



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Debate Over Future of Social Security and Medicare Dominates State of the Union

During Tuesday's State of the Union address, President **Joe Biden** promised that he would not agree to cuts to Social Security or Medicare. He contrasted his commitment with proposals by "some" in Congress to sunset the programs after five years.



Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) heckling President Biden Tuesday

Many Republicans heckled Biden, falsely claiming that was not a GOP plan, and Republicans and Democrats stood to demonstrate support for Social Security and Medicare. Biden then [ad-libbed](#), "I will not let Medicare be taken away, not today, not tomorrow, not ever. But apparently, that will not be a problem."

On Wednesday and Thursday Biden went to DeForest, Wisconsin and Tampa, Florida and repeated his pledge to never cut Social Security and Medicare. In Tampa, with ten Alliance members in the audience, he named

some of the senators who support sunseting Social Security, Medicare and all federal legislation, including Senators **Rick Scott** (FL) and **Ron Johnson** (WI).

Biden delivered the speech against a backdrop of recent GOP threats to force the nation to default on the national debt if their cost-cutting conditions are not met: more than 160 House Republicans endorsed a [budget plan](#) for fiscal year 2023 that increases the Social Security and Medicare eligibility age, privatizes Social Security, and reduces Social Security benefits by changing the formula used to calculate them.

Some of the GOP threats over the past several weeks were Republican Study Committee plans to [cut or privatize Social Security and Medicare benefits for future retirees](#).

"The Alliance [called on](#) President Biden to reiterate his pledge that he will not approve any cuts or changes to Americans' hard earned Social Security and Medicare benefits, and he delivered with flying colors," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We are grateful he did so

because, while Speaker **McCarthy** recently said that House Republicans won't push for cuts to these critical programs during the debt ceiling debate, we frankly don't believe him."

### **More State of the Union Priorities: Lower Insulin Prices for all Americans, the PRO Act**

President Biden mentioned seniors nine times on Tuesday, the most mentions older Americans have heard in any State of the Union address in the past 40 years. The references covered a wide array of issues, including lower drug prices, passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, and stricter nursing home regulations, as well as increased support and benefits for caretakers who provide seniors and people with disabilities with home care services.

"We're protecting seniors' lives and life savings by cracking down on nursing homes that commit fraud, endanger patient safety, or prescribe drugs they don't need," President Biden said.

Biden called for expanding the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to cap insulin costs for all Americans at \$35 per month. Currently, insulin prices are only capped for Medicare beneficiaries. In addition, he noted that the IRA will limit out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors on Medicare to a maximum \$2,000 per year — an important threshold when expensive cancer drugs can cost up to \$14,000 annually.

In addition, Biden called for passing the PRO Act to defend workers' right to form and join a union and guarantee all workers a living wage. The PRO Act improves Americans' retirement security, since union workers have higher wages and can negotiate for benefits such as health care, pensions and employer contributions to retirement plans.

"President Biden covered the gamut of labor and senior issues Tuesday night," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. "The speech was a homerun for retirees and workers who are looking to Washington for solutions to the problems they face every day."

### **White House Fires Back After Freshman Member of the House Moves to Repeal the Inflation Reduction Act**

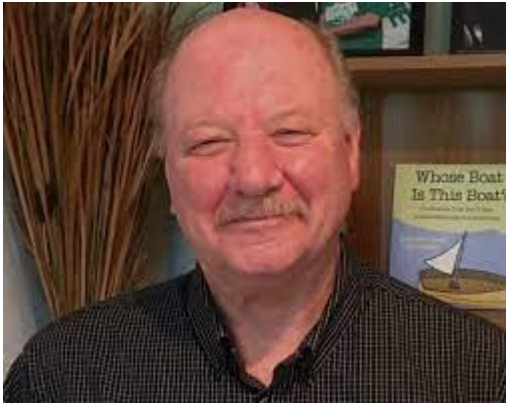
The White House issued a release Saturday criticizing a new [bill](#) filed by freshman Rep. **Andy Ogles** (R-TN) to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act.

Ending the Inflation Reduction Act, the White House said, would "provide a handout to Big Pharma" and "be one of the biggest Medicare benefit cuts in American history."

"We must not go backwards or cave to drug corporation pressure," added **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices, capping insulin prices, and making recommended vaccines free are the first steps in forcing these wealthy corporations to put patients ahead of profits."

### **Obituary: Gary Mitchell, President of the Wisconsin Alliance**

**Gary Mitchell**, President of the Wisconsin Alliance since 2020, passed away on Wednesday, February 8 at age 70.



Gary was a respected labor movement leader who continued his activism after retiring in 2014 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he served for 33 years as an Administrative Support Worker in the College of Letters and Sciences, the Chancellor's Office and the School of Medicine and Public Health.

Shortly after starting at UW-Madison, he was recruited to join AFSCME Local 2412, beginning involvement as a Steward, Vice-President, Secretary, President, Chair of the Administrative Support Bargaining Team and International Vice President – Wisconsin District. He was also President

of AFSCME Wisconsin Retirees Subchapter 52.

“Gary was a committed leader fighting for a better life for active and retired union members. He will be sorely missed by his many friends both inside and outside of Wisconsin,” said Executive Director Fiesta. “He will be long remembered not just for his dedication to the labor movement and to seniors, but also for his kindness.”

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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.