



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

November 17, 2023

Speaker Johnson Leads Battle Toward Medicare and Social Security Cuts

House Speaker **Mike Johnson** (R-LA) and senior U.S. senators are following through on their threat to create a so-called “[debt commission](#)” that would come up with schemes to slash Social Security and Medicare benefits Americans have earned.

The effort faces steep opposition from President **Joe Biden**, who earlier this year [said](#), “Look, I know that a lot of Republicans, their dream is to cut Social Security and Medicare. Well, let me say this: If that’s your dream, I’m your nightmare.”

Johnson reiterated his support for a commission during his first speech as Speaker, and the threat became more serious when Senators **Mitt Romney** (R-UT) and **Joe Manchin** (D-WV) introduced the bipartisan Fiscal Stability Act, [S. 3262](#). That legislation would create a commission tasked with finding legislative solutions to “stabilize and decrease our national debt.” Sen. **Kyrsten Sinema** (I-AZ) is also among the 9 co-sponsors of the bill.

Rep. **Bill Huizenga** (R-MI) has introduced a bipartisan Fiscal Commission legislative proposal in the U.S. House: [H.R. 5779](#), the “Fiscal Commission Act of 2023,” which has 20 co-sponsors, including 10 Democrats. The House Budget Committee is expected to hold a hearing to discuss a commission the week after Thanksgiving.

“These commissions always start with the false premise that Social Security contributes to the national debt, and that Social Security and Medicare should be cut,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “The idea of strengthening Social Security by making the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share and increasing benefits is never considered. To [quote](#) Rep. **John Larson** (D-CT) on the expansion of benefits, ‘the last time the program was addressed in a significant manner, **Tip O’Neill** was Speaker and **Ronald Reagan** was President.’”

Alliance Members Turn Out to Support Starbucks Employees Trying to Form a Union



Alliance members picketed in support of thousands of [Starbucks](#) employees nationwide who walked off the job Thursday, in the largest work stoppage in the five-decade history of the company. The workers are seeking better working conditions, higher pay, and increased staffing levels.

"Alliance members are coming out to support workers in large part because Starbucks is not bargaining in good faith and is doing everything it can to prevent workers from exercising their right to form a union," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "For example, at one Starbucks store in St. Louis that unionized in August 2022,

Texas Alliance (TARA) activists Patricia Murphy, Charlotte Connelly and TARA President Gene Lantz are pictured with a Starbucks United organizer in Dallas Thursday

company representatives have only attended one bargaining session — and management left that meeting after just 15 minutes. This irresponsible practice has been repeated across the country."



Jody Weinreich, Alliance Regional Board Member (second from right) with Starbucks employees and allies in Pennsylvania

YOU'RE INVITED - Watch Your Wallet: Making Housing Decisions, Managing Debt and Avoiding Scams as You Age Webinar

Mark your calendars! On Monday, November 27, 2023 from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM Eastern Time the Alliance will host an educational webinar with **Hector Ortiz**, Senior Policy Analyst at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Office of Financial Protection for Older Americans.

To RSVP, click [here](#).

Alarming Stat: 1 in 3 U.S. Adults Is Unable to Afford Needed Medication

Rising prescription drug prices continue to have a devastating financial impact on many Americans and their health, with 1 in 3 adults saying they cannot afford to take their prescriptions as prescribed, [according to the Center for American Progress](#). A separate 2023 analysis [found](#) that the 25 drugs with the highest aggregate Medicare spending have more than tripled in price since their entrance into the market.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is helping seniors, who bear the brunt of higher drug prices, by providing free vaccines and capping insulin prices at \$35 per month, and in 2025 there will be an out of pocket cap of \$2,000 a year for Medicare Part D beneficiaries.

In addition, corporations with ten of the highest priced drugs in the country are currently negotiating lower prescription drug prices with Medicare — new prices will go into effect in 2026, but the lower prices will only apply to Medicare, and younger Americans will still be subject to exorbitant prices.

Congressional leaders have introduced legislation like H.R. 4115/S. 1139, the Lower Drug Costs for Families Act of 2023, introduced by Rep. **Ruben Gallego** (AZ) and Sen. **Catherine Cortez Masto** (NV); and H.R. 4895, the Lowering Drug Costs for American Families Act of 2023, introduced by Rep. **Frank Pallone** (NJ). Each bill would help stop excessive price hikes.

“Congress must address the rampant unaffordability of prescription drugs in this country by extending the cost-lowering benefits of President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act to all Americans,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance.

Additional Material from the Alliance’s Retirement Security Symposium Now Available

The Alliance has added new material to the website page from the October 17, 2023 Retirement Symposium [here](#). Video presentations, broken down by segment, include AFL-CIO President **Liz Shuler**, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and Alliance Executive Vice President **Fred Redmond** and **Rep. John Larson** (CT). Presentations from the symposium are also posted.

Happy Thanksgiving from the Alliance

The Alliance wishes all our members a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving and urges you to choose union-made products for your celebrations.



THIS THANKSGIVING, MAKE SURE IT'S UNION-MADE!

Cookware, Cutlery and Dinnerware <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All-Clad• Anchor Hocking• Bennington Pottery• Clauss Knives• CorningWare• Cutco Knives• Fiestaware• Libbey• Pyrex	Vegetables and Sides <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Betty Crocker• Birds Eye• Del Monte• Dole• Hanover Foods• Ocean Spray• Ore-Ida	Desserts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cool Whip• Entenmann's• Kroger 100% Pure Pumpkin• Marie Callender's• Reddi-Wip• Sara Lee
Stuffing and Bread <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kraft Stove Top• Strohmann• Schwebel's• Arnold	Turkey and Ham <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boar's Head• Butterball• Cook's Hickory Smoked Spiral Sliced Ham with Honey• Foster Farms• Tyson	

MORE AT: AFLCIO.ORG/THANKSGIVING

AFL-CIO

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national grassroots advocacy organization with 4.4 million members fighting for retirement security for all Americans. www.retiredamericans.org @activeretirees