# Alliance forRetired Americans 

## Congressional Voting Record

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& 108^{\text {th }} \text { Congress, } 2^{\text {nd }} \text { Session } \\
& \text { January } 2004 \text { - December } 2004 \\
& \text { A Special Report on Legislation } \\
& \text { Vital to American Retirees }
\end{aligned}
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Congressional Voting Record
$108^{\text {th }}$ Congress, $2^{\text {nd }}$ Session
January 2004 —December 2004

The year 2004 saw national political focus on congressional activity take a back seat to the presidential election. As busy as Congress was in 2003 on retiree issues with the Medicare prescription drug legislation, 2004 did not have as high a level of activity. Nonetheless, Congress did address key issues such as government spending, pension protections, and veterans' health care.

The results in many instances were not senior-friendly. Budget deficits continue at record high levels, which threaten the financial stability of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. Congressional actions in 2004 exacerbated the skyrocketing federal deficits. As the nation approaches the retirement of the baby boomers in great numbers, the American fiscal house is not in order. The coming years will see even more pressure on the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds at a time when they will be needed most to pay promised benefits. In spite of the mounting budget problems, many in Congress and President Bush are actively advocating the privatization of Social Security. Privatization would only magnify the federal deficit, by as much as $\$ 1$ trillion during the next ten years.

In addition to compounding the nation's fiscal problems in 2004, Congress failed to enact legislation to provide tough pension and retirement security laws that punish corporate wrongdoers and protect the savings from a lifetime of hard work. Loose rules and loose enforcement have threatened the retirement security of millions of Americans. Many retirees in the steel and airline industries have seen their pensions cut or even eliminated because of deliberate underfunding of pension plans or under the guise of bankruptcy laws. It is time for laws that enforce pension promises made.

The many flaws of the 2003 Medicare prescription drug law went unaddressed as well. The touted so-called "discount cards" were poorly advertised and undersubscribed. Americans still pay the highest prescription drug prices in the world and seniors bear the greatest burden. Yet Congress did nothing to stop the ban on the authority of Medicare to negotiate for lower prices when the drug program takes effect in 2006. With drug prices increasing at double-digit inflation rates each year, more seniors will pay $100 \%$ of their drug costs after $\$ 2,250$ in annual drug spending. It is time that Congress enacts a Medicare prescription drug program that benefits seniors, not the pharmaceutical and insurance companies.

This Voting Record reflects how committed our elected representatives are to retirees and older Americans. Use it to educate yourself on where your elected representatives stand. Get active today and help create an America that protects the health and economic security of seniors, strengthens families and builds safe and thriving communities.


How To Read This Record

| Democrat (D) Republican (R) Independent (I) | $\mathbf{O}$ | Not Eligible Member |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| $\boldsymbol{J}$ | Voted With Alliance Policy | $\mathbf{+}$ | Announced For |
| $\boldsymbol{X}$ | Voted Against Alliance Policy | - | Announced Against |
| $\mathbf{S}$ | Speaker Did Not Vote | $\mathbf{A L}$ | At-Large |
| $\mathbf{P}$ | Present | The number before each name indicates Congressional District. |  |
| $\boldsymbol{?}$ | Did Not Vote | $\mathbf{1 0 0 \%}$ | Best Score Possible |

The following is a list of eight key votes selected as representative of the votes of critical importance to retirees taken by the U.S. Senate:

## 1 Budget Priorities

Sen. Daschle, D-SD, introduced an amendment to the budget resolution that would increase funding for veterans' medical care and lower the national debt by reducing the President's tax breaks for taxpayers with incomes in excess of $\$ 1$ million a year. The changes would redirect tax cuts weighted toward the wealthiest Americans in favor of other budget priorities such as health care. The amendment failed 44-53. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. Con. Res. 95, Roll Call No. 34, March 9, 2004.

