



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Alliance Takes More Action to Protect Voting Rights

The Alliance called on the U.S. Election Assistance Commission ([EAC](#)) on Thursday to stop permitting state elections offices to require that people provide their full Social Security numbers when submitting a voter registration form, explaining in a [public comment letter](#) that such requirements violate federal laws that protect the right to vote and prevent identity theft and fraud.

“The U.S. Election Commission has allowed at least four states to violate the U.S. Constitution and several federal laws by requiring the collection of full Social Security numbers on their voter registration forms,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, referring to Tennessee, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Virginia. “This practice creates a burden for Americans trying to exercise their constitutional right to vote and also puts them at a higher risk of identity theft, financial scams and fraud.”

In addition, last Friday the Texas Alliance sent [a demand letter to Texas Secretary of State John B. Scott](#) stating that his decision to limit the number of voter registration forms his office provides to the Texas Alliance and other voter registration organizations is a violation of the National Voter Registration Act (“NVRA”).

The letter stated that Scott’s decision is a change from the former practice of providing voter registration forms to voter registration organizations based upon the organization’s needs.

In response to the letter, copies of voter registration forms were made available last weekend, just days before the deadline to register for the March 1 Texas primary elections.

“Limiting access to voter registration forms is yet another way that the state of Texas has made it harder to vote,” said **Gene Lantz**, President of the Texas Alliance. “Saying that the price of paper has gone up, which is one excuse that has been [reported](#), when the state has a [\\$7.85 billion surplus](#), just does not make sense.”

## Key Senator Still Pushing for Legislation to Lower Drug Prices

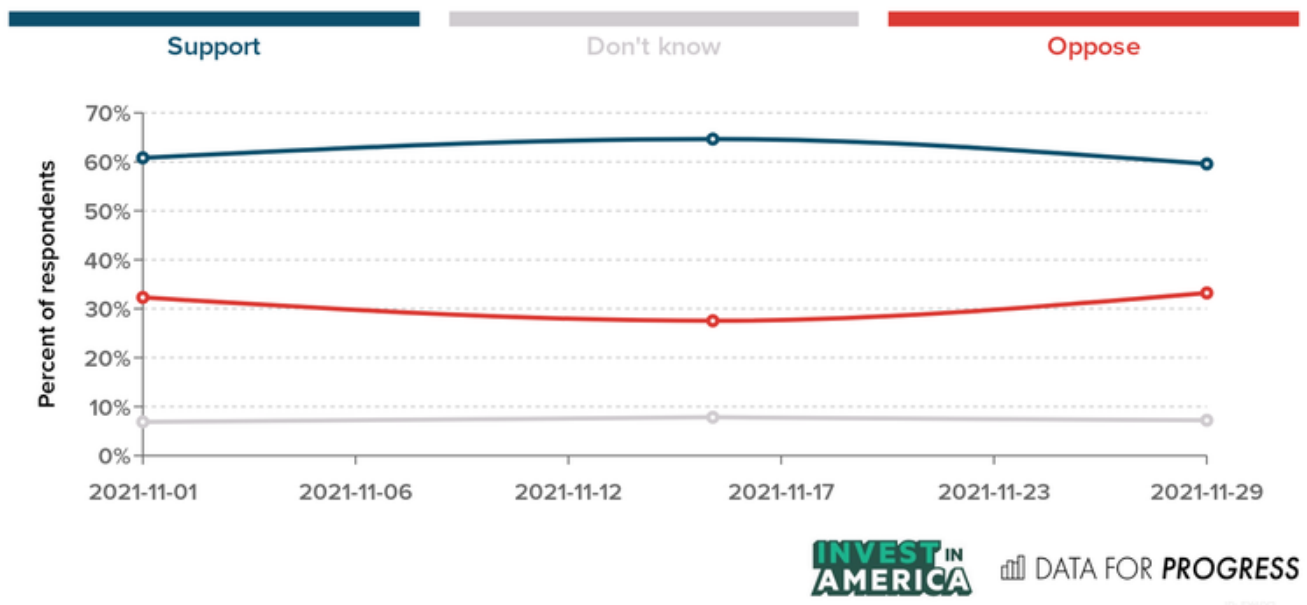
Senate Finance Committee Chairman **Ron Wyden** (OR) told *Bloomberg News* this week that a new version of the Build Back Better Act [could be reintroduced](#) with a focus on lowering prescription drug costs, expanding access to health care and increasing clean energy tax credits. The previous version of the legislation was blocked last year after Sen. **Joe Manchin** (WV) objected to the overall cost of the bill.

However, Sen. Manchin has expressed support for allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug pricing, increasing the likelihood that a more focused bill could pass. Manchin's vote is necessary for Democrats to pass the bill through a narrow Senate majority without Republican support.

## The Build Back Better Act Has Remained Popular Over Time

The Build Back Better Act is a proposal to invest \$1.75 trillion over the next ten years to better fund long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities, expand Medicare coverage to include hearing, invest in clean energy, extend tax credits for families with children, and provide subsidies for child care.

Based on what you know now, do you support or oppose the Build Back Better Act?



The American public [strongly favors](#) the health care proposals in the stalled Build Back Better legislation, including requiring Medicare to negotiate lower prices on certain prescription drugs; a \$35 per month cap on insulin costs; and expanding Medicare to cover hearing care, including hearing aids.

“If Build Back Better must be scaled back, it is important that we keep the provisions that lower drug prices,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary -Treasurer of the Alliance.

### Nursing Home Staff Shortage Worsens as the Pandemic Continues

Staff members of nursing homes across the country continue to [quit in droves](#) as a result of low wages and poor working conditions during the pandemic.

Poor working conditions and lack of COVID-19 protections in long term care facilities have pushed many staffers to retire early or look for employment elsewhere. Some workers have left in search of higher-paying jobs with more benefits. Low and minimum-wage positions constitute a substantial amount of the nursing home workforce.

Nursing home leaders and unions representing nursing home staff expect the shortages to continue even as the Omicron variant wanes. Community college enrollment in skilled nursing courses has dropped to half the level it was before the pandemic. Of those still training to be nursing assistants, many are opting for higher-paying work as travel nurses or home health aides rather than positions within nursing homes.



The shortage of nursing home workers also signals trouble for [America's aging population](#). By the year 2030, all 70 million members of the Baby Boomer generation will be over the age of 65. Without appropriate levels of staff in the nation's long term care facilities, seniors could face lower standards of care and a lack of available nursing home beds.

"We already know some important things we can do as a country to protect America's nursing home labor force," said **Robert Roach**,

**Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "Better wages and better working conditions will keep nursing homes well-staffed for years to come."

"Allowing more seniors to receive the care they need at home, as proposed in the Build Back Better Act, is part of the solution," President Roach added.

### **KHN: Why Medicare Doesn't Pay for Rapid At-Home Covid Tests**

By Michelle Andrews

What group is especially vulnerable to the ravages of covid-19 even if fully vaccinated and boosted? Seniors. And who will have an especially tough time getting free at-home covid tests under the Biden administration's plan? Yes, seniors.

As of Jan. 15, [private insurers will cover the cost](#) of eight at-home rapid covid tests each month for their members — for as long as the public health emergency lasts.

Finding the tests will be hard enough, but Medicare beneficiaries face an even bigger hurdle: The administration's [new rule doesn't apply to them](#).

It turns out that the laws governing traditional Medicare don't provide for coverage of self-administered diagnostic tests, which is precisely what the rapid antigen tests are and why they are an important tool for containing the pandemic.

[Read more here.](#)