



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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February 11, 2022

Alliance Cheers House Passage of Bipartisan Postal Reform Bill

On Wednesday the U.S. House of Representatives passed [H.R. 3076, the 2021 Postal Reform Act](#), on a bipartisan [342-92](#) vote, repealing the Congressional mandate that the United States Postal Service (USPS) spend billions of dollars every year to prefund retiree health care. The Postal Service would instead pay these costs on a yearly basis, as other government agencies and corporations do, saving nearly \$50 billion over 10 years. In addition, the bill would mandate that the USPS continue to deliver the mail at least six days each week.



The Alliance for Retired Americans, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), the National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU), the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), and the AFL-CIO all support the legislation.

Majority Leader **Chuck Schumer** (NY) said he will hold a vote on the bill in the Senate as soon as possible. White House officials have said that President **Biden** would then sign it into law, putting

the Postal Service on more solid financial footing.

APWU and the Alliance are asking members to help by **calling your Senators at 844-402-1001** and **urging them to vote "YES" on The Postal Service Reform Act of 2022**. Tell them that passage of the Postal Reform Act of 2022 will help solve many of the USPS financial challenges, is fair to active and retired postal workers, and is a big step toward strengthening and preserving our public Postal Service.

"Older Americans rely on the U.S. Postal Service for at-home delivery of medications and important mail six days a week," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "It is an institution that has served our country since its founding, and it is as important today as it ever was."

Census Report Highlights Older Households' Sources of Income

While Social Security makes up the largest share of most older adults' incomes, other sources also provide earnings to people 65 and older. A new [report](#) from the United States Census Bureau

analyzed older households' sources of income, the amounts, and how much each source contributed to total household income. The analysis relied upon data from the nationally representative 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), which reflected respondents' answers about their incomes from 2017.

The report examined six types of income primarily earned by people aged 65 or older, including Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), pension and retirement account income, property income, earnings and other income.

The average total income for households with only people aged 65 or over was \$41,830 in 2017. The average Social Security income for those households was \$18,250, with Social Security providing 57.5% of overall income.

The report found that 20.4% of adults 65+ still worked.

As expected, lower-income households relied primarily on program income sources such as Social Security and SSI. Meanwhile, higher-income households were reported to receive more of their income from pensions, retirement accounts and assets held outside of a retirement account.

“The data is a useful reminder about how much of seniors' income comes from Social Security and is important for determining what we need to do to improve retirement security,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “By strengthening and expanding Social Security and continuing to defend pensions from attack, we can help ensure that seniors will enjoy a dignified retirement after a lifetime of hard work.”

“Of course, we must also get health care and prescription drug costs under control,” he added.

According to [Stat](#), the out-of-pocket costs that Medicare enrollees faced at the pharmacy counter accounted for approximately 12% of their [median income as of 2019](#) — and that did not even account for other out-of-pocket medical expenditures such as drug plan and other insurance plan premiums, or for treatment of many other acute or chronic illnesses.

For Older Patients, Exercise Could Speed Recovery Following Hospitalization



Even though bed rest is commonly prescribed for older adults recovering from a hospital stay, many health care professionals are highlighting the risks associated with such inactivity. In one [study on older hospital patients](#) from 2008, scientists found that just 10 days of bed rest resulted in a substantial loss of patients' strength and power. The loss of physical strength can also drastically weaken a senior's mobility.

Now, [a new study](#) from JAMA Internal Medicine found that in-hospital exercise programs may be the key in helping seniors regain their strength before they return home. In the study, researchers in Spain divided 200 older hospital patients into two groups. One group followed an exercise program for three days while the other group received bed rest in the same period of time.

While patients who were prescribed bed rest reported limited gains in physical performance and pain, those who participated in the exercise program experienced far less pain and twice the physical performance gains. Although the results suggest that exercise can help improve an older patient's mobility after hospitalization, the authors of the study warned that "improvement in activities of daily living in older or frail patients requires a more intensive approach than merely promoting mobility."

"The study is a strong indicator that exercise helps older patients to return to their normal routines more quickly," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "There are also other ways that seniors can maintain their autonomy, like [setting up home improvements to prevent falls](#)."

***Kaiser Health News* — Health Care Paradox: Medicare Penalizes Dozens of Hospitals It Also Gives Five Stars**

By Jordan Rau

The federal government has penalized 764 hospitals — including more than three dozen it simultaneously rates as among the best in the country — for having the highest numbers of patient infections and potentially avoidable complications.

The penalties — a 1% reduction in Medicare payments over 12 months — are based on the experiences of Medicare patients discharged from the hospital between July 2018 and the end of 2019, before the pandemic began in earnest. The punishments, which the Affordable Care Act requires be assessed on the worst-performing 25% of general hospitals each year, are intended to make hospitals focus on reducing bedsores, hip fractures, blood clots, and the cohort of infections that before covid-19 were the biggest scourges in hospitals. Those include surgical infections, urinary tract infections from catheters, and antibiotic-resistant germs like MRSA.

This year's list of penalized hospitals includes Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles; Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago; a Cleveland Clinic hospital in Avon, Ohio; a Mayo Clinic hospital in Red Wing, Minnesota; and a Mayo hospital in Phoenix. Paradoxically, all those hospitals have five stars, the best rating, on [Medicare's Care Compare website](#).

[Read more here.](#)

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.