

FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Murray Energy Bankruptcy Threatens More Pensions

Murray Energy, America's largest coal mining company, [declared bankruptcy on Tuesday](#), further endangering earned pension and health care benefits for retired mine workers and their spouses.

The company says it will operate normally during the bankruptcy reorganization, using cash on hand and an influx of up to \$350 million from the lenders who will likely emerge as operators of the reorganized company. More than 40 coal companies have filed for bankruptcy since 2008.

The United Mine Workers of America multiemployer pension plan is projected to become insolvent during its 2022 plan year if Congress doesn't act, and Murray Energy is the last major contributor to the fund.

The fund covers about 90,000 coal workers and their families. Murray Energy mine workers are also likely to lose medical benefits as financial stress is added to a fund meant to protect sick or out-of-work miners.

"The miners pension plan is in jeopardy because of coal companies' improper use of bankruptcy laws to get rid of legal obligations to pay into the pension plan," said **Richard Trumka**, President of the AFL-CIO. "Without those contributions, that plan will fail. Murray Energy is the eighth coal company to employ this tactic this year, putting the pension plan that thousands of retired miners rely on in danger of collapse. A pension is a promise, wages deferred for a lifetime of hard work in dangerous conditions."

"Congress needs to step in on behalf of these workers. The Miners Pension Protection Act of 2019 will help solve this problem," said **Robert Roach, Jr.** President of the Alliance. "We have a national retirement security emergency on our hands, and this week's news about Murray makes it even worse."

Senator Romney Introduces Plan That Could Threaten Benefits

Senator **Mitt Romney** (UT) introduced a bill to establish [a joint bipartisan committee](#) to address funding issues of several federal trust funds such as those for Social Security and Medicare as well as other trust funds such as the Highway Trust Fund.

The bill would establish so-called congressional “Rescue Committees” to write legislation providing 75 years of solvency for trust funds. The legislation would then receive expedited consideration by both chambers of Congress. The Romney plan is based in-part on the 2010 Simpson-Bowles plan, which created an independent commission report that called for deep Social Security cuts.

“We should not put the future of the retirement benefits we have earned through a lifetime of hard work into the hands of a committee that is not accountable to the public,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We are prepared to fight this idea tooth and nail.”

The Senate legislation has bi-partisan cosponsors, including Senators **Joe Manchin** (WV), **Doug Jones** (AL), **Todd Young** (IN), and **Kyrsten Sinema** (AZ). Representatives **Ed Case** (HI), **Mike Gallagher** (WI), **Ben McAdams** (UT) and **William Timmons** (SC) introduced a companion bill in the House of Representatives.

House Passed Bill Would Update Older Americans Act

On Monday the House passed a bill sponsored by Rep. **Suzanne Bonamici** (OR) to reauthorize and expand the [Older Americans Act](#) (OAA). The Dignity in Aging Act, H.R. 4334, reauthorizes the OAA and increases funding for social services and community-based programs like Meals on Wheels. The bill also helps people suffering with Alzheimer’s, beginning support services for them at [60 as opposed to 65](#).



Rep. Bonamici

Funding for the OAA has not kept pace with the growing aging population. In fact, funding per senior has basically been cut in half since 2010 as Congress has failed to authorize more funding. The real world effects of this can be devastating. By 2015, 83% of low-income seniors received no assistance getting food the program allowed them, and two-thirds of seniors who were supposed to receive home-based care were not getting it.

This newest reauthorization addresses these problems by providing an immediate 7% increase to all OAA programs, and a 6% increase every year subsequently. The bill also expands efforts to combat social isolation and removes the cap on benefits under the National Family Caregiver Support Program. It authorizes the Government Accountability Office to study how to improve the independence and safety of seniors living at home.

“The Senate should quickly pass OAA expansion to give older Americans the support they need and deserve,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The needs of older Americans have changed and this bill will provide critical assistance for today’s seniors.”

Richard Fiesta Talks about Seniors Issues with Postal Workers Retirees

Executive Director **Fiesta** spoke to the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) National Retirees Educational Conference in Las Vegas on Tuesday. He discussed Speaker **Pelosi’s** [Lower Drug](#)

[Costs Now Act \(H.R. 3\)](#), the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement, Social Security expansion and Alliance activism opposing the privatization of the Postal Service.

"Our retirement security is at risk from drug prices and the erosion of workplace retirement plans," said Fiesta. "We must demand that Congress take action and pass H.R. 3, the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, to force Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices for all public and private plans. We must also expand Social Security for current and future retirees."

Mississippi Alliance Holds Their Convention

On Sunday, October 27th, the Mississippi Alliance for Retired Americans held their second annual convention at the IBEW Hall in Jackson, MS. The convention was addressed by Democratic Candidate for Mississippi State Insurance Commissioner **Robert Amos** as well as the president of the Mississippi chapter of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, **John Graves**. Mississippi Alliance President **James Sims** (IUE-CWA), Treasurer **Patricia Blanchard** (IUE-CWA) and Secretary **Chellie Ruth Payne** (AFT) were all re-elected to their officer positions. Alliance Field Mobilization Director **Brendan Kelly** attended the convention.

Arizona Alliance Members Protest at SSA on Halloween



Arizona Alliance members dressed up to protest at the Social Security Administration Building in downtown Phoenix on Halloween, letting Congress know that ANY cuts to Social Security are scary!!!