



# FRIDAY ALERT

## Alliance for Retired Americans

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

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

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## Alliance Holds 2026 Membership Meeting; President Robert Roach, Jr. and Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Peters, Jr. Re-Elected

The Alliance's quadrennial National Membership Meeting took place from Monday to Thursday of this week. The meeting's theme, *Retiree Power: 25 Years and Growing*, marked the Alliance's 25th anniversary. During the meeting, members elected national officers, debated and voted on resolutions, and participated in workshops that sharpened their organizing skills and prepared them to campaign for pro-retiree candidates in the upcoming midterm election.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and Alliance Executive Vice President **Fred Redmond** discussed how the labor movement is suited for responding to the current political moment, and called on attendees to organize to protect workers' rights and voting rights. He also installed new officers elected at the meeting.

Former SSA Commissioner and Maryland Governor **Martin O'Malley** energized the crowd, outlining the "Big Lies" that **Elon Musk** and the Administration are telling about earned benefits. He also detailed ways to fix Social Security's impending financial shortfall and staffing shortage, including eliminating the cap on income subject to Social Security taxes and making full staffing a legal requirement. A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) President **Clayola Brown** kicked the meeting off on Monday.



APRI President Clayola Brown and former SSA Commissioner Martin O'Malley at the Alliance's 2026 National Membership Meeting

Members also re-elected [Robert Roach, Jr.](#) as Alliance President and [Joseph Peters, Jr.](#) as Alliance Secretary-Treasurer. They have served in those positions since September of 2015. **Steve Barger**, a UBC retiree from Kentucky, was elected Executive Vice President, replacing NEA retiree Julie Horwin. **Jean Dobashi** of Hawaii was re-elected to the Alliance's Executive Board, and three new members were elected: **Patrice Earnest**, a retiree from Georgia; Doug Jaynes, from Colorado; and **Linda Somo**, Arizona Alliance President.



AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and Alliance Executive Director Fred Redmond installs newly elected and re-elected officers

Acclaimed author and past President of the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict **Hardy Merriman** contrasted the characteristics of democracies and authoritarian governments and outlined how attendees can organize to stop autocratic threats and prevent democratic backsliding in the United States.

Members also heard from pollster **Jason McGrath** and Alliance Executive Director **Richard Fiesta** about what older voters are thinking about retirement security issues and how that could effect the

upcoming midterm elections. Las Vegas Mayor **Shelley Berkley** welcomed attendees to Las Vegas. Nevada AFL-CIO Executive Secretary-Treasurer **Susie Martinez** thanked members for making a difference in their communities and urged them to keep up the fight for retirement security.

Attendees also had the opportunity to hear from other labor movement leaders and advocates, including video greetings from AFL-CIO President **Liz Shuler**, AFSCME President **Lee Saunders**, AFT President **Randi Weingarten**, and USW President **Roxanne Brown**, as well as in person remarks from IAMAW **James “Stretch” Little**, and AFGE District 7 National Vice President **Jason Anderson**. Maryland/DC Alliance member and former Social Security Administration (SSA) Claims Specialist **Witold Skwierczynski** shared information about the current state of Social Security and the effects that the Department of Government Efficiency’s (DOGE) Social Security Administration (SSA) staffing cuts are having on beneficiaries.

The event finished with a Retiree Roundtable and a State Presidents Panel featuring California Alliance President **Pauline Brooks**, Washington State Alliance President **Jackie Boschok**, Arizona Alliance President **Linda Somo**, and Wisconsin Alliance President **Ross Winklbauer**.



Attendees at the 2026 National Membership Meeting (Photo: Howard Heath)

## Supreme Court Guts Voting Rights Act

The Supreme Court [issued a 6-3 ruling](#) on Wednesday that will have devastating consequences for voting rights in the United States. The decision negates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which was passed in 1965.

The court’s [new interpretation](#) of the Voting Rights Act in *Louisiana v. Callais* flies in the face of decades of precedent, essentially greenlighting racial gerrymandering by making it more burdensome to prove that a gerrymandered map violates minority voters’ rights. Previously, merely showing that a map’s effects would result in discrimination was sufficient for it to be considered invalid, but now voters need to prove that a gerrymandered map is intentionally discriminatory in order for it to be rejected.

Republicans are already scrambling [to gerrymander](#) state electoral maps and the decision has [thwarted](#) 28 lawsuits defending minority voting rights.

“The Voting Rights Act came out of a civil rights movement built by older Americans – including many of our members – to protect and strengthen voting rights in this country,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “We refuse to accept this anti-democratic ruling and will mobilize our members to elect pro-retiree candidates this November who will protect voting rights – not gut them.”

## **Report: Orphan Drug Loophole in “One Big, Beautiful Bill” Weakened Medicare Negotiation**

[According to a report](#) released by patient advocacy group Patients for Affordable Drugs (P4AD), drug corporations increased prices for over 200 different medications treating rare diseases. More than 80 percent of these hikes exceed the inflation rate.

The report explains that the so-called “orphan drug” loophole in the “One Big, Beautiful Bill” Act passed last summer is responsible for these price hikes. “Orphan drugs,” which treat rare conditions, already face little competition, and special protections allow manufacturers to inflate prices. But the loophole included in the tax law makes the problem worse by exempting these drugs from the law that requires Medicare to [negotiate lower prices](#) with pharmaceutical corporations.

“What we are seeing is the inevitable consequence of prioritizing corporate greed over people’s health,” said **Richard Fiesta, Executive Director** of the Alliance. “Congress needs to repeal the Orphan Cures Act and demand that Medicare negotiate lower prices for more drugs, not fewer.”

## **Alliance Members Stand in Solidarity With Workers**

Alliance members commemorated Workers’ Memorial Day and International Workers’ Day, or “May Day,” this week. “May Day” is [an international holiday](#) meant to celebrate workers and the history of labor organizing itself.

Workers’ Memorial Day was established to recognize workers who died or suffered because of harmful working conditions. [According to the AFL-CIO](#), more than 380 workers are killed and more than 8,600 suffer injury and illness because of dangerous, preventable working conditions. During the National Membership Meeting on Tuesday, attendees observed a moment of silence to remember the working people who have lost their lives or been injured on the job.

“This week and every week we stand with workers around the world who are fighting for their right to organize and have a voice on the job,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**, Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We also embrace the chance to reflect on the contributions of those who have lost their lives or been injured at work.”

## **KFF Health News: Medigap Premiums Leap, and Consumers Have Few Alternatives** **By Julie Appleby**

After decades of selling insurance, Illinois-based broker John Jaggi had never seen anything like it.

More than 80 of his customers who were enrolled in the same Medicare supplemental plan from the insurer Chubb got hit last August with a 45% increase.

“In my 49 years of doing biz as a broker, I’ve never seen a premium increase be effective immediately on everyone, instead of on their policy anniversary,” said Jaggi, whose brokerage scrambled to find more affordable options for clients. The policies pick up deductibles and other costs not covered in traditional Medicare, and without one there is no upper limit on how much a consumer might owe each year.

[Read more here.](#)

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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](http://www.retiredamericans.org) @activeretirees