



# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)

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

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## Social Security Reduces Poverty in Every State

A report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has re-confirmed that Social Security [lifts millions of Americans out of poverty](#) and does so more than any other program. Without it, 21.7 more Americans would live beneath the poverty line, including nearly 15 million seniors.

TABLE 1

### Effect of Social Security on Poverty (Official Poverty Measure), 2018

Age Group	Percent in Poverty		Number Lifted Above the Poverty Line by Social Security
	Excluding Social Security	Including Social Security	
Children Under 18	17.8%	16.2%	1,197,000
Adults Ages 18-64	13.5%	10.7%	5,653,000
Elderly Age 65 and Over	37.8%	9.7%	14,810,000
<b>Total, All Ages</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>21,661,000</b>

Source: CBPP analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's March 2019 Current Population Survey

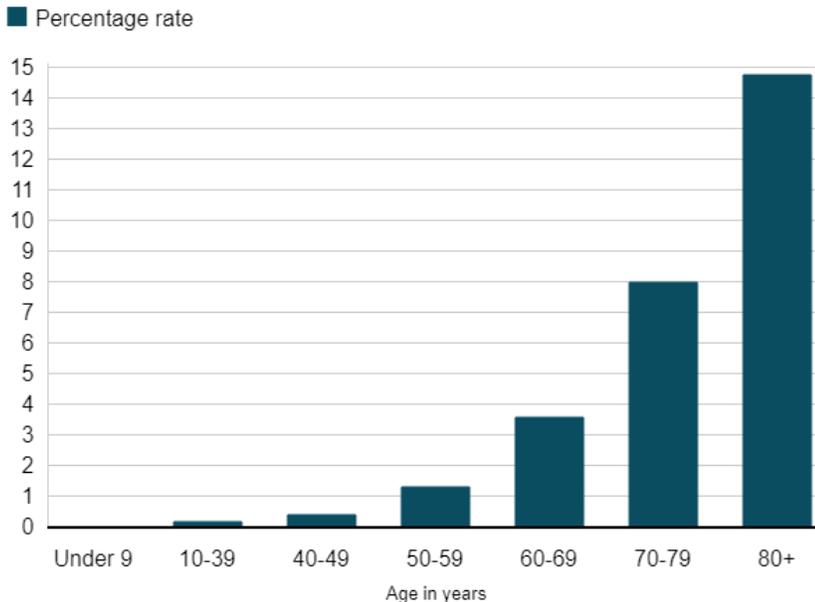
The findings show this is consistent in every state. In fact, without Social Security one-third of states would have a poverty rate of over 40 percent for people 65 and older.

“The report shows that Social Security is particularly important for elderly women, blacks and Latinos, who have fewer retirement resources outside of Social Security,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “It shows that we need to keep fighting to expand Social Security benefits and keep all Americans from poverty as they age.”

## As Coronavirus Spreads, Elderly and Sick Americans Are Most at Risk

A new [study of the Chinese cases of coronavirus](#) shows that the elderly, sick people, and medical staff are most at risk. While more than 80 percent of the cases have been mild, the fatality rate increases for those over 80 years old.

### Coronavirus fatality rate in China



Source: Chinese Centre for Disease Control

BBC

To date, men have been more at risk than women. Chronic health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and hypertension, also increase patients' risk. This week the first American coronavirus case of unknown origin was confirmed in Northern California.

"The [Centers for Disease Control](#) has shared specific ways that people can prepare for a pandemic and what to do during one," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "They include ensuring you have a continuous supply of regularly

needed prescription drugs; avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent infection; and stocking a two-week supply of water and food."

## Be Sure You are Counted in the 2020 Census!

The importance of having an accurate census - a count of all people living in the United States - cannot be overstated. The results of the census determine how many representatives a community will have in Congress and state legislatures as well as how federal dollars for [Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP \(formerly known as food stamps\), and other vital services](#) are distributed. Being counted is critical for seniors.

For the first time, the 2020 census will be primarily conducted online. This is a major change from the past, and experts are worried that older Americans will not be able to or will not want to submit their information electronically.

Between March 12 and 20, most households will receive a postcard with information on how to fill out the census form on the internet. Those who do not complete their census form online will receive a traditional form in the mail. If a household does not fill out the traditional form, a census taker will then be sent to collect the information in person. People in areas unlikely to have reliable access to the internet will get the traditional form in the mail instead of the postcard.

“As we enter March, make sure to watch for your census postcard to ensure that you, your neighbors and family members are counted,” said **President Roach**. “The data collected will affect how well the needs of our aging population will be met.”

Your community is relying on you to fill out the census, and the cost of not responding is high. [Learn more about the 2020 Census here.](#)

### **Medicare Patients Face Difficulty In Accessing Home Health Care Services**

This year Medicare has changed the way it pays for [home health care services](#) and *Kaiser Health News* reports that it is having a significant effect on patients and health care workers. Home health care agencies are cutting physical, occupational, and speech therapies for patients and firing therapists. Severely ill patients who rely on these services for their quality of life have been cut off from care.



To [qualify for these types of services](#), patients have always needed to be homebound and require less than 8 hours a day of skilled care. The previous amount Medicare paid for these services reflected the amount of therapy delivered: if a patient received more therapies the provider received higher payments.

The new reimbursement system does not include therapy services in reimbursement rate calculations. Instead, the new payment system is

based on the patient’s medical condition. This incentivizes agencies to serve patients who need short-term care, such as services that follow a stay in a hospital or rehabilitation facility. Providing skilled services on a long-term basis is not economically feasible.

“As a direct result of this change, it is likely patients with chronic illnesses may not get the support and treatment they need,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “It is heartless and we call on the Department of Health and Human Services to reverse course immediately.”

### **Make Your Reservations Now for the Alliance’s Regional Conferences**

Prepare for the 2020 election and hone your advocacy skills by attending one of the Alliance’s four regional meetings. They will be held in the following cities:

- Midwest Regional Conference - April 27 - 28, 2020 in Detroit, Michigan
- Western Regional Conference - May 12 - 13, 2020 in Las Vegas, Nevada
- Northeast Regional Conference - May 28 - 29, 2020 in Washington, DC
- Southern Regional Conference - June 5 - 6, 2020 in Orlando, Florida

**March 20 is the deadline for booking rooms at the Alliance's negotiated rate for the Midwest Regional Conference at the MGM Grand Hotel in Detroit.** The registration fee includes two breakfasts and a luncheon.

Come be a part of a growing movement focused on labor, community-based retirees, and working families. You are a vital part of our grassroots effort and you will leave these meetings with the tools and information you need to elect pro-retiree candidates in November. Workshops will focus on mobilization, effective communication, and how to fight rising prescription drug prices. There will also be Regional Board elections, allowing you to vote for who will plan and implement state and national strategies.

[Additional information and registration forms are here.](#) Questions? Contact **Joni Jones** at either [ARAConference@retiredamericans.org](mailto:ARAConference@retiredamericans.org), [jjones@retiredamericans.org](mailto:jjones@retiredamericans.org) or 888-373-6497.

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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.