



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

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Alliance Stands with Victims of Texas Elementary School Shooting and Their Families

Just ten days after a mass shooting in Buffalo, Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.**, expressed his condolences after at least 19 elementary school children and two teachers were [murdered at Robb Elementary School](#) in Uvalde, Texas.

In condemning the carnage, President Roach said, “The members of the Alliance join with all Americans who were devastated by this most recent, terrible gun violence in Texas in calling for an end to the heinous bloodshed. Our thoughts are once again with the deceased, the injured and all of their loved ones. We send our deepest wishes for healing to everyone affected by this senseless attack, this time at an elementary school.”

“We need the United States Senate to take appropriate and aggressive action on gun safety immediately. We must protect American citizens, families, workers, teachers, and especially children, from this incessant violence. And we must act without delay to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill.”

Social Security Administration Levied Enormous Fines on the Poor and Disabled

According to [The Washington Post](#), attorneys in charge of a little-known anti-fraud program run by the Social Security Administration (SSA) Inspector General’s (IG) office set inflated fees in motion during the **Trump** administration. SSA then levied unprecedented fines against poor and disabled Social Security beneficiaries without due process.

The Inspector General’s office investigates disability fraud and tries to recoup money for the government. However, in many cases, they disregarded regulations and deviated from how the program had recovered money since its inception in 1995, failing to take into account someone’s financial state, age, intentions and level of remorse, among other factors.

Among those affected are **Gail Deckman**, who lives outside Chicago. She kept thousands of dollars in Social Security disability benefits that should have stopped when her longtime partner died. The IG’s office ultimately charged her \$119,392 — nearly three times what she received in error.

Deckman didn’t have the money, so SSA garnished the entire \$704 check she was going to receive every month when she retired from her minimum-wage job flipping burgers. She can apply for retirement in 2032 — when she’s 83. At 73, she continues to work, saying she has to.

Over a seven-month period ending in mid-2019, 83 people were charged a total of \$11.5 million, — a jump from less than \$700,000 for all of 2017.

The sums demanded by the government shocked those accused of fraud. The remarkable penalties were not the only break with how the Civil Monetary Penalty program had previously been conducted: Unlike in the past, the chief counsel also directed staff attorneys to charge those affected as much as twice the money they had received in error, on top of the fines.

The exorbitant penalties led to tumult inside the Office of Inspector General **Gail Ennis**, a Trump appointee. One whistleblower was targeted for retaliation, according to a ruling this month by an administrative judge. Another settled a similar claim of retaliation late last year with Ennis's office.

"Many of the beneficiaries who came under scrutiny in 2018 continue to owe disproportionately high fines," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "The first order of business must be straightening out those cases."

FCC Addresses Annoying Robocalls from Other Countries



Americans will soon get [fewer robocalls from abroad](#) after four FCC commissioners voted unanimously last week to require more stringent caller-ID for people from other countries placing calls to people in the United States.

The Federal Communications Commission receives more complaints about robocalls than anything else. Already this year there have been about 43,800 robocall complaints made to the commission.

The new rules ensure the companies that help connect phone calls from outside of the U.S. to residents use the stringent "STIR/SHAKEN" caller ID authentication protocols. The rules also require phone companies to stop illegal robocalls or face harsh consequences.

"Given the number of robocalls seniors and others receive, the FCC's new rules should be a huge relief," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Next, we need Congress to allow the collection of fines from the worst perpetrators."

Executive Director Fiesta Addresses Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

Executive Director Fiesta traveled to Los Angeles this week for the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) Retirees' Conference and General Conference. He provided an update on numerous federal issues affecting retirees, including Social Security and the importance of the retiree vote in the midterm elections.

Alliance Marks Memorial Day

With Memorial Day 2022 this Monday, the Alliance joins with the Union Veterans Council in marking the solemn occasion. Memorial Day began in the years following the U.S. Civil War and is set aside specifically for those who were killed in action.

The Union Veterans Council notes that Memorial Day isn't Veterans Day and is not just for people who were in the military. With over one million active working military veterans in unions, every union has members and retirees who have served in the military. The countless parents, spouses, children, and friends who are union members who have lost someone while serving the country strengthens the labor movement's connection to this day.

HONOR THEIR SACRIFICE



“As you enjoy a cookout or spend time with your loved ones, please take a moment to remember those who no longer have such opportunities,” said **President Roach**.

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.