



# FRIDAY ALERT

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## Senior Trump Appointees Remain in Place at Social Security Administration



The Social Security Administration's main campus in Woodlawn, Md.

The chairs of Social Security subcommittees in the House and Senate are calling on President Biden to fire Social Security Administration (SSA) Commissioner **Andrew Saul** and his deputy, **David Black**, immediately. Saul and Black were appointed by former president **Donald Trump** to terms that end in 2025.

There have been several incidents that call into question Saul and Black's leadership.

- In 2020, an SSA [Inspector General report](#) found that the Agency knew that full benefits were not being paid to tens of thousands of Americans but took no action to ensure these beneficiaries received the money they were owed;
- An SSA whistleblower recently came forward saying that Saul and Black were putting illegitimate pressure on SSA judges to wrongfully deny people with disabilities the Social Security benefits they have earned; and
- Stimulus payments for nearly 30 million Social Security beneficiaries have been delayed because the SSA failed to send the IRS the payment information it needed to send stimulus payments [until March 25](#).

“President Biden must protect the people who rely on Social Security from leaders who are not serving the mission of the SSA and the American people,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-

Treasurer of the Alliance. “We call on him to fire Saul and Black and replace them with appointees who understand, respect and support SSA and the millions of Americans who rely on it for the benefits they have earned.”

## **KHN: Democrats Eye Medicare Negotiations to Lower Drug Prices**

By Emmarie Huetteman, *Kaiser Health News*

Democrats, newly in control of Congress and the White House, are united behind an idea that Republican lawmakers and major drugmakers fiercely oppose: empowering the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate the prices of brand-name drugs covered by Medicare.

But they do not have enough votes without Republican support in the Senate for the legislation they hope will lower the price consumers pay for prescription drugs. That raises the possibility that Democrats will use a legislative tactic called reconciliation, as they did to pass President Joe Biden’s covid relief package, or even eliminate the Senate filibuster to keep their promise to voters.

Regardless, Democrats hope to authorize Medicare negotiations on payments for at least some of the most expensive brand-name drugs and to base those prices on the drugs’ clinical benefits. Such a measure could put Republicans in the uncomfortable position of opposing an idea that [most voters from both parties generally support](#).

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## **Marty Walsh is Confirmed As Labor Secretary At a Key Time for Unions**

**Marty Walsh**, a former union leader who most recently served as the mayor of Boston, was [confirmed as Labor Secretary](#) by the U.S. Senate in a [68-29 vote](#) on Monday, becoming the first union member to run the department in over four decades. Walsh previously served 16 years in the Massachusetts statehouse, taking classes at night to earn his college degree. Before he was elected mayor, he led the Boston Building Trades Council. He is a member of the Laborers International Union.



Vice President Kamala Harris (R) ceremonially swore in Labor Secretary Marty Walsh (L) as his partner Lorrie Higgins held a bible Monday.

Labor leaders applauded the appointment enthusiastically, noting that it likely means a new generation of good-paying union jobs, followed by a more secure retirement later; increased hope for a \$15 per hour minimum wage; and the delivery of funding to create a 21st-century infrastructure. Walsh is also expected to ramp up workplace safety standards, following Covid-19 breakouts at food processing plants.

Raising the minimum wage would help older workers: about [1 in 6 workers](#)

[earning the minimum wage are over age 55](#). The wage increase would also provide more revenue for the Social Security Trust Fund, improving its solvency and increasing benefits for these workers when they retire.

“We have, in Marty Walsh, a Secretary of Labor who truly appreciates that the labor movement has been, and continues to be, the leading force in the fight to strengthen Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance.

“Now we need for him to help us make the case for the PRO Act to become the law of the land and ensure all Americans have the right to form a union.”

### **Calls for Postal Banking Gain Momentum**

The coronavirus pandemic and policies imposed by Congress have weakened the Postal Service’s finances, and a growing number of legislators are pushing to allow the Post Office to provide basic banking services to its customers, an idea the Alliance strongly supports.

The idea of postal banking is not new, in fact the Postal Service provided financial and banking services for more than 50 years, from 1911 until 1966.

Postal banking proponents including Senators **Kirsten Gillibrand** (NY) and **Elizabeth Warren** (MA) say that postal banking would provide revenue to USPS and critical services to millions of Americans who were “unbanked” in 2019, meaning that no one in the household had a checking or savings account. It’s estimated that 12 million Americans in these circumstances turn to predatory payday lenders each year for the financial services they need.

### **ACTION NEEDED: Tell Congress to Make Postal Banking a Reality**

“Postal banking is a wonderful idea whose time has come. Let’s help seniors and the USPS at the same time, by sending that message to Congress,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.