



# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

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## Retirees Welcome House Passage of the Lower Prescription Drug Costs Now Act

Members of the Alliance cheered the passage of the landmark “Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act” in the House of Representatives on Thursday by a vote of [230-192](#). The bill, H.R. 3, will lower skyrocketing drug prices by:

- Requiring Medicare to negotiate drug prices on the 250 highest priced drugs, including insulin
- Making the lower negotiated drug prices available to ALL insured Americans, not just seniors
- Capping annual out of pocket expenses for Medicare beneficiaries at \$2,000
- Using the savings to expand Medicare coverage to include hearing, dental and vision

“Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs and seniors are bearing the brunt of this burden,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, in a [statement](#). “Today 230 members of the House of Representatives stood up to pharmaceutical corporations and said ‘enough is enough.’”

“H.R. 3 will help retirees enjoy longer, healthier lives with less financial anxiety,” added Fiesta. “Negotiating drug prices will save taxpayers billions of dollars and help ensure that no retiree has to choose between filling a prescription and putting food on their table.”

The Congressional Budget Office predicted that the legislation overall would lower federal spending by \$456 billion over a decade. The Center for American Progress released an [analysis](#) of how much patients could save for certain prescription drugs under H.R. 3.

“The savings in this bill will be used to add critical benefits to Medicare — including dental, hearing and vision — and provide more funding for crucial medical research. However, our work is not done,” Fiesta continued. “We call on the Senate to pass this legislation without delay.”

## Alliance Members Help Get H.R. 3 Over the Finish Line

Medicare drug price negotiation has been an Alliance priority for years, and Alliance members have been going all-out to ensure passage of H.R. 3. Over the past year they

have met with members of Congress in their local district offices, signed petitions, sent messages and flooded the Capitol with phone calls urging them to take strong action to lower prescription drug prices now.



This week, **Jim Riordan**, a member of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans and AFSCME Retirees, joined House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi (CA)** at a news conference about the legislation at the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday. He said passing the Lower Drug Costs Now Act would change his life. Riordan receives Xolair injections to treat his asthma at a cost of \$24,000 per month.

Medicare pays 80%, leaving him with a \$4,800 bill each month. To save money he only takes half of his dosage, putting his health at risk. [Click here](#) to watch Riordan's remarks.

The same day, members of the Illinois Alliance in Champaign teamed up with Citizen Action Illinois to [sing carols with some tweaked lyrics](#) about high drug prices outside Rep. **Rodney Davis'** district office.

And last Friday, **Randy Schmidt**, President of the Indiana Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund, [wrote in an op-ed](#) that passage of H.R. 3 would significantly lower the costs of prescription drugs for both Medicare and private employer insurance plans.

"Thank you to all of our Alliance members who were so instrumental in getting this critical legislation passed," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

## The Administration Claims Nursing Home Regulations Are Too Tough



The Administration has proposed [continuing its trend of deregulating the nursing home industry](#). A new proposed rule would scale back several safety requirements, putting the health and safety of seniors in danger to save the industry millions of dollars.

1.3 million Americans live in nursing homes. They are protected by federal rules ensuring basic standards of cleanliness and safety, such as regulations controlling infections, abuse, neglect, bed sores and when high-risk antipsychotic drugs can be prescribed.

"Proposals to roll back nursing home regulations are extremely alarming," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "These regulations were put in place to protect

residents, and we know that removing them will dramatically increase cases of abuse, illnesses, and safety violations.”

Between 2013 and 2017, nearly 6,500 nursing homes — 4 of every 10 — [were cited at least once for a serious violation](#).

## **AFL-CIO Endorses USMCA After Successfully Negotiating Significant Changes**

Leadership in the U.S. House has also reached an agreement with the administration to move forward next year with the White House’s replacement for the North American Free Trade Agreement. AFL-CIO President [Richard Trumka stated his approval of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement \(USMCA\)](#), provided that promised changes are included.

Among the changes are stronger enforcement of labor standards and the removal of giveaways to drug corporations. The original USMCA deal contained provisions that maintain lengthy patent terms for certain drugs known as “biologics.” protecting them from generic competition. That provision has now been removed.

Mexico ratified the version of USMCA that the three countries agreed to last year and is expected to approve the new agreement. [The United States and Canada are also expected to ratify the new deal](#).

## **President Roach Meets with Senate Democratic Policy and Outreach Steering Committee**



**President Roach** discussed retirement security with key senators this week with the Senate Democratic Policy and Outreach Steering Committee. Specific topics included the immediate need to make the mine workers pension and health benefits whole and fixing the multiemployer pension system.

Left: President Roach with **Sen. Amy Klobuchar** (MN). Sen. Klobuchar reiterated her commitment to protecting retirement security, including defined benefit pension plans.