



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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The Alliance wishes you and your family a safe and enjoyable holiday season! Our weekly Friday Alert Newsletter will resume on December 31st.

First Nursing Home Residents and Staff Receive Covid Vaccinations

Just days after the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) advisory panel voted in favor of awarding emergency medical approval to the Pfizer vaccine, seniors started getting their first vaccinations this week at some long-term care facilities. On Wednesday, [90 of the most vulnerable residents and 80 staff members received their first doses of the Pfizer vaccine](#) at a senior living home in Pompano Beach, Florida. A second dose will be required later.



More than 1,100 vaccination clinics at other long-term care facilities across the country are scheduled to launch next week. CVS, Walgreens and other pharmacy retailers have been preparing for this massive undertaking by hiring additional staff to help sort out logistics. [The vast majority of nursing homes in the United States won't start administering the vaccinations until December 21st.](#) That's because many facilities opted to take part in a federal program that uses pharmacy chains, such as CVS and Walgreens, to treat their

residents and staff. By February, it's expected that other seniors living independently – anyone over age 65 – will be able to ask their pharmacist for a vaccination, according to ABC News.

Some states are also waiting to administer Moderna's vaccine, which is expected to gain emergency FDA approval Friday after an FDA advisory panel recommended its use Thursday. If approved, Moderna's vaccine may be administered closer to December 28th.

"It's uplifting that so many older Americans will receive the vaccination as soon as next week," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "However, it will take time to vaccinate all Americans and in the meantime it is critical that everyone continue to wear masks and practice social distancing until the CDC says that is no longer necessary."

Andrew Young joins the Alliance to Get out the Vote in Georgia Runoffs



Ambassador Young

On Monday retirees joined the Alliance for a Tele-Town Hall call with Ambassador **Andrew Young** to help elect **Jon Ossoff** and **Raphael Warnock** to the United States Senate in January. Young, a former U.S. Congressman from Georgia, represented the country's interests at the United Nations during the **Carter** Administration before serving as the Mayor of Atlanta. He answered questions from Alliance members about what they can do to help win both run-offs in Georgia and discussed the importance of the races with President **Roach** and Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. During the call Amb. Young also stressed the importance of protecting pensions.

Ossoff and Warnock are challenging incumbent Republican Senators **David Perdue** and **Kelly Loeffler**, respectively. The early voting period for the two races began on Monday and will

go until December 31st. More than 1,100,000 votes have already been cast, and more than 1.2 million absentee ballot requests have been submitted.

Residents from all states can still help elect Ossoff and Warnock by participating in a union-led phone bank in the weeks leading up to Election Day on January 5th. The next phone bank shift will be tomorrow, December 19th, at 2:00 Eastern Time. Click [here](#) to sign up.

Deal Reached to End Surprise Medical Bills

Key congressional committees have reached a bipartisan agreement on legislation to [protect patients from massive "surprise" medical bills](#). These bills can range anywhere from a few dollars to over \$1,000, and affect uninsured and insured Americans. It has not yet come to a vote, but House Speaker **Nancy Pelosi** (CA) said the measure should be included in a year-end funding package.

Surprise medical bills happen when patients are rushed to an out-of-network hospital, or are simply unaware that a particular doctor or technician does not participate in their insurance plan. Until patients receive a bill after their hospital visit, they have no idea that they will be charged for those portions of their care.

"Surprise medical billing is a problem years in the making," said Executive Director **Fiesta**. "Patients should focus on their health, not have to try and figure out whether providers in a hospital are covered by their insurance plan."

Covid-19 Measures Have Mitigated Flu Outbreaks

Flu season typically occurs during the fall and winter months, spiking between December and February. Health officials have been bracing for a so-called "twindemic" of Covid-19 and seasonal influenza. So far, however, cases of flu in the United States have been significantly lower than

usual, according to New York City hospital counts, [with less than one-third the usual cases during early December](#). The flu kills [12,000 - 61,000](#) Americans in a typical year.

Medical experts believe widespread mask wearing, social distancing and lockdowns in New York to combat the spread of the Covid virus have also reduced the transmission of the flu. Decreased travel, the cancellation of large indoor gatherings, and closing schools also have had an effect. In addition, preliminary data shows that about [70 million adults received the flu shot this year - 10 million more than last year](#).

“While it’s still too early in the season to declare victory over the flu, if we follow the coronavirus prevention guidance from public health officials, we may be able to avoid thousands of deaths and ensure there will be enough hospital space for COVID-19 patients,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Alliance Releases 2020 Activity Report

This year has been especially difficult for older Americans, with hundreds of thousands losing their lives to the pandemic. Alliance members continued fighting for lower drug prices, including affordable Covid-19 treatments and vaccines, funding to protect frontline and health care workers, and enhanced safety for nursing home workers and seniors who rely on nutrition programs.

We also fought to elect pro-retiree candidates who will put the health and well-being of older Americans ahead of wealthy corporations.

This work would not be possible without the support of every member of the Alliance. Please read more about what we accomplished together in our [annual Activity Report](#).