



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## Court Grants Preliminary Injunction and Blocks Access to SSA Systems

A federal court granted a preliminary injunction blocking Elon Musk's so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) from further accessing sensitive personal data stored within the Social Security Administration's (SSA) systems Thursday night.

The ruling by federal district court Judge **Ellen Lipton Hollander** in Maryland comes in response to a motion filed by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO; the American Federation of Teachers (AFT); and the Alliance.

The court recognized that Musk's operatives' unprecedented access to private Social Security data violated critical privacy protections and would cause irreparable harm.

"Older Americans can breathe easier knowing that Elon Musk and his DOGE team have been clearly ordered to stay away from their most personal financial and health information," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "We will always fight to ensure that every American after a lifetime of work receives the Social Security benefits they have earned and that their most sensitive information remains protected."

The preliminary injunction halts DOGE personnel from accessing SSA data while the broader lawsuit moves forward. Read the [complaint](#), the [motion for temporary restraining order](#), the [motion for preliminary injunction](#), and [today's ruling](#).

## Alliance Members Participate in "Save Social Security" Day of Action

Tuesday was a "Save Social Security" Day of Action to draw attention to the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) attempts to dismantle the Social Security Administration.

"It is unacceptable, unconscionable and un-American that Elon Musk and House Republicans are dismantling and closing Social Security offices, jacking up wait times and preventing hardworking Americans from securing their benefits," [said](#) House Minority Leader **Hakeem Jeffries** (NY), who organized the events. "We will make clear that we are going to do everything possible to protect

Social Security and strengthen Social Security so that the American people receive the earned benefits that they deserve.”

Alliance members across the country joined lawmakers, allied organizations, and other retirees for rallies and events from Washington State to Middletown, Connecticut. Illinois Alliance members also [organized](#) a rally in Jacksonville, IL to urge Rep. **Mary Miller** to protect essential services, and Ohio Alliance member and former APWU local president **Martin Ramirez** [spoke](#) at a rally in Toledo with Rep. **Marcy Kaptur** (OH).

“Imagine earning \$100,000 and after 35 years the Bank Manager telling you 'I'll see if you deserve it, because we think it's an entitlement,’” **Ramirez** said.



Top left and right: Washington State Alliance members at a Save Social Security Day of Action rally; Bottom left: Connecticut Alliance members with Rep. Joe Courtney (CT); Bottom right: Alliance members at Save Social Security Day of Action rally in Racine, Wisconsin

## New Executive Order Raises Concerns About Prescription Drug Prices for Seniors

A [new executive order](#) signed by President **Trump** on Tuesday is raising red flags among advocates for affordable prescription drugs. While the order includes a few provisions that appear beneficial, one key section could ultimately lead to higher drug prices for seniors and the Medicare program.

The order directs the Department of Health and Human Services to work with Congress to delay when certain medications become eligible for Medicare price negotiations—potentially rolling back one of the most meaningful reforms in years to lower drug costs. The delay would benefit the drug companies that have been aggressively fighting the Medicare negotiation law since its passage.

Notably, this move follows months of behind-closed-doors meetings between the Administration and the pharmaceutical industry. In [December](#), President Trump and HHS Secretary **Robert Kennedy** held [private dinners](#) with Pfizer CEO **Albert Bourla**, Eli Lilly CEO **David Ricks**, and PhRMA CEO **Stephen Uhl** at Mar-a-Lago. A separate meeting took place at the White House in February. Pfizer and Eli Lilly are actively suing to block Medicare drug negotiations, and their executives have publicly [opposed the law](#).

While the order also includes some modest reforms—such as reducing co-pays for certain cancer treatments at specific facilities and expanding access to discounted insulin and epinephrine for some low-income patients—these changes may pale in comparison to the potential long-term consequences of undermining Medicare’s ability to negotiate fair drug prices.

“It appears that the drug industry may have gotten what it wanted, but it remains to be seen if Congress will agree to weaken the landmark drug price negotiation law,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We must fight to ensure seniors can afford the prescription drugs they need.”

### **Medicare Advantage Plans Spent Billions on Supplemental Benefits Last Year**

In 2024, Medicare Advantage plans [paid](#) \$38 billion for services not covered by traditional Medicare. But the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), an independent legislative agency that advises Congress on Medicare, [says](#) that it can’t evaluate or track the way this money was spent.

These services include gym memberships, dental care, and transportation. Commissioners called for standardization of benefits within these plans and criticized the lack of transparency for beneficiaries, who don’t always understand exactly what benefits they are signing up for.

"Clearly, we need to know how these dollars are being spent and what value they're delivering," said commissioner **Cheryl Damberg, PhD, MPH**, director of the RAND Center of Excellence on Health System Performance in Santa Monica, California. She suggested Medicare could offer incentives to plans for submitting more complete encounter data that shows more precisely what services were provided, "or [they would] possibly face a penalty for incomplete submissions."

“These are massive payments going out without proper monitoring,” said **Joseph Peters Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “Medicare Advantage must be held accountable to ensure that patients are getting the health care they need and that taxpayer dollars are spent properly.”

### **KFF Health News: Trump HHS Eliminates Office That Sets Poverty Levels Tied to Benefits for at Least 80 Million People**

**By Arthur Allen**

President Donald Trump’s firings at the Department of Health and Human Services included the entire office that sets federal poverty guidelines, which determine whether tens of millions of

Americans are eligible for health programs such as Medicaid, food assistance, child care, and other services, former staff said.

The small team, with technical data expertise, worked out of HHS' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, or ASPE. Their dismissal mirrored others across HHS, which came without warning and left officials puzzled as to why they were "RIF'ed" — as in "reduction in force," the bureaucratic language used to describe the firings.

"I suspect they RIF'ed offices that had the word 'data' or 'statistics' in them," said one of the laid-off employees, a social scientist whom KFF Health News agreed not to name because the person feared further recrimination. "It was random, as far as we can tell."

Among those fired was Kendall Swenson, who had led development of the poverty guidelines for many years and was considered the repository of knowledge on the issue, according to the social scientist and two academics who have worked with the HHS team.

The sacking of the office could lead to cuts in assistance to low-income families next year unless the Trump administration restores the positions or moves its duties elsewhere, said Robin Ghertner, the fired director of the Division of Data and Technical Analysis, which had overseen the guidelines.

[Read more here.](#)