Alliance for Retired Americans FRIDAY ALERT

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Alliance Mourns the Death of Jo Etta Brown

Jo Etta Brown, who served as Alliance Executive Vice President from 2014 until this year, passed away on Saturday in Nevada after a long career of fighting for seniors and civil rights.

"Jo Etta was beloved not just for her commitment to social justice, but for her warmth and the way she touched everyone who interacted with her," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "She will be missed but we will always remember her kindness and dedication."

Jo Etta Brown in 2015

Ms. Brown first joined the Nevada Alliance in 2007 after 30 years in community banking, urban development and affordable housing advocacy, bringing to the Alliance her experience fighting for more women in management roles. She led the Alliance's Community Advocacy Network while serving as Executive Vice President.

In 2016 Nevada Governor **Brian Sandoval** appointed her to the Nevada Commission for Women, which studies the changing and developing roles of women in society and recommends proposed legislation. In 2020 Governor **Steve Sisolak** re-appointed her and made her Chair, and he re-appointed her as Chair in 2021.

At their national meeting in July, Alliance members adopted a resolution honoring Jo Etta's work in transforming the lives of retirees in Nevada and across the country.

Arizona Alliance, Priorities USA and Voto Latino Challenge Arizona Voter Suppression Law

The Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans, Priorities USA and Voto Latino announced a legal challenge to Arizona SB 1260. The bill radically alters Arizona's voting laws by threatening the ability of Arizonans to cast a ballot if they have previously registered to vote in another state or another Arizona county. There is no requirement that notice be given to a voter if their registration

is purged by a county official. The bill was signed into law in June and is scheduled to take effect on September 24, 2022.

SB 1260 criminalizes those individuals and organizations who provide voting assistance to Arizona voters if the voter they are helping is registered to vote in another state. This is troubling for various reasons but specifically due to the fact that having multiple voter registrations is quite common especially among young voters, college students, older voters who have moved to Arizona, and other more transient voters who are more likely to be poor and non-white. There is no requirement to cancel your voter registration after you've moved, and in many states, canceling a voter registration can be a complicated, burdensome process. An act as simple as handing a ballot to a family member who is registered in another state is potentially criminalized under SB 1260, making it extremely difficult for individuals and organizations to register and engage voters without first confirming their registration status.

The bill also requires county recorders to cancel a voter's registration and remove them from the early voting list without any notice simply because the voter is registered in another county. In fact, two county recorders could simultaneously cancel the voter's registration without notice. This could leave countless voters without any voter registration at all.

Finally, SB 1260 allows third parties to provide county recorders with "credible information" that voters have registrations in other counties, which would then force county recorders to confirm those voters' registration status and cancel those registrations and remove those voters from the early voting list. This enables third parties to engage in coordinated voter suppression by sending county recorders on endless investigations to cancel voter registrations of targeted groups.

"The members of the Arizona Alliance understand that the right to vote is sacred. Educating our members and seniors across the state about how to register and cast their ballots is one of our top priorities," said **Saundra Cole**, President of the Arizona Alliance. "SB 1260 is almost certain to disenfranchise older Arizonans who may have moved to the state to retire, or moved from their long-time home to live in a retirement community or nursing home, or with a family member. We wholeheartedly oppose this voter suppression law."

"The Alliance for Retired Americans is fighting to make sure every one of our 4.4 million members nationwide, and all older Americans, can exercise their fundamental constitutional right to vote," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "That means challenging laws that are designed to suppress votes and will disenfranchise our members and older Americans."

Read the full press release here.

Alliance Celebrates Social Security's Anniversary in the Face of Threats to the Program

Alliance members commemorated the 87th anniversary of Social Security on August 14 and throughout the month as a growing number of Republican candidates and elected officials call for dramatic changes to the earned benefits program. Threats include requiring it to be re-approved by Congress every year, sunsetting it in five years, privatizing the system, and reducing benefits.

"Social Security has been a bedrock of our retirement security since FDR signed it into law on August 14, 1935, and this anniversary is an opportunity to remind Americans we cannot take its future for granted," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "As we celebrate the anniversary, we also redouble our efforts with events to make sure voters understand that the benefits they have earned will be on the ballot in November."

The events call for expanding Social Security and protecting it from attempts to cut, eliminate or privatize it. A virtual event in Wisconsin on Monday featured Rep. **Mark Pocan**. Wisconsin is a key state in the battle to protect Social Security, because Sen. **Ron Johnson** (WI) favors an extreme plan that includes Social Security and Medicare being re-approved on an annual basis by Congress.

Arizona members thanked Rep. **Raúl Grijalva** on Thursday for his work to expand and protect Social Security. An August 4 event in Arizona focused on the threat posed by **Blake Masters**, who won the Republican primary for Senate in the state and publicly has called for the privatization of the program.

A virtual event in Florida on Thursday featured Rep. **Charlie Crist**. His fellow Floridian, Sen. **Rick Scott** — the chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee — has crafted an election-year campaign plan that would sunset Medicare and Social Security in five years.

An event in West Hartford, Connecticut featured Rep. **John Larson**, who has introduced legislation endorsed by the Alliance to expand Social Security. H.R. 5723, the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act, increases benefits for all beneficiaries and requires that wealthy Americans pay their fair share of Social Security taxes.

Richard Fiesta Addresses APWU Retirees in Maryland

Executive Director Fiesta was in National Harbor, Maryland Saturday to address the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Retirees Conference. During his presentation he discussed the senior vote in the 2022 midterm elections and the Alliance's Medicare and Social Security anniversary activities. Fiesta thanked APWU for its strong, continuing partnership with the Alliance.

Arizona Alliance board member Joanne Romero, second from left, with other APWU retirees at their conference in Maryland on Saturday. Rich Fiesta is third from right.

He also spoke about the many pro-retiree actions taken by Congress and the Biden Administration, including the IRA, which will allow Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices and cap insulin at $35 per month for Medicare beneficiaries.

Affordable Hearing Aids to Be Available Over the Counter Nationwide

The FDA ruled on Tuesday that a new category of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids will become available for purchase without a prescription or medical exam beginning in October.

The ruling comes as part of President **Biden's** Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy. In addition to making hearing aids widely available to the public, this historic rule is expected to help lower costs and assure the effectiveness and safety of hearing aids for the 30 million Americans with mild to moderate hearing loss.

The availability of OTC hearing aids has the potential to save American families upwards of $3,000 on a pair of hearing aids.

The OTC devices are expected to become available to the public in retail and drug stores nationwide immediately when the rule takes effect, as soon as mid-October, without the need for a medical exam, prescription or fitting adjustment by an audiologist.

President **Roach** celebrated the FDA ruling, saying, “This is a major step toward lowering health care costs for American families – especially for older Americans. It goes hand-in-hand with lowering prescription drug prices for seniors through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).”

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.