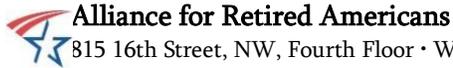




FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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The Alliance wishes you and your family a safe and happy 4th of July.

Gilead's Remdesivir Price Gouging is Latest Example of Industry's Shameful Profiteering



Drug corporation Gilead announced this week that it has jacked up the price of Remdesivir, the promising COVID-19 treatment, by 30%. It will now cost more than \$3,000 for a 5-day treatment in the United States.

Taxpayers [invested at least \\$70 million](#) to develop Remdesivir but have no say in how much Gilead can charge for it because the U.S. government put no strings on this investment. Americans already pay the highest prescription drug prices in the world and the pharmaceutical industry is allowed under

law to use its monopoly power to set prices as high as they want to.

"This is yet another sad example of a drug corporation taking advantage of a worldwide pandemic and putting profits over people, and President Trump is allowing it," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Retirees, the most vulnerable COVID-19 population, are left paying for this greed."

Since the start of the pandemic, [pharmaceutical corporations have raised prices on 245 drugs](#).

To make matters worse, the **Trump** administration's [vaccine development contracts reveal a massive giveaway to drug corporations](#). While the newly released contracts are heavily redacted, they shine a light on the extent to which the White House has watered down or altogether eliminated its rights to intervene in cases where pharmaceutical corporations charge high prices or don't produce enough of a product.

The House of Representatives passed a bill to lower drug prices by requiring that Medicare negotiate lower drug prices on behalf of all Americans and taxpayers, [H.R. 3](#). This week Reps. **Jan Schakowsky** (IL) and **Francis Rooney** (FL) introduce [H.R. 6472](#), the "Make Medications Affordable by Preventing Pandemic Price Gouging Act" to prevent pandemic profiteering.

Action Needed - Tell the Senate to Fund Vote by Mail

The coronavirus pandemic has made the ability to vote by mail more important than ever for Americans. But President **Trump** recently launched a new series of attacks, inaccurately saying that vote by mail leads to voter fraud and corruption.

According to experts, mail-in ballots are a safe and effective alternative to voting in person. The president and several members of his administration and family have actually voted by mail in several elections, despite his objections. Primary elections have also shown that the number of people interested in voting by mail has grown, and this need will only increase by November.

We must take action now so that we're prepared to meet the demand. No one should have to risk their health in order to make sure their vote is counted. [Tell your Senators to fund vote by mail immediately so that resources are properly allocated.](#)

House Passes Affordable Care Act Expansion

On Monday the House [passed](#) legislation to expand the Affordable Care Act (ACA), called [The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Enhancement Act](#) (H.R. 1425). Coming amidst the COVID-19 health care crisis, the legislation marks the first significant expansion of the health care law since its inception a decade ago.

The bill passed [234-179](#), almost along party lines. The vote came just days after the Trump administration reaffirmed its position in a filing with the U.S. Supreme Court that argues the ACA is illegal in its entirety, since Congress eliminated the individual tax penalty for failing to purchase medical insurance. The administration is asking the Supreme Court to invalidate the law, and Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (KY) also opposes any expansion of the ACA.

The [legislation](#) strengthens the 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.

"Americans have a right to affordable and comprehensive health care coverage," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "It is unconscionable to make it harder for Americans to pay for the health care they need in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Trump Administration Fails Nursing Home Residents and Workers

Senators **Bob Casey** (PA), **Gary Peters** (MI), and **Ron Wyden** (OR) released a [report](#) this week detailing the Trump administration's failure to protect nursing home residents and workers from COVID-19.

According to the report, the White House was slow to understand the magnitude of the impact of COVID-19 on nursing homes and the disjointed federal response compounded the devastation. A lack of coordination among government agencies limited access to COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment (PPE).

The COVID-19 statistics on nursing homes vary, but it is estimated that residents and workers in nursing homes and other long term care facilities makeup over 40 percent of COVID-19 deaths across the country, a disproportionate share of the total 127,000 deaths. The report makes it clear

that with a better federal response the lives of vulnerable residents and workers could have been protected from the ravages of the pandemic.

Some of the Administration's failures include:

- Failure to track the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in nursing homes for over 4 months;
- Lack of a cohesive plan to ensure a steady supply of PPE to nursing home workers;
- The supplies nursing homes did receive were often inadequate due to faulty and unusable PPE;
- And while regular testing for residents and workers was recommended, no plan or required resources were provided.



“Nursing home residents and workers are among the most vulnerable people to the COVID-19 virus in our country,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “The Administration turned a blind eye to the problem and people died because of it. Congress needs to step up and demand that seniors, people with disabilities, and workers on the frontlines are protected, especially since the coronavirus continues to spread.”

Oklahoma Voters Approve Medicaid Expansion

Voters in [Oklahoma passed a ballot measure](#) on Tuesday to adopt the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion, extending insurance to an estimated 200,000 low-income adults in the state. While only approved by a narrow margin of 50.5 percent, this marks the first Medicaid expansion during the pandemic.

Oklahoma is now the fifth state where voters have defied Republican leadership to expand Medicaid through a ballot measure. This throws a wrench in the Trump administration's goal to make Oklahoma the first state to cap Medicaid spending, which would have placed fiscal constraints on the program.

Oklahoma is tied with Georgia with the nation's second highest uninsured rate, behind only Texas, where [18 percent of the population](#) doesn't have health insurance. Thirteen states have not expanded Medicaid: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. A Medicaid expansion initiative is on the ballot in Missouri next month.