) examining what happened after four states closed public employees' defined benefit pension plans.

The researchers focused on Alaska, Kentucky, Michigan and West Virginia. State legislatures replaced pensions with cash balance or defined contribution plans such as 401(k)s. In each of the states, the new plans were drastically underfunded and it cost taxpayers more to cover the shortfall than it did to make payments into the pension plans.



Not surprisingly, the researchers also found that closing the pension plans was bad for public employees. For example, in Alaska, teachers and other public employees do not participate in Social Security. Without the guarantee of Social Security benefits or a stable pension plan, these employees will have little economic security when they retire. In West Virginia, the effects were so severe that the state decided to reopen its pension plan.

After the pension plans were closed, these states also had difficulty retaining public employees. In Alaska, the state Department of Public Safety saw a significant increase of pre-retirement separations from service. Seventy-two percent of the employees who quit were hired by another state's public safety department and once again have defined benefit pension plans.

Overall, the report concluded that closing pension plans does more harm than good.

"These case studies are cautionary tales for policymakers considering changes to employee retirement plans in their states," said **Dan Coonan**, co-author of the report and NIRS Executive Director.

"This report reinforces what we knew: eliminating traditional pension plans is a lose-lose proposition," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Protecting and funding pensions is the right thing to do for the workers and for the taxpayers who rely on them."

## Discrimination Contributed to Purging of Americans from Voter Rolls

From 2016 to 2018, at least 17 million Americans were purged from voter rolls across the country, according to a new [study](#) by the Brennan Center for Justice. While the national rate of purges has decreased gradually over time, in some states the numbers increased dramatically.

In 2013 the Supreme Court invalidated provisions of the Voting Rights Act. Before this ruling, states with a history of discrimination had to get pre-approval before making voting rule changes that could affect minorities. Once the rule was changed, many of these states moved quickly to purge their voter rolls. The report found that those jurisdictions purged voters at a rate 40% higher than the national average in 2017-18.

The Brennan Center recommends that election administrators take steps to ensure that every eligible American can cast a ballot in the next election. They noted that Election Day is too late to discover that a person was wrongfully purged.

“These systematic, targeted voter purges have disenfranchised millions of people, including seniors,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “The right to vote is fundamental and the strength of our democracy depends on it. We must redouble our efforts to register all those who wish to vote, and ensure that their votes are counted.”

## Rhode Island and Virginia Alliances Hold Annual Conventions

Members of the Rhode Island and Virginia state alliances held their annual conventions this week.

Sen. **Sheldon Whitehouse** (RI) and Rep. **Cicilline** (RI) attended the Rhode Island Alliance’s convention on Wednesday. Sen. Whitehouse spoke to members about the importance of protecting and expanding Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Alliance Executive Director **Rich Fiesta** also spoke at the event, commending Senator Whitehouse and Rep. Cicilline for their work on behalf of older Americans. He also provided a brief issue update on pensions, prescription drug prices and the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal (USMCA, or NAFTA 2.0).

“This Administration has shown over and over it is not on the side of retirees,” said Executive Director Fiesta. “We will keep fighting to stop these attacks while we prepare to elect pro-retiree, pro-worker candidates to elected office up and down the ballot.”



RI State President John Pernorio poses with Sen. Whitehouse at the state’s convention



Virginia Alliance members pose with their celebratory Medicare and Social Security birthday cakes

The Virginia Alliance for Retired Americans gathered in Williamsburg. Virginia AFL-CIO President **Doris Crouse-Mays** addressed the attendees and emphasized the need for retirees to participate in this year’s state elections. Virginia Alliance President **Cliff Carlton** (SOAR) and Secretary **Marguerite O’Connor** (AFT) were both re-elected for additional two year terms. Interim Treasurer **Roy Rodgers** (IUE-CWA) was elected to a full two year term.

Alliance Field Mobilization Director **Brendan Kelly** gave a presentation regarding legislative challenges and opportunities facing retirees and the specific actions Alliance members are taking to advance the organization’s mission. The meeting

concluded with a celebration of the 84th Anniversary of Social Security, with cake.

## Retirees Mourn Senseless Violence in El Paso and Dayton

President **Roach** offered condolences on behalf of the Alliance after [separate mass shootings](#) last weekend in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio. The attacks took at least 31 lives and wounded dozens more people. These were the [247th and 248th mass shootings](#) in the United States this year. Details released about the shooters show that both exhibited troubling forms of hatred.

“The members of the Alliance for Retired Americans stand with community and family members of those killed and wounded by the atrocious violence in El Paso and Dayton,” he said. “These monstrous acts are an attack on all of us and on the American way of life.”

"Bigotry has no place in America. It threatens the moral fabric of this country, which is built on inclusion and freedom. We send our deepest condolences to all of the families at this time, and thank the first responders and medical staff for bravely acting in the face of danger."

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The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.