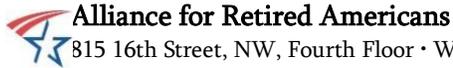




# FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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

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

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

June 12, 2020

---

## Pfizer Won't Commit to Affordable COVID-19 Vaccine

Despite investing billions of taxpayer dollars on research and development of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, pharmaceutical corporations refuse to guarantee that these drugs will be affordable for all who need them.

Pfizer CEO **Albert Bourla** [said](#) this week that his corporation won't put a "huge price" on a coronavirus vaccine. However, Pfizer's definition of a "not huge price" could be very different from what patients can afford, and the public has no way to hold them accountable. Pfizer has a history of price-gouging -- its best-selling drug is [Plevnar 13](#), a vaccine that protects against pneumonia and other infections. Pfizer has dramatically increased the price on that drug.

Some members of Congress have proposed legislation to require that any COVID-19 vaccine or treatment is affordable, but it has not yet come up for a vote. The bipartisan **Affordable COVID-19 Drug Pricing Act of 2020** from Reps. **Jan Schakowsky** (IL) and **Francis Rooney** (FL) will establish [critical protections against price gouging amid the pandemic](#).

The bill:

- ensures universal access to new, taxpayer-funded drugs that are used to treat COVID-19;
- mandates these COVID-19 drugs be reasonably and affordably priced;
- requires manufacturers to publicly report specific cost breakdowns; and
- prevents excessive pricing of drugs used to treat any disease that causes a public health emergency.

"Without the kind of controls in this bill, drug corporations can continue to use their monopoly control over prices," said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. "Big Pharma has demonstrated time and time again that they will use every opportunity to profiteer by setting sky-high prices on drugs developed with taxpayer dollars. Lawmakers must take strong action to prevent drug corporations from putting patients' health over shareholders' profits."

## When A Doctor No Longer Accepts Medicare, Patients Left Holding The Bag Carmen Heredia Rodriguez, *Kaiser Health News*

Pneumonia. Heart problems. High cholesterol. **Betsy Carrier**, 71, and her husband, **Don Resnikoff**, 79, relied on their primary care doctor in Montgomery County, Maryland, for help managing their ailments.

But after seven years, the couple was surprised when the doctor informed them she was opting out of Medicare, the couple's insurer.

"It's a serious loss," Resnikoff said of their doctor.

Patients can lose doctors for a variety of reasons, including a physician's retirement or when either patient or doctor moves away. But economic forces are also at play. Many primary care doctors have long argued that Medicare, the federal health insurance program for seniors and people with disabilities, doesn't reimburse them adequately and requires too much paperwork to get paid.

Read more at: [When A Doctor No Longer Accepts Medicare, Patients Left Holding The Bag](#)

### Caravan in Waterloo, Iowa Grows Support for the Postal Service

Last Sunday members of the Iowa Alliance joined American Postal Workers Union Local 451 for a caravan to support the hardworking people of the U.S. Postal Service. The caravan called on their Senators **Chuck Grassley** and **Joni Ernst** to include funding for the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) in the next coronavirus relief package.



Without action from Congress, the Postal Service could be very different in September. Millions of older Americans rely on the USPS to deliver food, medicine, and mail amid the pandemic. Voters of all ages will need the federal program in November to deliver absentee ballots and protect our health while ensuring our right to vote.

"The **Trump** administration is purposely aiming to deny adequate funding to the Postal Service, and it refuses to provide the federal program with any support to survive the coronavirus and economic crises," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Alliance Secretary-Treasurer.

**Call (866) 828-4162 and demand that Congress approve emergency USPS funding. You will be connected to your Senator's office.**

## Telemedicine Leaves Tens of Millions of Patients Behind

As more doctors turn to telemedicine amid the coronavirus pandemic, many [patients are not getting the care they need](#). The technological knowledge and equipment needed to have an online appointment is a barrier for many people, particularly older adults.



According to *Wired* magazine, more than 150 million Americans have substandard internet speed and over half of low-income Americans say they're [concerned about paying their internet and phone bills](#). In rural areas with unreliable connections, phone calls can be patients' best option, but no visual contact makes it more difficult for doctors to treat and diagnose.

Telemedicine is an imperfect solution. The digital divide across the country is increasing disparities in the access that people have to health care. Patients without reliable internet service or access to devices are receiving inferior care, or none at all. To overcome this problem, these patients are being asked to come for in-person visits. However, many of the patients who are more likely to have problems accessing technology and need more frequent care are also more vulnerable to COVID-19: older adults and people with preexisting conditions.

“Telemedicine was supposed to increase access and protect patients during the pandemic,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Unfortunately for some people, particularly older adults, it is another barrier that can cause serious harm if people aren't getting the level of care close to what they had experienced in person.”

## Trump's War on Health Care Exacerbates Crisis for Seniors in Michigan and Nevada

Protect Our Care (POC) and the Alliance for Retired Americans this week released Michigan- and Nevada-specific reports on [the impact of COVID-19 for seniors](#). A previous report had outlined how President Trump's ongoing sabotage of seniors' health care and attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act have been especially dangerous nationally amid the coronavirus pandemic.

On Wednesday, POC-Michigan was joined by speakers including State Representative **Padma Kuppa**; **Dick Long**, President of the Michigan Alliance; and **Bob Sisler**, Group Chair of the UAW Region 1A Retirees, to explain how Trump's war on health care is hurting Michigan seniors facing the COVID-19 outbreak. On Thursday, Nevada Alliance President **Tom Bird** joined POC and Sen. **Catherine Cortez Masto** to brief the media about the effect of Trump's health care policies on Nevada seniors.