



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## **GOP Blueprint Shows Guaranteed Medicare Benefits are at Risk if Trump Returns to Office**

On Monday [Rolling Stone magazine](#) detailed GOP plans to move quickly to privatize Medicare if **Donald Trump** is elected in 2024. The Alliance issued a [press release](#) to underscore the seriousness of this threat to earned benefits.

“After a lifetime of work, Americans have earned the right to guaranteed health care under Medicare,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Alliance Executive Director, in the statement. “But those benefits are at risk if either Donald Trump or **Nikki Haley** is elected President this November.”

He continued, “It’s all in plain view. *Rolling Stone* magazine reported that the 887-page policy [blueprint](#) for a second Trump Administration written by well connected Republican operatives calls for fully privatizing Medicare by making Medicare Advantage (MA) the ‘default enrollment option for people who are newly eligible for Medicare.’”

Fiesta called the plan a scheme that would be a boon to the profits of private insurance corporations that are making billions in profits by reneging on their promises to provide seniors with more care for less money. He noted that MA plans are delaying and denying care and that privatization would hurt the most vulnerable seniors: those with the least amount of money and the most need for health care. Fiesta then contrasted the GOP’s Medicare plans with those of President **Biden**.

“Instead of privatizing Medicare, President Biden is strengthening it,” Fiesta stated. “He is holding Medicare Advantage insurance companies accountable, requiring them to return improper payments and deliver the care patients need. He’s also bringing down the cost of prescription drugs. Already, insulin under Medicare is capped at \$35 a month and even more lower prices are on the way through direct negotiation with the drug corporations.”

Fiesta concluded, “To truly look out for seniors’ best interests, we must strengthen traditional Medicare — not end the promise of Medicare’s guaranteed benefits in favor of giveaways to wealthy corporations.”

The GOP blueprint can be read [here](#).

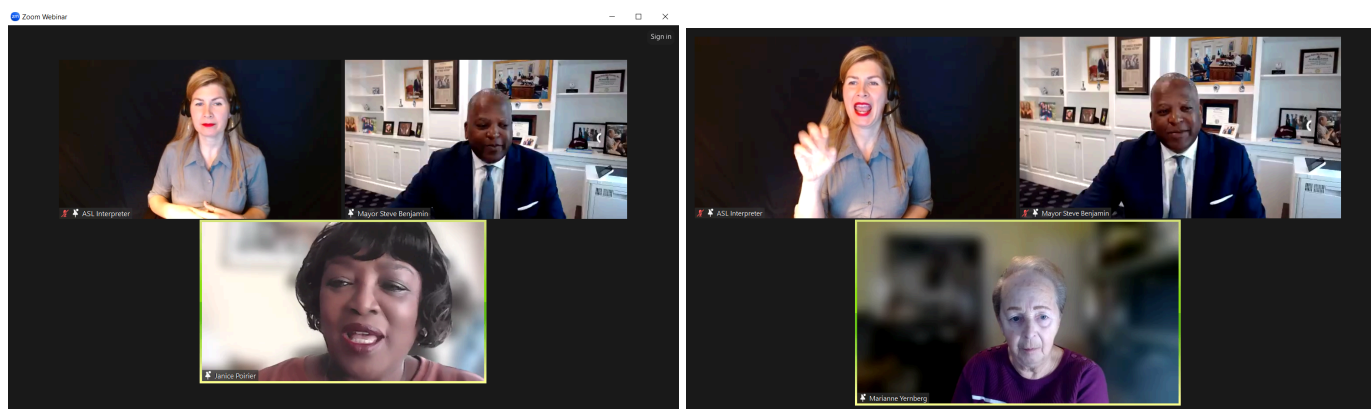
## Alliance Members Share How Much Less They Pay for Their Prescriptions

On Tuesday officials from the **Biden-Harris** administration hosted a national webinar to highlight the difference the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) has made in reducing health care costs, including lowering drug prices. Alliance members **Janice Poirier** and **Marianne Yernberg** shared their stories about how they have each benefited from the IRA.

