



# FRIDAY ALERT

## Alliance for Retired Americans

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

[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)

Spanish version: [www.alianzadejubilados.org](http://www.alianzadejubilados.org)

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## New Report Confirms Steep Decline in Social Security Administration Staffing Levels

The number of staff members working at the Social Security Administration (SSA) has dropped precipitously since the beginning of last year, according [to a new report](#) from the Congressional Research Service.

More than 57,000 SSA workers – an already historically low number – were on staff at the end of January 2025. Only about 49,000 people were working at the SSA in February. The Administration cut about 7,000 workers last year and scrambled to reassign remaining staff to answer customer service calls to keep wait times from increasing. But this has caused unprocessed claims to pile up. In March, processing centers reported a backlog of six million cases while field offices reported a backlog of 12 million cases.

Beneficiaries in several states will also find it harder to visit SSA offices in person, as the agency [is temporarily closing field offices](#) in West Virginia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Northern Mariana Islands, Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan and Montana. Agency leaders are encouraging beneficiaries to use the SSA website or call the 1-800 customer service number if they need assistance.

“Americans earned their Social Security benefits with each paycheck. They should be able to expect an efficient and reliably run Social Security Administration,” said

**Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “Once again, we implore Congress to pass legislation, including Rep. **John Larson’s** (CT) bill, the Keeping Our Field Offices Open Act (H.R. 1876), to require a fully staffed SSA.”



Photo: Yoshi Canopus, "Social Security Administration, Hilo, Hawaii (at Prince Kuhio Plaza)," Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

## Millions of Medicare Advantage Patients Are Losing Access to Their Preferred Doctors

35 million seniors and people with disabilities use Medicare Advantage plans, [but a report from the New York Times shows how many are at risk of losing their longtime doctors](#) as more providers pull out of the for-profit plans. Patients with these policies are typically unable to see providers who are outside their network. This has created a cycle where patients have fewer or no options after doctors leave their insurance networks.

Last November, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services proposed a regulation that would allow patients under Medicare Advantage to switch plans mid-year so they could remain with their current providers, but the agency reversed the proposal earlier this month.

“CMS’s decision to shelve its proposal has unfairly jeopardized care for millions of beneficiaries,” said **Richard Fiesta**, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We urge officials to give patients more flexibility by offering them the ability to switch plans mid-year given the circumstances.”

## Consumer Group Sues Meta for Failing to Protect Customers Over Fraudulent Ads on its Platforms

[On Tuesday, the Consumer Federation of America filed a lawsuit against Meta](#), which owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The lawsuit alleges that the company has violated Washington, D.C.’s consumer protection laws by failing to discipline scammers and profiting from scam advertisements. The lawsuit further alleges that Facebook’s advertising tools allow scammers to target specific demographics, including by birth year.

**Ben Winters**, CFA’s director of AI and data privacy, [told Wired](#) that a simple search shows a breadth of scam ads in Meta’s ad library. [A Reuters report](#) found Meta’s own internal documents showed that 10 percent of the corporation’s revenue in 2024 came from scam ads.

Older adults are especially susceptible to online scams: statistics show that scammers often specifically target seniors. [The FTC’s 2024-2025 annual report to Congress](#) showed that in that year alone, seniors reported collectively losing close to \$561 million, a drastic increase from 2020.

“Social media-driven scams are only getting more prevalent and sophisticated, which means it’s important for platforms to be held accountable,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We’re glad that the Consumer Federation of America is taking action against Meta. Here at the Alliance, we’re working to educate seniors about how to stay safe online and pushing lawmakers to pass legislation that strengthens oversight of these platforms.”

## **KFF Health News: Real Estate Investors Profit From Long-Term Care While Residents Languish**

**By Jordan Rau**

By the time she was hospitalized in 2020, Pearlene Darby, a retired teacher, had suffered open sores on both legs, both hips, and both heels, as well as a five-inch-long gash on her tailbone. She died two weeks later at age 81 from infections and bedsores, according to her death certificate. Her

daughter sued the nursing home, alleging it had left Darby sitting in her own feces and urine time and again.

The lawsuit, settled on confidential terms last year, blamed not only the managers of City Creek Post-Acute and Assisted Living but also the building's owner, a real estate investment trust, or REIT.

In the year Darby died, City Creek paid CareTrust REIT more than \$1 million in rent, while the Sacramento, California, nursing home ran a deficit, court records show.

Federal tax rules ban REITs from running health care facilities, but CareTrust was not an absentee landlord either, according to internal records filed in the case. It chose the nursing home's management company and required through the lease that the home keep at least 80% of beds occupied. CareTrust granularly tracked how well the home kept to its financial plan, down to the money spent monthly on nurses and food, the records said. And the documents showed that the real estate company kept tabs on government safety inspection findings and Medicare quality ratings.

[Read more here.](#)