



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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White House Announces First 10 Drugs Up for Medicare Price Negotiation

On Tuesday, the **Biden-Harris** administration [unveiled a list](#) of the 10 prescription drugs that Medicare will negotiate lower prices for with drug corporations.

[The list has](#) several drugs that many seniors use, including Eliquis and Xarelto, which are used to treat blood clots, and Jardiance, Jenuvia, Farxiga, and Fiasp (along with Fiasp FlexTouch; Fiasp PenFill; NovoLog; NovoLog FlexPen; NovoLog PenFill), which are used to treat diabetes. [Eliquis is the most](#) widely used drug on the list, with 3.5 million people with Medicare Part D currently taking it. 282,000 of those users are in Florida and about 277,000 in California. Jardiance and Xarelto [also have a large number of older users](#), with 1.6 million and 1.3 million people with Part D taking them respectively.

Medicare is set to negotiate lower costs for the 10 most expensive drugs, including:

Drug	People taking the drug	Total cost to Medicare (2021)	Lifetime list price increase
Eliquis <small>treats blood clots</small>	3.1 million <small>taking the drug</small>	\$12.58 bn <small>total cost to Medicare (2021)</small>	124% <small>lifetime list price increase</small>
Januvia <small>treats type 2 diabetes</small>	934,000 <small>taking the drug</small>	\$4.06 bn <small>total cost to Medicare (2021)</small>	275% <small>lifetime list price increase</small>
Jardiance <small>treats type 2 diabetes</small>	884,000 <small>taking the drug</small>	\$3.74 bn <small>total cost to Medicare (2021)</small>	97% <small>lifetime list price increase</small>
Xarelto <small>treats blood clots</small>	1.2 million <small>taking the drug</small>	\$5.23 bn <small>total cost to Medicare (2021)</small>	168% <small>lifetime list price increase</small>



“For the first time, the price Medicare pays for ten of the most expensive prescription drugs will be determined at a negotiating table, not in a corporate boardroom,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “This would not have happened without the leadership of President Biden and our grassroots members’ tireless activism.”

The negotiated prices for these drugs will not take effect until 2026, but pharmaceutical corporations are trying to roll them back in court. So far, eight lawsuits have been filed by drugmakers, including the makers of some of the drugs on the newly released list: Eliquis (Bristol Myers Squibb), Januvia (Merck), and Jardiance (Boehringer Ingelheim).

Biden Administration Releases New Minimum Staffing Standards for Nursing Homes

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) [proposed a new rule](#) to increase the number of staff providing care to nursing home residents. Nearly 1.2 million Americans receive care in facilities covered by the proposal.

The new standards include a mandatory federal floor for staffing levels and increased federal oversight of nursing home performance. They would also make nursing homes safer by increasing enforcement of current staffing standards and enhancing the government's ability to hold providers accountable for inadequate staffing.

Recent data suggests that this measure is especially important, as current standards alone are not robust enough to stop wrongdoing. [Only 4%](#) of inadequately staffed nursing homes were cited by federal inspectors in 2022.

There is also more support for hard working staff members at nursing home facilities under the proposed rule, including a national nursing careers pathway program that will work to recruit, train, and retain workers. The rule is open to a 60 day comment period from the public that will end on November 6.

"All older Americans deserve to have access to safe, quality long-term care." said Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta**. "More staff with better training and oversight will mean better care for nursing home residents and a more stable workforce that can provide that care. We look forward to working with the Biden Administration during the regulatory process."

