



# FRIDAY ALERT



## Alliance for Retired Americans

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Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

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## Alliance Sues Treasury Department to Protect Americans' Personal and Financial Data

On Monday, the Alliance, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) [sued the Department of Treasury](#) to block sharing of sensitive confidential data with the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), run by **Elon Musk**.



The Department of Treasury maintains the sensitive personal and financial information of millions of Americans, and federal laws protect such data from improper disclosure and misuse, including by barring disclosure to individuals who lack a lawful and legitimate need for it.

Instead of protecting the private information of Americans as required by law, the complaint explains, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent took punitive measures against officials who sought to protect that information from improper access and allowed DOGE full access to the data.

Judge **Colleen Kollar-Kotelly** [issued an interim order](#) on Wednesday that prevents Musk or others affiliated with DOGE from accessing the payment records while the case proceeds. The agreement [will remain in place](#) until February 24, when additional arguments will be considered.

“Retirees deserve to receive the benefits they earned and paid for without fear that their personal information could be compromised by Elon Musk and his lackeys,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We urge the court to make a permanent ruling that stops this unlawful theft or disclosure of our data.”

## Retirees Affected by WEP-GPO May Have to Wait a Year for Benefit Increases

The Social Security Administration (SSA) [estimates](#) that it could take more than a year for retirees to receive benefit increases mandated by the newly enacted Social Security Fairness Act, as Congress did not [allocate](#) additional funds for implementation of the law.

The Social Security Fairness Act repealed the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), which unfairly reduced Social Security benefits for public sector retirees who receive a public pension. More than 2.5 million retired federal, state, and local employees [are eligible](#) to receive up to \$600 more per month in Social Security benefits, calculated retroactively to 2024. The average monthly benefit increase is expected to be \$360.

SSA officials recommend that people with public pensions or survivors whose Social Security benefits are affected check to ensure that their correct name and address are on file. Retirees who never filed for Social Security because of the WEP-GPO provisions should complete an application online or in person, according to the agency.

A bipartisan group of 27 lawmakers [has called for](#) speedy implementation of the law.

“Thanks to the Social Security Fairness Act, public sector retirees will get the full benefits they are owed, even if it takes a little time. We appreciate SSA employees and their critical role in implementing this important legislation,” said **Robert Roach**, President of the Alliance. “Affected retirees can stay up-to-date on how the implementation process is progressing by visiting [ssa.gov](#).”

### **Pharmaceutical Industry Pushes for Drug Price Negotiation Pause**

Pharmaceutical corporations, including Eli Lilly & Co. are reportedly [calling on](#) the Trump administration to pause Medicare drug price negotiation, which the government is required to do under the Inflation Reduction Act.

In January, Democratic U.S. Senators **Elizabeth Warren** (MA), **Ron Wyden** (OR), and **Bernie Sanders** (VT) [wrote](#) a letter to President Trump encouraging him to reject the pharmaceutical industry’s request. They urged him to follow through on his past promises to lower drug costs and his previous support for drug negotiation by following the law and defending it in court.

If confirmed as Secretary of Health and Human Services **Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.** would be responsible for the drug price negotiation program. During his confirmation hearings, Kennedy [refused to](#) give assurances that he or the Trump administration would preserve the Inflation Reduction Act’s drug pricing provisions and continue Medicare’s ability to negotiate lower drug prices. When asked about a statement [released](#) by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services that said they aim to “improve the Negotiation Program,” Kennedy simply [stated](#) that he will “comply with the law.”

“This law helps millions of Americans and prevents pharmaceutical corporations from price-gouging,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “It is essential that President Trump resists drugmakers’ efforts to pause drug price negotiation. His administration must follow the law and negotiate a fair deal for patients.”

If President Trump follows the Inflation Reduction Act’s schedule, Medicare [is set to](#)



negotiate the top 10 most expensive drugs starting next year, and will ultimately negotiate lower drug prices for 20 prescription drugs by 2029.

## **The Alliance Joins the AFL-CIO in Celebrating Black History Month**

Black workers have been a vital part of the labor movement for generations. This February, the AFL-CIO will highlight the important role that Black unionists played in the creation of unions, helping to gain critical workplace protections and fighting for civil rights across the country.

Throughout the month, the AFL-CIO will be showcasing the contributions of Black leaders and activists from across the labor movement. The profiles will be posted on the [AFL-CIO blog](#), on social media, and profiles for certain individuals will also be displayed in the lobby of the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C.

“At a time when workers’ rights and civil rights are under attack, it’s more important than ever to remember the contributions of Black workers and acknowledge their critical role in the labor movement,” said President **Roach**.

## ***KFF Health News: Across the South, Rural Health Care Has Become ‘Trendy.’ Medicaid Expansion Has Not.***

**By Lauren Sausser**

WALHALLA, S.C. — Nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a small primary care clinic run by Clemson University draws patients from across the region. Many are Hispanic and uninsured, and some are willing to travel from other counties, bypassing closer health care providers, just to be seen by Michelle Deem, the clinic’s bilingual nurse practitioner.

“Patients who speak Spanish really prefer a Spanish-speaking provider,” Deem said. “I’ve gotten to know this community pretty well.”

Clemson doesn’t operate an academic medical center, nor does it run a medical school. Arguably, the public university is best known for its football program. Yet, with millions of dollars earmarked from the state legislature, it has expanded into delivering health care, with clinics in Walhalla and beyond. School leaders are attempting to address gaps in rural and underserved parts of a state where health outcomes routinely rank among the worst in the country.

[Read more.](#)