



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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President Roach Urges House Democrats to Expand Social Security

On Wednesday Alliance **President Robert Roach, Jr.** made the case for expanding Social Security benefits during a meeting of the House of Representatives Democratic Caucus.

President Roach told the representatives that urgent action is needed to strengthen retirement security by increasing Social Security benefits. The number of retirees who are dependent on Social Security for most or all of their income is increasing, in part, due to the decline of traditional pensions.



Chairman Larson speaks during the hearing.

Earlier in the week, the House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee held a hearing on the need to expand Social Security. Five Social Security beneficiaries told the Representatives what Social Security means to them, and how even a small benefit increase of \$20 a month would help them purchase enough groceries for their families each month.

Chairman John Larson reminded the subcommittee that Congress has not taken action to improve Social Security benefits for 50 years, and current benefits “are inadequate, unfair, and in many cases discriminatory, because of systemic economic inequities.”

Government Panel: Higher Drug Prices, not More Prescriptions, Are Driving Higher Medicare Spending

Medicare’s spending on prescription drugs increased by 26% between 2013 and 2018 -- and high drug prices are to blame -- according to [a new report](#) from the Medicare Advisory Payment Commission (MedPAC).

The expert report rebuts the pharmaceutical industry's claim that higher Medicare spending was driven by more prescriptions being filled, not the price of those drugs. Additionally, Medicare Part D rebates did not offset the higher drug prices.

"This study confirms again what every retiree knows: Americans are paying the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. It doesn't have to be this way," said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. "Patients and taxpayers will save \$500 billion if Congress passes legislation allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prices. We know that drug price negotiation works, and it is high time that Congress put patients and the American public ahead of pharmaceutical corporation profits."

U.S. Supreme Court Dismisses Challenge to the Affordable Care Act

In a 7-2 [decision](#), the Supreme Court rejected a lawsuit brought by the state of Texas to overturn the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This is the third time that the Supreme Court has upheld the law which provides health insurance for millions of Americans.

Justice Breyer, writing for the majority, said that the plaintiffs did not have standing in the case since they could not demonstrate they had been harmed by the law.

"Today is a great day," said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Joe Peters, Jr.** "Millions of Americans will be able to keep their health insurance and Americans with pre-existing health conditions will not be denied or charged more for their coverage. The ACA closed the prescription drug doughnut hole and provides free wellness checks and health screenings for all Medicare beneficiaries."

Device Makers Have Funneled Billions to Orthopedic Surgeons Who Use Their Products By Fred Schulte and Elizabeth Lucas, *Kaiser Health News*

Dr. Kingsley R. Chin was little more than a decade out of Harvard Medical School when sales of his spine surgical implants took off.

Chin has patented more than 40 pieces of such hardware, including doughnut-shaped plastic cages, titanium screws and other products used to repair spines — generating \$100 million for his company SpineFrontier, according to government officials.

Yet SpineFrontier's success arose not from the quality of its goods, these officials say, but because it paid kickbacks to surgeons who agreed to implant the highly profitable devices in hundreds of patients.

In March 2020, the Department of Justice accused Chin and SpineFrontier of illegally funneling more than \$8 million to nearly three dozen spine surgeons through "sham consulting fees" that paid them handsomely for doing little or no work. Chin had no comment on the civil suit, one of more than a dozen he has faced as a spine surgeon and businessman. Chin and SpineFrontier have yet to file a response in court.

Medical industry payments to orthopedists and neurosurgeons who operate on the spine have risen sharply, despite government accusations that some of these transactions may violate federal anti-kickback laws, drive up health care spending and put patients at risk of serious harm, a KHN investigation has found. These payments come in various forms, from royalties for helping to

design implants to speakers' fees for promoting devices at medical meetings to stock holdings in exchange for consulting work, according to government data.

[Click here to read more.](#)

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.