

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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September 27, 2019

Alert: 400,000 People Double-billed for Medicare Part B

Because of a “process error” [hundreds of thousands of retirees](#) who pay their Medicare Part B premiums directly were double billed for the month of September. The problem was announced by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on September 24.

People who are older than 65 and on Medicare but aren’t receiving Social Security must pay the premiums directly. Many have it withdrawn automatically every month from their checking or savings account through Easy Pay. Everyone in that group was double-billed.

CMS said it was working with the Treasury Department to correct the problem and advised beneficiaries who are concerned with overdraft or other fees related to the issue to contact their bank, and ask that the fees be waived. Beneficiaries may contact 1-800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227), if verification that the issue occurred is needed. CMS expects the situation to be corrected by October.

New Alliance Fact Sheet: What’s in the House Drug Prices Bill

Last week House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** and House Democrats released H.R. 3, the “Lower Drug Costs Now Act.” A new Alliance [fact sheet](#) outlines how the bill would require the government to negotiate lower drug prices for people covered by Medicare or private insurance.

Once enacted, the Secretary of Health and Human Services would negotiate lower prices for the 250 most expensive drugs, including insulin. The negotiated prices would be limited to 120% of the average costs of the drug in six other countries. Drug corporations who refuse to negotiate with the government face a 65-95% excise tax on their gross sales. It also caps out-of-pocket drug spending under Medicare and limits the increase in drug prices under Medicare Part B and D. Savings would be reinvested into Medicare and could be used to expand benefits, such as hearing, dental and vision coverage.

“We expect this bill to reach the House floor for a vote in mid- to late October and the public needs to know what is at stake,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “To make sure that the deadline doesn’t slip, we’re urging all Alliance members [to click here and send a message to their U.S. Representative](#) urging swift action on H.R. 3. Retirees can’t wait.”

Rally Demands an End to the Abuse of Government Workers

The Alliance joined [a Capitol Hill rally on Tuesday](#) to defend government employees against the constant stream of attacks on their rights, unions and contract.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, and American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President J. David Cox led the rally.



Senate Minority Leader Schumer fires up the crowd on Tuesday.

AFGE is suing the Trump Administration over several executive actions targeting federal employee unions. Recent orders and policy changes have violated or eliminated rights that were secured long ago, such as the ability to file grievances over wrongful termination.

“Government workers have been under constant attack since 2017,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Enough is enough. Federal employees work hard every day on behalf of the American people. We will continue to support their right to collectively bargain for fair wages and working conditions.”

International Day of Older Persons is October 1

Almost 700 million people are now over the age of 60, and that number is expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2030. On October 1 the United Nations’ [International Day of Older Persons](#) will bring international experts together to explore ways to change the narrative of “old age.”

The discussions will focus on life-long learning, labor policies and universal health coverage.

“Older people and retirees deserve respect and support,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The International Day of Older Persons helps to remind us that this is a global challenge.”

State Alliance Convention Roundup

The Illinois Alliance convention was held at the UAW Pat Greathouse Center in Ottawa, IL last Friday and Saturday. President **Barbara Franklin** retired after 10 years of service and will be

succeeded by AFSCME retiree **Don Todd**. **Jacki Naughton** of the Illinois Federation of Teachers is the new Secretary.

Joining the Labor affiliated board are **Drunita Stewart** (Chicago Teachers Union); **Jane Russell** (Illinois Federation of Teachers); **Mary Johnson** (AFSCME); and **Carl Bishop** (UAW). **Stephanie Collins** from the Chicago Metro Retirees joins the Community Board. State Rep. Lance Yednock briefed the convention on senior issues in the Illinois Legislature and former state Senator **Daniel Biss** discussed the state's Fair Tax ballot referendum.



The Illinois Alliance board is sworn in.

In Des Moines last Friday, State Senator **Amanda Ragan**, Iowa Federation of Labor President **Ken Sagar** and Secretary-Treasurer **Charlie Wishman** joined Executive Director Fiesta in addressing Iowa Alliance members at the chapter's 12th Annual Convention. **Midge Slater** is retiring as President and **Mike McCarthy** will take over on October 1.

In Grand Island, Nebraska on Saturday, President **Al Mumm** (CWA), Treasurer **Ken Mass** (IBEW) and Secretary **Virginia Busch** (CWA) were all re-elected to the board of the Nebraska Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund.

"The Alliance salutes **Barbara Franklin** and **Midge Slater** for their many contributions over many years on behalf of thousands of midwest retirees. Under their leadership, both the Illinois and Iowa Alliances have been a strong voice for retirement security and health care for all older Americans," said Executive Director Fiesta.



Attendees at the Iowa Alliance Convention.

IAMAW Retirees Hear from Robert Roach, Eva Dominguez

President Roach and Eva Dominguez, Legislative Representative for the Alliance, spoke at the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers' (IAMAW) 2019 Retirees Education Strategy Program in Placid Harbor, Maryland on Monday. President Roach discussed ways that retirees can remain active in the fight for pension security, health care and Social Security and energized the attendees with the 2020 GOTV plan. Ms. Dominguez updated the retirees on current legislation to lower prescription drug prices, expand Social Security and protect health care.

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.