



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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President-elect Trump Chooses Dr. Oz to Run Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

President-elect **Donald Trump** has selected [Dr. Mehmet Oz](#) to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency in charge of a \$1.5 trillion budget and the health insurance coverage for more than 155 million Americans.

CMS oversees Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Health Insurance Marketplace. If Oz, a former cardiac surgeon who became a household name as a frequent guest on **Oprah Winfrey's** daytime TV show, is confirmed by the Senate, he would also be responsible for a health agency that has about 6,500 employees.

When Dr. Oz ran for Senate in Pennsylvania, he called for turning Medicare over to private, for-profit Medicare Advantage health insurers that have been found to [over-charge and deny care](#). That is also a goal of Project 2025, a project of the conservative Heritage Foundation and staffed by many former Trump Administration officials.

"Medicare Advantage (MA) was created in part because insurance corporations argued that they could deliver more benefits to consumers at a lower cost to the government," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "In reality, the Kaiser Family Foundation found that in 2019 Medicare spending for MA enrollees was \$321 higher per person than if enrollees had instead been covered by traditional Medicare. The next CMS administrator must hold insurance corporations accountable, not give them a blank check."

Senate Must Pass Social Security Fairness Act Before End of the Year

On November 12, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly [passed](#) a bill that could raise Social Security benefits for millions of Americans who worked in public service, as well as their families. The Senate must vote on the bill by [December 31](#), before the current Congress adjourns.

The legislation addresses the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), provisions which unfairly reduce Social Security benefits for public sector retirees who receive a public pension — or the spouse or survivor of a Social Security beneficiary — who worked in a job not covered by the Social Security program.

For decades, the two Social Security law provisions have unjustly deprived more than 2 million public service retirees of the benefits they have earned.

“The House voted to correct a serious injustice involving Social Security benefits that has been a problem for decades,” said Executive Director **Fiesta**. “Many Alliance members and other retirees are seeing their Social Security benefits reduced by hundreds of dollars a month. The economic harm to their quality of life cannot be overstated.”

ACTION NEEDED: *For this important bill to become law, the Senate must also approve it. More than 60 Senators have already cosponsored the Senate version of the bill (S. 597).*

Please [click here](#) to tell your senators to support this critical legislation and push for a vote before the end of the year.

Martin O'Malley Stepping Down as SSA Commissioner

Martin O'Malley, Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, [will resign from his position](#) on November 29th.



Commissioner O'Malley

During O'Malley's tenure at SSA, he focused largely on making improvements to wait times on the 1-800 number and for initial disability determinations, as well as rooting out underpayments and overpayments in Social Security benefits.

Earlier this year, SSA launched [an initiative](#) focused on addressing customer experience challenges for the agency. Over the past several months, O'Malley has reviewed performance metrics and identified actions for progressing toward better customer service.

O'Malley, a former Maryland governor and mayor of Baltimore, however, has also warned that without more resources and support, the SSA workforce will struggle with rising employee workloads as the agency faces a record high number of beneficiaries and historically low agency staffing.

In the results of the 2024 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, for the first time in years, SSA employees' results on engagement, satisfaction and agency leadership all trended positively.

“Retirees, SSA employees and all Social Security beneficiaries are grateful for Commissioner O'Malley's tremendous accomplishments and dedication,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “That he was able to achieve those results on such a limited budget is astounding. He is absolutely right that SSA must have more funding to meet its goals.”

Social Security Administration Will Require Customers to Make Appointments for In-Person Services

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is expanding appointment-based services at their [local Social Security offices](#). By scheduling appointments, SSA aims to further reduce wait times, streamline service delivery, and improve the overall customer experience.

Nearly 400 field offices have already moved to appointment-based service this year, leading to both significant improvements in wait times and increases in the number of customers able to complete their business online. Some offices have minimal to no wait times.

SSA is implementing appointment-based services nationwide in two phases. The first phase is a transition period, now through January 5, 2025. The purpose of this transition period is to educate customers about needing to schedule an appointment for SSA services. As a reminder, many services can be provided via phone with an appointment and do not require an in-person visit.

Effective January 6, 2025, SSA will require customers to schedule an appointment for service in field offices, including requests for Social Security cards. SSA encourages customers to become accustomed to their [online services](#), where many transactions can be completed conveniently and securely, and to their [automated services](#), available at the National 800#, 1-800-772-1213.

Customers who are not able to handle their business online or with the automated options may call their [local Social Security office](#) or the National 800# to schedule an appointment.

SSA emphasizes that people who are unable to make an appointment or do not want to make an appointment will not be turned away. Members of vulnerable populations, military personnel, people with terminal illnesses, and individuals with other situations requiring immediate or specialized attention may still prefer to walk in for service at field offices.

“The hard-working SSA staff are delivering quality services despite the underfunding of the agency,” said **President Roach**. “We are grateful for their additional efforts during this transition period.”

InterGen, the Intergenerational Alliance of Young and Elder Activists, Shares Inspiring Video

InterGen, the Intergenerational Alliance of young and elder activists that the Illinois Alliance has helped sponsor, has released a video with highlights from a recent retreat at SEIU Healthcare. Their powerful, [8-minute video](#), which includes centenarian and Illinois Alliance member [Bea Lumpkin](#), shows how people of different generations are working together to accomplish their political goals.

“On issues like Social Security, most voters across party lines are in agreement that the program should be strengthened, not cut,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The video is very uplifting as an example of the synergy of older and younger Americans with so much in common.”

Alliance Releases New Fact Sheet with Updated Social Security, Medicare Statistics

The Alliance has updated its Social Security and Medicare Facts and Figures [fact sheet](#) for 2025 with the most up-to-date information about average benefit amounts, the cap on earnings subject

to Social Security taxes, and Medicare Parts A, B, and D premiums. To see all the Alliance fact sheets and position papers, click [here](#).

Happy Thanksgiving from the Alliance

The Alliance wishes all our members a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving. Make your Thanksgiving extra special by choosing union-made products for your celebrations!

THIS THANKSGIVING, MAKE SURE IT'S UNION-MADE!

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- CorningWare
- Cutco Knives
- FiestaWare
- Libbey
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- Dole
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- Kroger 100% Pure Pumpkin
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- Stroehmann
- Schwebel's
- Arnold

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- Butterball
- Cook's Hickory Smoked Spiral Sliced Ham with Honey
- Foster Farms
- Tyson

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