



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Retirees Applaud President Biden's Forceful Call for Action to Lower Prescription Drug Prices

On Thursday **President Biden** made remarks from the East Room of the White House to urge Congress to pass legislation that would allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices, a policy the Alliance has been advocating for since its launch in 2001.

The President is also calling for a cap on out of pocket spending for Medicare beneficiaries, and spoke of his own mother's difficulty paying for her prescriptions as she aged.

"Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs and older Americans bear the brunt of it. Our recent [poll of voters age 65 and above](#) found that 87% of seniors — Republicans, Democrats and Independents — overwhelmingly support allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prices," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

"We know the pharmaceutical corporations will do everything they can to prevent Medicare from negotiating lower prices, as they have in the past," Fiesta added. "Having President Biden so personally involved in this fight is a significant and welcome development."

Medicare drug price negotiation was included in the \$3.5 trillion budget resolution passed by the Senate this week. The framework also includes adding dental, hearing and vision benefits to Medicare, as well as funding to expand home health care and services for seniors and people with disabilities. In addition, it increases wages and benefits for caregiving workers. The next step is for Congressional committees to work out the details and then move the full legislation for a vote this fall.

"The budget resolution not only includes Medicare drug price negotiation and expanded Medicare benefits, it means that more older Americans and people with disabilities can receive care safely at home, rather than in an institution," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "It would also help the caregiving workforce who provide these critical services every day."

Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal Passes Senate



Earlier in the week on Tuesday, after much debate, the Senate passed a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package on a [69-30 vote](#), with 19 Republicans joining the united 50 Democrats. The package included funding for traditional infrastructure projects, such as repairing roads and bridges, improving airports, as well as internet access and working to modernize the passenger rail system, all while creating valuable jobs.

“We must pass both the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill and the \$3.5 trillion human infrastructure bill in order to

‘build back better’ and fulfill President Biden’s priorities,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance.

Alliance Says “Expand, Don’t Cut” Social Security as Anniversary Approaches

With Social Security’s 86th anniversary coming up tomorrow -- Saturday, August 14 -- the Arizona Alliance continued the summer celebrations of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid on Thursday. This year the Arizona chapter’s event featured the virtual presentation of the 2021 Congressman **Raúl M. Grijalva** Champion of Social Security Award to retired teacher and education activist **Barbara Matteson**. Rep. Grijalva joined the event to bestow the honor that is named for him.

“Half of all seniors rely on Social Security for at least 50 percent of their income,” said Executive Director Fiesta, who also joined the event from Washington, DC. “We should build on its success by expanding it, so that current and future retirees can retire with dignity. We must fight any attempts, such as the TRUST Act, that would pave the way to cut it.”

The Texas and South Carolina Alliance chapters also celebrated Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid’s birthdays yesterday and today, respectively.

KHN: Why Doesn’t Medicare Cover Services So Many Seniors Need?

By Julie Rovner, *Kaiser Health News*

Sorry, Joe Namath. Despite what you keep saying in those TV ads, under Medicare, seniors are not “entitled to eliminate copays and get dental care, dentures, eyeglasses, prescription drug coverage, in-home aides, unlimited transportation and home-delivered meals, all at no additional cost.” But if Democratic lawmakers in Congress have their say, seniors could soon be entitled to some of those services.

Namath’s commercial is hawking private Medicare Advantage plans, which frequently do offer benefits traditional Medicare does not — in exchange for being limited to certain doctors and hospitals. “Traditional” Medicare does not cover many benefits used overwhelmingly by its

beneficiaries, including most vision, dental and hearing care, and drug coverage is available only by purchasing a separate insurance plan — Medicare Part D.



But Democrats in the House and Senate plan to try to change that as soon as this fall. On Monday, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer released an [outline of a coming budget bill](#) that includes a directive to the Senate Finance Committee to expand Medicare “to include dental, vision, hearing benefits.” The catch — all the Democrats in the Senate and almost all in the House will have to agree on the entire budget bill for it to become law.

[Read more here.](#)

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national advocacy organization with 4.4 million members that is working for retirement security for all Americans. www.retiredamericans.org @activeretirees