



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

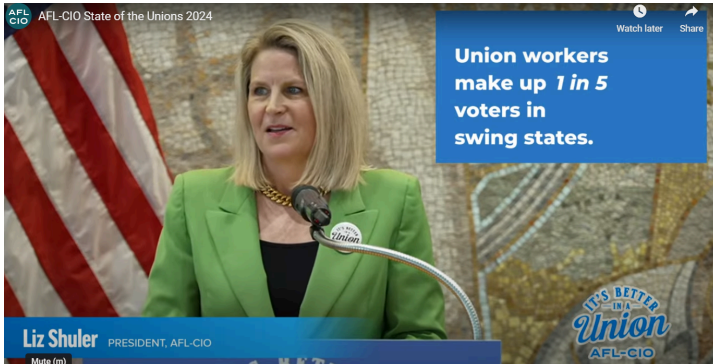
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Labor Day: Union Approval Rating Continues to Skyrocket



A new Gallup poll [shows that union approval](#) is at its second-highest level in almost 60 years. 70 percent of Americans reported having favorable views of labor unions.

During [the State of the Unions address](#) this week, AFL-CIO **President Liz Shuler** and Secretary-Treasurer **Fred Redmond** emphasized how critical the union vote will be in deciding who wins the 2024 election up and down the ballot. “We are the ones who

are going to decide this election,” said Shuler. “In these swing states – like Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nevada, that are gonna come down to 1 percent, 2 percent – union voters are 20 percent of the electorate.”

She also pointed out that workers in the labor movement are “force multipliers” during elections because they come together as union households. Workers can leverage this intergenerational power by teaching younger members of their families about the importance of labor unions. The Labor Heritage Foundation has a [special song playlist](#) to help get started.

“I teach my grandchildren to stand up for themselves and care about others,” says long-time labor activist **Karen Nussbaum**. “That's Union 101. But how do I teach them they are part of a long tradition of fighting alongside others for what's right and are part of a big union family? Union songs for kids! If you've got them singing 'you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union' at 5, you've got them for life.”

Save the Date: Alliance Retirement Security Symposium on November 13

The Alliance's annual Retirement Security Symposium will be Wednesday, November 13, from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, at the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C. and also streamed online.

The event will examine the future of retirement security and bring together government officials, labor movement leaders, policy experts, Social Security and pension advocates, academics, attorneys, economists and young workers who work on retirement security and social insurance issues.

Participants will hear from national experts on important retirement security issues, including defined benefit pensions and Social Security. Presenters from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau have been invited to speak.

“The symposium will provide tools so individuals and organizations are better prepared to bolster retirement security for the nation and themselves. This mission has become even more important as 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “More details will follow as the event approaches.”

Lawmakers Push for September House Floor Vote for Social Security Fairness Act

Representatives **Abigail Spanberger** (D-VA) and **Garret Graves** (R-LA) [plan to force a vote](#) and get the Social Security Fairness Act on the House floor after the August recess.

[The bill](#), introduced by Rep. Spanberger and Rep. Graves last year, would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) amendments, which were added to Social Security law in 1977 and 1983. These amendments reduce Social Security benefits for public sector retirees who receive public pensions – including teachers and federal workers – as well as spouses and survivors of beneficiaries who worked in a job not covered by Social Security. More than 2 million beneficiaries are affected, especially low-income workers and women.

“It’s time to repeal the WEP and GPO amendments that have threatened retirement security for millions of public sector employees and their spouses for far too long,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Everyone should receive the full Social Security benefits they earned after a lifetime of hard work.”

Latest Postal Service Proposal Would Degrade Service in Rural Areas

[A new proposal](#) from Postmaster General **Louis DeJoy** would change the speed of delivery and mail service based on where customers live and how close they are to regional USPS hubs. [Those who](#)



[live within 50 miles](#) of the Postal Service's largest processing facilities would get faster service.

The change is supposed to help USPS financially, but trial runs of the plan's provisions suggest that it will hurt rural areas, which are already trying to recover from the aftermath of previous cost-cutting measures. A series of initiatives implemented in 2020 caused massive mail slowdowns and threatened ballot access for millions of Americans who cast their votes by mail.

DeJoy's "Delivering for America" 10-year plan, outlined in 2021, resulted in cost increases for customers and a major overhaul of delivery services – [but has not recouped](#) savings for the agency, according to an audit conducted this year. The agency increased the first-class mail delivery rate from three days to five days and increased first-class postage stamp prices by 33 percent.

"Millions of seniors live in rural communities and rely on the Postal Service for timely delivery of essential goods and services," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "Cost-cutting' plans like DeJoy's latest are not solutions and should be considered nonstarters."

The new plan must receive approval from the Postal Board of Governors and Postal Regulatory Commission. USPS will present it to the commission during a meeting on September 5. If approved, changes would not be made until after the November election.

Medicare Changes Rules for Wegovy Weight-Loss Drug

[A recent rule change](#) enables Medicare beneficiaries with heart disease and a high Body Mass Index (BMI) to receive Wegovy treatment – and have it covered by Medicare. Previously, Medicare was not allowed to cover prescription drugs that are only used to treat weight-loss – including Wegovy – and beneficiaries had to pay the entire cost themselves.

Research suggests that this update could extend treatment eligibility to more than 3 million Americans. Only a small subset of beneficiaries would qualify, but experts expect Wegovy to become one of the more expensive drugs that Medicare covers, estimating a price tag of more than \$10 billion a year. [During a June 2024 Senate hearing](#), Senator **Bernie Sanders** (D-VT) disclosed that the price of Wegovy is 15 times more in the United States than in other developed countries.

[Wall Street analysts predict](#) that Ozempic, which is used to treat diabetes, will be one of the drugs approved for Medicare's drug price negotiation program in 2027.