



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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May 30, 2025

Social Security Phone Service Changes Will Create Unnecessary Burdens

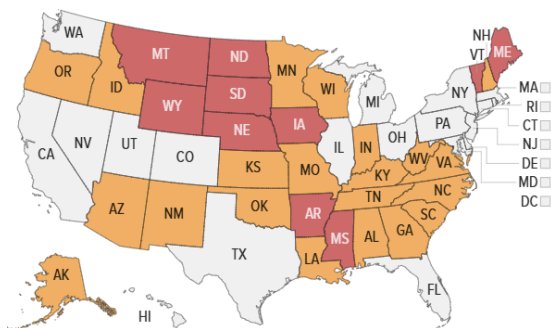
The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)'s Social Security phone service restrictions will make it harder for seniors to access customer service support, according to new data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The Social Security Administration (SSA) estimates that the updates will force beneficiaries [to make](#) more than 1 million additional trips to field offices, exacerbating difficulties for the more than 6 million older Americans who do not [drive](#), and almost 8 million seniors who have trouble traveling due to medical conditions or disabilities.

To visit a field office in no traffic, half of all seniors nationally must [drive](#) at least 33 minutes, and for 13 million seniors it is an hour's drive roundtrip. In ten states, over 40 percent of seniors would have to [drive](#) more than an hour roundtrip, and in 31 states, over 25 percent of seniors would spend at least an hour traveling. Wyoming [has](#) the highest percentage of seniors who would need to travel such long distances (71 percent) and Vermont has the second highest (64.4 percent). There [are](#) only three field offices in both of those states, making accessible phone services especially critical.

In 31 States, More Than 25% of Seniors Must Travel Over an Hour to Access Their Nearest Social Security Field Office

Percent of seniors who must drive more than an hour to visit a field office

25 - 39% 40%+



For more details on the burdens faced by seniors in a particular state, including estimates by Congressional district, click on the state to view a detailed fact sheet.

Note: Travel times are for round-trip travel to the nearest field office.

Sources: OpenTimes travel times database (Snow, Dan, (2024). OpenTimes (Version 0.01) [Data set]. <https://github.com/dansnow/opentimes>); Social Security Administration; 2023 American Community Survey.

On Thursday, SSA Commissioner **Frank Bisignano** [announced a new plan](#) to use artificial intelligence to address long phone waiting times.

“DOGE’s systematic dismantling of the SSA has put unreasonable pressures on seniors. Older Americans shouldn’t have to travel long distances to ensure that they get the benefits they’ve earned,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Restricting access to Social Security customer service support in this way is not what Americans have paid for.”

New Fact Sheet: Threats to Retirees in House Budget Package

This week, the Alliance released a [new fact sheet](#) detailing how the Republican budget, recently passed in the House of Representatives, will be harmful for seniors.

The *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* (H.R. 1) will slash \$490 billion from Medicare and \$715 billion from Medicaid over the next decade. It will also gut food assistance for seniors, remove minimum staffing requirements for nursing homes, and lock in high drug prices.

[Despite assurances](#) from Speaker **Mike Johnson** that there will be “no surprises” regarding the bill’s passage, it is already receiving [significant pushback](#) from Republicans in the Senate.

“This bill takes food assistance and health care away from millions of vulnerable Americans, all so Republicans can give the wealthiest Americans more tax cuts,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “It’s incredibly cruel, and we must let the Senate know that this legislation cannot become law.”

ACTION NEEDED: [Click here to send a message to your senators demanding they vote against draconian cuts.](#)

Overhaul of the Federal Government Remains on Hold

Last week, Northern District of California Judge Susan Illston [issued a preliminary injunction](#) in a lawsuit challenging the Trump administration’s efforts to revamp the federal workforce, extending a previous two-week temporary restraining order blocking their plans.

The Alliance is one of the plaintiffs in the case, along with the American Federation of Government of Employees (AFGE), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and several other labor and allied organizations.

The ruling bars 22 government agencies from implementing planned layoffs until lawsuit proceedings conclude. Specified bureaus include the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Treasury, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

The Trump administration appealed the temporary restraining order in the Supreme Court and is expected to appeal the preliminary injunction.

The Alliance Celebrates Contributions of AAPI Workers This May

This month, the Alliance joined the AFL-CIO in marking Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, honoring the AAPI workers who have championed labor rights throughout history.

There [are](#) nearly 800,000 AAPI union members in the country, and leaders such as Philip Vera Cruz, Gene Viernes, and Silme Domingo [were](#) critical in forming organizations like the United Farm Workers Union and the Alaska Cannery Worker's Association. In 1992, more than 500 AAPI labor advocates gathered to found the [Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance \(APALA\)](#). APALA [is](#) the first and only national organization of AAPI workers and has been doing essential work in advocating for marginalized communities' rights since its formation.

"AAPI communities have played a vital role in advancing not just labor rights, but rights across the board for vulnerable groups," said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. "We are proud to support APALA and we look forward to continuing to work with them in the future."

KFF Health News: How Trump Aims To Slash Federal Support for Research, Public Health, and Medicaid

By Elisabeth Rosenthal

Health care has proved a vulnerable target for the firehose of cuts and policy changes President Donald Trump ordered in the name of reducing waste and improving efficiency. But most of the impact isn't as tangible as, say, higher egg prices at the grocery store.

One thing experts from a wide range of fields, from basic science to public health, agree on: The damage will be varied and immense. "It's exceedingly foolish to cut funding in this way," said Harold Varmus, a Nobel Prize-winning scientist and former director of both the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute.

The blaze of cuts have yielded nonsensical and perhaps unintended consequences. Consider instances in which grant funding gets canceled after two years of a three-year project. That means, for example, that \$2 million has already been spent but there will be no return on that investment.

Some of the targeted areas are not administration priorities. That includes the abrupt termination of studies on long covid, which afflicts more than 100,000 Americans, and the interruption of work on mRNA vaccines, which hold promise not just in infectious disease but also in treating cancer.

While charitable dollars have flowed in to plug some gaps, "philanthropy cannot replace federal funding," said Dustin Sposato, communications manager for the Science Philanthropy Alliance, a group that works to boost support from charities for basic science research.

Here are critical ways in which Trump administration cuts — proposed and actual — could affect American health care and, more important, the health of American patients.

[Read more here.](#)

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