



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Alliance Protects Voting Rights with Victories in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin

On Wednesday, the Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans announced a major victory that stemmed from a [lawsuit](#) challenging the rejection of mail-in and absentee ballots that were missing the last two digits of the year from the handwritten date on the outer return envelope.

As part of a mandatory directive to all 67 county Boards of Elections, the Pennsylvania Department of State has instructed the full year to be pre-printed on the return envelope for mail-in and absentee ballots, instead of requiring voters to complete the last two digits of the year by hand. Having achieved its goal, the Pennsylvania Alliance voluntarily discontinued its lawsuit.

Mike Crossey, President of the Pennsylvania Alliance, said, "The right to vote and choose our leaders has never been more important. We are relieved that no voters will be disenfranchised over this technicality and thank the Department of State for taking action on this issue."



In another important Alliance voting rights case, last Friday the Wisconsin Supreme Court [reinstated](#) the use of ballot drop boxes ahead of the 2024 election, overturning a 2022 decision from the court's prior conservative majority that largely barred their use in the potential swing state. The decision came as a result of a lawsuit filed by the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans, Priorities USA, and a registered voter in the state who challenged the drop box ban in a lawsuit filed last summer.

Though drop boxes proved to be a widely popular method of returning absentee ballots ahead of the 2020 election in Wisconsin and other states, they became a hot-button issue in the weeks afterward as former President **Donald Trump** and his allies sought to sow doubt about the final election results.

"These two victories in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin represent big wins for people who vote absentee and by mail," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "The Alliance will continue to fight unlawful voter suppression efforts whenever and wherever we see evidence of it."

President Biden Meets with the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO



President Joe Biden addressed the AFL-CIO's Executive Council meeting in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday. During the meeting, the AFL-CIO's leadership unanimously reaffirmed its commitment to re-electing President **Biden** and Vice President **Kamala Harris**.

"The best opportunity for seniors to see the enhancement of Social Security and lower drug prices — including medications that treat conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart disease — is to re-elect the Biden-Harris ticket, keep a Democratic Senate, and elect a Democratic House," said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance and an Executive Council board member.

President Biden received a warm welcome Wednesday from Executive Council members including President **Roach**, AFL-CIO President **Liz Shuler** and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer/Alliance Executive Vice President **Fred Redmond**

***Wall Street Journal*: Medicare Advantage insurance Corporations Overcharged the Government \$50 Billion from 2018 to 2021**

A major investigation by [The Wall Street Journal](#) found that Medicare Advantage insurance corporations overcharged the federal government by billions of dollars by mischaracterizing the health status of its customers, resulting in bigger profits for the insurers.

Medicare Advantage (MA) insurers are paid a fee for each beneficiary they enroll regardless of how many health care services or treatments each patient receives. The corporations are paid more for patients with more serious or complex medical conditions, such as morbid obesity or HIV, than a patient without these conditions.

The Wall Street Journal investigated the patient diagnoses that MA insurers reported to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services from 2018 to 2021. The newspaper found that insurers added hundreds of thousands of questionable diagnoses to patient records, and many of

these patients received no treatment for the supposed conditions. The corporations pocketed \$50 billion from these diagnoses alone.

However, In many cases, neither the patient nor their doctor knew of the new diagnoses given to the patients by the insurance corporations, and patients received no care at all for the conditions they supposedly had.

Medicare Advantage corporations commit to providing care more efficiently and at a lower cost than traditional Medicare. However, they have never delivered on this promise. Medicare spending for Medicare Advantage enrollees was \$321 higher per person in 2019 than if enrollees had instead been covered by traditional Medicare.

“Instead of saving Americans money, this report shows that too many Medicare Advantage corporations have been bilking taxpayers out of tens of billions of dollars,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The strength of the Medicare system depends on demanding an end to these practices.”

KFF Health News: Lack of Affordability Tops Older Americans’ List of Health Care Worries

What weighs most heavily on older adults’ minds when it comes to health care?

The cost of services and therapies, and their ability to pay.

“It’s on our minds a whole lot because of our age and because everything keeps getting more expensive,” said **Connie Colyer**, 68, of Pleasureville, Kentucky. She’s a retired forklift operator who has lung disease and high blood pressure. Her husband, **James**, 70, drives a dump truck and has a potentially dangerous irregular heart rhythm.

Tens of millions of seniors are similarly anxious about being able to afford health care because of its expense and rising costs for housing, food, and other essentials.

Read more [here](#).

Join Us at the Alliance’s Northeast Regional Meeting

Registration is still open for the [Northeast regional meeting](#) in Washington, D.C., July 30-31, 2024. Strengthen your skills as a retiree activist! Make sure you’re ready to help elect pro-retiree candidates this November and win the fight for retirement security. [Click here to register](#).

All meeting attendees will participate in four interactive workshops with fellow retiree activists. For more information, please contact **Joni Jones** by calling 202-637-5377 or e-mail AllianceConference@retiredamericans.org.

Alliance Calls for Strengthening the Older Americans Act on its Anniversary

Since the Older Americans Act (OAA) was signed into law on July 14, 1965, it has provided Americans ages 60 and older with vital services including nutrition screening, healthy meals, counseling, education, and programs supporting their well-being.

However, the world has changed dramatically since the last substantial update to the regulations governing these programs and the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL). The ACL published a [final rule](#) to update the regulations for implementing its OAA programs to ensure that the nation's older adults can continue to receive the services and support they need to live – and thrive – in their own homes and communities.

The National Council on Aging has [listed](#) their priorities for the law's 2024 reauthorization as healthy aging, including quality health care services; economic security, including lowering the poverty rate of older Americans; and supporting communities through social connections such as senior centers.

“The Older Americans Act has long provided seniors with programs to support their health and independence, and is a necessary lifeline for millions of seniors,” said President **Roach**. “As we celebrate its 59th anniversary, we agree wholeheartedly with the priorities the National Coalition on Aging has enumerated as part of the reauthorization process.”

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