



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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January 19, 2024

House Budget Committee Advances “Fiscal Commission” Legislation

On Thursday, the House Budget Committee [approved three pieces of legislation](#) that pave the way for cuts to Social Security and Medicare: the Fiscal Commission Act (H.R. 5779), the Fiscal State of the Nation Act (H.R. 6952), and the Debt-to-GDP Transparency and Stabilization Act (H.R. 6957).

The committee approved the Fiscal Commission Act by a margin of 22-12, with every Republican member present and three Democratic members – Reps. **Earl Blumenauer** (D-OR), **Scott Peters** (D-CA), and **Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA) – voting to send it to the full House for consideration. If passed, the bill will create a 16-member fiscal commission to search for ways to reduce the national deficit and “balance the budget.”

[In his opening statement](#), House Budget Committee Ranking Member **Brendan Boyle** (D-PA) emphasized the danger that a fiscal commission poses to Social Security and Medicare: “There are absolutely those who are getting ready to use a commission as a backdoor way to force through unpopular cuts that I completely oppose and will completely oppose.” He also urged members to take action to increase revenues instead of pursuing cuts.



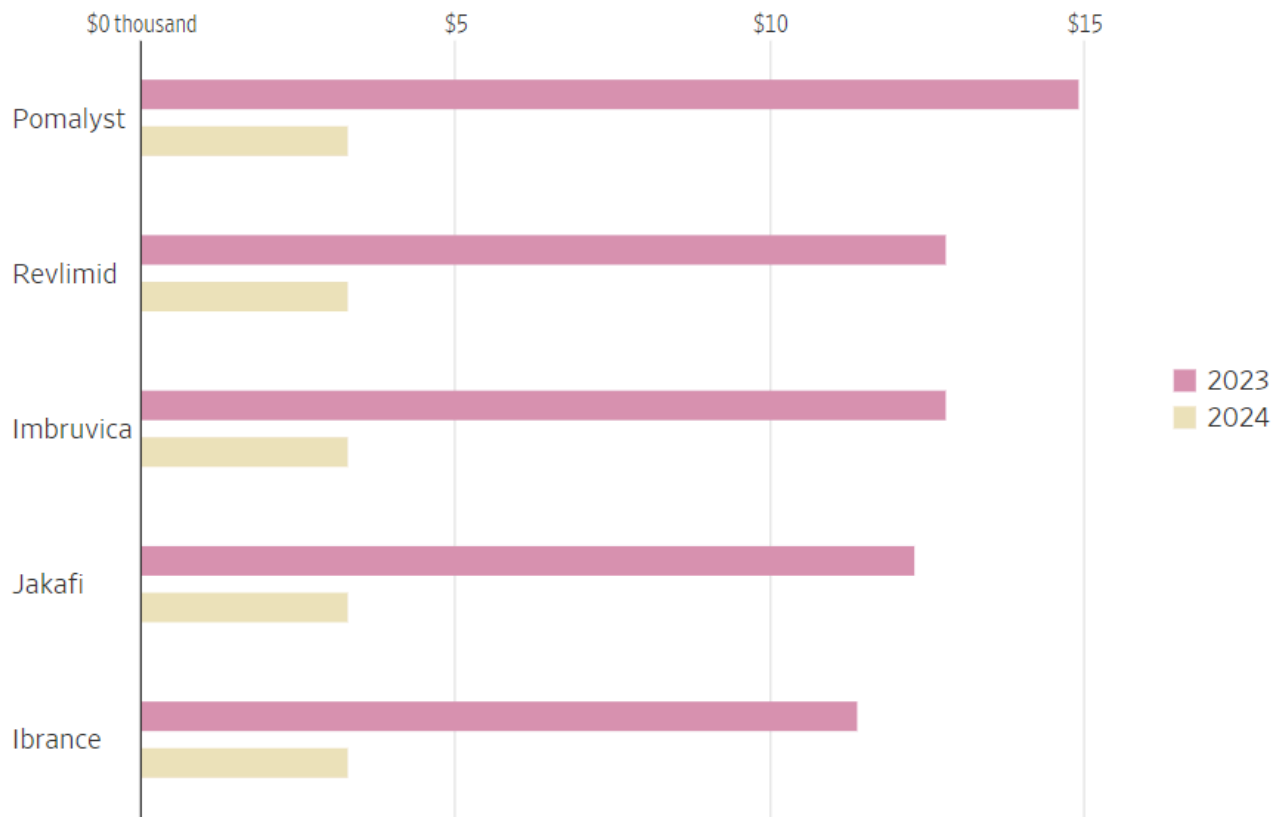
Rep. **Boyle** and Rep. **Sheila Jackson Lee** (D-TX) [offered amendments](#) that would have taken Social Security and Medicare benefit cuts off the table as a potential fiscal commission recommendation option, while Reps. **Brian Higgins** (D-NY) and **Bobby Scott** (D-VA) submitted amendments that stressed increasing revenue and closing tax loopholes as potential recommendations. Committee members blocked all four amendments.

