



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

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Trump Administration Rescinds Memo “Pausing” Federal Grants After Sparking Widespread Panic and Confusion

Monday night the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [issued a memo](#) freezing all federal grants, causing chaos for nonprofit organizations and government agencies and jeopardizing critical assistance programs that older Americans rely on, including Meals on Wheels. State Medicaid programs [reported](#) that they were unable to access payment portals.

The pause was set to take effect at 5 P.M. on Tuesday, but OMB officials eventually sent a notice [revoking](#) the memo altogether.

Twenty-three state attorneys general filed a lawsuit in Rhode Island in response to the freeze, and the federal judge in that case said he is open to blocking future attempts to pause funding.

“All across the United States seniors were left wondering whether their next meal would be delivered, whether the ride they were depending on to get to the doctor would show up, or whether their nursing home bill would even be paid,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “It’s good he backed down, but we know that the goal of gutting the health care and other services Americans rely on remains in place. We must remain vigilant and ready to fight back.”

Report: Americans Prefer to Add Revenue to Social Security Instead of Cutting Benefits

A new public opinion survey entitled “Social Security at 90: A Bipartisan Roadmap for the Program’s Future,” [indicates that](#) the majority of Americans want to strengthen Social Security – not cut it. 85 percent of Americans surveyed said they want to make sure that benefits are increased and/or not reduced, even if that means paying higher taxes.

The poll was commissioned by the National Academy of Social Insurance, AARP, National Institute on Retirement Security and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

When asked about potential Social Security policy changes to address future funding shortfalls, respondents showed a strong preference for making adjustments that add revenue, showing the strongest support for getting rid of the payroll tax cap on earnings over \$400,000. They also reported strong disapproval for any proposed updates that excluded eliminating the payroll tax cap.

Other popular modifications included gradually raising the payroll tax rate from 6.2 percent to 7.2 percent and adapting the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to more accurately reflect inflation and the spending habits of older Americans. Respondents also broadly opposed policy changes that involve benefit reductions, especially raising the retirement age.

“This study confirms how united Americans are in their support for strengthening Social Security and increasing benefits,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Congress needs to follow their lead and raise the payroll tax cap so the wealthy pay their fair share into the system.”

The Alliance Urges Senators to Reject Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as Secretary of Health and Human Services

Alliance for Retired Americans leader Richard Fiesta released the [following statement](#) regarding Robert Kennedy, Jr.’s nomination for Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS):

“During his confirmation hearings, Mr. Kennedy demonstrated a lack of understanding of how Medicare and Medicaid, the health insurance programs which forty percent of Americans rely on every day, operate.



“On Wednesday, Mr. Kennedy [appeared unaware](#) that most Medicaid recipients do not pay premiums or co-pays or that the program’s cost is shared by states and the federal government. On Thursday, he [could not state](#) what Medicare Part A, B, and C are or what they cover. This is basic information, readily available to anyone with a computer, and something that the person who wants to run these insurance programs needs to know.

“He also offered no new ideas for lowering the price of prescription drugs – despite this being an issue President Trump has spoken on over the years. Kennedy gave [no assurances](#) that the current Administration would protect the lower drug price provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act which are saving people with Medicare money on the drugs they need.

“Medicare beneficiaries have a right to know whether this Administration will go along with efforts to repeal the monthly \$35 cap on insulin co-pays, the \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap on drug prices, and the requirement that Medicare negotiate lower prices for the most expensive drugs.

“Older Americans earn Medicare benefits over a lifetime of work, contributing to the system with every paycheck. And millions of the most vulnerable Americans rely on Medicaid to pay for the health care and long-term care they need. Seniors’ health care is too important to put in Mr. Kennedy’s hands and on behalf of the Alliance’s 4.4 million members, I urge senators to reject his nomination.”

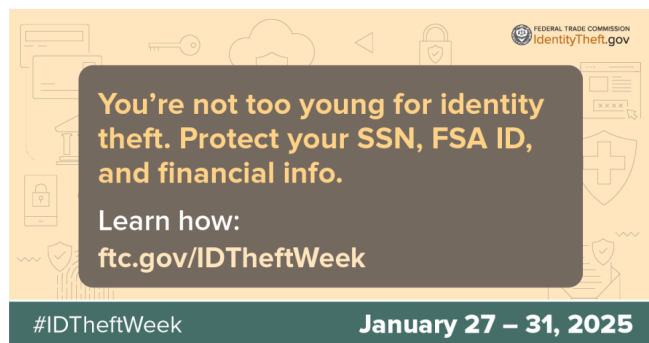
Alliance Celebrates Lunar New Year

The Lunar New Year, an international holiday celebrated in many Asian countries, took place this Wednesday, January 29. Sometimes called the Chinese New Year because it follows a calendar developed in China, Lunar New Year is celebrated in many 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 up to two weeks. This new year, which began on the 29th, is the Year of the Snake. While snakes have a bad reputation in Western countries, they are celebrated in the Eastern hemisphere. In the Lunar New Year tradition, the snake is [symbolic](#) of positive transformation and new beginnings.

“Lunar New Year is a time to travel and visit immediate family, other relatives and friends, especially older relatives,” said President **Roach**. “It is also an opportunity to recognize the important contributions of the Asian Pacific American community and the work that the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) does to fight for racial justice and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers.”

Federal Trade Commission Holds Identity Theft Awareness Week



This week, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) partnered with a [multitude of organizations](#), including the Better Business Bureau, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Social Security Administration to raise awareness of identity theft and promote good habits to understand, avoid, and, if necessary, recover from identity theft.

The FTC hosted free podcasts, webinars, interviews, and other events that centered on avoiding and recovering from identity theft, as well as [spotting scams](#). The events emphasized that identity theft can happen to anyone, regardless of age, but also provided extra support and advice for communities that are often targeted for identity theft, including seniors.

On Thursday, the FTC hosted two webinars in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) that covered understanding and avoiding identity theft.

“Identity theft is a serious issue that affects countless older Americans each year,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “This week is a chance to help seniors and other communities learn more about identity theft, how they can prevent it, and how to recover from it.”

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