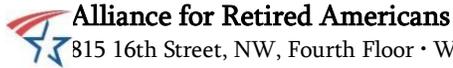




FRIDAY ALERT



815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

May 8, 2020

Trump Commits to Gutting Social Security on National Television

President **Trump** issued a threat on Sunday, saying he would veto any coronavirus stimulus relief unless Congress cuts the payroll tax, Social Security's dedicated funding source. Speaking in front of the Lincoln Memorial, he [said](#), "We're not doing anything without a payroll tax cut," his strongest statement yet that he will not protect earned benefits.

The declaration directly contradicts what he said just last week, when speaking at an Older Americans Month event at the White House he [promised](#), "We will protect your Social Security." Cutting Social Security's dedicated funding threatens to starve the program and puts Americans' hard-earned benefits at risk.

"It is outrageous, callous, and cruel for President Trump to hold the American people, and seniors in particular, hostage if Congress doesn't go along with his plan to gut Social Security for current and future retirees," said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**.

The President's plan is also bad economics. Social Security puts more than \$800 billion into the economy each year. Social Security benefits, which are spent when received, are a counterbalance to declines in the economy.

In addition, cutting the Social Security payroll tax is not a good stimulus tool, because it would do nothing for the 30 million people who have lost their jobs.

Take action by signing this [petition](#) to call on your members of Congress to refuse any deal that threatens Social Security!

Big Pharma Shouldn't Profiteer Off the COVID-19 Pandemic

This week pharmaceutical companies Eli Lilly and Gilead held their shareholder meetings, reminding us that Big Pharma corporations should not profiteer off the coronavirus pandemic.

Gilead Sciences Inc., the maker of the novel coronavirus treatment Remdesivir, has a long history of price gouging on life saving drugs. It has previously charged \$2,000 a month for a drug to prevent HIV/AIDS and \$1,000 per pill to treat Hepatitis C.

For years, Eli Lilly has price gouged on drugs like insulin for diabetes, forcing people to go without the medicine they need, ration doses, or rack up debt to stay alive. Last year Eli Lilly made \$598 million in the United States, but paid zero dollars in taxes. Their CEO, **David Ricks**, was paid \$21.3 million and the company spent \$4.1 billion in shareholder buybacks.



Two-thirds of American adults report that [prescription drug prices have increased](#) since 2017. Meanwhile, over 2,000 people are dying of COVID-19 in America every day. Nearly one-third of Americans didn't pay rent in April. [Forty-four percent](#) of all workers qualify as low-wage, making a median annual salary of \$18,000. Yet the message from Big

Pharma is clear - pay their price for life saving drugs or that's it.

"We cannot let pharmaceutical corporations receive taxpayer dollars to develop COVID-19 treatments and then charge Americans an arm and a leg for what they've already paid for," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, Alliance President. "All of our lives are at risk amid this public health crisis. Big Pharma's practices will further endanger us by price gouging on critical drugs."

Florida Alliance Files Lawsuit to Ensure Safe and Fair Voting During Pandemic

On Monday the Florida Alliance and four of its members filed a [lawsuit](#) asking the United States District Court for the Northern District of Florida to protect the rights of older voters during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are challenging several provisions of the state's absentee voting law to ensure that all Florida voters, including older Floridians, are able to cast a ballot that will actually be counted.



"The court must act now to protect the right of older people to vote. We should not have to put our health in danger and stand in long lines on Election Day at polling sites to make sure our votes are counted," said **Bill Sauers**, President of the Florida Alliance. "Right now we have no way to control whether our ballots will

arrive at our homes or be returned to the County Supervisor of Elections on time."

The suit alleges that the state has failed to prepare for the upcoming elections, forcing voters to choose between their civic duty and their health.

"There are more than 2.8 million seniors registered to vote in Florida, and the state is asking them to take unnecessary risks with their health," said Executive Director Fiesta. "The

Alliance for Retired Americans is committed to ensuring that all older Americans nationwide can cast a ballot that will be counted, especially at this unprecedented time.”

Additional plaintiffs include Priorities USA, Alianza for Progress, and Florida Alliance members **Felicia Bruce** of Fort Pierce; Recording Secretary **Barbara DeVane** of Tallahassee; and **Donesa Jackson** of Oviedo.

This year the Alliance, working with its state chapters, has also filed lawsuits to protect vote by mail and absentee voters in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Congress and Administration Seek to Shield Nursing Home from Lawsuits

20,000 people have died in American nursing homes from the coronavirus to date and the long term care industry is asking Congress to allow the industry to [protect themselves from lawsuits that claim care was inadequate](#). Watchdogs, patient advocates, and elder care lawyers say that these immunity proposals are misguided because legal liability is the last safety net that keeps facilities accountable to residents and their families.

Before COVID-19 the **Trump** administration [eased regulations for nursing homes](#), relaxing requirements for safety inspections and [shielding operators from potential lawsuits](#). Amid the coronavirus crisis, the administration has not required universal and immediate testing for residents and staff. At the same time, Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (KY) has focused on providing [legal immunity](#) to all businesses for lawsuits related to their actions amid the pandemic.

The lobbying efforts of the long term care industry have led at least 15 states to provide protection from lawsuits claiming a lack of testing and shortages of personal protective equipment. However, the crisis is just bringing to light previously existing, chronic issues within the industry, including staff shortages and poor infection control. Almost 70% of the country’s nursing homes are for-profit and immunity from legal action has been on the industry’s wish list for years.

“We must keep the corporations that provide critical care to our most vulnerable citizens accountable,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Rep. **Jan Schakowsky** (IL) has introduced new legislation, [H.R. 6698](#), the ‘Quality Care for Nursing Homes Residents and Workers During COVID-19 Act,’ to protect residents.”

Temporary Flexibility Offered for Medicare Enrollment

On Wednesday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) said it will allow individuals extra time to enroll in Medicare. Typically seniors must enroll within 3 months of turning 65. This means that individuals who missed an enrollment period will not be penalized if they enroll prior to **June 17, 2020**.

More information can be found [here](#). The agency has also published a Frequently Asked Questions document [here](#).