



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

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Unanswered Vaccine Questions Come to the Forefront: Will They Work? Who Gets Them First? And How Much Will They Cost?

On Monday biotech corporation Moderna Inc. announced that its new Covid-19 vaccine has been [94.5% effective](#) in preventing infection in tests so far. On Wednesday, Pfizer and BioNTech announced results from their late-stage vaccine trial, saying that theirs was 95% effective and had no serious side effects. The results of both trials add to the growing confidence that vaccines could help end the pandemic in a matter of months and restore a sense of normalcy to everyone's lives.

There is widespread agreement that healthcare workers should be a high priority in getting the vaccine first. Epidemiologists say workers in essential industries, people with certain medical conditions and people age 65 and older would likely also be among the early recipients.

Much, but not all, of the funding for the development of the Moderna vaccine came from taxpayers. Moderna received nearly \$2.5 billion from the federal government -- reinforcing the belief among consumer and health advocates that any taxpayer-funded vaccines or treatments for COVID-19 must be accessible, affordable, and available to all who need them.

The Alliance is urging Congress to pass the [Make Medications Affordable by Preventing Pandemic Price-gouging \(MMAPPP\) Act](#), which would prohibit monopoly control over drug prices and require the federal government to mandate affordable prices for treatments and vaccines developed with taxpayer dollars. Representatives **Jan Schakowsky** (IL), **Francis Rooney** (FL), **Lloyd Doggett** (TX), **Rosa DeLauro** (CT), and **Peter DeFazio** (OR) introduced the legislation.

"The news of there being two highly effective vaccines is very promising," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "However this and any treatment that we fund with our tax dollars must be available and affordable for all who need it. Congress must also pass the MMAPPP Act to ensure this happens for drugs to treat COVID-19 or other diseases."

Trump's Refusal to Concede and Begin the Transition is Putting Lives at Risk

While President-elect **Joe Biden** is moving forward with transition plans, [President Donald Trump still refuses to accept that he has lost the election](#). Leaders of Biden's coronavirus

advisory board are calling on Trump to share critical Covid-19 data with Biden’s transition team as soon as possible. They and other public health experts stress that the federal government’s delay in starting the transition will hurt efforts to manage and end the pandemic crisis.



Biden-Harris Covid-19 Advisory Board

The Biden coronavirus transition team is barred from consulting with any federal health officials. That means they do not have real-time data on available hospital beds or the status of the National Strategic Stockpile. This includes information about the availability of therapeutic treatment supplies and the amount of protective equipment (PPE). For now,

they are simply relying on data from state and local officials and non-governmental information sources such as the Covid Tracking Project. On Monday, [Biden warned](#) that “more people may die” if the Trump Administration continues to obstruct the smooth transition of power.

“There is no doubt that President Trump’s refusal to share key information with the Biden administration puts countless lives in harm’s way,” said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. “Not sharing information about the crisis shows a disregard for the American people and is unacceptable.”

Despite President-elect Biden’s victory, Government Services Administrator (GSA) **Emily Murphy** has refused to allow the transition to a Biden Administration to begin. The GSA supports the transitions for all new presidents. Her obstruction will hinder the administration’s ability to hit the ground running and threaten the integrity of our national security. [Click here to sign the Alliance’s petition to begin Biden’s transition period immediately.](#)

Medicare Open Enrollment Closes December 7th



With Medicare’s open enrollment period ending on December 7, beneficiaries are encouraged to do a “Medicare Check-up” to ensure their Medicare insurance plan still meets their needs. Even if you don’t think you need drug coverage, or are content with your current plan, evaluating your options could save you money.

Visit [eHealth](#) to learn about all of the coverage options available to you, and compare them to your existing plan to see what best fits your needs. This is a free service and there is no obligation to change your plan or enroll. To speak to a licensed insurance agent at eHealth call 1-888-519-2029 (TTY users: 771) Monday - Friday between 8am - 8pm EST or visit [their website](#).

Medicare open enrollment runs from October 15 to December 7. For more information, visit [Medicare.gov](#).

Administration Attacks the Social Safety Net in its Final Weeks

Although **Donald Trump**'s presidency is coming to a close, his administration is still working to implement [a number of regulations that target people with disabilities, food benefits for the economically disadvantaged and worker protections](#).

On Monday, the Trump administration finalized a regulation that could make it harder for people who apply for Social Security and disability benefits to appeal denials. And last week Social Security Administration (SSA) officials said they are going to increase continuing disability reviews, which are examinations of whether people receiving disability benefits are still disabled. Eligibility standards for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, or food stamps, are also being tightened, which would take food away from [3 million beneficiaries](#).

"These regulations are nothing more than last ditch efforts by the Administration to weaken Social Security and other important programs," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Forcing people with disabilities to prove their eligibility repeatedly and excessively is unnecessary and cruel."

The Alliance wishes all our members a safe and happy Thanksgiving. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) has updated its guidelines for celebrating Thanksgiving, noting that the safest way this year is to celebrate with people in your household who are consistently taking measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 – or to plan a virtual Thanksgiving celebration.

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.