



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## President Biden Addresses Many of Retirees' Highest Priorities at State of the Union

President **Joe Biden** delivered his [first State of the Union address](#) Tuesday, and he included several initiatives designed to improve the lives of older Americans. Noting that Americans continue to pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, he again pushed for allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, as the Veterans Administration and Medicaid programs do. He also said that the nation needs to cap the cost of insulin at \$35 per month.

“Hopefully, 2022 will be the year when we finally see legislative action that substantially lowers drug prices,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Congress should take the \$450 billion in savings from drug negotiations and direct Medicare to use it to expand benefits for vision, dental and hearing.”



*President Biden greeting members of Congress Tuesday night*

President Biden also called on Congress to pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the **John Lewis** Voting Rights Advancement Act to ensure that seniors' voices are heard at the ballot box – a high priority given that legislators in 19 states have enacted 34 laws with provisions that severely restrict voting access.

In addition, President Biden called for passing the PRO Act, which will allow workers to join a union without facing corporations' unnecessary impediments, and for increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, which would mean higher Social Security benefits for seniors upon retirement.

“The House has already passed bills that would lower prescription drug prices, protect voting rights, make the PRO Act the law of the land and raise the minimum wage. We call on the U.S. Senate to listen to President Biden and follow suit,” said **Richard Fiesta**, executive director of the Alliance.

## **Biden Unveils Plans to Support Poorest-Performing Nursing Homes**

During his address, President **Biden** also announced plans to [boost staffing and oversight for nursing homes](#) across the country. Nursing homes became an epicenter of COVID-19 transmission during the pandemic, with elevated levels of infections and deaths reported even after the rollout of vaccinations. The nation has seen [200,000-plus](#) nursing home residents and staff die since the pandemic began two years ago.

[Increased staffing levels](#) have proven to be a highly significant factor in limiting covid cases and deaths, and the Administration has now responded by allowing the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to propose minimum staffing levels within long term care facilities.

Nursing homes are also encouraged to limit disease spread by shifting to single occupancy rooms, while phasing out rooms with three or more residents. The President called on Congress to provide \$500 million for health and safety inspections in nursing homes.

Finally, the President vowed to crack down on nursing home facilities and investors with a track record of safety concerns. This includes harsher penalties for certain areas of poor performance, as well as the creation of a database that would track owners and operators across the country to highlight their safety records.

“Nursing home residents are still one of the groups at highest risk for severe COVID-19 infection,” said President **Roach**. “We welcome the President’s plan to ensure that the most vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities are given the resources and attention they deserve.”

## **Even Sen. McConnell Reprimands Sen. Rick Scott over Drastic Social Security, Medicare Proposals**

In a rare [public admonishment](#) of one of his top lieutenants, Sen. GOP Leader **Mitch McConnell** (KY) rebuked Sen. **Rick Scott's** (FL) plan that “sunsets” Social Security and Medicare within five years. Sunsetting is a legal provision under which a program is automatically terminated at the end of a fixed period unless renewed by legislative action. Sen. Scott’s so-called 11-point Rescue America Plan would sunset all federal programs after five years. The plan also includes voter suppression proposals similar to those that several states have already enacted.

Scott is the chairman of the National Republican Senate Committee, which is in charge of developing Republican strategy and recruiting candidates to take back the Senate.

“This plan should still serve as a warning about what the agenda for Social Security and Medicare could look like if the GOP retakes the Senate in November,” said executive director **Fiesta**. “No wonder the plan is endorsed by **Newt Gingrich**, who advocated for Medicare to ‘wither on the vine’ as far back as the 1990s.”

## **Social Security Administration Fights Fraud with National “Slam the Scam Day”**

Chances are someone you know has received an ominous call or message from someone pretending to be from the government, alleging that your information has been compromised or demanding immediate payment. Ignore it. This is just one of the tips that the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General (SSA OIG) is sharing to warn consumers about scams through a National [“Slam the Scam Day”](#) taking place on Thursday, March 10.

The initiative, which began in 2020 to combat Social Security-related scams, is now expanding to include other government imposter scams. The scams often involve someone claiming to be an SSA or other government employee who asks for personal information, demands payment, or makes threats. These scams are primarily carried out over the telephone, but perpetrators may also use email, text messages, social media, or U.S. mail.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), from January through September 2021, consumers lost more than [\\$331 million](#) to government imposter scams.



**?** Buying a gift card to pay someone?

**!** **STOP. It's a scam!**

**!** Gift cards are for gifts.

Do NOT use a gift card to pay: the IRS or Social Security, tech support, a family member in trouble, ransom or to avoid arrest or deportation, a member of the military, or to keep your utilities on.

Report gift card scams at: **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**



SSA OIG urges everyone to be cautious of any contact supposedly from a government agency telling you about a problem you don't recognize and provides the following tips: Real government officials will NEVER:

- threaten arrest or legal action against you unless you immediately send money;
- promise to increase your benefits or resolve a problem if you pay a fee or move your money into a protected account;
- require payment with gift cards, prepaid debit cards, wire transfer, Internet currency, or by mailing cash; or
- try to gain your trust by providing fake "documentation," false "evidence," or the name of a real government official.

"The best ways to avoid falling prey to these types of scams are to hang up the phone or delete suspicious texts and emails without responding," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance.

Report Social Security-related scams and fraud online at <https://oig.ssa.gov>. Other government imposter scams may be reported to the Federal Trade Commission at <https://www.ftc.gov/scams>.