



FRIDAY ALERT

Alliance for Retired Americans

815 16th Street, NW, Fourth Floor • Washington, DC 20006 • 202.637.5399

www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

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DOGE/Social Security Data Case Enters a New Phase

This week brought two significant developments in the lawsuit over the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) access to and handling of sensitive Social Security data, filed by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the Alliance, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). A federal judge has ordered that the case move forward to the discovery phase—allowing plaintiffs to seek documents, testimony, and other evidence about how and why this data was accessed. Depositions under oath of key DOGE personnel and production of government documents are likely but have not yet been scheduled.

This step follows a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which said it was bound by an earlier U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing DOGE to continue accessing Social Security data while the case proceeds. The appeals court lifted a lower court order that had previously blocked that access.

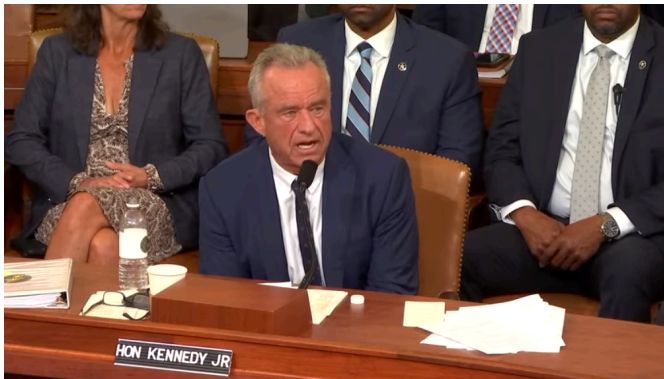
Notably, several appellate judges expressed concern about the outcome, warning about the risks of granting broad access to highly sensitive personal data and the misstatements acknowledged by the Department of Justice earlier this year.

That included an admission that individuals' personal data was shared with third parties using a non-government server, and that a DOGE team member at the Social Security Administration entered into a "Voter Data Agreement" after being asked by someone outside the government to analyze state voter rolls.

"The unauthorized release of Americans' personal data represents a profound violation of public trust. Retirees, workers, and families depend on the Social Security Administration to protect their most confidential information," said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. "The courts don't move quickly, but we're making progress. We won't stop until we get to the bottom of what happened at the SSA."

Healthcare Advocacy Group Releases Report Ahead of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.'s Congressional Hearings

On Wednesday, the health care advocacy group Protect Our Care [released a report](#) entitled “Robert F. Kennedy Jr. vs Public Health.” [The report](#) is critical, asserting that under Kennedy’s leadership the public’s trust in vaccines has eroded and medical research funding has been slashed.



As HHS Secretary, **Kennedy** has promoted his Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) plan, which ostensibly aims to address the country’s growing health crisis. In practice, since **Kennedy** was confirmed, funding for Medicare and Medicaid has been cut, prices for Affordable Care Act insurance plans have skyrocketed, and hundreds of hospitals are at risk of closure, particularly in rural areas.

Kennedy testified before the House Committee on Ways and Means on Thursday. [Rep. Suzan DelBene \(WA\) criticized](#) his promotion of WISeR, a pilot program in 6 states that uses for-profit AI-corporations to determine whether patients with traditional Medicare can receive certain medical treatment.

“Under this HHS Secretary, health care has become less affordable and accessible,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “It is a shame that older Americans are struggling to get the care they deserve and work a lifetime to earn.”

Skyrocketing Gas Prices May Mean a Larger Social Security COLA in 2027

Two new estimates of the 2027 Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) are out, and [gas prices](#) are expected to be a key factor.

The Senior Citizens League [estimates a](#) 2.8 percent increase, the same as the 2026 COLA. That would bring the average retirement benefit to \$2,081.46—a \$56.69 increase. The prediction is based on a model that incorporates the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Federal Reserve interest rate, and the national unemployment rate. Earlier this year, their model [predicted a](#) 2.5 percent COLA.

Meanwhile, *CNBC* just [published an estimate](#) of a 3.2 percent COLA, based on an assumption that gas prices will remain high into the summer.

Social Security COLAs are announced in mid-October, with the new payment amounts taking effect for benefits paid in January of the following year.

“The cost of living for seniors has increased drastically over the past year as prices for essential goods and services skyrocket,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We urge Congress to adopt the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) instead of the Consumer Price Index for Workers (CPI-W) to calculate COLAs so that they more accurately reflect older Americans’ expenses.”

KFF Health News: New Federal Medicaid Rules Require One Month of Work. Some States Demand More.

By Samantha Liss

Millions of people who apply for Medicaid in the coming years will have to prove they've been working, going to school, or volunteering for at least a month before they can gain or retain health insurance through the government program.

But Republican lawmakers in some states think the new rules — part of the GOP's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed last July by President Donald Trump — don't go far enough.

Indiana is leading that charge, with a new law that requires applicants to prove they've been working or participating in a similar activity for three consecutive months to get benefits.

Meanwhile, residents in many other states will have to show they've been working just one month, the least cumbersome option under Trump's signature tax-and-domestic-spending law. It instructs states to decide whether to require one, two, or three months of work history.

[Read more here.](#)