



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Republican Presidential Debate Brings Back Threats to Cut Social Security and Medicare

Wednesday night's debate brought new attention to Republican presidential hopeful **Nikki Haley's** statements about cutting Social Security and Medicare, as well as **Ron DeSantis'** previous votes to slash the programs while in the U.S. House.



Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley
at Wednesday's debate

Haley, formerly governor of South Carolina, has been the most vocal of all the Republican candidates, openly [declaring](#) at the debate that she plans to raise the retirement age at which younger Americans, such as those in their 20's, can become eligible for Social Security benefits. The current Full Retirement Age, or FRA, is 67 for people born in 1960 and later. While Haley did not specify what she would raise the age to, moving the FRA from 67 to 70, as some have proposed, would effectively cut currently scheduled benefits [by nearly 20%](#).

Previously, she [stated](#), "What they need to be doing is looking at entitlements. Look at Social Security. Look at Medicaid. Look at Medicare. Look at these things, and let's actually go to the heart of what is causing government to grow, and tackle that."

DeSantis, Florida's governor, backtracked away from proposing changes to Social Security on the debate stage by pointing towards a declining U.S. life expectancy, but his record reflects otherwise. During his time as a congressman, DeSantis earned a [0% rating](#) in the Alliance's pro-retiree voting record. He [voted](#) numerous times to privatize and cut Social Security and Medicare through voucherization, slower cost of living increases, and raising the retirement age.

Former President **Donald Trump**, who was not on the debate stage despite qualifying, has said ["we're going to look"](#) at cutting Social Security and Medicare if he gets a second term. He also proposed cutting the programs [every year](#) he was President.

“Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley and Donald Trump have shown time and again that they are willing to cut Social Security and Medicare,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Wednesday’s debate should serve as a reminder to anyone who may have forgotten.”

Florida’s Plan to Import Lower Cost Prescription Drugs from Canada Approved by FDA

The Food and Drug Administration has [approved](#) Florida’s plan to import prescription drugs from Canada in an attempt to lower costs. The first drugs that Florida expects to import will treat HIV, mental illness, and prostate cancer. These specific medications will require further FDA approval to import, and once imported, they will be made available to state-run facilities and Medicaid recipients.

This state plan comes under a wider national push from the **Biden** Administration to lower prescription drug prices through laws like the Inflation Reduction Act. The Florida importation plan is estimated to save state taxpayers up to \$150 million if enacted without impediment.

However, there is reason to cast doubts on the likelihood of imports ever being allowed. The U.S. pharmaceutical industry responded negatively to the decision, signaling an immediate push to prevent the policy through any option available. Additionally, Canada, seeking to avoid drug shortages, has restricted such exports.

“Florida’s importation program’s success in gaining FDA approval is a welcome step in the fight for lower prescription drug prices,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “They complement President Biden’s achievements in lowering drug prices nationally, including the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which finally forces drug corporations to negotiate with Medicare.”

Record High of Over 20 Million Selected Affordable Health Coverage through ACA Since the Start of Open Enrollment

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [reports](#) that a record 20 million people have selected an Affordable Care Act (ACA) Health Insurance Marketplace plan since the 2024 Marketplace Open Enrollment Period began in early November.

3.7 million new people have selected plans using the Marketplaces for 2024, an 18% increase over 2023. The overall rise in coverage has been monumental – since Biden took office there has been an increase of over 8 million people who now have coverage.

Under the Biden Administration, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been bolstered alongside the passage of other key pieces of legislation – including the IRA and the [American Rescue Plan](#) – which have made health coverage more affordable.

Medicaid unwinding has [played a role](#) in increasing enrollment in the Marketplace. During the pandemic, states allowed continuous enrollment in Medicaid, but recent disenrollments have spurred a shift. Enhanced subsidies in the American Rescue Plan have aided the transition from Medicaid to private coverage.

Older Americans are much more likely to have pre-existing conditions, with up to [84%](#) of people aged 55- 64 having at least one. This often directly leads to a denial of coverage by insurers. The Affordable Care Act has [put an end](#) to this health discrimination for millions of Americans by

barring health insurance companies from refusing coverage on the basis of a pre-existing condition.

“The increased enrollment in health coverage through the Affordable Care Act is an indicator of how crucial the ACA remains,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “The American Rescue Plan has also been key as Medicaid disenrollments continue.”

AFL-CIO’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day Conference to be Held in Montgomery

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is Monday, January 15, and the AFL-CIO will be holding the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference in Montgomery, Alabama from January 12-14. The conference’s theme is “Our Voice, Our Ballot, Our Future,” and each day will focus on part of the theme.



The [event](#) will reaffirm the bond between labor and the civil rights movement, honoring Dr. King’s vision on the importance of collective action—at the voting booth, in the community and in the workplace.

The first day’s “Our Voice” program will open with remarks on advocacy and collective action from AFL-CIO President **Liz Shuler** and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer **Fred Redmond**. The second day, “Our Ballot,” featuring former U.S. Senator **Doug Jones** (AL), will focus on voter mobilization

2024 AFL-CIO DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

and legislative and electoral issues. The conference will conclude with an awards gala focused on “Our Future.”

Other speakers at the virtual event include labor and social justice leaders from across the country: acting Secretary of Labor **Julie Su**, Senator **Laphonza Butler** (CA), Illinois House Speaker **Emanuel “Chris” Welch**, Montgomery Mayor **Steven Reed**, Rhode Island Senator **Sandra Cano**, Alabama State Rep. **Laura Hall**, Mi Familia Vota President/CEO **Héctor Sánchez Barba**, Bishop **Leah Daughtry** and SAG-AFTRA National Executive Director **Duncan Crabtree-Ireland**.

“Dr. King’s contributions to our civil rights and the labor movement cannot be overstated,” said President **Roach**. “We are invoking his legacy this year by continuing to work to protect democracy and voting rights, issues that were especially close to his heart.”