



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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Republicans, Democrats Release Separate Plans to Keep Government Open

With just 11 days to pass legislation to keep the government open, Congressional Republicans and Democrats are far from reaching an agreement. Republicans had enough votes to [pass a](#) government funding bill in the House of Representatives without Democratic votes this morning but, in the Senate, they need [seven](#) votes from Democrats.

Hill Republicans and Democrats released separate funding bill proposals, called continuing resolutions, on Wednesday.

Republicans claim their continuing resolution is a “clean” bill to fully fund the government. Democrats, however, are emphasizing that any proposed deal needs to address impending health care cuts, including to Medicaid and Affordable Care Act premium subsidies.

“The House Republicans-only spending bill fails to meet the needs of the American people and does nothing to stop the looming healthcare crisis,” Senate Minority Leader **Chuck Schumer** (NY) and House Minority Leader **Hakeem Jeffries** (NY) [said](#) in a joint statement.

The GOP’s continuing resolution would fund the government through November 21, but would not extend Affordable Care Act subsidies that are set to expire in December. If the subsidies expire, monthly insurance premiums could [skyrocket](#) by as much as 75 percent for 24 million Americans [who buy](#) their health insurance plans on marketplace exchanges.

The Democratic proposal would fund the government through October 31 while extending ACA subsidies and curtailing President **Donald Trump**’s ability to rescind money already approved by Congress. It would also revoke Medicaid cuts and other health care cuts included in the Republican tax and budget law passed in July.

“A government shutdown is never good, but letting Affordable Care Act subsidies expire in December would also be devastating,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance.

“Americans shouldn’t have to choose between funding the government and losing access to health coverage. It’s time for Republicans to work with Democrats to avert this crisis.”

Trump Administration Backs Off Its Promise to “Not Touch Social Security,” Considers Raising the Retirement Age

During an appearance on *Fox News*, Social Security Administration Commissioner **Frank Bisignano** [said](#) that the Trump administration is considering raising the retirement age beyond 67 years of age.

“I think everything’s being considered, will be considered,” said Commissioner **Bisignano** when asked about whether the Administration would consider raising the retirement age in its efforts to address Social Security’s impending financial shortfall.



This year’s Trustees Report [showed that](#) the Social Security Trust Fund will be able to pay full benefits until 2033, but will only be able to pay 77 percent of benefits to all current and future retirees if Congress doesn’t take action. Raising the retirement age would result in further benefit cuts and force Americans to work longer for less, taking thousands of dollars from middle class retirees that they earned over a lifetime of hard work.

“This Administration cannot be trusted with Americans’ hard-earned retirement security. Its policies have already drained at least a year of solvency from the trust fund, making the situation worse, not better,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance, in a statement. “The real solution is fair and straightforward: require the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share into Social Security. That will strengthen the program for today’s retirees and future generations without cutting a single dollar of our earned benefits.”

Medicare Telehealth Services Set to Expire on September 30

Congress [only has until the end of September](#) to renew expanded Medicare telehealth services. Before the COVID pandemic, only certain patients with specific diagnoses and conditions were eligible to receive telehealth medical care. But lawmakers made telehealth available to all

beneficiaries during the pandemic and [broadened](#) the types of practitioners who can provide those services.

If expanded telehealth services are not extended, [they will](#) become much less accessible for Medicare beneficiaries, especially those who are homebound or living in rural areas. Beneficiaries would lose at-home and audio-only telehealth options, and non-physician practitioners like occupational therapists will no longer be able to provide telehealth care.

A recent survey [shows that](#) the majority of providers are worried that vulnerable patients will lose telehealth access altogether, with more than 60 percent citing it as a top concern.

“Congress must act now to ensure that seniors don't have to worry about their health care being disrupted or discontinued,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We urge them to make expanded Medicare telehealth access permanent in order to avoid this problem in the future.”

Alliance Chapters Hold Conventions in Florida, Iowa and Illinois

Last Thursday, the Florida Alliance held a virtual annual meeting and convention, which included an awards ceremony. Florida Alliance members **Roland Broussard** and **Melanie Ribeiro** received the Tony Fransetta Award, **Miriam "Bunny" Baker** received the Strickland Award, and **Barbara Toepke** received the President's Award. Alliance Executive Director **Fiesta** spoke during the event. The Colorado Alliance also hosted its state convention on Thursday.

Alliance Field Mobilization Director **Maureen Dunn** spoke at the Iowa Alliance Convention on Friday – where former organizer **Midge Slater** received the **George J Kourpias/Donald P Rowen** Service to Seniors Award – and the Illinois Alliance Convention on Saturday. Illinois Alliance members elected **Peter Mendoza** as the new state president.



Members at the Iowa and Illinois Conventions

KFF Health News: Team Trump's Answer to Ballooning Obamacare Premiums: Less Generous Coverage
By Julie Appleby

Trump administration officials, looking at the possible impact of large insurance premium increases for millions of next year's Obamacare customers, want more people to consider plans with less generous benefits and high deductibles.

The agency that oversees the ACA announced early this month that it would expand eligibility for "catastrophic" plans sold in Affordable Care Act online marketplaces. The plans require people to spend more than \$10,000 a year on deductibles before the policies pay most medical costs but carry lower monthly premiums than other Obamacare policies.

The move reflects growing concern among Republicans about political backlash if Congress doesn't extend larger tax credits put in place during the covid-19 public health emergency to help consumers pay their premiums. The extra subsidies are set to expire at the end of the year, resulting in an average 75% increase in the amount people pay for coverage, according to KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News.

A small, bipartisan group of House lawmakers introduced legislation to extend the enhanced covid-era subsidies for one more year, which would keep them in place through midterm congressional elections in fall 2026.

[Read more here.](#)