## 2 Budget Discipline

Sen. Feingold, D-WI, introduced an amendment to the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution that would require that either new revenues or spending cuts pay for future tax cuts. This pay-as-you-go amendment better protected the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds against spending without offsetting revenue increases. The amendment passed 51-48. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. Con. Res. 95, Roll Call No. 38, March 10, 2004.

## (3) Budget Fairness

Sen. Nelson, D-FL, introduced an amendment to the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution that would create a reserve fund for an increase in veterans' medical care by eliminating abusive tax loopholes. Experts project a greatly increased demand for veterans' health care during the next ten years. The amendment failed 46-51. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. Con. Res. 95, Roll Call No. 40, March 10, 2004.

## 4 Anti-Retiree Budget

The Senate passed the annual budget resolution for fiscal year 2005. The resolution sets spending and revenue guidelines. This budget cuts domestic spending programs by $\$ 113$ billion over five years while accelerating and making permanent tax cuts that help only the wealthiest Americans. This fiscal policy threatens the financial stability of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. The resolution passed 51-45. A NO vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. Con. Res. 95, Roll Call No. 58, March 12, 2004.

## (5) Asbestos Victims' Rights

The Senate refused to limit debate on legislation that severely limited the rights of asbestos victims to fair compensation. The proposed legislation, designed to help insurance companies and asbestos companies, would have left a proposed asbestos victims trust fund $\$ 40$ billion short of what experts believe is necessary to pay claims. Due to the long latency of asbestos related diseases, many victims are retired by the time a disease manifests itself. The motion to limit debate failed 50-47. Sixty votes are needed to limit debate. A NO vote is the proretiree vote. S. 2290, Roll Call No. 69, April 22, 2004.

## (6) Overtime Protections

Sen. Harkin, D-IA, offered an amendment to the Labor Department funding bill that would prohibit enforcement of rules that reduced the eligibility for overtime of more than six million workers. Older Americans often return to the work force in order to earn income to meet their daily needs. The amendment passed 52-47. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. 1637, Roll Call No. 79, May 4, 2004.

## (7) Veterans' Health Care

Sen. Daschle, D-SD, offered a motion to the Defense Department authorization bill that assured funding for veterans' health care each fiscal year in order to cover increases in population and inflation. Much of this funding would otherwise have to come out of the Medicare Trust Fund. The Senate rejected the motion to waive the Budget Act 49-48. Sixty votes are necessary for a waiver. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. 2400, Roll Call No. 145, June 23, 2004.

## 8 National Debt Increase

Sen. Frist, R-TN, sponsored a bill that would increase the statutory limit on the public debt by $\$ 800$ billion. Tax cuts, benefiting only the wealthiest Americans, during the past four years have greatly increased the national debt. Interest payments on a skyrocketing national debt threaten the financial stability of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. The bill passed 52-44. A NO vote is the pro-retiree vote. S. 2986, Roll Call No. 213, November 17, 2004.

## Senate Votes




The following is a list of eight key votes selected as representative of the votes of critical importance to retirees taken by the U.S. House of Representatives:

## 1 Pro-Retiree Budget

Rep. Spratt, D-SC, offered a substitute amendment to the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution. The substitute amendment would establish pay-as-you-go rules so that any tax cuts would have to be offset by revenues. The substitute amendment better protected the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds from the spending of their funds without offsetting revenue increases. The amendment failed 194-232. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H. Con. Res. 393, Roll Call No. 91, March 25, 2004.

## 2 Anti-Retiree Budget

The House passed the annual budget resolution for fiscal year 2005. The resolution sets spending and revenue guidelines. This budget cuts domestic spending programs by $\$ 120$ billion over five years while accelerating and making permanent tax cuts that help only the wealthiest Americans. This fiscal policy threatens the financial stability of the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. The resolution passed 215-212. A NO vote is the pro-retiree vote. H. Con. Res. 393, Roll Call No. 92, March 25, 2004.

## (3) Pension Stability

Rep. Andrews, D-NJ, moved that the House send a pension bill back to the House-Senate conference committee with instructions that the bill include more relief for the pension plans and beneficiaries of smaller employers, many of which are in the construction trades. The instructions would give such plans the ability to stabilize funding obligations and keep plans operating. The motion failed 195-217. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 3108, Roll Call No. 116, April 2, 2004.