“This fiscal commission legislation is based on the false premise that Social Security is adding to the national deficit,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “If its proponents were serious they could have ensured that measures to increase revenue – not just cuts – would be considered. This legislation is bad for Americans of all ages and the Alliance is going to make that clear to every member of Congress.”

Wall Street Journal: Out-Of-Pocket Drug Expenses Cap Will Save Seniors Thousands of Dollars

An article in the Wall Street Journal this week [detailed](#) how much Medicare beneficiaries will save on prescription drugs this year thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act. Once a Medicare beneficiary has spent \$3,250 on coinsurance or copayments this year their spending will be capped. In 2025 the cap will be \$2,000.

Sample Medicare drug payments for Part D enrollees, before and after the coinsurance change



Source: KFF

Graph Source: *Wall Street Journal*, “Medicare Patients on Pricy Drugs Are Saving Big This Year”

As a result, seniors will see significant savings, especially if they use certain high priced prescription drugs. Those who use the leukemia and lymphoma drug Imbruvica, for example, could see their out-of-pocket spending reduced by more than \$6,000 compared to last year. Imbruvica [is also one of the first ten prescription drugs](#) selected for Medicare’s new price negotiation program.

Medicare beneficiaries will also continue to benefit from other cost-saving measures this year, including insulin copays capped at \$35 a month, access to all Medicare Part D recommended vaccines for free, and Medicare Part D's Low-Income Subsidy program, "Extra Help."

"Americans pay the highest drug prices in the world, and older Americans have always borne the brunt of it," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "It's taken years of advocacy by Alliance members but seniors are finally paying less at the pharmacy counter, thanks to President Biden's leadership."

RSV Vaccine Authorization Encourages Older Americans to Seek Preventive Care

[A new report indicates](#) that the recent approval of the Respiratory Syncytial (RSV) Vaccine for adults aged 60 years and older has boosted the number of older Americans getting preventive health care and medical tests overall. The analysis shows that the demand for care surged when the demand for RSV vaccines increased. All recommended vaccines, including the RSV vaccine, are free for Medicare beneficiaries thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act.

During the pandemic many seniors did not receive regular health check ups. The report found that RSV vaccine appointments have served as a good re-entry point for these patients and allowed physicians to check on other conditions that might not have been identified or treated otherwise. Even with the uptick, the RSV vaccine rate remains low for older Americans – only about 20% of adults over 60 have received one.

"Anything that inspires retirees to get the health care they need is good news," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Older Americans who want an extra layer of protection from RSV can talk to their physician about this new vaccine and determine the best course of action to protect themselves and their loved ones."

KFF Health News: America's Health System Isn't Ready for the Surge of Seniors With Disabilities

By Judith Graham

The number of older adults with disabilities — difficulty with walking, seeing, hearing, memory, cognition, or performing daily tasks such as bathing or using the bathroom — will soar in the decades ahead, as baby boomers enter their 70s, 80s, and 90s.

But the health care system isn't ready to address their needs.

That became painfully obvious during the covid-19 pandemic, when older adults with disabilities had trouble getting treatments and hundreds of thousands died. Now, the [Department of Health](#)

[and Human Services](#) and the [National Institutes of Health](#) are targeting some failures that led to those problems.

One initiative strengthens access to medical treatments, equipment, and web-based programs for people with disabilities. The other recognizes that people with disabilities, including older adults, are a separate population with special health concerns that need more research and attention.

Lisa Iezzoni, 69, a professor at Harvard Medical School who has lived with multiple sclerosis since her early 20s and is widely considered the godmother of research on disability, called the developments “an important attempt to make healthcare more equitable for people with disabilities.”

“For too long, medical providers have failed to address change in society, changes in technology, and changes in the kind of assistance that people need,” she said.

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