



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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December 6, 2019

Alliance Mourns the Death of George J. Kourpias

Members of the Alliance for Retired Americans are joined together in mourning the passing of **George J. Kourpias**, the beloved founding President of the Alliance. He died on Monday, December 2 at age 87.

“Our condolences go out to his wonderful family who meant so much to him, and to all of the retirees and union members who benefited from his lifetime of work on their behalf,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, current Alliance president. “George was a great friend and mentor to me personally for decades. He showed me what it meant to successfully represent union members.”



“Countless retirees and union members are leading better lives today because of the life and work of George Kourpias,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “His dedication to retirees came straight from the heart. He was an inspirational leader driven by his warmth and passion to make America a place where everyone regardless of background had the opportunity to work and retire with dignity.”

Family and friends are invited to celebrate George’s life at a viewing

on Friday, December 6 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at: Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, 701 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, Maryland. Funeral services will be Saturday, December 7 at 12:00 pm at Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church.

A full [statement](#) includes more about George’s many accomplishments during his lifetime.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to [Guide Dogs of America](#), [Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church](#) or [Holy Cross Hospice](#). No flowers can be accepted at the church on December 6.

Survivors include his loving wife of 62 years, June; his children, Kathy (Ken), Cyndi (Bobby), Nikki, and John (Brenda); his sister, Mary; nine grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; his friends and colleagues at the Alliance for Retired Americans and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW); and a host of other relatives and friends.

House to Vote on Lower Drug Prices Next Week

The House of Representatives will vote on a major bill to help Americans struggling with the high price of prescription drugs the week of December 9. The bill is H.R. 3, the Lower Drug Costs Now Act.

Passing H.R. 3 by a wide margin will send a strong and clear signal to the U.S. Senate that the American people are demanding lower drug prices now and they must take swift action.

Please help us ensure passage by [sending a message urging your Representative to vote YES](#).

This bill will:

- Require Medicare to negotiate drug prices on the 250 highest priced drugs, including insulin
- Rein in the outrageous prices charged by the powerful pharmaceutical corporations
- Make the lower drug prices available to ALL insured Americans, not just seniors
- Cap out of pocket expenses for Medicare beneficiaries at \$2,000
- Use the savings to expand Medicare coverage to include hearing, dental and vision

Fifty million Americans say they didn't have enough money to pay for their prescription drugs at least once in the past year. Meanwhile, pharmaceutical corporations are taking in billions of dollars in profits and hiking drug prices at more than five times the rate of inflation.



A bipartisan majority of Americans support this bill, with nearly 9 in 10 people saying they want Medicare to have the ability to negotiate lower drug prices. Nonpartisan experts say that Medicare price negotiation would reduce drug prices by as much as 55 percent.

“If you prefer to reach your Representative's office by phone, you can use the Alliance's Action Hotline by dialing 866-828-4162,” said Executive Director **Fiesta**. “The

number is up and running throughout December.”

[A fact sheet on H.R. 3 is available on our website.](#)

H.R. 3 Would Expand Medicare to include Hearing, Dental and Vision

“The House bill not only lowers drug costs, it expands Medicare to include new hearing, dental and vision benefits that seniors need to stay healthy,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Today the cost of these services falls on retirees and many go without needed care. This is an appropriate way to invest savings from lower prescription drug prices.”

The "Lower Drug Costs Now Act" would add these new benefits to Medicare Part B.

Currently, Medicare only covers hearing and balance exams but excludes coverage for most other hearing services and hearing aids. Coverage for most dental services such as preventive dental care, routine dental treatments, or dentures has also been excluded. H.R. 3 would provide coverage for dentures.

With respect to vision, Medicare has only covered vision services related to certain eye diseases such as glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy. H.R. 3 would provide coverage for routine eye examinations and fitting services for eyeglasses and contact lenses. One pair of eyeglasses during a two-year period or a two-year supply of contact lenses would be provided.

GOP Pension Plan Proposal is Dangerously Flawed

Earlier this week **President Roach**, together with leaders of 17 labor unions, released a strong [statement](#) opposing Senate Republicans' new legislation on multiemployer pension plans.

The bill, sponsored by Senators **Chuck Grassley** (IA) and **Lamar Alexander** (TN), claims to address the multiemployer pension crisis but will in fact make it worse. It provides no federal financial assistance and imposes burdensome new costs that will most likely prompt the collapse of ALL multiemployer pensions.

“Contrast this to the over \$700 billion that the government provided to the banks and Wall Street in 2008, or to the 2017 massive tax give away for corporations and multi-millionaires,” said union leaders in the statement. “Here, under the guise of a federal solution, Grassley and Alexander have crafted a tax increase that hits hardest those who do not bear responsibility for the financial challenges faced by troubled multiemployer pension plans—including retirees, pension plan participants, unions and employers.”

An executive summary of the Grassley-Alexander proposal by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) revealed that the proposal could lead to cuts of as much as 10% per month, depending on a pension plan's funding status.

There are better proposals that will be much more effective at tackling the multiemployer pension crisis. One of them, the Butch Lewis Act, has passed the U.S. House and now needs Senate approval.

1.3 million Americans' earned pension benefits are at risk. If you have not already done so, [please click here to urge your Senators to pass the Butch Lewis Act.](#)

Congress bailed out Wall Street in 2008 and gave billions in tax breaks to corporations in 2017. It's time for them to help working and retired Americans in their time of need.

West Virginia Alliance Holds Annual Convention

The West Virginia Alliance for Retired Americans held its convention on November 21 in Ripley. **Virginia Moles** (AFSCME) was re-elected president, **Terry Cunningham** (AFT) was elected Treasurer and **Betty Totten** (USW) was elected Secretary. Alliance regional board member **Jody Weinrich** addressed the convention.



West Virginia University Professor **Annie Marie Lofaso** briefed the convention with a political update and West Virginia AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer **Andy Walter** provided a labor update before receiving the Retiree of the Year award from the membership.

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.