



# FRIDAY ALERT



**Alliance for Retired Americans**

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## **Social Security Administration Quietly Removes Customer Service Data Before Commissioner Testifies**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) stopped posting customer service performance metrics on its website, [according to a new report](#) from *The Washington Post*. The SSA website no longer has a “live data” section that shows current call wait times, callback wait times, and number of callers waiting on hold or waiting for a callback.



SSA Commissioner **Frank Bisignano** did not say why the agency removed this information or commit to restoring it when asked by Rep. **Judy Chu** (CA) during a hearing in the House Ways and Means Social Security and Work and Welfare Subcommittees on Wednesday.

**Bisignano** focused on his plan to use technology, including Artificial Intelligence, to “modernize” customer service at the agency,

and insisted that he doesn’t need to increase staffing levels for those improvements. In February, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) implemented staffing reductions that [slashed](#) the SSA workforce by 12 percent, [wreaking havoc at the agency](#) with slowed down claims processing times, increased wait times, and frequent website crashes.

Throughout the often combative hearing on Wednesday, **Bisignano** emphasized that he wants to use technology at the agency more while still “meeting people where they are” and providing “an omnichannel” approach.

But he failed to provide specifics about how he would ensure that rural Americans and seniors without broadband or smart phones continue to have access to customer service while the agency implements artificial intelligence (AI) and other modernization technologies. He did not provide a direct answer about whether AI would be used for eligibility determinations or redeterminations.

“These changes are not modernizing, they are marginalizing,” said Rep. **Terri Sewell** (AL). “In Black and Brown communities where generational poverty and digital exclusion remain high, seniors are now expected to navigate impersonal and inaccessible systems with little or no support.”

Committee members also asked about the Department of Government Efficiency’s (DOGE) reach in the Social Security Administration. **Bisignano** deflected questions about how much influence DOGE has within the agency, and he doubled down on misinformation originally spread by **Elon Musk**, the head of DOGE, refusing to refute his false claim that 120 year olds were collecting Social Security benefits.

“There’s an immediate urgency as it deals with DOGE and their access to the public’s personal data,” said Social Security Subcommittee Ranking Member **John Larson** (CT). “I also think that it’s become blatantly obvious to the American public that we are in the midst of the privatization of Social Security. We have put forward a plan, the plan is very specific and direct. We see no plan, we’ve had no hearing from our colleagues on the other side.”

“At a time when SSA is reeling from DOGE staffing cuts that resulted in the loss of thousands of employees, Mr. **Bisignano** provided no indications that he will prioritize or that he even understands what Social Security beneficiaries actually need when it comes to customer service,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “There is no substitute for experience and human interaction when it comes to ensuring that older and disabled Americans get the benefits they have earned. We will continue to work with Congressman **Larson** on this and other issues pertaining to Social Security and the SSA.”

## **Senate Republicans Scramble to Pass Unpopular Budget Bill**

Senate GOP leaders are forging ahead despite broad opposition to their “big, beautiful” budget bill. Nearly two-thirds of Americans view it unfavorably, [according to a new KFF poll](#).

Earlier in the week, 15 vulnerable House Republicans [sent a letter](#) to Senate Majority Leader **John Thune** (SD) stating that the Senate Finance Committee version “goes too far.”

Political squabbling over the bill reached new levels during a closed door meeting Republican senators held Tuesday. Sen. **Thom Tillis** (NC) expressed worry that the plan’s proposed Medicaid cuts could cause trouble for Republicans in the midterm elections to which Sen. **Mitch McConnell** (KY) [suggested that](#) Americans “will get over it.”

Despite internal dissent and [recent rulings](#) from Senate Parliamentarian **Elizabeth MacDonough** that will require revisions to the regulation, both President **Donald Trump** and Senate Majority Leader **Thune** [remain confident](#) the Senate would pass the budget plan by the July 4 weekend.

“It’s not surprising that Americans don’t want to pay for more tax cuts for the wealthy by slashing food assistance, Medicaid, and Medicare. But that’s exactly what the Republican budget plan calls for,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We must continue to speak out and make sure senators stop this destructive bill.”



Michigan Alliance President Jim Pedersen talks about Sen. Mitch McConnell's (KY) suggestion that Americans will "get over" Medicaid cuts.

**ACTION NEEDED:** [Click here to tell your senators to vote against the budget proposal when it comes to the floor.](#)

## Alliance Marks LGBTQ+ Pride Month

Throughout Pride Month, the Alliance aims to uplift the LGBTQ+ community, who face unique challenges in the workplace and play an essential role in championing labor justice. [1.8](#) percent of Americans over the age of 65 and at least [4](#) percent of the U.S. workforce are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, which is why it is essential to understand the intersection between seniors' issues, labor rights, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Ensuring equality in the workplace is critical — 47 percent of LGBTQ+ workers have [experienced](#) discrimination at their job at some point in their lives. A pay gap also remains: LGBTQ+ workers [make](#) 10 percent less than other workers on average, leading to lower Social Security benefits in retirement. Union membership is highly effective in closing this gap and [creating](#) wage equity.

“All Americans should have access to a safe work environment free of the threat of discrimination or dismissal,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The Alliance wishes its members a Happy Pride Month and encourages allies to help fight for increased workplace protections for the LGBTQ+ community.”

***KFF Health News: Many Older People Embrace Vaccines. Research Is Proving Them Right.***  
**By Paula Span**

Kim Beckham, an insurance agent in Victoria, Texas, had seen friends suffer so badly from shingles that she wanted to receive the first approved shingles vaccine as soon as it became available, even if she had to pay for it out-of-pocket.

Her doctor and several pharmacies turned her down because she was below the recommended age at the time, which was 60. So, in 2016, she celebrated her 60th birthday at her local CVS. [...]

For older adults who express more confidence in vaccine safety than younger groups, the past few months have brought welcome research. Studies have found important benefits from a newer vaccine and enhanced versions of older ones, and one vaccine may confer a major bonus that nobody foresaw.

The new studies are coming at a fraught political moment. The nation's health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has long disparaged certain vaccines, calling them unsafe and saying that the government officials who regulate them are compromised and corrupt.

[Read more here.](#)