



# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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*The Alliance wishes you and your family a safe and joyous holiday season.*

*The Friday Alert will resume on January 6, 2023.*

### **Congress Releases Omnibus Spending Bill**

Lawmakers [released a \\$1.7 trillion government spending bill](#) for next year on Tuesday. The legislation [provides funding](#) for things that directly impact working and older Americans, including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, nutrition programs, and long-term care.

As of Friday morning, the bill had not been approved by the House and Senate.

Under the plan, the Social Security Administration will receive \$14 billion for operating expenses, a \$785 million increase compared to funding for this past year. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will get a total of \$4.1 billion, \$100 million more than in 2022. \$3.7 billion will be allocated to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia research.

The omnibus bill also invests in affordable housing and services that promote senior well being, including \$4 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and \$405 million for the Senior Community Service Employment for Older Americans Program. The Administration for Community Living, which oversees community-based services for older Americans, will receive \$220 million more for 2023 than it did in 2022. This includes increased funding for Senior Nutrition Programs and for the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

The bill also provides increased funding for Worker Protection Agencies, most notably the National Labor Relations Board, which has not had an increase in funding since 2010 and has struggled to meet workload demands.

“It’s important that our lawmakers invest in workers and seniors,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We’re glad to see that critical agencies like the Social Security Administration and the NLRB will receive a boost in funding next year.”

## Many Inflation Reduction Act Provisions Set to Take Effect in January

On August 16, 2022, President **Biden** signed the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) into law, setting into motion multiple provisions that will bring down skyrocketing prescription drug prices for millions of Americans.

Many of those provisions will begin in January including:

- Insulin co-pays will be capped at \$35 per month for Medicare beneficiaries;
- All recommended adult vaccines will be free for Medicare beneficiaries;
- Corporations that raise the price of drugs sold to Medicare faster than the rate of inflation must pay rebates back to Medicare;
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) must identify the 100 highest-priced drugs and select the first 10 for price negotiation

In addition, Medicare will begin to cover medically necessary dental procedures beginning in January. Also, over-the-counter hearing aids are available now, following an [Executive Order](#) signed by President Biden in October.

“It took many years of activism to get here, but in two weeks drug prices will finally begin to come down,” said Executive Director **Fiesta**. “Alliance members should be proud of the role they played in making this a reality.”

## EPI: Older Workers are Working Later in Life to Make Ends Meet

The Economic Policy Institute's [Older Workers and Retirement Chartbook](#), published recently, shows the risks to retirement security and disparities in retirement preparedness.

The report found that more older Americans are staying in the workforce due to a lack of retirement savings and pensions. At the same time, older workers find it hard to find good-paying jobs.



The researchers concluded that expecting workers to work longer is neither a fair nor a realistic solution to the retirement security crisis.

“The findings prove once again that there is no substitute for the reliability of defined benefit pensions,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We also need to expand Social Security and increase benefits. The Alliance will always defend earned pension benefits and ensure more workers have access to one.”

**3 FAST FACTS**  
About the **Inflation Reduction Act**

- 1 It lowers prescription drug costs and extends health coverage**  
Medicare price negotiations and \$2,000 out-of-pocket caps, saving seniors \$288 billion  
Extends Affordable Care Act premium supports
- 2 It invests in climate, energy and American manufacturing**  
Tax credits for clean energy  
Tax credits to increase U.S. manufacturing of solar, wind, batteries, etc.  
Tax credits for electric vehicle production (\$7,500) in North America  
Prevailing wage, apprenticeship and domestic content standards
- 3 It taxes corporations and the super-rich**  
15% minimum corporate tax  
More money for IRS collections  
Imposes a 1% excise tax on corporate stock buybacks

AFL-CIO

## Special Message from President Roach

*Thank you to all of our Alliance members who helped us achieve an especially successful and productive year in 2022 through your activism.*

*We helped elect a pro-retiree Senate majority.*

*Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act that President Biden signed into law this year, we have also taken a significant step toward bringing down prescription drug costs, by finally giving Medicare the authority to negotiate prices on many of the most expensive drugs.*

*We still have work to do, and I look forward to working together in 2023 to achieve even more of our goals. Happy Holidays to all of our members. Please know that you are all valued and appreciated.*

### **Kaiser Health News: States Challenge Biden to Lower Drug Prices by Allowing Imports From Canada** **By Phil Galewitz**

The Biden administration is facing mounting pressure from states to let them import medicine from Canada to help lower prescription drug costs.

[Colorado](#) on Dec. 5 became at least the fourth state to seek federal permission to use the strategy, following [Florida](#), [New Hampshire](#), and [New Mexico](#).

President Joe Biden has endorsed the approach, but his administration has yet to greenlight a state plan.

“States have done the work, and the only thing preventing them from going ahead is the Biden administration,” said Jane Horvath, a health policy consultant who has worked with states on importation plans.

Health and Human Services Secretary **Xavier Becerra** told KHN on Dec. 5 that the Biden administration welcomed applications for drug importation programs from Colorado and other states. But he would not pledge that the FDA would rule on any application in 2023.

Read more [here](#).