



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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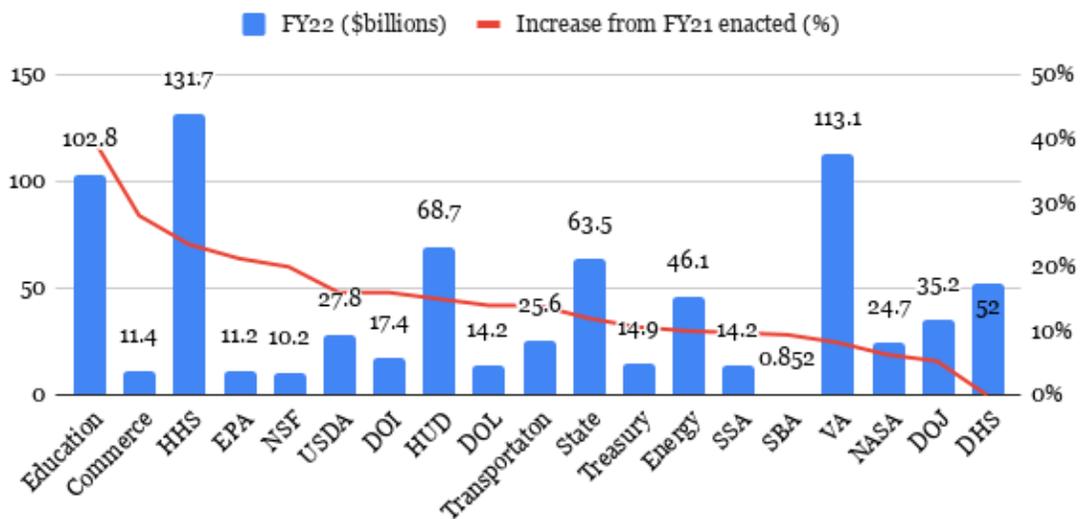
April 16, 2021

White House Budget Includes Increased Funding for SSA, Alzheimer’s Research

President **Biden** unveiled [his first budget request](#) last Friday, and it calls for \$14.2 billion in funding for the Social Security Administration (SSA), an increase of 11% over the current budget.

The budget includes \$895 million in additional funding to strengthen SSA customer service by processing applications more quickly and responding to requests for assistance; and \$75 million in additional funding for outreach to ensure that SSA benefits reach the most vulnerable individuals.

Biden's FY 2022 Non-Defense Discretionary Budget



GovExec

Source: OMB

The budget also asks Congress for increases to other programs that benefit seniors: \$1 billion more than in FY 2021 for nutritional programs from the Department of Agriculture; a 15% increase for the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and an 8.2% increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Overall, the President requested a 23% increase for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. That includes a \$9 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health, with \$6.5 billion proposed for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health to pursue research in diseases such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's. He is seeking a \$1.6 billion increase for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

"Through his COVID-relief bill, the American Jobs Act, and his first budget, President Biden is making older Americans a priority," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "We welcome this, but still have a lot of work ahead to get Congress to pass these important bills and help seniors have a healthier and more secure retirement."

COVID Scams Targeting Seniors Continue Despite a Majority of Seniors Being Vaccinated

The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a parallel outbreak of coronavirus [scams](#), many targeting older Americans.

As of April 13, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) had logged nearly 452,000 consumer complaints related to COVID-19 and stimulus payments, many of them involving fraud or identity theft. These scams have cost consumers more than \$406 million, with a median loss of \$340.

The fraudsters' tricks include phishing emails and texts, fake social media posts, robocalls, impostor schemes and more. They often coincide with the news headlines, adapting their messages and tactics as new medical and economic issues arise.

Some phony websites and email campaigns promise easy and early access to coronavirus shots. Authorities anticipate a fresh wave of stimulus scams as the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act brings another round of relief payments.

House Energy and Commerce Chairman **Frank Pallone, Jr.** (NJ) and Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee Chair **Jan Schakowsky** (IL) released a joint statement Thursday listing [five consumer protection bills](#) that the House of Representatives has passed recently to combat these and related problems. Several target scams aimed at seniors.

"If you receive a text message with an unfamiliar link, reply 'stop' and don't click on the link," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "If you receive an email from someone you do not know that contains an attachment, do NOT click on the attachment. And if you get a request to pay for anything related to the vaccine, you know that is a scam because the vaccine is free."

KHN: Biden Seeks \$400 Billion to Buttress Long-Term Care. A Look at What's at Stake.

By Judith Graham, *Kaiser Health News*

There's widespread agreement that it's important to help older adults and people with disabilities remain independent as long as possible. But are we prepared to do what's necessary, as a nation, to make this possible?

That's the challenge President Joe Biden has put forward with his bold proposal to spend \$400 billion over eight years on home and community-based services, a major part of his \$2 trillion infrastructure plan.

It's a "historic and profound" opportunity to build a stronger framework of services surrounding vulnerable people who need considerable ongoing assistance, said Ai-jen Poo, director of Caring Across Generations, a national group advocating for older adults, individuals with disabilities, families and caregivers.



It comes as the coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and group homes, killing more than 174,000 people and triggering awareness of the need for more long-term care options.

"There's a much greater understanding now that it is not a good thing to be stuck in long-term care institutions" and that community-based care is an "essential alternative, which the vast majority of people would prefer," said Ari Ne'eman, senior research associate at Harvard Law School's Project on Disability.

"The systems we do have are crumbling" due to underfunding and understaffing, and "there has never been a greater opportunity for change than now," said Katie Smith Sloan, president of LeadingAge, at a recent press conference where the president's proposal was discussed. LeadingAge is a national association of more than 5,000 nonprofit nursing homes, assisted living centers, senior living communities and home care providers.

[Click to read more.](#)

Rich Fiesta Addresses United Federation of Teachers Retirees

Rich Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance, spoke Tuesday at the United Federation of Teachers' (UFT) retired teachers virtual chapter membership meeting. Over 900 attendees from across the country participated in the event.

Fiesta covered a wide range of issues including President Biden's plans to expand and strengthen elder care and invest in housing and transportation, as well as legislative efforts to lower the price of prescription drugs and add hearing, vision and dental services to Medicare. He also discussed voting rights and the hundreds of new state bills to create barriers to voting by mail and drop boxes, which were used by millions of seniors during the 2020 election.

"Rich Fiesta superbly connected national issues for our retirees to the state and local concerns we UFTers are facing," said **Tom Murphy**, Retired Teachers Chapter Leader for UFT and an Alliance executive board member. "He notably presented a future oriented program based on recent electoral progress that involved relevant data and opportunities for action."

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.