



# 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)

**July 10, 2020**

---

## Coronavirus Economic Crisis Causing a Social Security Technical Glitch

Without Congressional action, everyone who was born in 1960 will receive 15% lower Social Security benefits when they retire than people born in 1959. The problem is called a “notch” and it is caused by the coronavirus economic crisis.

While each person’s individual benefit amount reflects their earnings history, it also takes into account national economic indicators, including the aggregate figure for total wages in a given year. Typically, aggregate wages rise every year, but the coronavirus recession and job losses are expected to significantly lower them for 2020.

A drop of this magnitude is unprecedented -- there has only been one other drop, in 2009, and it was very small in comparison. The 2020 notch will have a harmful and permanent effect on these people regardless of whether they worked, lost their job, or didn’t work at all this year. There is nothing a worker can do on the individual level to avoid the notch.

“No one should have their Social Security benefit reduced permanently because of the pandemic,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.**

## Medicare’s Nursing Home COVID-19 Website Excludes Months of Data

In May the **Trump** administration required nursing homes to begin reporting their coronavirus cases to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The data was supposed to be available to the public, allowing residents and their families to make informed decisions. In fact, facilities that have had COVID-19 cases and deaths [show up as having none](#) on Medicare’s COVID-19 nursing home [website](#).

However, HHS only requires that information about cases and deaths of residents and staff after May 8 be reported. The first coronavirus outbreak in a nursing home was detected in late February.

According to the website, more than 33,000 nursing home residents have died from COVID-19. The Associated Press has tracked more than 57,000 deaths of residents and staff in all long term care facilities.

“Without complete data, residents and their loved ones are left in the dark, unable to make informed decisions about their health and safety,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Congress must act quickly to require nursing homes to report coronavirus cases and deaths going back to the start of the pandemic.”

## **Elderly Veterans Given Hydroxychloroquine Whether They Needed It or Not**

[Veterans at a Pennsylvania nursing home were given hydroxychloroquine](#), the antimalarial drug touted by President **Trump** without proof of any positive impact in COVID-19 patients, even if the veterans hadn't been tested for the coronavirus.

*The Washington Post* reported that nurses at the facility raised concerns about the “covid cocktail,” a drug regimen that included hydroxychloroquine, which was routinely dispensed to residents in April. Some of the patients were 80-90 years old and hadn't been tested for COVID-19. Others suffered from medical conditions known to increase the risk of dangerous side effects from hydroxychloroquine.



This treatment is in direct conflict with the guidance from the Food and Drug Administration, which stressed that hydroxychloroquine should only be administered during clinical trials or in hospitals providing close heart monitoring and only after discussion with patients and their families about the risks.

Instead, the Southeastern Veterans' Center gave the treatment over the objection of some nurses, with little knowledge among residents' families,

Chrissy Diaz, holding her father's ashes, questions whether he should have been given hydroxychloroquine at the Southeastern Veterans' Center. (Bonnie Jo Mount/*The Washington Post*)

and hid the action from lawmakers who were investigating the matter. There is no way of knowing whether the treatment played a role in any of the 42 COVID-19 deaths at the facility, but 11 of the fatalities had been given the drug without ever being tested.

“Giving an unproven treatment to vulnerable patients is reckless and dangerous,” said Executive Director Fiesta. “When politicians with limited knowledge touted hydroxychloroquine as a magic elixir, it put lives in danger and likely contributed to many deaths. The actions at this nursing home were disgraceful.”

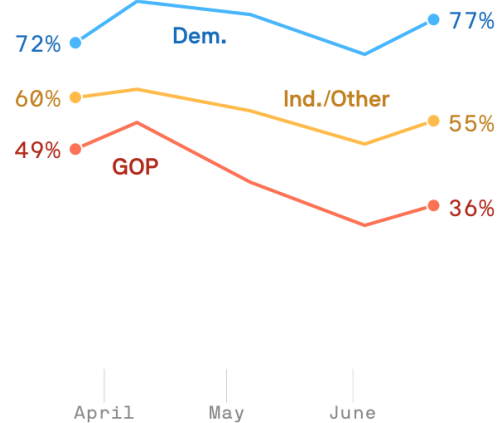
## **People 65+, Women, and Democrats Are Taking the COVID-19 Threat Most Seriously**

A new Axios-Ipsos [poll](#) shows that the longer the coronavirus pandemic lasts, the more Americans are viewing the pandemic through a partisan lens and moving apart politically.

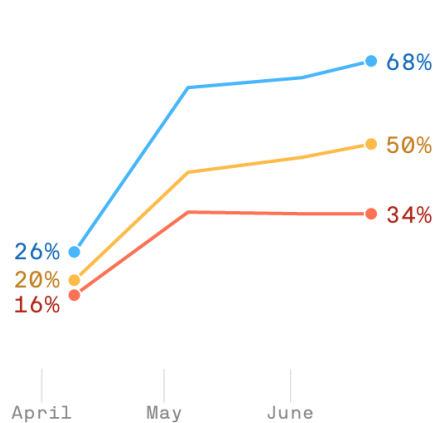
## Americans' COVID response by political party

Survey of U.S. adults from March 20 to June 29, 2020

Concerned about COVID



Wearing a mask at all times



According to the poll, partisanship is the main driver of worries about the virus and personal actions to contain its spread, such as wearing masks or practicing social distancing. Women and people aged 65 and older take the COVID-19 threat more seriously than men and younger people. Republicans, specifically, have never shared the intense concern of other groups.

Data: Axios/Ipsos poll; Chart: Andrew Witherspoon/Axios

Race also plays an important role in attitudes towards the pandemic. Forty-six percent of Black Americans know someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, compared to only 35 percent of whites and 36 percent of Hispanics. Twenty-eight percent of Black Americans, 11 percent of whites, and 17 percent of Hispanics know someone who has died from the virus.

“Seniors are most at risk from dying from the coronavirus, so they have reason to be careful,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “As the virus continues to spread we need to find common ground and unite to meet this challenge.”

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.