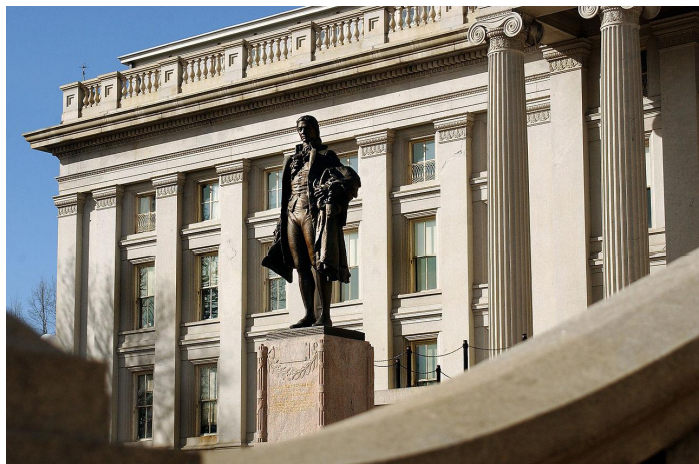
GOP Presidential Candidates Continue to Attack Earned Benefits

Several 2024 Republican presidential candidates are [publicly](#) embracing policies that would cut or end earned Social Security and Medicare benefits. In 2020, former President **Donald Trump** told *Fox News* ["we'll be cutting"](#) Social Security and [said he was open](#) to looking at entitlement reforms as a second term issue. Last week, former South Carolina governor **Nikki Haley** [told Bloomberg Markets](#) the retirement age "is way too low," suggesting it should be increased for younger workers.

Former New Jersey Governor **Chris Christie** [referred to politicians](#) reluctant to pursue Social Security cuts as "liars and cowards," and [doubled down](#) on his position during a conference in Atlanta last weekend. **Mike Pence** [has called for](#) Social Security privatization as well as "common sense" solutions for "entitlement reform." **Ron DeSantis** and **Tim Scott** [have both voted](#) in favor of raising the retirement age in the past.

“Older Americans need to pay attention because our earned benefits are on the line,” said Alliance President **Robert Roach, Jr.** “Instead of attacking retirees and our earned benefits, these candidates should be working to strengthen retirement security.”

Labor Day: Treasury Department Study Demonstrates Union Benefits for Workers and Labor Unions Approval Rating Reaches Record Levels



Statue of Alexander Hamilton by James Earle Fraser in front of the United States Treasury Building in Washington, DC.

The Treasury Department has [released a new report](#) demonstrating that unions are vital for worker security and fighting income inequality. The report shows that union workers [earn 20%](#) more on average than non-union workers.

In addition to boosting wages, unions [make workplaces safer](#) and [increase access to retirement plans](#). 93% of union workers in private industries have access to a retirement plan, while only 66% of non-union workers have access to a retirement plan.

Also this week, AFL-CIO President **Liz Shuler** and Secretary-Treasurer **Fred Redmond** delivered an inaugural State of the Unions address where they released [new polling](#). The poll underscores the American people’s support of unions—especially that of young workers—and their view of unions as critical to growing the middle class and providing opportunities for working people to thrive.

The poll found that **7 in 10 Americans (71%)** support unions cutting across party lines. A majority of Republicans and more than two-thirds of Independents join **9 in 10 (91%) Democrats** in supporting unions. In addition, an unprecedented number of young Americans support unions. Nearly **9 in 10 (88%) people under 30** view unions favorably, a record high.

“The idea of a union may sound complicated, but in reality, unions are just a group of people coming together. They are about each of us becoming the most powerful version of ourselves that we possibly can,” said **Shuler**. “That’s *all* a union is. It’s that simple.”

“The workers of today are the retirees of tomorrow,” said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Joseph Peters, Jr.** “Workers in a union not only earn more, they are more likely to have a secure retirement. As we take the time to celebrate this weekend, we must also remember that the fight for workers’ rights continues, and that unions are the best way to secure and preserve those rights.”

Prescriptions for Fruits and Vegetables Enhances Health and Well-Being

[A new study](#) finds that when physicians prescribe healthy fruits and vegetables, in addition to, or instead of drugs, patients' health improves.

The study examined the effects of a six month prescription produce program on a group of individuals at increased risk for cardiovascular disease. A mix of adults and children participated in the study, with an average age of 54. As part of the program, participants received \$63 a month to help pay for groceries. They also completed questionnaires about their fruit and vegetable consumption and received regular health screenings.

Researchers found that participants in the program ate more healthy fruits and vegetables and many lowered their blood sugar and blood pressure levels.

The program also reduced participants' food insecurity. Today [7% of the senior population](#) in the United States are food insecure.