“My 2022 out-of-pocket prescription drug costs were \$7,069, and my 2023 costs were \$7,629, so I will benefit greatly from this year and next year’s Inflation Reduction Act out-of-pocket caps,” said Ms. Yernberg, a Minnesota Alliance member. “In 2024 Medicare Part D beneficiaries across the country will pay no more than \$3,200 out of pocket annually for drugs and in 2025, they will pay no more than \$2,000. It is such a change to look forward to things improving rather than dreading that they will get worse.”

“I had been paying \$120 to \$160 for 3 vials of insulin, and now pay only \$35,” said Ms. Poirier, a Florida Alliance member and President of the Florida Education Association Retired. “Before the insulin cap took effect, I had gotten to the point where I was only taking half of my recommended dosage in order to save money.”

Administration speakers included Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement **Steve Benjamin**; Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council **Neera Tanden**; Secretary of Health & Human Services **Xavier Becerra**; Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services **Chiquita Brooks-LaSure**; and Deputy Administrator and Center for Medicare Director **Dr. Meena Seshamani**.



*Left photo (Clockwise from top left): American Sign Language Interpreter and Steve Benjamin with Janice Poirier on Zoom Tuesday; Right photo (Clockwise from top left): American Sign Language Interpreter and Steve Benjamin with Marianne Yernberg*

## GOP House Passes Bill that Threatens To Roll Back Medicare Drug Negotiation While Harming Public Health and Increasing Health Care Costs for Millions

In an effort to weaken the Inflation Reduction Act’s (IRA) drug price negotiations and the Affordable Care Act, the U.S. House passed the Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act ([H.R.485](#)) by a margin of [211-208](#) Wednesday. Every Republican voted in support of the bill and every Democrat voted no.

The bill's supposed purpose is to ban any value measures like "Quality Adjusted Life Years" (QALYS) which are used by the government to determine the dollar value of a particular treatment. In reality, this is unnecessary since the IRA already prohibits the use of QALYS in Medicare coverage determinations.

However, because the language in the bill is purposefully vague, analysts say that it would make it easier for prescription drug corporations to sue over the Medicare drug price negotiation law. In addition, the Congressional Budget Office said the measure would actually add [hundreds of millions of dollars](#) in costs for federal programs.

H.R.485 would also cut funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund, established by the Affordable Care Act to provide retirees affordable access to preventive health care services, leading to even more artificially high drug and health care costs.

"This legislation is not about protecting health care for patients," [said Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.](#), Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member (D-NJ). "Instead, it is a trojan horse intended to undermine the progress President Biden and Democrats have made in lowering prescription drug costs for American families."

"The Senate should not pass this harmful legislation," added **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "It is a gift to the drug corporations to protect their profits."

### **KFF Health News: Halfway Through 'Unwinding,' Medicaid Enrollment Is Down About 10 Million**

By Phil Galewitz

Halfway through what will be the biggest purge of Medicaid beneficiaries in a one-year span, enrollment in the government-run health insurance program is on track to return to roughly pre-pandemic levels.

Medicaid, which covers low-income and disabled people, and the related Children's Health Insurance Program grew to a record 94 million enrollees as a result of a rule that prohibited states from terminating coverage during the nation's public health emergency.

But since last April, states have removed [more than 16 million people](#) from the programs in a process known as the "unwinding," according to KFF estimates compiled from state-level data.

Click [here](#) to read more.

### **Alliance Celebrates the Lunar New Year this Saturday**

The Lunar New Year, an international holiday celebrated in many Asian countries, is this Saturday, February 10. It is sometimes called the Chinese New Year, because it follows a calendar that was developed in China, but it is also celebrated in other parts of Asia, including Korea and Vietnam.

The Lunar New Year is celebrated on different dates from late January to mid-February depending on the year, and celebrations often last for a week. This new year, which begins on the 10th, is the Year of the Dragon. In the Lunar New Year tradition, the dragon is [symbolic](#) of many favorable traits, including strength, wisdom, success, and good fortune.



“During the Lunar New Year it is customary to travel and visit immediate family, other relatives and friends, especially older relatives,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “It is also an opportunity to recognize the Asian Pacific American community and the work of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), which shares the Alliance’s vision of a society where economic and racial justice prevail and human rights and worker dignity are prioritized.”

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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](http://www.retiredamericans.org) @activeretirees