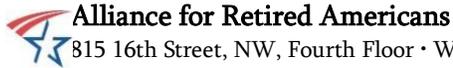




FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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House Democrats Move to Protect Affordable Care Act As Judicial Threat Rises

House Democrats introduced new legislation to expand access to health care and make prescription drugs more affordable, and a vote is scheduled on Monday, June 29. The package, called the [The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Enhancement Act](#) (H.R. 1425), was introduced by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman **Frank Pallone, Jr.** (NJ), Ways and Means Chairman **Richard E. Neal** (MA) and Education and Labor Chairman **Robert C. “Bobby” Scott** (VA).

The [legislation](#) strengthens the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its protections for people with pre-existing conditions, which are especially significant for older Americans. Among people ages 55 to 64, [84 percent](#) have at least one pre-existing condition.



The bill also creates a national reinsurance program to help cover the costs of people with expensive medical conditions, lowering premiums and providing funds to states to help reduce deductibles and out-of-pocket costs for everyone. It also expands eligibility for insurance premium tax credits and increases the size of tax credits for all income brackets.

The legislation comes as the **Trump** administration again challenges the ACA's constitutionality. On Thursday night the

Administration urged the Supreme Court to strike down the ACA, escalating its attack on the health care law even as millions of newly jobless Americans may come to depend on its coverage. The administration and Republicans in Congress have tried time and time again to dismantle the health care program and have even continued to do so amid the coronavirus pandemic, when millions are losing their employer-sponsored coverage.

“Health care, specifically the Affordable Care Act, has never been more important than in the middle of this pandemic,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Protecting all Americans, including retirees, requires a comprehensive solution. The legislation that House

Democrats introduced this week - combined with the Lower Drug Costs Now Act, will strengthen the ACA as the Trump Administration continues to sabotage it by supporting the lawsuits that repeal it.”

Alliance Sues State of Maine to Remove Barriers to Absentee Voting in Light of COVID-19 Pandemic

On Wednesday, the Alliance and two of its members [filed a lawsuit in the Maine Superior Court](#) to protect the rights of older Maine voters during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Alliance was joined in the suit by [Vote.org](#).

The lawsuit alleges that the State of Maine’s vote by mail requirements are burdensome and will force older voters to choose between protecting their health or casting a ballot they know will be counted. The plaintiffs noted that the number of people voting absentee by mail has surged as the coronavirus pandemic continues and is expected to reach record levels. However, the state’s onerous absentee ballot measures make it impossible for older residents of Maine to cast a mail-in ballot and be confident it will count.

The plaintiffs are asking the Maine Superior Court to mandate that Maine:

- Allow Maine residents to register to vote online;
- Eliminate the requirement that a voter registration application be accompanied by a photocopy of an identification document;
- Ensure that ballots postmarked by Election Day, but not yet received by a Supervisor of Elections, are counted;
- Permit any third party the voter chooses to submit their sealed ballots in person on their behalf;
- Provide pre-paid postage for all mail ballots; and
- Notify voters and provide an opportunity to cure their ballots if they are rejected due to a technical defect or a signature mis-match.

“There are more than 235,000 seniors registered to vote in Maine,” said Executive Director **Fiesta**. “The Alliance for Retired Americans is committed to ensuring that all older Americans nationwide can exercise their right to vote, especially during this unprecedented public health crisis.”

“Maine is the oldest state in the nation. Nearly 21 percent of the population is over the age of 65,” said **Don Berry**, a plaintiff and President of the Maine Alliance who lives in Oxford County, Maine. “Older people like me are at a particularly high risk of getting infected with the coronavirus. If I have to stand in the long lines the Secretary of State anticipates on Election Day, my health will be put in jeopardy.”

Nursing Homes are Evicting Vulnerable Residents

Nursing homes have been at the center of the coronavirus pandemic, representing more than 40 percent of the total death toll in the United States. Now, nursing homes across the country are [evicting less profitable residents](#) to make room for COVID-19 patients who will generate more revenue.

Nationwide, there are reports of nursing homes kicking out older and disabled residents - among those most susceptible to the coronavirus - and forcing them into homeless shelters, rundown motels, and other unsafe facilities. These evictions are known as “involuntary discharges,” and many appear to violate federal rules that require nursing homes to provide 30 days notice and safe places to relocate to.



Nursing homes have long had a financial incentive to evict patients on Medicaid in favor of those with private insurance or Medicare, but the pandemic has intensified the situation. With no outside visitors, nursing homes are facing less scrutiny over their practices and some facilities are taking advantage of the situation to evict vulnerable residents.

There is no national data on how many evictions have taken place, but figures provided to *The New York Times* totaled more than 6,400

discharges during the pandemic, many to homeless shelters. This is likely a dramatic undercount.

“Nursing home evictions are bad enough for vulnerable patients in normal times,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, Alliance President. “But to do this during a pandemic that preys on the elderly and those with underlying conditions to make more money is immoral. We need to do more to protect these most vulnerable Americans, and that includes more federal and state oversight, not less.”

Help Repeal the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision!

The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) penalize people who have dedicated their lives to public service by taking away benefits they or their spouses have earned. These offsets reduce or even eliminate Social Security benefits for 25% of public employees nationwide, including millions of retired federal, state and local government employees.

[Demand a vote to repeal the GPO and WEP by signing this petition.](#)

Victims of the GPO would be entitled to collect their full Social Security benefit – based on a spouse’s work record – if they had never worked a day in any type of employment, but are singled out for the offset because they worked in public sector jobs.

“The GPO has a particularly harsh impact on moderate- and low-income pensioners, affecting women disproportionately and making them more likely to face poverty in their later years,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

The WEP applies a similar offset to Social Security benefits earned by public employees themselves in Social Security-covered jobs held before, during or after their public-service careers.