

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

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Rep. Elijah Cummings Leaves a Lasting Legacy

Rep. **Elijah Cummings** (Maryland) died Thursday at age 68. [An advocate for cutting prescription drug prices, fighting addiction, and reforming the criminal justice system](#), he was also the Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Over the course of his career, Rep. Cummings earned a score of 100% for voting in seniors' best interests in the [Alliance Voting Record](#).



“Congressman Cummings will be missed for both who he was as a person and his legislative accomplishments,” said **Robert Roach**, President of the Alliance. “He represented many of the best qualities we could want in a Member of Congress: integrity, tenacity, and truly caring about the human condition. Our condolences go out to his family and friends and also to his constituents in the Baltimore area.”

CBO: “Affordable Drugs Now Act” Would Lead to Massive Medicare Savings

For years, high drug prices have led patients to ration medications like insulin, or in some cases, forced them to declare bankruptcy. Many members of Congress have described this as their number one constituent issue.

On Wednesday, Alliance member **Pam Altmeyer Alvey** of Indianapolis, Indiana spoke at a press event on Capitol Hill regarding H.R. 3, the “Affordable Drugs Now Act,” legislation to address those prices. House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** (CA), who introduced the bill, hosted the event with Chairmen **Frank Pallone** (NJ) of the Energy and Commerce Committee, **Richard Neal** (MA) of the Ways and Means Committee, and **Bobby Scott** (VA) of the Education and Labor Committee. Reps. **Colin Allred** (TX), **Katie Hill** (CA), **Bill Pascrell** (NJ) and **Peter Welch** (VT) were also at the event.

Ms. Altmeyer Alvey described the emotional and financial hardship of paying as much as \$2,000 per month for the twenty prescription drugs needed to treat her conditions that include Type 2 diabetes and related heart and kidney issues.

“H.R. 3 requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate lower prices for 250 of the most expensive drugs covered by Medicare -- including insulin -- and caps out of pocket costs at \$2,000 per year for seniors on Medicare,” said Ms. Altmeyer Alvey. “That would provide dramatic financial relief for me and my family.”



The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) previously announced that if passed, H.R. 3 will reduce drug prices and [save Medicare \\$345 billion over the next decade](#). The Office of the Actuary found that drug negotiations and Medicare inflation rebates will save households \$158 billion and private businesses \$46 billion from 2020-2029. Speaker Pelosi has said the savings could allow Medicare to cover vision and dental expenses or could be put into research and development to cure chronic diseases.

Ms. Altmeyer Alvey at the podium with, from left: Reps. Allred, Welch, Neal, Pallone and Speaker Pelosi.

“About [1 in 4 people](#) have a difficult time affording their medicine,” added **President Roach**. “H.R. 3 would go a long way in addressing that.”

Medicare Fraudsters Now Tap Telemedicine In Medical Equipment Scams **Victoria Knight and Elizabeth Lucas, Kaiser Health News**

Dean Ernest had been living in a nursing home about a year when his son, John, got a call last winter asking if his father was experiencing back pain and would like a free orthotic brace.

The caller said he was with Medicare. **John Ernest** didn’t believe him, said “no” to the brace and hung up. He didn’t give out his father’s Medicare number.

And yet, not just one, but 13 braces arrived soon afterward at Ernest’s house in central Pennsylvania.

Medicare, the federal taxpayer-supported health care insurance program for older Americans, had paid over \$4,000 for 10 of the braces: a back brace, two knee braces, two arm braces, two suspension sleeves, an ankle brace, a wrist brace and a heel stabilizer.

The orders came from four medical equipment companies and were prescribed by four separate health care professionals — a prescription being required to receive an orthotic brace. But Ernest said he didn’t talk to any doctors during the phone call.



That’s how the latest Medicare frauds work, said **Ariel Rabinovic**, who works with Pennsylvania’s Center for Advocacy for the Rights & Interests of the Elderly. He helped report Ernest’s fraud case to authorities at Medicare. Rabinovic said the fraudsters enlist health professionals — doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners — to contact people they’ve never met by telephone or video chat under the guise of a telemedicine consultation.

Read more at: [Medicare Fraudsters Now Tap Telemedicine In Medical Equipment Scams](#)

U.S. Appeals Court May Rule Against White House’s Medicaid Work Rules

An administration Executive Order to put a work requirement on Medicaid seems likely to be [struck down in federal court](#). Attorneys for Medicaid recipients say that Congress intended the program to provide “medical assistance,” and that the administration failed to adequately consider the harm from potential coverage losses resulting from work requirements. In Arkansas, about 18,000 people have lost benefits.

All three judges on a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit lobbed hard questions at a Justice Department lawyer defending the policy at a recent hearing.

“These provisions endanger the health of lower-income Americans,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We need to protect our most vulnerable citizens, and sometimes we need lawsuits to do that.”

Richard Fiesta Speaks in Kentucky and Florida

Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta** traveled to Lexington on Monday and Tuesday to address the Kentucky State AFL-CIO Convention. On Thursday he was in Orlando for the Florida Education Association-Retired Annual Meeting, where he spoke about such issues as Social Security expansion, the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, and the importance of seniors in the 2020 elections.

“Seniors represented 33% of the vote in Florida in 2018,” said Fiesta. “That means prescription drug prices and Social Security expansion could be an important issue in the 2020 elections.”