



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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

[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)

Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

**July 22, 2022**

## **Drug Corporations Hike Prices Again While Senate Democrats Continue to Work on Legislation Allowing Medicare to Negotiate Lower Prices**

A new [report](#) from Patients For Affordable Drugs revealed accelerating price gouging from pharmaceutical corporations, with 1,186 price increases and a median price increase of five percent already recorded this year. And while only half of Americans can afford to cover a \$1,000 expense, many are already spending their entire paychecks on drugs they depend on. New drugs now carry a median annual cost of \$180,000, a monumental leap from \$2,000 in 2008. Pfizer increased the price of 23 drugs, more than any other corporation.



The Senate could vote in early August on [a budget reconciliation package](#) to lower drug prices for Medicare and extend expanded subsidies for people who purchase health insurance on the Affordable Care Act exchanges.

“Each week the evidence mounts and the case for taking real action to lower drug prices grows stronger,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Retirees are bearing the brunt of high drug prices and need relief now. There is not a moment to lose.”

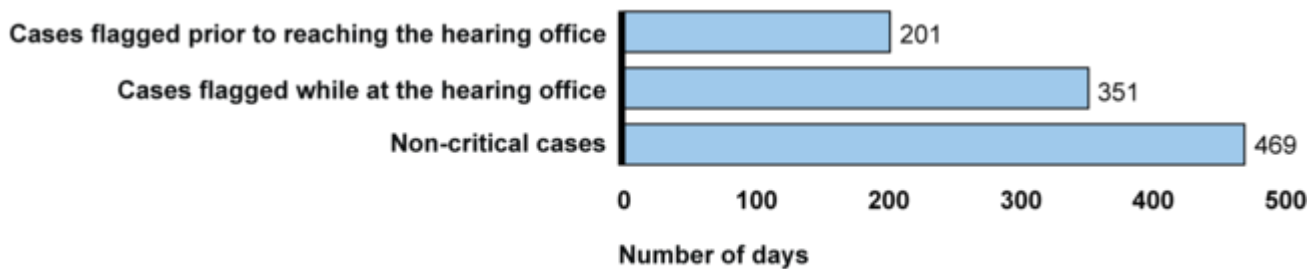
## **GAO Investigation Finds Failures in Appeals Process for Social Security Disability Benefits**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a [study](#) on Monday that revealed inconsistencies in the expedited appeals process for Social Security disability benefits.

The findings were released after a [previous report](#) found that almost 110,000 people died in the past decade while awaiting a benefits appeal decision. About 48,000 people filed for bankruptcy while waiting for a decision from 2014 to 2019.

The new GAO report was requested by House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Chairman **John B. Larson** (CT) and Senate Budget Committee Chairman **Bernie Sanders** (VT). It found that while the Social Security Administration (SSA) expedited most critical cases, there was inconsistent policy in considering the documentation of “dire needs.” Cases that do not qualify for fast-tracking regularly wait more than a year or years for a hearing about their appeals.

Rep. Larson and Sen. Sanders called the administrative failures “unacceptable” for the 10 million beneficiaries who rely on Social Security Disability Insurance.



Source: GAO analysis of Social Security Administration (SSA) data. | GAO-22-104191

“It is outrageous that so many Americans suffered and died waiting for their disability claims to be adjudicated,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “This report underscores why Congress must provide full funding for the Social Security Administration so that Americans can get the help they need in a timely manner.”

### Study Finds American Men Are Less Healthy Than Their Counterparts

The public health non-profit The Commonwealth Fund released a new [report](#) that suggests American men are in poorer health than those living in other developed nations.

Men in the United States experience higher rates of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease, than their counterparts in Switzerland, Norway, New Zealand, Germany, Australia, the U.K., France, the Netherlands, Canada and Sweden. They also suffer more avoidable deaths, defined as deaths before age 75, than other countries.

The study showed that income disparities play a major role. Men with lower incomes tend to partake in unhealthy habits more frequently, such as drinking and smoking, leading to chronic conditions. Low-income earners are also least likely to afford adequate care and can't visit the doctor regularly, which contributes to worsening health issues.

“This study provides further evidence that we need a stronger safety net and universal health coverage for all Americans,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The United States remains the only country without universal care.”

### Alliance Members Elect Regional Board Members

The Alliance hosted its Regional Meetings this week and elected 15 Regional Board members who will serve until 2024.

Western Region - July 19, 2022 election results:

- Sub-Region 1: Steve Kofahl (AFGE, Washington State)
- Sub-Region 2: Hene Kelly (AFT, California)
- Sub-Region 3: Sheila Lieder (CWA, Colorado)
- At-Large: Carolyn Boller (Community Advocacy Network, Colorado)

Midwest Region - July 20, 2022 election results:

- Sub-Region 1: Richard “Dick” Long (UAW, Michigan)
- Sub-Region 2: Michael Louis (IAM, Missouri)

Southern Region - July 21, 2022 election results:

Sub-Region 1: Kirk Gillenwaters (UAW, Kentucky)  
Sub-Region 2: Ken Goodfriend (AFT, Florida)  
Sub-Region 3: Tony Padilla (IAM, Texas)

Northeast Region - July 22, 2022 election results:

Sub-Region 1: Roger Boudreau (AFT, Rhode Island)  
Sub-Region 3: Carol Rosenblatt (AFSCME, Washington, DC)

“We are fortunate to have these accomplished people helping lead the fight to strengthen retirement security,” said President **Roach**. “We have much work to do to ensure all Americans can enjoy the retirement they have earned.”

---

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.