## 4 LIHEAP Funding

Rep. Sanders, I-VT, offered an amendment to the Health and Human Services funding bill that would increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by $\$ 26$ million. Older Americans often rely on this vital program to pay for home heating costs. The amendment passed 305-114. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 5006, Roll Call No. 427, September 8, 2004.

## (5) Pension Disclosure

Rep. Miller, D-CA, introduced an amendment to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) funding bill that would permit the agency to notify pension plan participants of underfunding in their plans. The PBGC insures private pensions through premiums paid by pension plans. Current law permits the agency to withhold disclosure of underfunding. The amendment passed 268-148. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 5006, Roll Call No. 429, September 8, 2004.

## (6) Overtime Protections

Rep. Obey, D-WI, offered an amendment to the Labor Department funding bill that would prohibit enforcement of rules that reduced the eligibility for overtime of more than six million workers. Older Americans often return to the work force in order to earn income to meet their daily needs. The amendment passed 223-193. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 5006, Roll Call No. 434, September 9, 2004.

## (7) Medicare Data Disclosure

Rep. Stark, D-CA, introduced an amendment to the Health and Human Services Department funding bill that would reduce available funds to the department by $\$ 84,500$. The Medicare administrator had forbidden department staff to release information to Congress on the true cost of the 2003 Medicare prescription law. The proposed funding cut represents the proportional amount of the Medicare administrator's salary during the previous fiscal year. The amendment failed 195-216. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 5006, Roll Call No. 437, September 9, 2004.

## 8 Cash Balance Pensions

Rep. Sanders, I-VT, introduced an amendment to the Treasury Department funding bill that would prohibit the federal government from overturning a federal court decision which ruled in favor of older workers. The case arose because IBM changed its pension plan to a cash balance plan. Over eight million workers have had their pensions reduced because of conversions to cash balance plans while another fourteen million are at risk. The amendment passed 237-162. A YES vote is the pro-retiree vote. H.R. 5025, Roll Call No. 458, September 21, 2004.

## House Votes






Alliance Position
Pennsylvania

1. Brady (D)
?. Fattah (D)
2. English (R)
3. Hart (R)
4. Peterson (R)
5. Gerlach (R)
6. Weldon (R)
7. Greenwood (R)
8. Shuster (R)
9. Sherwood (R)
10. Kanjorski (D)
11. Murtha (D)
12. Hoeffel (D)
13. Doyle (D)
14. Toomey (R)
15. Pitts (R)
16. Holden (D)
17. Murphy (R)
18. Platts (R)
Rhode Island
I. Kennedy (D)
$\therefore$ Langevin (D)
South Carolina

| 1. Brown (R) | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | X | $X$ | $X$ | 0\% | 3\% |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 2. Wilson (R) | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | 0\% | 4\% |
| 3. Barrett (R) | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | 0\% | 6\% |
| 4. DeMint (R) | $X$ | $X$ | ? | $X$ | $X$ | $X$ | X | ? | 0\% | 9\% |
| j. Spratt (D) | $\checkmark$ |  |  |  | J |  | $\checkmark$ | - | 100\% | 100\% |
| j. Clyburn (D) |  |  | ) | $\checkmark$ |  | ? | $\checkmark$ | $\checkmark$ | 100\% | 97\% |
| South Dakota |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4L Herseth (D) | 0 | 0 | 0 | $\checkmark$ | , |  |  |  | 100\% | $0 \%$ |

## Iennessee



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## Vermont

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## Virginia

1. Davis, J. (R)
2. Schrock (R)
3. Scott (D)
4. Forbes (R)
5. Goode (R)
6. Goodlatte (R)
7. Cantor (R)
8. Moran (D)
9. Boucher (D)
10. Wolf (R)
11. Davis, T. (R)



Get Active! Make a Difference! Vote on Election Day!

